

a  
***Potted History  
of  
Madang***

by  
***Mary R Mennis***

*Traditional Culture and Change  
on the  
North Coast of Papua New Guinea*

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by

Mary R. Mennis MA, MSocSc, DipEd.

*Mary Mennis has always had a great interest in the Oral History of the people of Papua New Guinea, and had spent many years in researching their traditions. This research has led to her two Masters Degrees, the first from the University of Papua New Guinea and the second from James Cook University, Queensland. Apart from her degrees, Mary has also published several books based on her research. She is also the family historian for the Eccles family of Victoria, and has published her family's history and a short history of her father, the late Sir John Eccles.*

**By the same Author:**

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*Tolai Myths of Origin* (with Janssen and Skinner) (Jacaranda Press)  
*Time of the Tauber* (Kristen Pres)  
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In writing this book, Mary Mennis utilized many sources, including existing publications, interviews, letters and old documents, acknowledgement to which is given in the text.

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## Author's Note

In 1971, my husband, Brian, was appointed Regional Surveyor in Madang after nine years in Rabaul. As we were settling in, centenary celebrations were being held for the arrival of a Russian scientist, Miklouho-Maclay, on the Rai Coast in 1871. Maclay had kept a detailed diary and described the life and customs of the people and also the large trading canoes that once graced Astrolabe Bay. Over the years, I grew interested in the culture of the Madang people, collecting their stories and learning about their past, particularly their material culture – their canoes and earthenware pots.

I received no grants or other financial assistance while doing this research. The fact that Brian was employed by the Government meant I could access the local villages with ease and over a long period of time. Our house staff faithfully did the housework and, once I had taken the children to school each morning, I was free to visit my village friends and collect memories of past events. Each of the old headmen had a book of knowledge in their heads and I was eager to record their oral history while there was still time.

This work was not done haphazardly. I was in constant contact with historians at the University of Papua New Guinea, including Professor Don Denoon and Dr Rod Lacy who greatly encouraged my work. The first assignment they gave to me was to see how much historical fact there was in traditional myths. Choosing the Kilibob and Manup myth, I visited Budup to investigate the place where these two mythical brothers were said to have had a fight. The older one, Kilibob, built a ship here and sailed away promising to return. It was a long shot but this visit to Budup led to discovery of stories of distant visitors to the shores of Madang whose ship had been washed ashore during a tidal wave. Ebony statues, ship fittings and steel knives previously found at the site were material evidence of the foreign ship's visit which had been absorbed into the local mythology. The fact that the sailors on board had promised to return bringing cargo for the people led to the first cargo cult in the area. It was a fascinating beginning to years of research.

The Bel people in the Madang area trace their origins back twelve generations to the Island of Yomba which, according to their traditions, disappeared with a large tsunami. Leaving their island home, those who survived established small settlements on the North Coast often in poor areas and subsequently relied on trading their pots to buy food for their very survival. Their large canoes were described by Miklouho-Maclay in 1871.

When we arrived a century later, these canoes had not been built for 40 years. In 1978, I encouraged the last five canoe builders in Bilbil Village to build another one, a *lalong*, and accompanied the men to the jungle to collect the materials needed and noted

measurement, type of wood etc. It was a time of great discovery and adventure for me. The village elders became deeply involved in the project, treasured as they were for their knowledge of their traditional ways. These old headmen of Bilbil and other Bel villages were amongst the finest and most knowledgeable men I have ever known, spanning, as they did, the time of the old traditions with that of modern times. I hold their memory dear. I chose Bilbil Village for my detailed study of the material culture as it had easy access from Madang. Situated on the coast opposite Bilbil Island where their ancestors once lived, Bilbil Village belongs to the Bel group along with the Yabob, Kranket, Riwo, Siar and southern Karkar Island villages. It was once the centre of an extensive trade network and, with its sister village, Yabob, the Bilbil travelled to the North Coast as far as Sarang, out to Karkar Island and south as far as Sio on the Rai Coast. Bilbil Village was significant in the history of the Bel people as it is also central to this story of Madang town and Province.

In this book, the trading networks are described in detail from the traders' point of view. The scene is set for the traders leaving their wives as they set off on their long trips to the Rai Coast. These descriptions cover: the canoes that were used for the trading trips; the clan conch shell calls; discipline at sea; the wind patterns that must be known; the weather magicians paid in pots to deliver the right weather; the *opim dua* ceremony when the canoes arrived at the different villages along the coast; the trade friends contacted and the right procedure for both guests and hosts; and tragedies at sea that sometimes occurred.

The canoes were large vessels with one or two mat sails and they epitomised the highest technical knowledge of the village people in traditional times made, as they were, with tools of stone, shells, bones and wood and using only bush materials. The pots they traded were of paramount importance as they were the currency of the day buying food, brides, ornaments, weapons and tools in trade exchanges with people who did not have the art of pottery making.

Into this world, for better or worse, came the agents of change bringing European technology, religion, and economic systems. Innovative technical knowledge and steel tools brought changes but the fact remains that these people, given their tools and materials, had reached a high standard of living and creativity in their traditional way of life. In studying these agents of change, the headmen helped me see Madang History from their perspective, which sometimes differed widely from the official recorded version. Their accounts of Mikloucho-Maclay, the Siar Revolts, the German times, the Australian Administration, the Japanese occupation, the aftermath of the war and Independence are all noted and compared with the official version. In writing this book I am heavily indebted to these headmen and their

descendants that I interviewed in the Madang Province. The Catholic and Lutheran Missions and their influence in the Province and on the people are also studied in some detail.

This research was done in two stages: initially in the years 1974 to 1979 as described already; later in 1994, after an absence of 15 years, I did an informal survey to see how much of the knowledge of the trading canoes and the earthenware pots was left along the North Coast. By this stage, the old headmen had all died with the exception of Pall Tagari. Even Pall had lost his memory. and I was just so thankful that I had recorded his wonderful stories in the 1970s.

While this potted history covers the traditional Madang culture and the changes that have occurred since the time of pre-history, it also gives a wider view of the whole of Madang Province: the island region, the coastal area, the river regions, and the mountain areas; and the changes that have happened there.

The research done in the 1970s was used as part of a Master of Arts Degree from the University of Papua New Guinea and then later I followed this up with a Master of Social Science Degree in Material Culture at the James Cook University at Townsville. However this book has additional research not previously published.

I started to write this foreword note in China where I had come to teach for a year at the Wujin TV University in Changzhou, 2004. Here I was reminded of the many influences of the Chinese Culture on the Madang History; they introduced *Tok Pisin*; they introduced Chinese made boats; Chinatown in Madang was an integral part of the new trading system that was developed in the town; and during the Japanese war, the Chinese settlers suffered privations alongside the local people. In more recent times, the Chinese Government, through its mining company, China Metallurgical Construction Corporation, has agreed to develop the Ramu Nickel/Cobalt project. A slurry pipeline will be built from the mine to Astrolabe Bay where a plant will be set up to produce the nickel for export. While there are some environmental concerns, this project will ensure Madang's economic future and provide employment for many thousands of local people. Furthermore, I noticed a new note of adventure in China: the people are anxious to travel to other lands and maybe with good advertising the Chinese people could once more be enticed to the shores of Papua New Guinea, this time as tourists.

Hopefully, this work will have wider implications than just the Madang area. During the course of this research, it became apparent that Yomba was not just a mythical island in their oral traditions. It probably once stood where Hankow Reef is now off the coast of Madang.

Since the devastating December 2004 Tsunami in the Indian Ocean, interest in past tsunamis has increased and oral traditions are being studied to throw light on these. Recently, a group of Scientists from the Santa Cruz campus of the University of

California became interested in the Yomba story and followed it up with investigations at Hankow Reef with various possibilities of an island existing there and disappearing with a large tsunami. The delayed publication of this book has meant that references to their findings can be added. It also has meant that the oral traditions of the Bel people can be vindicated.

In doing this work, I have many people to thank: First and foremost, my husband Brian who has tirelessly helped with the manuscript and illustrations and a number of his photographs have been included. He always given me help and encouragement as well as strong guidelines. He has become my chief editor and publisher and has given many years of encouragement and advice since I began the research in 1975. We are both so pleased that it is now ready for publication.

I also thank; Professor Denoon and Dr Rod Lacey who initially set me on this path of research; Dr Pamela Swadling, formerly of the Papua New Guinea National Museum, for her encouragement and for publishing the oral testimonies in *Oral History*, the magazine of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies; Michael Quinell and Rowena Hill of the Queensland Museum for their interest and advice over many years; Robert Bruce of the Department of Forests in Madang helped with botanical terms; members of two missions in Madang gave valuable advice and assistance, Archbishop Benedict To Varpin, Fr Golly and Maria Ziegler of the Catholic mission, and Dr and Mrs Braun, Pastor Krou and Pastor Namur of the Lutheran Mission; in Madang town, Tabah Silau, Nalon Derr, Peter To Rot, Sir Peter Barter, Maureen Hill and the staff of the Cultural Centre were unstinting in their assistance. The following people have helped me with information or in various ways: Mrs Roma Bates, Dr Simon Day, Dr Maria Friend, Mrs Chris Harding for translations from the German, Irmgard Duttge of Hamburg, Germany, Kath Carman, Mrs Lee Christensen (now deceased) and anthropologist Dr Colin De'Ath, now resident in Thailand.

I must make special mention to those who have helped in checking the text for errors of which there were many. Any errors remaining are mine. Dr Pamela Swadling offered many valuable comments on this work as it progressed. Dr Nikki van Kammen and Alan Tarbit very kindly helped with the onerous task of checking the final draft.

To them all, I give my heartfelt thanks.

In conclusion, I particularly thank the five clan leaders and canoe builders of Bilbil who were my main informants in many areas: Maia Awak, Gab Kumei, Pall Tagari, Damun Maklai and Derr Mul, all now deceased. It is to their memory that I dedicate this book.

Mary Mennis

Brisbane, Queensland. June 2006

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## Introduction

*A Potted History* is a short history: a history that takes something of the past to try to preserve the flavour of a place or people. That is what I have tried to do in this history of Madang. The whole history of the Province is too vast to cover in one volume including as it would: patrol reports; government documents; law reports; people's stories; mission records; vulcanological records; and a host of other material.

This *Potted History* is also about the pottery and canoes of the Province and the changes that have occurred in the material culture from prehistory until Independence and beyond, with a particular emphasis on the Bel group of villages: Riwo, Siar, Kranket, Bilia, Yabob and Bilbil near Madang, the Takia on Karkar and villages in the Gogol area. The name "Bilbil" has been variously given over the years as Bilbili, Bilibil and Bilbil, as well as some other variants. To maintain consistency, I have adopted Bilbil throughout the text as this is the name currently in use.

By blending the narrative with historical facts and legends, I hope to give a broader picture of life in the villages, town and Province of Madang. E. M. Voegelin described ethno-history as the study of, "identities, locations, contacts, movements, numbers and cultural activities of primitive peoples from the earliest written records concerning them onward" (1954: 168). I would go further and say that the time before written records is also important as it represents a history of the past as the people see it themselves. If many of the old headmen agree on past events as handed down in their traditions, then credence should be given to them. Because of the studies I have done from the 1970s, a montage of the past has been collected through these oral testimonies, documentary evidence and diaries of the original foreign observers and through research of anthropological works.

Some of the researchers have said that the Madang people had little sense of history. "Not only the whole mythology but even individual myths reflected the absence of the idea of time depth. There was no suggestion of a gradual advance from a rudimentary to a more elaborate way of life" (Lawrence, 1964: 33). De' Ath found that most people he met had a very shallow time-frame of past events, perhaps only four generations and that thought of the future would be about the same (1980: 25).

However, many of my informants had their own history stories, as opposed to myths, which went back for generations. Often when relating an event, they would link it to whoever was alive in their genealogy at that point in time. As their history could be passed on traditionally only by word of mouth, it was only as good as the memory of the person who transmitted it. If an elder died prematurely, then his skills and knowledge may not have been fully learnt by his progeny. It is surprising the amount of their own true history that can be fathomed through oral history and putting information together piecemeal.

During my research, I had the impression that the Bel group in particular had a longer notion of their own history, dating back ten generations as known in their genealogies. (As this research was carried out in the 1970s, we can add two generations to the ten noted and bring it up to twelve generations from the present as the informants were old at that time. I have maintained the time depth of ten generations throughout this book). They also had markers for different people in their genealogy. "This was the man and woman who fled from Yomba Island before it sank" was a story told all along the coast with variations in the name of the ancestor. Names two generations later in the genealogy were pinpointed as the people alive at the time of Long Island eruption etc. Because of these major volcanic happenings the coastal people had a reckoning by which to measure their past.

To study changes in a culture, Gunter Wagner suggested a threefold approach: firstly, a clear view of the culture before contact; secondly, the nature of the various contact agencies must be determined; and thirdly, "the functional analysis of the present stage of the cultural processes that is resulting from this contact." (Wagner, 1936: 317). This approach is similar to that of oral historian, Vansina, who thought chronology essential to history. "History deals with chains of change, that is, not with change as a fact only, but with changes as the result of preceding situation(s) leading to later situations. Chronology need not be based on an absolute calendar, it can be a relative sequence of events and situations only" (Vansina, 1985: 173, quoted by Neumann, 1988: 94).

Klaus Neumann, also an oral historian, criticised Vansina's approach, arguing it places too high a value on the chronology of events producing a straightjacket mentality. In studying the Tolai of East New Britain, Neumann himself makes a montage of their past using their myths, rituals, attitudes and beliefs. "In my history of the Tolai, I do not tell the Tolai past in a chronologically structured narrative, but present it as an ensemble of Tolai histories and my comments" (1988: 94). This may have worked for Neumann who was writing a history rather than a history of culture contact. His approach is innovative and creative and valuable and may well mark a turning point in recording history. It is certainly more relevant for his Tolai readers. I have tried to bridge the gap between Neumann and Vansina and have also taken note of Wagner's approach. Wagner has the key when he lists the three stages. Some chronology is needed when doing this, but it does not preclude the possibility of making a montage of the past using myths, trading ventures, trade items, manufacture of pots and canoes and all the colour of the dances and feasts that were a part of their traditions. Three events had a profound effect on the culture of both the Madang and the Tolai people: the first was the German annexation of the two areas and the subsequent changes; the next was the impact of the Japanese invasion during the war;

the last was when the people of Papua New Guinea gained Independence. These events can be put in chronological order and the way they impinged on the culture of the people can be studied.

One of the reasons I undertook the initial research was to help record the past before it was lost. Traditionally, the people's heritage was passed on orally from one generation to the next, but, once this ceased, it was as if a section of knowledge died with each of the old leaders. Part of my technique is to let the people speak for themselves about their traditional beliefs and traditions and their own reaction to change. In describing the agents of change in the religious, economic, political and technical spheres, a balanced approach is used so that both sides of the question are seen.

The stories of different informants needed to be corroborated and collated to develop theories about the people's past. Vansina thought that a good informant is the common man, "who has reached a position which enables him to be conversant with traditions" (Vansina, 1965: 192). In searching for informants in the 1970s, I usually chose either the headman of a clan or a man of standing. They were the ones deferred to in arguments. "If you want to hear this story you must ask so and so. I cannot tell this story as I might get it wrong." These old men could remember the German Times, which means they were at least 10 or so in 1914. In Papua New Guinea, the oral traditions of the clans were passed on by word of mouth, by songs and recitations of genealogies and in their mythology. The changes that occurred in their material culture were in response to internal and external pressures. In the people's quest for survival, despite suffering dispersal, deprivation and war, they have kept their integrity and unity. They see themselves as the Bel group and say, "We are like brothers. We came from Yomba Island and settled in many places on the islands and coast." Yomba Island was once situated where Hankow Reef is now before it erupted and sank, or just sank, about ten generations ago. At that time, the people fled on canoes and wooden rafts and swam on logs to the coast and settled on small islands and coastal places. Even though their villages are now scattered along the Madang and Rai Coasts, they remember their past connections and have common linguistic origins. Hankow Reef is now listed on the international list of volcanoes as a result of this research. Furthermore, in photographs taken at high altitude, this reef shows up as being circular in shape, indicating the remnants of a volcano. Perhaps a matter where modern technology supports an ancient story. Research is currently on-going into Hankow Reef and this may provide a definitive answer as to why Yomba Island disappeared.

In the early chapters of this book, the Austronesian Migration to the Madang area is described and also the more recent local migration from Yomba Island located at Hankow Reef to the coast. The trading canoes for which the Bel group were famous and the trading voyages in Astrolabe Bay, and the traditional beliefs of the weather magic that gave protection against bad weather are

also discussed along with the pottery and other items of material culture, which were the basis of the trading system.

Next we observe the observers, as it were, those early ethnographers, anthropologists and linguists who studied the people, collected artefacts and recorded their culture. Included in these chapters are Miklouho-Maclay, a Russian scientist; Otto Finsch, a German naturalist; John Kubary, a Polish adventurer; Lajos Biro, a Hungarian ethnographer; Otto Dempwolff, a German Doctor; E.F. Hannemann and John Mager, American Lutheran Pastors; and Fr Aufinger a German Catholic Priest. These specialists came from six different countries and had different reasons for being in New Guinea. Some were there to observe only, others to collect artefacts, still others for religious reasons. Because these experts had widely different approaches, we are the richer for their work.

From 1884 until World War II, many agents of changes influenced the traditional trading system and culture of the people. This encompasses the time of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie, the German Colonial Government and the Australian Administrations until 1941 when the Japanese invasion took place. One of the clan leaders in the Madang area shook his head when recounting all the foreign masters his people had experienced. "The Germans came and then they went, the Australians came and then they left and then the Japanese arrived and then the Australians came back". He was old enough to remember most of it. It got to the stage that people shrugged their shoulders and just obeyed the new set of masters fearing what would happen if they rebelled. All these regimes had a big influence on the people's beliefs and customs.

During the War Years 1941 to 1945, Europeans left Madang and the Australian administration collapsed in the face of the Japanese invasion. However, the Coastwatchers and the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) fought on to free New Guinea from the invaders. All of this had a devastating effect on the Bel group. The fate of the Lutheran and Catholic Missionaries, the Chinese and the mixed-race people are all studied to give a bigger pictorial canvas of the state of affairs. Then, during the difficult post-war years, the Australians returned to rebuild Madang. Subsequently, many political changes occurred with the introduction of Local Government Councils and then Papua New Guinea attained Self-Government and Independence by 1975. Madang developed and became an important part of Papua New Guinea and has taken its place in the internal and international trade of copra, cocoa, coconut fibre, fish, and tobacco.

In 1935, the whole of Bilbil Village became Lutherans. When they were baptised, they threw out many of the artefacts used in their magic, although they retained many of their traditional beliefs. However, from this point on, the *likon*, weatherman, was forbidden to make his magic over the fleets of canoes as they were setting out on their trading trips. This magic was seen as an insurance against trouble at sea and a protection from evil spirits. Without it, how could the men venture out on long trips? 1935 is

noted as the time of the last trading trip. Despite this, a group of men kept the knowledge of canoe construction stored in their memories and, by combining their knowledge, they were able to build a trading canoe forty years later in 1978. It was the same as the canoes described so ardently by Miklouho-Maclay. Included in this book is an account of this project, the difficulties encountered and the final successful outcome.

Now, in 2005, it is nearly thirty years ago since we built the canoe in Bilbil Village. The canoe has rotted away but the whole process was recorded in photographs, notes and diaries. The old canoe builders have all died, but their memories still live on in their testimonies. The material culture in that village is still strong because the women continue to make pots for the tourist industry. The results of a pottery study I carried out in 1994 along the coast and also in inland villages revealed the plight of the pots and the pottery industry, which continues in only a few centres in Bilbil and the Gogol where it was still economically viable.

Traditionally, the Bel people had political, social, economic and religious organisations and saw themselves as the most powerful group in the region. But, with outside contact, there were many changes and challenges to their beliefs. Each village had elders who often co-operated with each other. Hannemann mentions an elders' council who came together to decide what to do on the big issues affecting the village (1944: 15). Furthermore, elders of several villages would meet together as allies to discuss policy and programs.

Politically, the Bel group co-operated on trading trips for the best outcome for the group. The Siars and Kranket Islanders often accompanied the Yabob/Bilbil traders on barter trips to the Rai Coast. Through these trips, they made social contact with many other village communities along the coast with their many trading partners. Miklouho-Maclay concluded, "that each village constituted a community based on collectivist principles and that there was no division between the haves and the have-nots", nor were there hereditary chiefs although certain *big men* who became leaders with great authority due to their "military prowess" (Tumarkin, 1982: 15). However, in the testimonies collected from Yabob and Bilbil Villages, it appears that the chiefs in warfare and magic were hereditary, particularly the *likon*, the weather magicians, whose magic was passed on from father to son. Later, in German times, *luluais* and *tultuls* were appointed to represent the village and took over the leadership role in the village. These positions were not hereditary.

Economically, pots were the basis of the barter system and the canoes the means of transporting them. Pots allowed the Bel group to access many other cultures and artefacts that they could not produce for themselves. Their culture was soon to be at loggerheads with a much stronger culture – that of the German culture brought out from in Europe. With its centuries of tradition, Germany had developed technically and economically in quite a different manner. The Protestant revolution had promoted the

value of work, "Man must work by the sweat of his brow", but they surrounded this with strict regulations, punctuality and work ethic. Trying to impose this on the local populations was difficult. Neither side understood the culture or the beliefs of the other side. In the years between 1884 and 1904, these two sets of culture would clash with devastating results. It was a David and Goliath situation. Strangely enough each side saw themselves initially as the Goliath. The New Guineans knew they far outweighed the Germans numerically and thought that their own magic was probably superior. True, they had seen the power of the guns against the birds and animals but, until 1904, the guns were not turned on the people. Because the intrusion of the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie had been a peaceful one through the work of Otto Finsch, they did not see the might of the Germans arms until too late. As Gurnass of Siar said, "we only had bows and arrows and you could see them. When the government men used rifles you could not see the bullets. You fell down as if nothing had gone through the air. Once the Germans killed the Siars, [in 1904] the people were very afraid of the German bullets". From this time on, Germany was seen as the Goliath, but the wealth of their material goods was attributed to magic. Where did the Germans get their cargo from? These people whose material culture was based on things from the ground (clay and stones), from the forest (timber, food and tools) and from the sea (shells and fish), were amazed at the manufactured goods. This led to the growth of cargo cults: rituals done to procure the European goods.

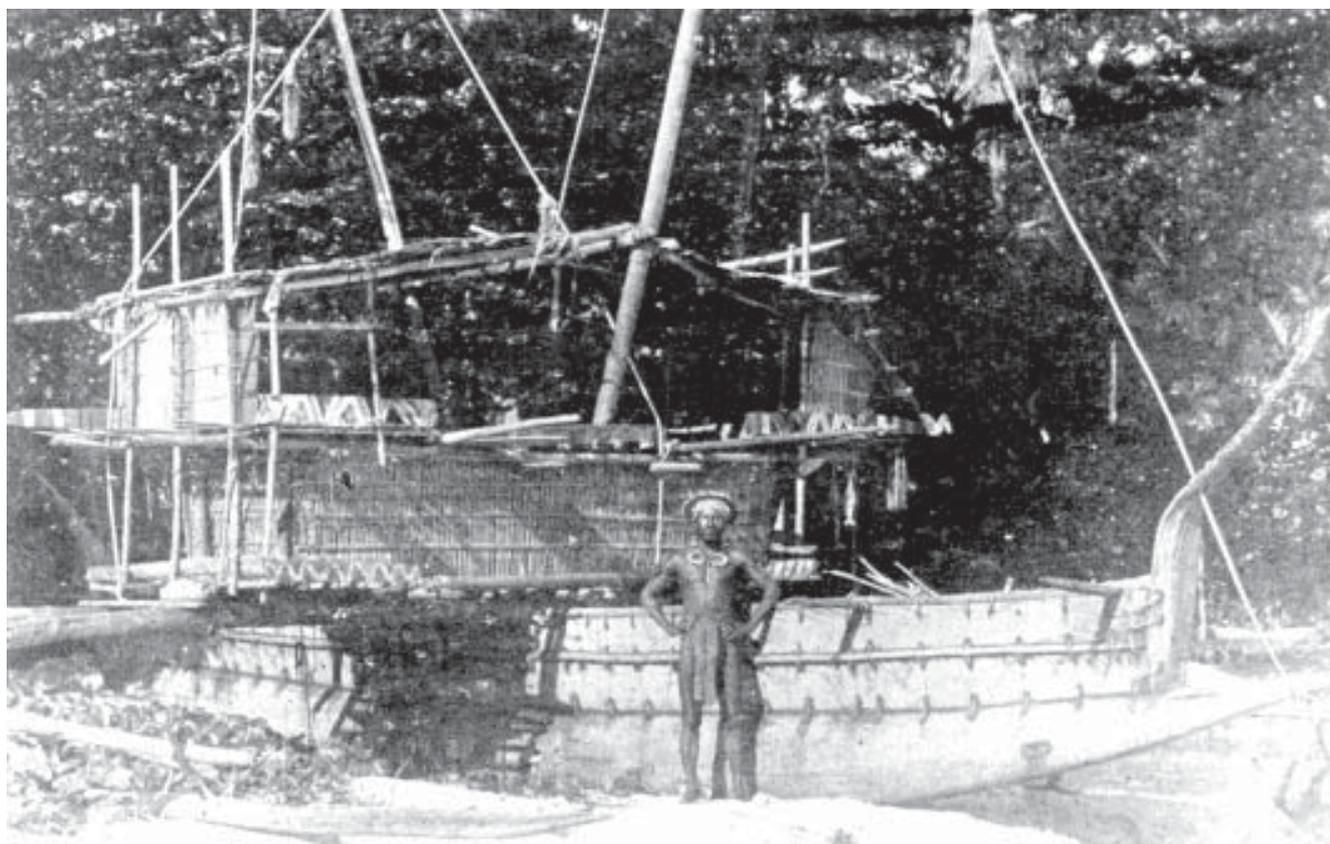
Religious changes were profound and long lasting. In pre-contact days, the main component was the *meziab* with its secret rituals, instruments and men's sacred house which was *taboo* for the women. Both the Catholic and Lutheran Missions established stations in the Madang Province and, from the beginning, the latter questioned the basic beliefs of the men in their sacred *meziab* houses and rituals. Through the efforts of the Lutheran missionaries, the women were liberated when they entered the *meziab* house and saw the sacred images without fear of being killed. Eventually, the people accepted the new beliefs but within their own perspective. There was often mutual misunderstanding between what was taught and what was understood, perhaps leading to the renewed growth of cargo cults. At first, the Lutheran and Catholic missionaries were at loggerheads with each other but they learnt to appreciate each other during the long years spent in together in prison camps during the Second World War. In more recent times, they co-operate in an ecumenical spirit with institutions like the Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service in Goroka. The missionaries are at the forefront of bringing the culture of the people into the church services to attract their congregations. A paper written in 1974 by Theodore Ahrens discusses Christian Syncretism. The idea for this was formed after discussions with about 15 Lutheran leaders in villages on the Rai Coast, dealing with, among other things, the relationship between God and the ancestral deities and with the idea of reconciliation and finally syncretism in indigenous theology. The people themselves must work out the boundaries

between their traditions and environment and the new religion (Ahrens, 1974).

In the final part of this book, the threads of the story are connected and implications for the future of the culture are noted. By using modern tools, these large canoes could be built and once again grace the lagoons and harbour in Madang, resurrected again as the traditional *lagatoi* with their beautiful crab-claw sails as has been done in Port Moresby. They could be a colourful part of the many festivals held in Madang. In the beautiful book on pottery by May and Tuckson (1982), Madang Province is shown as the "Province of the Pots" with all their variety and colour, shape and manufacture. Is it too late for the last of the potters to teach the younger generation this skill?

Madang since the 1990's to the present day provides an interesting study of some political, social and religious changes with women beginning to take a more active role in leadership. When I revisited Madang in the 1990s, it was noted that the villages in the Bel group had adapted to the modern world with their small businesses, both traditional and modern. However, the pottery survey done along the North Coast in 1994 reveals the attitude of some villages towards traditional pottery.

Some potters continue to make pots while other former pottery villages have lost the art and can no longer pass their skills onto future generations.



*In the 1930s, Keni of the Kakon Clan in Yabob Village built this palangut. His son, Beg, is standing in front of the canoe. They went on many trading trips to the Rai Coast, with cargoes of hundreds of pots to exchange. Note the breakwater in the front and the outrigger which supports the pot cage.*

## Chapter 1, The Historical Origins of the People



*Once, long ago, there were no hills in Madang. People could walk around easily as the land was all flat. The people would have been happy apart from the presence of a huge python that roamed around killing and eating them. One day, the python stormed into a village and ate a man in front of his wife and son who then hid in a cave for a long time. Later they returned to the village. Many years later, the son became a strong young man skilled in fighting, hunting, fishing and building houses. One evening he asked his mother, "Why don't I have a father like the other boys"? His mother told him the story of the huge python that had killed his father. Hearing this, the son grew angry and wanted to avenge his father's death. Seizing his bow and arrows, he went out looking for the python and eventually found it asleep in its den. The young man took the python by surprise and pierced it with an arrow, but the python was so huge it fought back. The fight went on a long time. At last the young man pierced the python's eye with a poisoned arrow. Writhing in pain, the python formed the hills with his rolling tail (Myth from Madang).*



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Hansemann Range (Otto Finsch, 1888a).*

Papua New Guineans have always had many wonderful stories about the things that they encountered in their everyday lives. Many had explanations like the legend above as to how things happened. These myths breathed life into commonplace things like trees, rocks and mountains.

Behind the flat plains of Madang, there are many hills and mountains including the Finisterre and Schraeder Ranges. Offshore, there are five volcanic islands, Manam, Karkar, Bagabag, Crown and Long Island, with cones or craters of various heights as well as the submerged volcanic cone at Hankow Reef. Manam is a beautiful cone of nearly 1829 metres high and is visible from the North Coast Road on the way to Bogia on the mainland. Bagabag has a sunken crater and Karkar and Manam have both been active in recent years, erupting with devastating effect. Karkar's volcanic crater is two metres higher than Manam's but not as dramatic looking. The major rivers in the Madang Province are the Ramu and the Gogol. The Ramu River, which often floods, snakes through the Province. Along this river live the Ramu carvers of wooden bowls, shields, spears and canoe prows.

Bundi, one of the furthest outposts of the Madang Province, is in the Bismarck Ranges overlooking the Ramu River. It illustrates the variety of the Province. Here there are many steep, rugged valleys and rushing streams and mists rise from the depths of the Ramu River Valley to envelop the town. The tough mountainous terrain makes it one of the most picturesque areas of Papua New Guinea and contrasts to the watery landscape of Madang town. The Bundi people are strong, stocky people related through marriage to the Chimbu people over the range. There was a traditional trade route here from the coast mainly for cowry and kina shells, which were traded over the Bismarck Ranges into the cool Highlands. It is much hotter down along the Rai Coast where the people were once guests to traders from the Siassi Islands in one direction, the Bel group of the Madang area and also to the Karkar Islanders.

Madang town is surrounded by water with its lovely harbour where the water feeds into quiet lagoons where coconut palms hang over the mirror-still water. Everywhere there is the colour of hibiscus, bougainvillea, and frangipani flowers. Around the harbour are smaller non-volcanic islands such as Kranket, Riwo,



*North Coast scenery, with Karkar Island in the background.*

Sek, Siar and Biliau. Further south along the coast are the islands of Yabob and Bilbil. The people on these islands belong to the Belan language group and they refer to themselves as the Bel Group. Traditionally, they built large canoes and sailed across Astrolabe Bay and beyond to trade with people in Karkar, the Rai Coast and along the North Coast. Further along the New Guinea coast, the people of the Siassi and Tami Islands had another trading system. It seems that the presence of populated offshore islands resulted in the establishment of trade networks and, conversely, the lack of islands as happens between the Huon Gulf and the Trobriands meant there were very scanty maritime trade connections.

The Bel group of islands are made of raised coral reefs with stony ground, which, in most places, was difficult to cultivate for gardens. They depended on their earthenware pots for trading for food. The men took part in long trading trips along the coast

in large trading canoes with cargoes of pots to exchange for food. They sailed between May and July to the Rai Coast and returned a month or so later.

Linguistic evidence indicates that the people of the Bel group are of a common language stock, belonging to an Austronesian language group, one of many sub-groups. The three groups of most interest in this study are the Belan sub-family, the Astrolaban sub-family and the Vitiaz Strait sub-family. The Belan language family are: the people of Kranket, Sek, Riwo, Siar, Yabob and Bilbil, near Madang; the Takia on Karkar Island; the Matukar and Sarang on the North Coast and the Ham, Ato, Barum and Mair villages in the Gogol Valley. Austronesian speakers on the Rai Coast are referred to as the Astrolaban sub-family and include Mindiri, Biliau and Wab whereas the Austronesian speakers in Arop, Malalamia, and Roinji belong to the Vitiaz Strait sub-family (Z'graggen 1975: 2).

The majority of people in the Madang Province are non-Austronesian speakers and have many different lines of ancestry dating back thousands of years. Recent research from the Bobongara archaeological site on the Huon Peninsula indicate that non-Austronesian speakers reached the Northeast Coast of Papua New Guinea about 40,000 years ago (Groube 1986). Then about 3,200 ago, the first Austronesian speakers settled along the coast, but left little evidence of their existence. It is possible that a major tsunami wiped out these communities (Swadling and Hide, 2005: 318). Dr Simon Day, geologist with the University of California at Santa Cruz, has identified evidence of a very large tsunami about 500 years ago, using C-14 dating of samples. This tsunami ravaged the north coast of New Guinea and the adjacent islands probably causing a tremendous loss of life (Personal communication, 21 February, 2006). Whether the two tsunamis described above were one and the same needs scrutiny.

There are many other stories of major tsunamis in Madang's oral history. In the 1960s, Romola McSwain traced a genealogy on Karkar Island going back ten generations when a large tidal wave killed most of the inhabitants of the island. Subsequently, an Austronesian speaker arrived from the sea. His name was Karkar and he was the ancestor of the Takia people on the south of the island (1977:24). This tsunami ties in with my own research on oral traditions in coastal mainland villages, which tell of a large devastating tsunami about ten generations ago when the people's old homeland, Yomba Island, sank. Many died in the ensuing destruction but some survivors escaped in canoes, on logs and rafts of dry coconuts to the mainland, to Karkar and to other smaller islands. They were the ancestors of present day Austronesian speakers found in pockets in 100 kilometre stretch along the Madang coast. Each group has a similar account of its origin.

Linguist Malcolm Ross stated that the Austronesian speaking communities along the North Coast were recent arrivals. They speak a chain of languages that were probably established by the westward expansion of coastal communities from the vicinity of West New Britain (Ross, 1988:120). And that, "the most probable dispersal point for all Oceanic subgroups east of Irian Jaya is in the Bismarck Archipelago, where several high-order subgroups are contiguous" (1995: 63). Matthew Spriggs agreed, "The association between archaeological and linguistic distributions suggest that the movement of Papuan Tip Cluster speakers to the west along the Papuan Coast took place rapidly about 1800 years ago and the time depth for the spread out from the Bismarck area of North New Guinea Cluster languages is almost certainly within the last 2500 years" (1995: 122). It should be noted that Watom Island and other sites in New Britain have deposits of lapita pottery that are very ancient. The sites were covered in a major volcanic eruption in New Britain.

The westward migration described by Spriggs and Ross might have been the initial direction from New Britain with very early settlements along the North Coast and on Yomba Island where

the Austronesian speakers may have settled and lived for hundreds of years, making pots and trading with each other until the already mentioned tsunami forced an evacuation causing an easterly movement back along the coast. It may have been at this stage that the early settlements noted by Swadling and Hide were destroyed only to be replaced by the new arrivals. Archaeological finds at Sio indicate that about 1,700 years ago people were making pottery which can be considered ancestral to that made by their descendants in recent times whereas pottery similar to the present day Madang pottery first appeared about 1,000 years ago (Lilley and Specht, in review). One source of this pottery may have been Yomba Island. When Specht and Egloff of the Australian Museum were discussing pottery sherds found on Long Island they pointed to the oral traditions about Yomba Island as indicating an alternative source for this pottery (1982: 441).

Where did these Austronesian speakers come from before their arrival in Papua New Guinea? Peter Bellwood held that, prior to 1500 AD, the Austronesian languages were, "the most widespread language family in the world" (1995: 1) spreading halfway around the globe including Easter Island and Madagascar. There are over a thousand distinct Austronesian languages and the Austronesians in Oceania were generally maritime people spreading their population in large canoes. Trade was of paramount importance and many groups in Papua New Guinea developed pottery industries as a basis for trading with their more sedentary neighbours. Some non-Austronesian speakers did build canoes and trade as in the case of the Muriks in the Sepik and the Mailu people in Papua, but they were the exception rather than the rule.

Bellwood goes on to say that being earlier settlers, the non-Austronesian language groups would have had the pick of the resources and the land when they arrived thousands of years ago. "They would have been able to choose the best dwelling, agricultural and fishing locations and they would have had moral rights to claim and mark these against the encroachment of the latecomers." Bellwood describes the hardships the Austronesian speakers would have met in Papua New Guinea as the resident long term people were already cultivating a range of local plants, including sago, sugarcane, bananas, and possibly taro and resisted any encroachment (1984: 91-92). Conversely, because the Austronesian speakers had arrived last, they had rather poor pickings on outlying islands often with stony ground. This affected their culture and their methods of survival.

Pawley and Green described a typical proto-Austronesian life as having a mixed economy of agriculture, fishing and hunting:

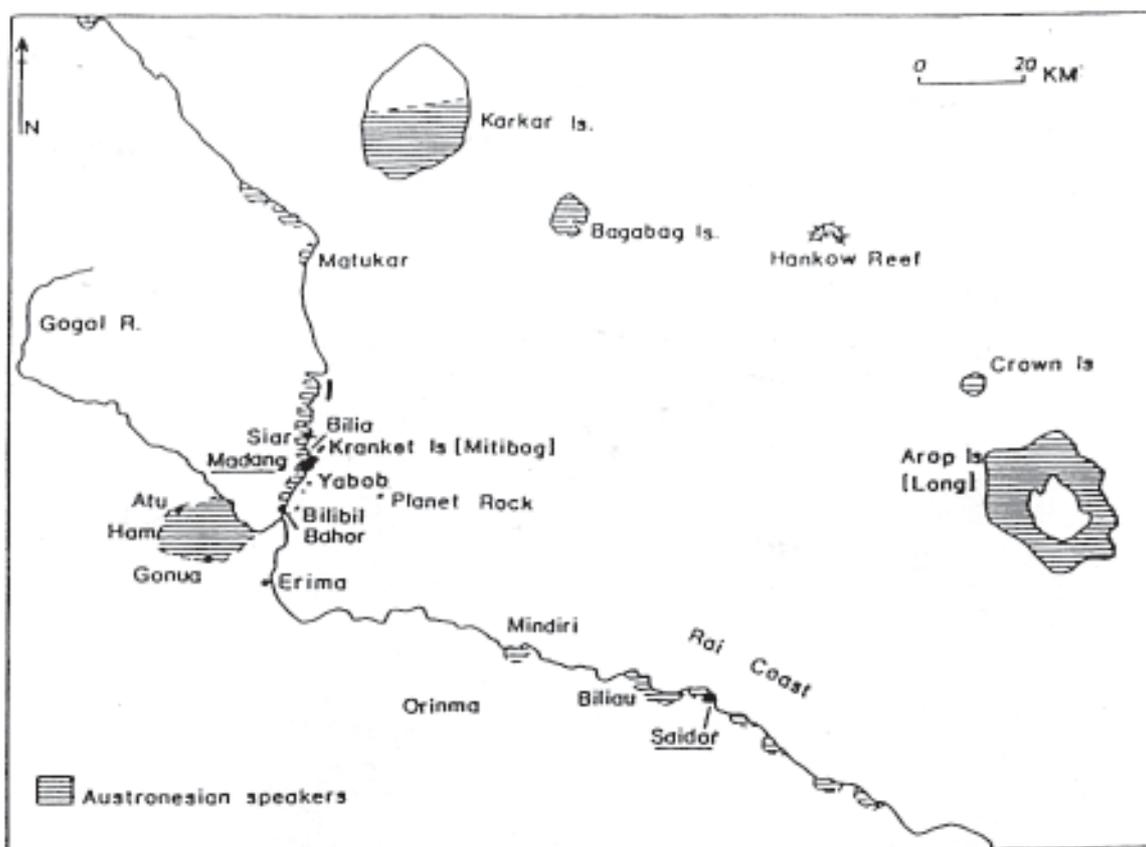
They cultivated crops included taro, yams, banana, sugar cane, breadfruit, and coconut. They kept pigs and probably dogs and chickens and made pottery. They exploited a maritime environment gathering shellfish and using a variety of fishing techniques and gear including nets, basket traps hooks and derris poison. They sailed outrigger canoes. Their tools were of stone, wood and shell (Bellwood [ed], 1978: 122-3).



TepTep village, inland behind Saidor, in the 1970s

The Austronesian speakers in the Madang area fished with fish traps, made pottery if clay was available and traded in their outrigger canoes. Where possible, they grew their own gardens. If their land was too stony for development, as with the Bilbil, they relied more on the maritime way of life, using their canoes to trade their pots hundreds of kilometres up and down the coast. Canoes were important to both the Yabob and the Bilbil because they were essential for survival. Large canoes, the *palangut*, were two-masted, whereas the smaller one-masted *lalong* were more common. Fleets of these canoes, with their *tanget* leaves fluttering and with colourful designs painted on their sides, from Kranket, Yabob and Bilbil would set off together on a trading voyage, the *dadeng*. Their trading friends recognised their canoes by the totem on the top of the mast. It was a credit to their ingenuity that these large craft once travelled so far, carrying large amounts of cargo in the form of earthenware pots.

Because the Austronesian speakers were a seafaring people, their settlements in Papua New Guinea are mostly on coastal areas or on offshore islands. Unlike the inland Melanesians, who tended just to trade in close vicinity, they traded over large areas moving artefacts as trade items in their canoes. Bellwood mentions that, in previous times, colonisation from the mother colony would not have been random but would have been planned, as shifting women, children, foodstuffs, animals and plants would require definite organisation. He adds, “current reconstructions of Oceanic canoe and navigational technologies, render an undue reliance on unplanned drifting rather unnecessary” (Fox et al, 1996: 29). Russian scientist, Miklouho-Maclay, travelled on these large trading canoes along the coast and found them very comfortable and very seaworthy. He was amazed at the sailing skills of the navigators. The technological advancements that enabled these craft to be built were probably introduced from outside contacts.



Map showing Austronesian speakers in the Madang and Astrolabe Bay areas, where they are found only in small pockets. Members of the Belan sub-family are near Madang, on Karkar Island, on the North Coast near Matukar, and in the Gogol at Atu, Ham and Gonua. Members of the Astrolaban sub-family on the Rai Coast are located at Mindiri, Biliau and near Saidor. Finally, the people of Arap belong to the Vitiaz Strait sub-family (after Z'graggen, 1975).

The canoes of Siassi and those in the Madang area were similar in some ways, and techniques would have been introduced through overlapping trade routes.

Pacific researchers wonder what caused these Austronesian speakers to move on to other locations, what their customs were, and why some customs were kept and others discarded. They have used archaeology, biological anthropology and linguistics to hypothesise on these Austronesian speakers and have reached back through the centuries with very interesting conclusions. When studying the question of why the Lapita pottery industry in New Britain lapsed, Geoffrey Irwin asked three questions about the people in the canoes which were setting out to form other colonies: Firstly, was there a potter on each of the canoes that went east and did she or he survive the voyage? Secondly, if so, was there clay available on the island? Thirdly, if there were raw materials available in the form of clay and tempers, were they of a quality appropriate to the imported technology? (1981: 486).

#### Some versions of the Yomba Island story

Hypotheses can be made of former migrations. What is missing in many cases are real people and real situations of migrations from a mother centre to other settlements and a study of the impact of migration on the material culture of those people. This can be achieved with a study of the people who migrated from Yomba Island some ten generations ago. According to their testimonies, the reason they moved was their island sank. Some say it just sank and others that it erupted and sank. In studying this migration to the coast we have a chance to study, on a small scale, a movement and dispersal of several groups from a common source. Through the oral traditions of the descendants, we may understand why some people kept many of the elements of the old material culture and continued the customs of their ancestors while others, moving to different areas, changed their culture to suit the new environment.

Bilbil Village is now situated on the mainland opposite Bilbil Island, where the people once lived, and is easily accessible from

town. Maia Awak was one of the first to tell me about the culture of his people, including the large trading canoes, and also the origins of his people on Yomba Island that had sunk generations previously. His forefathers had come from there, so it was important to his family tree.

Maia of Bilbil:

The island of Yomba was as big as Karkar. Arop was on one side and Bagabag on the other and in the middle there is a reef – that is where Yomba was. The people there made pots. When they realized that the island was about to sink, some left and went to Mindiri. Others went to Kranket and some to Yabob and Bilbil, bringing their pot making ability with them. (Interview, 1976).

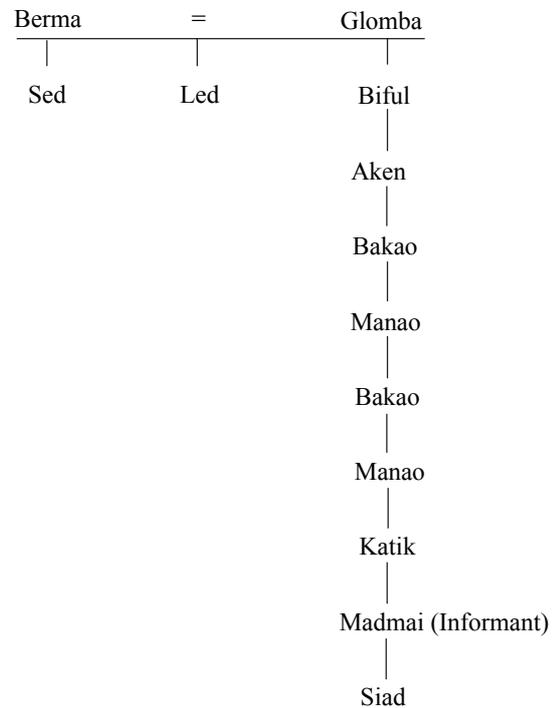
Madmai, of Mitibog on Kranket Island:

Yomba Island was as big as Karkar and lay near Bagabag and Arop. It had two mountains; one was a large mountain with smoke inside. When it erupted, the island sank into the sea. My ancestors, Berma and Glomba, escaped from Yomba and came to Kranket Island. The Bel people from Yabob, Bilbil and Kranket came from Yomba Island. Other people who escaped went to Mindiri and Biliau on the Rai Coast, to Karkar and Bagabag, and to Yabob and Bilbil near Madang. They used to speak the same language, but it changed in the different places. They knew how to make pots and brought this art with them. When the island sank it caused a large tidal wave, which covered the land on the coast and then went right out to sea. Yomba Island erupted first and Arop erupted a long time later. My ancestors had already left Yomba and were living on Mitibog (Kranket) when the time of darkness came from Arop. There were two happenings. First was Yomba, then, later, Arop erupted (Interview, 7 July 1977).

These Austronesian speaking people may have occupied Yomba Island for many hundreds of years living in many villages and were occupied in fishing, making pots, trading in their large canoes. However on becoming aware that they were about to lose their island, they managed to escape to the coast on canoes, float on rafts or even by clinging to coconuts. Of course many would have died in the catastrophe. Settlements of people on Bilbil, Yabob and Kranket Islands and the coastal villages of Mindiri, Megiar and inland villages in the Gogol area all trace their ancestry back to Yomba Island. Those who settled on the coast or small islands tended to keep more to the Austronesian traditions.



Madmai's genealogy:



When asked if his ancestors on Yomba made pots, Madmai answered in the affirmative but he added that the descendants of the Yomba people who came to Kranket Island did not make pots because there is no available clay deposits – the island has only mangroves. As an informant, Madmai was very confident and he did not refer me to anyone else for the story. He stated that he was descended from Berma and Glomba who were real people rather than mythical figures. Members of Madmai's clan used their names in a 1971 land dispute over various islands in the Madang harbour showing how important it is to know one's ancestors and genealogical tree:

The first witness for the respondent clans was Gardip-Jas. According to him his forefathers lived on Yomba Island, which broke up. Berma and his wife Glomba survived and swam to Tab Island. They found it not large enough to support them so they swam to Pejawai (Piawai) Island, another island the ownership of which is in dispute. From there they went to Kranket Island - he went on to relate how Berma and Glomba had six children who had inter-married. (Official Law Report 1971-2).

According to these oral traditions this island erupted and sank (or just sank without an eruption) about 10 generations ago. Damun, of Yabob Village, also stated that Yomba Island was between Bagabag and Arop and was bigger than the islands near Madang. It had a mountain on it. When the island broke, the sea was stirred up. He stated, "Yomba erupted on its own. Karkar did

not erupt, nor did Arop. Arop is there, and Karkar and Bagabag, but Yomba has gone. It used to be in line with the other islands”.

Paul of Siar Island mentioned a woman called Dadau who was alive in 1881 when the Lutheran mission arrived and died in the Pacific War. She told Paul that Yomba Island was not a volcano and it did not erupt but just disappeared into the sea. She gave the missionary version that the people who lived there were wicked and so they lost their island. “The men on Yomba Island were conceited and they always made trouble - so they were punished like Sodom and Gomorrah. They were sorcerers and talked of bad things, - always fighting, seducing the women and breaking up marriages. It is the talk of the mission that if you don’t behave, you will be destroyed. Now these men misbehaved so they were punished. Some died and others got on logs and swam to other lands”.

Ber, of Yabob, tells us the following:

The Island of Yomba was closer to Siassi than Yabob is now. My ancestors told me that the Siassi men used to go to this island to buy pots that were made there. When the island sank they had much further to go to Yabob and Bilbil so they used to buy the Bilbil pots at Sio on the Rai Coast. Some of those who escaped when Yomba sank went to Mindiri - they made the pots there and their dialect is like ours in some ways and also similar to the Rai Coast language. The people who went to Kranket did not have the right clay to make the pots.

Before Yomba erupted, there were plenty of people living on the island. They built a big *haus tambaran* or *haus boi* and were preparing a *singsing* for the opening of this house. A line of men came to the mainland near where the Madang airstrip is now to catch wild pigs. Two of the men were Kunkun and Kaptai. The Nabonob people came down to help them. They made a pig fence and went to round up the pigs. However, some of them called *soin soin*, which is the talk of the Nabonob people and others called *bor bor*. Because they used different words they did not catch any pigs. Later, when the Yomba men tried to return to their island, it was not there - it had broken and sunk. Kaptai went to live on Yabob-on-Top (i.e. on the mainland). Kunkun stayed at Nob at Iacundo point where the hospital is now. He is the ancestor of the Nobs (Interview, 1 July 1977).<sup>1</sup>

At this time of this interview, Ber was the big man of the Madib clan in Yabob village. The statement that the Siassi thought that Yomba Island was close to them is interesting. If Yomba were at Hankow Reef, then it would have been a lot closer to Siassi than Yabob is and they could have sailed there easily. It is just one more point in favour of Yomba being at Hankow Reef. Of all the informants, those at Yabob had the most information about Yomba Island before it sank.

I collected stories about Yomba from many villages near Madang, in the Gogol Valley, and on the Rai Coast, covering an area of a three hundred square kilometres or more. These villages included Siar, Kranket, Bilia, Yabob, Bilbil, Bahor, Erima, Atu, Gonua, and Mindiri. Not all of these villages belong to Austronesian language groups but most of the informants belong to a direct line of descent from people who are said to have once lived on Yomba Island. The informants chosen were usually men of standing in the village and clan leaders who spoke with authority and were prepared to take the responsibility for telling the story that belonged to their clan. Those groups who moved inland, not only lost their art of canoe making, but also changed their style of pot making, in keeping with their new neighbours. This happened in the case of the Gonua people in the Gogol area.

Geti of Gonua:

My ancestors came from the island that sank off the coast of Bilbil and Yabob. I do not know the name of this island, but it had a mountain on it. The saltwater drowned the island. The men living there had canoes and they went to the coast. Some went to Bilbil and Yabob, some to the Rai Coast, some to Manam and Karkar and some came inland here as far as Ouba in the bush. I do not know if they made pots on this island nor where it was exactly, but when the island sank, my ancestors went and lived on Bilbil Island. They were the Murpatt clan. When there were too many people on Bilbil, Gad and his brother Ninika and many others decided to go inland and follow the others who had gone into the bush already. They went as far as Dolua near the Naru River and lived there. Later Gad returned to Bilbil. He belonged to the Murpatt clan and his descendants are still there. Ninika, my ancestor lived at Dolua and his son, Sorum was born there and is buried there (Interview, October 1977).

With Geti’s testimony, we are viewing the Island of Yomba from geographic distance. Gonua is inland from the coast and the Ham group are completely surrounded by non-Austronesian speakers and cut off from Bilbil by many kilometres of thick bush. Yet they have retained the story of the island sinking and their relationship with the Murpatt clan on Bilbil. There is still much inter-action between the two groups. It is understandable that Geti did not know much about the island that sank. He did not say it was volcanic, but just that the sea drowned the island. His ancestors who came from Bilbil lost all contact with the sea life. They no longer fish in the sea, sail canoes or trade by sea. Compare this to the men on Kranket who pointed out to sea to show where they thought the island once was. They view the sea from their doorsteps and it is a vital part of their life.

Lokor, a nephew of Geti, added that, after leaving the island, some of his ancestors went inland as far as Ouba and others went to Gonua. “Our people tried to push the coastal people back further, but they were too strong and we did not get further than Ouba”. He also had information about the time of darkness from

the Arop eruption that occurred two generations later when Demi on the genealogy was alive. During this time the men were very hungry as the bananas and taro were covered in dust. The men stayed in their big *haus boi* and had to brush the dust off the roof. Lokor added he was unsure if the ancestors brought the art of pot making to Gouua as they have a different style of pottery making and use a different type of clay. "If we tried to make our pots in the same way as the Bilbil people do, they would break because our clay is different". (Interview, October 1977)

On my return from the Gogol River area, I re-visited Ber in Yabob. Previously he would not give me any information about an outside group until I had been to see them for myself because he did not "own" the story. Now, he followed up with his own accounts, which he had previously kept to himself, and he told me how some of the Bilbil and Yabob people had moved inland to the Gogol. His reason was that some men were tired of the clan fighting and wanted a new life. As a result, "the men who went to the Gogol lost the art of making canoes. The ancestors who knew the art died and their children did not learn this art". Ber was still friendly with Geti and his brothers and they often visited each other. So now we have confirmation at both ends of the story. To fill in the rest of the story about Gad, I returned to Bilbil and sought out the Murpatt clan there. I met Mangan who is a direct descendant of Gad. In this way I was able to get two lines of the genealogy from two different villages with a common ancestry. It was quite exciting to obtain this genealogy. This was the only time I was able to do this.

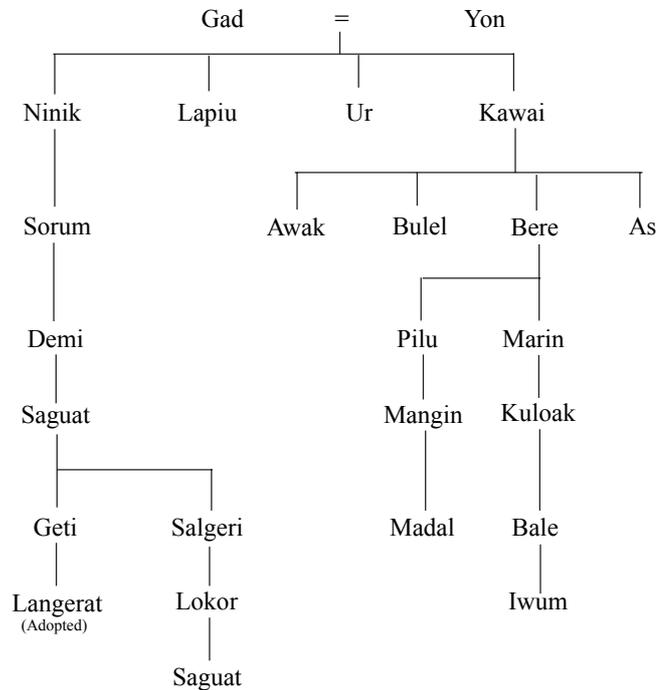
Mangan belonged to the Murpatt Clan in Bilbil Village and had relatives in the Gogol area who had fought their way inland to gain a foothold. He noted the common origins of their family line:

Ninik, son of Gad, went to the Gogol with his brother Lapiu to Dolua near the Naru River. Later their clan shifted to Gouua and they are still there. We belong to their family and they often visit us. They come and bring food for us, and we give them pots. Tahon is really the name of the big clan. Murpatt is the sub-clan. I have heard about Yomba and Kerata that sank. At that time too a point broke off Bilbil Island - the island was much bigger before. The name of this point was Taimbur. The island of Yomba went down first and the time of darkness happened later. (Interview, October 1977)

The genealogy of Gad of the Murpatt Clan (Tahon) of Bilbil Village, showing the Gouua (Gogol) line on the left and Murpatt (Bilbil) on the right: (Note in this genealogy Ninik is the son of Gad and were not brothers as Geti said).

This is the most significant genealogy of all those so far collected as it shows the two divergent family lines and the connections between the bush people in the Gogol valley and the coastal people of Bilbil and Yabob.

Gads Genealogy:



The two divergent lines were from Gad and Ninik. One stayed in Bilbil Village and the other moved to the Gogol area. From this genealogy, it seems fairly evident that some of the Gogol People came from Bilbil Island some time after Yomba sank. Some may have gone straight there in the earlier population movement to Ouba mentioned by Geti in his testimony

#### Comparison of Oral Traditions with Geological Evidence

Because Melanesian people had no other means of transmitting their history down the generations except orally, their oral traditions often contain stories of actual happenings. But can fact be distinguished from fiction in these stories? Most earth scientists would agree that, if other lines of evidence verify traditional stories of an event, then such oral traditions may be used as additional evidence for the event. For example, oral traditions about Long Island, also known as Arop, have been considered in dating the last major explosive eruption from the island before recorded history (Ball & Johnson, 1976). There are many oral stories of this eruption and the ash falls, which covered the surrounding area. Ball & Johnson (ibid) considered several lines of evidence, and concluded that the eruption took place about the early eighteenth century.

Eldon Ball:

Important courses of evidence concerning the geological history of Long Island include direct geological evidence, carbon 14 dating, accounts of visitors to the island concern-

ing the physical appearance of the island and its vegetation, and the legends of the local people (Ball, 1975: 14).

Scientists do admit then that oral traditions of a people are helpful in understanding the past history of volcanic eruptions. If this were so, then perhaps they would agree that there must be something in the story of Yomba Island. Genealogies given by the informants have been used to establish a chronology of events because volcanic eruptions, ash-falls, tsunamis, and severe earthquakes often feature in them. Thus, ancestor A may have witnessed an eruption, and two generations later ancestor C may have been swept ashore by a tidal wave. Having identified each happening with an individual in the genealogy, we can establish the order of events and the fact that there was a period of time between the events. For example, informants on Kranket Island believe that Yomba Island sank before the eruption on Long Island because the survivors from Yomba were already settled on Kranket Island when the Long Island ashfall took place. In this way known dates may be inserted into a genealogy. If many genealogies collected independently refer to the same number of generations since a particular event, they are verifying each other with the similar time frame. Many historians and anthropologists, however, do not acknowledge the absolute time significance of genealogies. Genealogies may be distorted: "Because of the functions they fulfil they undergo many alterations and are frequently telescoped" (Vansina, 1965: 153). Telescoping is achieved when identical names are "fused", or when names are omitted to keep the genealogy to a certain length. This happens in many places in Papua New Guinea (Harding, 1967). Telescoping can be achieved by continual modifications of the genealogy when similar or identical names are fused, or names omitted to keep the genealogy at a constant ten generations deep.<sup>2</sup>

The informants listed in the Comparison of Testimonies lived in villages which were quite a distance from each other. The Gogol Villages were a long way inland from the coast where Yabob is. The people on Mindiri have the same stories about Yomba Island and they are way down at the Rai Coast, a few hours sailing from Bilbil, so it is not as if they all sat down and decided on the same story. The origin stories have been passed down through many generations. The main conclusion to be drawn from these testimonies is that some village communities scattered along the north coast of mainland Papua New Guinea regard themselves as having a common origin on Yomba Island and believe that their ancestors once spoke a common language. Are there any other lines of evidence that substantiate their claims?

As the only clue to the existence of Yomba Island at Hankow Reef was found in these oral traditions, I approached some earth scientists who visited the Madang area in the 1970s to help verify these traditional stories. They concluded that the story may be mythical or that the people could have mistaken Yomba for Long Island and their ancestors escaped from Long Island when it erupted. When I told the informants what the earth scientists had suggested and asked if they could possibly be mistaking Long

Island (Arop) for Yomba, they regarded the question as foolish. Damun said, "Arop is there, and Karkar and Bagabag, but Yomba is gone". We are talking about people who crossed these waters many times in their large canoes when trading down the coast and surely they would know their islands. All informants were adamant that Yomba was a different island to Arop. The time of the disappearance of Yomba given in the genealogies is about ten generations ago which, taking a generation as 30 years, dates the eruption at about the late seventeenth century. However as already mentioned genealogies tend to be telescoped so this means that the eruption could have taken place up to 500 years ago and still be remembered in the narrated stories.

In the 1970s, I introduced Russell Blong, another earth scientist, to my informants on both Kranket Island and Bilbil. Russell wrote: "Mary Mennis' (1978) detailed work around Madang seems to indicate clearly that there were two times of darkness, the earlier one related to the disappearance of Yomba Island presumed to be a Bismarck sea volcano which vanished (total caldera collapse?), during the eruption"(1982). Essentially, he doubted the existence of Yomba because there were no ash deposits from a recent eruption there. But not all informants said the Yomba Island erupted before it sank. If it sank after a severe earthquake then the absence of ash does not disqualify its previous existence. Vulcanological evidence can be used to support the history embedded in the oral traditions of the people. In the Madang area, with its high percentage of volcanic islands, volcanic eruptions had a devastating effect on the culture of the people causing population movements and changes in the nature of pot making. Vulcanological evidence from two tephra (ash deposits) found in recent excavations at the Kuk site, near Mt. Hagen, shows that there was a big eruption on Long Island about three hundred years ago. To come to this conclusion, Russell Blong studied and eliminated many volcanoes along the North Coast of New Guinea including Manam and Karkar (1982: 3). "These various lines of evidence indicated that Long Island in the Bismarck Sea was the most likely source of both the thin tephra".

While doing this research, Russell Blong came across many legends about a time of darkness:

The time of darkness legends have significance far beyond that accorded to a relatively unimportant local story. Because most of the versions of the legend stem from the fall of Tibito Tephra, a volcanic ash identifiable on the ground and with ascertainable effects, legend can be compared with reality. The veracity of the time of darkness legends is testable in three ways. Firstly, the physical characteristics of the material that fell from the sky as described in the legends can be compared with the present (and past) character of Tibito Tephra. Secondly the effects related in the legends can be compared with the effects of tephra falls of similar thickness ---. Thirdly legend can be compared with reality by examining the question 'when did the time of darkness occur?' The legends contain data which can be

Comparison of Testimonies in table form																	
Place	Name of Informant	Questions on Yomba Island															
		Big Island	Volcanic	Not Volcanic	Yomba Sank before Arop Erupted	Guria then eruption, tidal wave, and time of darkness	Yomba was close to Madang coast	Yomba was near Yabob or Kranket	Yomba was near Bagabag and Arop at Hankow Reef	People from Yomba escaped to mainland and other islands	Yomba is distinct from Arop	Generations since Yomba eruption	Language was like Kranket and Bilibil	Made pottery	Did not make pottery	Ancestors came from Yomba Island	Ancestors came from another island that sank
Kranket	Madmai of Yanupain	Y	Y		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	10	Y	Y		Y	
	Sapom of Yanudaimon	Y	Y					y		Y	Y	10		Y			Y
	Sibud of Laupain		Y		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	
	Los of Graged Daimon		Y							Y	Y				Y		Y
	Adpa of Genasi	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	10		Y		Y	
	Aksim of Imalan	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y			Y	Y		Y			N	Y
	Bille of Yanupain	Y			Y				Y	Y	Y	10	Y			Y	
	Thomason of Sausau				Y					Y	Y	10	Y			N	Y
	Bek of Riwo Village	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			Y			
	Paul from Siar Village	Y	N	Y	Y			Y		Y	Y				Y	N	
Yabob	Kasare		Y			Y		Y		Y	Y					Y	
	Pipoi		?						?		Y					?	
	Ber	Y	Y						Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		N	
	Damun	Y	Y		Y				Y	Y	Y	9	Y			Y	
Bilibil	Maia	Y	Y		Y	Y			Y		Y				Y	Y	
	Pall	Y		Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			Y		Y	
Mindiri	Meinpain	Y				a			Y	Y	Y			Y		Y	
	Wangum					b		Y			Y	8		Y		N	Y
	Bail					b		Y		Y	Y	8				N	
Gonua	Geti, the oldest man	Y		Y		c		Y	?	Y	Y	9	Y	?		Y	
	Lokor	Y				a			?	Y	Y		Y	?		Y	
	Edei								?	Y	Y	9	Y	?		Y	
	Torimu								?	Y	Y					?	
	Conclusions	Y	Y		Y		??	Hankow Reef	Y	Y	9	Y	Y		Y		

Notes: a, Island just sank; b, Sank when Arop erupted; c, Tidal wave caused island to sink.  
Y, an affirmative answer. N, a negative answer. Blank/?, no answer or no information on this topic.

used to estimate genealogical dates. They attain significance not only because they are revealed here as a coherent group of legends about the one event but also because they are

shown to have originated with one of the great volcanic eruptions of the last millennium yet an eruption that was not witnessed by European man (1982: 9).

It was as if the stories about the Long Island eruption were acceptable as they could be backed up by vulcanological research but a big question mark hung over the Yomba story as it has yet to be verified by the same means. Yet (in the Madang area at least) the same informants tell of both events. It is the people's oral history that we are dealing with here - their beliefs of what occurred in the past. If the people's stories about the time of darkness are accepted, why not the stories of an even earlier island that disappeared amongst tidal waves? Yomba is a very real place to the people of the Madang area who trace their origins to it.

Years later, Simon Day commented on the "times of darkness":

It is important to distinguish vertical subsidence producing calderas (like Krakatoa) from lateral collapses like Ritter. The lateral collapse origin of Ritter was first demonstrated by Johnson (1987) and confirmed by us when we found the landslide deposit. One important point in relation to Russell Blong's comments is that lateral collapses can occur without large explosive eruptions - this seems to have been the case for Ritter - so lateral collapse is the more plausible mechanism for removing an island without producing a "time of darkness" (Personal communication, Dr Simon Day, 27 January 2006).

Writing about Africa, Vansina, a world authority on oral traditions, said of them:

They [oral traditions] are expressions of present and past world views that may reflect past events but do not necessarily do so. To deny all validity to such traditions in principle because they are an expressions of cognitive systems is as naive as to assume in principle that they are only mythical charters in the functional sense and should not be sources for the historian (1974: 322).

The informants did not all agree that the island erupted before it sank into the sea. Some of the informants said, "The sea drowned the island". All mention the immense tidal waves that swept over the coast for a long way. There are aspects of these oral stories that are consistent with general vulcanological observations. In particular, the large tsunami that accompanied the disappearance of the island, corresponds with similar ones that accompanied mainly submarine caldera-forming events such as at Krakatoa (Indonesia) in 1883. Further, the caldera on Long Island is wholly sub aerial and unlike Krakatoa could not have generated sea waves corresponding to those mentioned in the Yomba stories. Some informants stated that Yomba Island was volcanic and lay at Hankow Reef, which is within the chain of offshore volcanic islands. Hankow Reef is shown on bathymetric charts as covering a large area at seabed level and, presumably at one time, it could have supported a large island.

When I completed my investigations into Yomba Island nearly thirty years ago, I did not doubt that it had once existed, as it was

so prevalent in the oral traditions of the people, but I retained an open mind on its location and the reason for its disappearance. I wrote various articles about Yomba Island, discussing whether it could be validated or not and where it was positioned. Many of the oral traditions named Hankow Reef as the location and this seemed to be reasonable as it sits on the volcanic chain from Karkar through to Bagabag and Long Island. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated parts of Indonesia and India, interest in past tsunami was increasing. Then, in June 2005, I obtained a satellite photograph from TerraServer showing Hankow Reef as a circular shape. Could it be a volcano after all? I re-wrote my original paper with this added information. Having distributed this information in July 2005, I began to receive feedback from a group of scientists investigating the seabed in the Bismarck Sea. They were a U.S funded research team from the University of California at Santa Cruz and were intrigued by my early research on Yomba Island which was personally very satisfying.

Geophysicist, Dr Stephen Ward, wrote that their research around Ritter Island showed up the presence of a major volcano lateral collapse causing the large tsunami in 1888. Their findings were published in the *Geophysical Journal International*, August 2003. They also spent time in 2004 in the vicinity of Hankow Reef hoping to find traces of Yomba Island but were initially unsuccessful. "We were certainly a bit disappointed, as we (I anyway) had visions of finding a New Guinea 'Atlantis' or something. It doesn't seem too likely that the collapse of such a large island so recently (ten generations) could not be detected by our sonars" (Personal communication, 24 August 2005).

Eli Silver, Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of California at Santa Cruz wrote, "We were very intrigued by the Yomba stories and spent significantly more effort studying the flanks of Hankow Reef than many of the other volcanoes. I can say with some certainty that our data do not show compelling evidence for a young (within the last 1000 years), major collapse structure. The reason we spent so much extra time there is that there is a major submarine break that could indicate an ancient collapse (greater than 100,000 years), though there are other explanations for this structure" (Personal communication, August 2005).

According to their research Hankow Reef was a dormant volcano and the last **major** eruption would have been about 100,000 years ago. At least they had identified Hankow Reef as volcanic.

I was disappointed that the last major eruption had been so long ago but there were other possibilities for the formation and destruction of Yomba Island on Hankow Reef. Maia of Bilbil once remarked that the old men told him the island was built up on posts, which cracked during an earthquake causing the island to sink. This fits in with a possible scenario proposed by Dr Simon Day, a geologist also part of the Santa Cruz team, that Yomba Island may have been a reef platform built up on the basis of the old volcano.

Simon Day:

The island could have been like Mundua in the Witus, with small and easily - eroded Surtseyan tuff rings sitting on top of the big reef platform that we mapped at Hankow last year. This would result in an abundance of clay (produced by alteration of the very fine grained volcanic ashes produced in the Surtseyan eruptions) for pot-making as well as making the island very vulnerable to being washed away (Personal communication, 26 August 2005).

Austronesian people could have occupied this island making pots and trading across Astrolabe Bay for hundreds of years before disaster struck. There are many ways the island may have disappeared: one possibility is that **small** eruptions occurred giving the population a chance to escape to the mainland; alternatively, a violent earthquake could have cracked the island causing it to disappear and resulting in a tsunami along the coast; and then again it may have been a gradual change in the earth's crust leading to a general subsidence.

Simon Day mentioned the team also found a series of drowned reefs forming terraces up to 1,000 metres deep:

These suggest that the whole area of oceanic crust between Umboi and Karkar is subsiding rapidly (probably under the weight of the rising Finisterre range to the south), at rates as much as 1 - 2 metres per 1000 years. So it is entirely possible that a low-lying island at Hankow could have subsided or been eroded away quite recently – this would be consistent with the versions of the legend that say that the island “just sank” (Ibid).

Later, Dr Day added that, although there had not been a large eruption at Hankow, there might have been smaller explosive eruptions:

Particularly so called hydromagmatic eruptions (in which heating of groundwater trapped in sediments or reefs by intruding magma produces violent steam explosions) such as we have found evidence for at Garove and Mundua.

Furthermore, he mentioned that Dr Ray Binns from CSIRO in Sydney had dredged rhyolites and dacites from the submarine volcano just west of Hankow, leading to a conclusion that similar rocks may have once been found on Yomba Island above Hankow Reef making it into a centre of pottery production (ibid).

So while current research indicates that Hankow Reef/Yomba Island did not have a **major** eruption in recent geological history, it does not preclude the possibility of **smaller** eruptions as mentioned above. Many informants said there were two small volcanoes on the island. These informants who said Yomba erupted were not necessarily wrong in their testimonies. It makes more sense that the eruptions were small as it gave the people a chance to make their escape to the mainland. A major eruption

would, however, have killed them all. Additionally, the research by Ray Binns indicates deposits of pottery clay in the area which adds confirmation to oral testimonies that the people who once lived on Yomba were potters.

Another interesting detail the present U.S. research team found was that the Bagabag people (also Austronesian speakers) point to Hankow Reef as their former homeland. They claim fishing rights over the area because their people once lived there. They take their claims seriously. As I was not able to go to Bagabag Island in the 1970s, this information seemed to confirm Yomba Island's existence from another source altogether, Bagabag Island being very close to Hankow/Yomba. It is all a fascinating area of research, which is still ongoing.

Of all the oral traditions collected, that from Maia of Bilbil fitted most closely to this theory:

The reef where Yomba once stood is called *Pati*. [*Pati* is the Bel word for a stone]. When the island was there the people used to dig down for fresh water just like the wells on Bilbil Island. My ancestors used to say that the island of Yomba was resting on rocks, which were like posts and were called *bagi*. There were not many of these posts but gradually the reef was built up all around. There was a big earthquake that broke the foundations of the island and it sank (Interview, 1976).

In his testimony, he said that the island was in between Karkar and Long Islands where Hankow is now and that it sank after a severe earthquake broke the island. This testimony was the closest fit to the theory that that the island did not erupt before it disappeared into the sea. Over hundreds, or even thousands, of years, the island could have been a built-up reef on an old submerged crater rim. Austronesian people, who fished, traded pots and built large trading canoes in which they traversed the seas, occupied the island for hundreds of years. Later, extensive earthquakes caused the island to collapse with great tsunamis along the coast. Many would have drowned but others escaped in their canoes or floating on coconuts to the coast or wherever the currents took them.

Maia and other informants also spoke of another island closer to the coast that also disappeared. This island is referred to as “The New Yomba” by Simon Day but the study of it is beyond the scope of this history.

Yomba Island is important in the collective memories of the Austronesian speaking settlements along the Madang coast as they trace their ancestry back to it. Not only that, but informants say their ancestors had already left Yomba and two generations later, when they were settled on the coast of Madang, ash from the Long Island eruption fell. This shows that these oral traditions are older than those about Long Island. Was the migration to the coast adjacent to Yomba only as recent as is shown by the oral traditions of the people or does this over-simplify the real

situation? I am not suggesting that this migration heralds the arrival of Austronesian speakers on the North Coast generally. Swadling and Hide state that there were earlier settlements of Austronesian speakers along the coast but they were destroyed, perhaps by a tsunami (Swadling and Hide, 2005: 318).

In studying the common features of these Austronesian speaking groups near Madang, one can make assumptions about the culture of those who once lived on Yomba Island. They would have spoken an Austronesian language; they were pot-makers of the anvil and paddle method,<sup>3</sup> they were also makers of large sea-going canoes; and were involved in long distance trade at least as far east as the Siassi islands, using the morning star to guide them; they would have bartered their pots for food, wooden dishes and spears. Of the groups who migrated, only some were able to continue all these customs. For example the people who migrated inland to the Gogol kept the pottery craft although the style changed through the influence of the pottery traditions of neighbouring clans. Moving inland, however, they lost the art of building sea-going canoes. And again, those who went to places which did not have clay deposits, lost their skills as pot-makers within one generation. This happened in the case of Kranket Island. Instead of pots, they specialised in building canoes and making canoe hulls, which they used as trade items against pots. The groups that seem to have kept most of the traditions were the people who went to Yabob and Bilbil Islands because they were able to continue the pottery making as well as building the large canoes, both of which items of material culture were characteristics of the Austronesian speaking people.

It seems now that Yomba Island did exist and was probably positioned at Hankow Reef which is a dormant volcano. The oral traditions about Yomba Island are probably the oldest history found in the Madang area and amongst the oldest in Papua New Guinea. When the island sank it must have been cataclysmic for the story to survive in their collective memories for so long. The Austronesian speaking people around Madang trace their origins

to this island. Linguistically and biologically, they are correct in seeing themselves as having a common origin. Many of the friendships between clans go back in history to this time when their ancestors escaped together from Yomba Island. Many of those who trace their ancestry back to Yomba Island are almost landless and the authorities should recognise their plight. They cannot be ordered back to Yomba, as it no longer exists. (This is virtually what Judge Phillips wanted to do in his Judgement in May 1932 because he was unaware of the history of these people.) These oral traditions could also serve as a warning of what could happen again in the future as they are full of stories about tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Because of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, these oral traditions are now of paramount importance.

Oral traditions are the people's perception of their past as heard from their fathers and grandfathers around the fires at night. In some cases, changes may occur in the telling but the essential truth is there. In the people's quest for survival, despite suffering dispersal, deprivation and war, they have kept their integrity and unity. To the people, Yomba Island was no myth. It did exist. Its disappearance into the sea would have caused enormous tsunami along the coast breaking off points of land and sinking other islands. Whether there were a series of small eruptions before it sank, or the island just sank is a matter for future research.

The fact that it was once inhabited makes it the

### *Atlantis of the South Seas.*

1. Ber was an old man and sometimes his stories seem to contradict one another. His ancestry seems to be correct as I rechecked this several times. Some of his stories seem to be very old and from different sources which may explain the discrepancies.

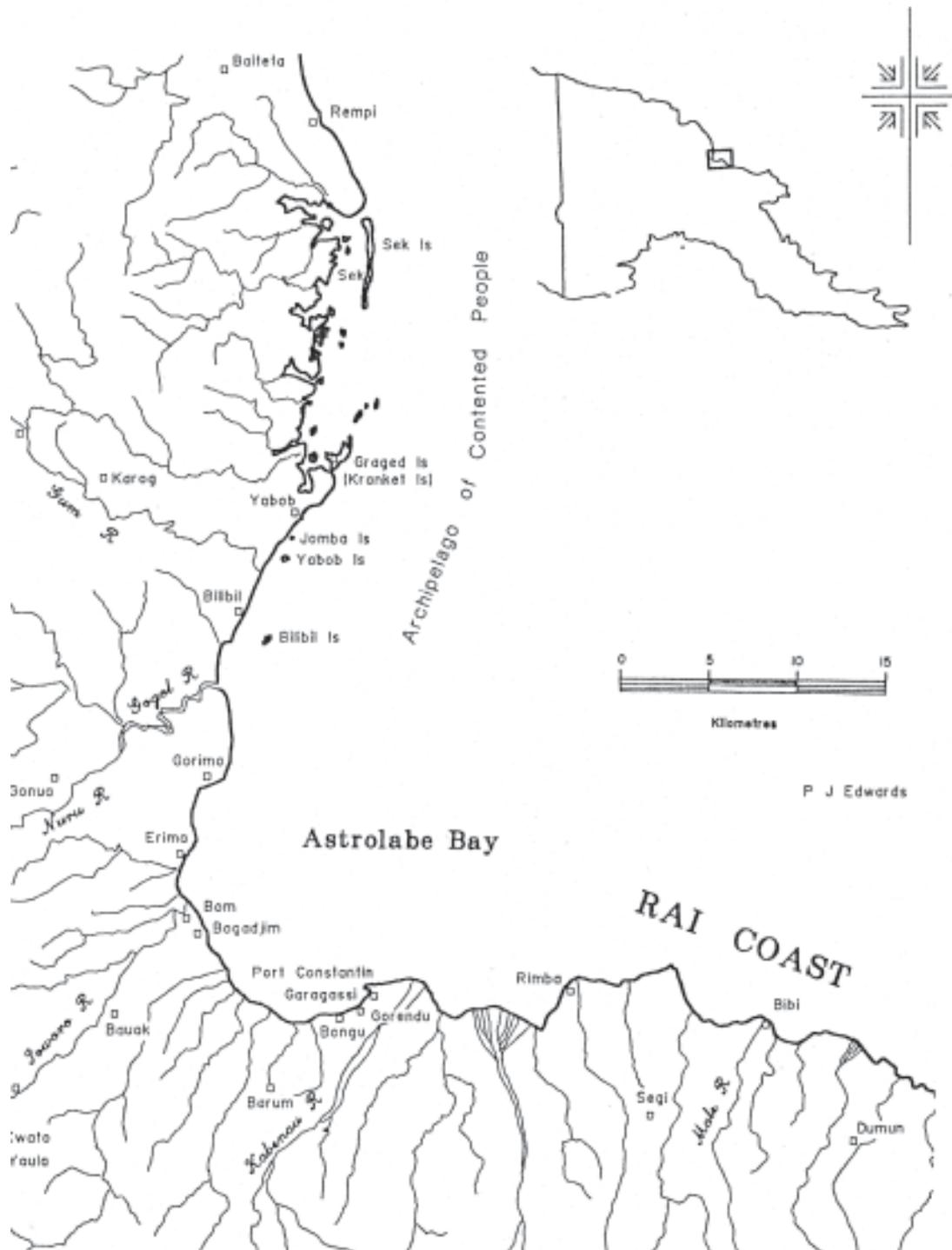
2. For more genealogical evidence, including actual genealogies, see my paper in Johnson [ed], 1981 and unpublished manuscript, 2005

3. Anvil and paddle pots were made by hand using a paddle to tap the outside of the pot against while a stone was held inside.

*Hankow reef as seen by satellite*



By courtesy, TerraServer



Map of the "Archipelago of the Contented People" so called by Miklouho-Maclay. (Map by Peter Edwards).

## Chapter 2, The Bel Group



*When we passed the Island of Yambomba (Yabob), I had the impression that the shore formed a bay in this place. The dawn showed, however, that what appeared to be a bay ended in straits, and we soon sailed into them. On both sides, the shore was a raised coral reef, densely overgrown with vegetation. To the south was the tip of the mainland. To the north is the island of Grager (Kranket). – We entered the bay with islands of different sizes forming a whole archipelago: they are all of them formed by raised coral reefs and overgrown with forest. As we moved ahead, I noted down the names of the islands. The sun appeared on the horizon and shone over the archipelago, the bays' smooth surface, and the distant mountains. The straits between the mainland of New Guinea and Grager are quite safe, and the bay with its numerous islets, shielded from the sea by the reef, in which there are several passages, can make a good haven (Tumarkin, 1982:257)*

Maclay was to call this the Archipelago of Contented Men. Most of these islands are inhabited by the Bel language group.

The Bel society appears to have been highly organised with clans, division of work, celebrations to look forward to, bartering of excess items and for food. Living in villages of 20 or more houses, sometimes with several families to a house, the people had a subsistence economy enhanced through trading which worked for them over thousands of years and would have continued unabated if the period of European contact had not happened. They also had a whole set of facts, myths and beliefs about the past that served them well. It is no wonder they fought when all this was under threat.

Changes were bound to happen sooner or later with the advances in world technology. New Guinea was one of the last places to be subject to contact by Europeans and those who came, found that the culture of the Bel Group people of Bilbil, Yabob, Kranket, Siar, Riwo, and Sek was very colourful and the social life was highly organised. According to Hannemann, the social structure was, "both patrilineal and patrilocal within the community". This means that the family usually lived in the father's village and inherited through the male line. An interesting point made by Hannemann was that, "The Madang natives have the conception that land cannot be alienated permanently. It is sanctified by the graves of the ancestors. Besides, a great number of folk-tales bind the people to the soil" (1944: 11).

The social pattern is best understood in relation to the economic practices. Living in small hamlets, the people were mainly self-sufficient with their gardens supplemented by food traded from other areas. The Bel people were also the makers of large canoes and were traders, with the basis of their economy being the earthenware pots. They used only material from nature – bones, shells, timber, clay, bark, leaves and grass. They had knowledge

of basic weaving when they used coconut and pandanus fronds to weave mats and walls for their houses and sails for their canoes using the warp and weft method.<sup>1</sup>

Lawrence says there were three basic characteristics that distinguished the village economy from the Western practices. Firstly, they had little specialisation, people were expected to take part in all the tasks within the village like building houses, growing food, and making tools and weapons. There were a few exceptions to this for example, "the manufacture of major artefacts (canoes, slit gongs and sacred instruments) and in ritual which were the prerogative of male experts". Secondly, the primary emphasis was on subsistence, "with no concept of profit". Thirdly; "Lacking the concept of profit, saving and reinvestment, the economy had no strong internalized forces of change and tended to be stationary." Because of lack of specialisation Lawrence said there were no "occupational groups" (Lawrence, 1964: 11).

The Bel group had specialty groups with each clan being responsible for certain things. Only certain clans could build the large two-mast canoes; others were restricted to the one-mast ones. Other clans specialised in magic with the *likon*, weather magician, being a hereditary role, still others looked after the magic to bring the migratory birds back each year. The women on Yabob and Bilbil were the makers of pots. Bilbil was seen as the wealthiest village in the area with more ornate houses and better decorations than the other villages and this was remarked specially by Finsch in 1884. Could this have been because they did have a surplus with their pots being the "money" of the local economy?

Overall it was true that their traditional economy limited growth as all surplus was traded on. Initially, the people's views clashed with the German ideal of the creation of surplus and profits to develop a new economic climate. When the Neu Guinea Kompagnie established industries and plantations in the area the



By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*“From Bilbil Village to Sek the language is much the same. We understand each other - we have the same bel. We are the Bel people” Dau of Riwo, August 1976. (Rosalie Christensen)*

local workers did not have the work ethic required, coming to work sometimes and wandering off on trading trips or building a house if it was required in their villages. The Germans frequently complained of their attitude and it led to misunderstandings on both sides.

Marriage was an important social event. Sometimes, sons of one family were matched with daughters of another. This might happen even before a child was born. “A man who had a son would go to a man whose wife was expecting a baby and make the agreement that, in case the infant should be a girl, she should be betrothed to his lad.” Bride price was an accepted custom and the earthenware pots of various places were often included as part of the price.

When it was time for the daughter to shift to her mother-in-law’s house her father would advise:

If, in your mother-in-law’s house, you see some betelnuts, tobacco, peppermint, water, *dau* leaves or anything like that, do not take any as that is stealing. If you are hungry and you see on her verandah some yams, do not take them. If she gives you some, cook or roast them and eat them. In the garden of your mother-in-law and her dependents, you must

not pilfer when you see taro, bananas, sugar cane or yams. By your own strength work together with you husband and eat what you grow. Do not be disobedient to your husband, but do his bidding (Hannemann, 1944: 14).

In common with some other societies, occasionally an unwanted child was exposed to the elements. The following story was related by Kasare of Yabob village:

They threw the child of Nakun away because he was a boy and they wanted a girl. That’s what they did in those days. They put him on the ground behind their house and the wind blew on him and they did not even cut the cord. They said the baby would pull on it and die. My grandfather, Bidimur, heard the baby cry and told his wife, Leli, to go and get it and cut the cord and look after the baby. She washed the baby and looked after it. They called it Dadau after the wind that was blowing on it. When the baby grew up, he walked about with my father, Sui, who was Bidimur’s brother. Later, Dadau married Wat and they had a child, Masi, and a girl, Sibul. Sibul’s son’s name is Gain and he still lives in Bilbil. Dadau, who had once been left to die, grew up to become a leader of his people and a great trader and canoe builder. In the German times he was a *luluai* (Mennis, 1981 a: 61).

The men did the hard work: cutting down trees; building the houses and canoes; making the garden fences; hollowing out new drums; making sago in the bush; making the yam hills; and preparing the gardens for yam and taro. They also hunted with their bows and arrows and killed and butchered the pigs. In preparing for a feast, the men grated the coconut and rolled the sago patties in it and then they grated the bananas and taro. If it was a special feast, the men did the serving when there were honoured guests. They also made a special grace for the protection of the spirits over all those present at the meal. And, of course, they made the long trading trips and bartered the pots made by the women for other trade items.

On the other hand, the women planted the taro, did the weeding, carried the food, water and firewood as well as cooked and looked after the children and fed the pigs. They also fished in the sea and the rivers both with nets, fish traps and hook and line. In the evening, the women would make *bilums* and pots or weave fish-traps with various vines.

Although the people of Coastal Madang did not have calendars or clocks to tell the passing of time, they had substitutes, which were almost as good for their purposes. Days were, of course, regulated by the sun and, since the people had no other form of light apart from fires and fire torches which they carried with them, they had to rise with the sun and finish most of their tasks in daylight hours. Nights when there was a full moon were used for fishing but travelling at night was only done in groups for fear of enemy tribes or bad spirits which inhabited the bush. Their first look at artificial light when Miklouho-Maclay walked around with a lantern created awe and fear in the minds of the people.

They thought he had broken off part of the moon to help him see at night.

There were simple ways of counting off days if planning ahead was required. If two tribes wished to mark off a day for a fight or a trade day, they would get a frond of the coconut and cut off all the fronds except those needed. Each time a day passed, another frond would be cut off until the trade day arrived.

The rising of the constellation, Pleiades, which occurred in the middle of June each year, marked the beginning of the year. On Bilbil Island, it was the task of the *likon* to watch on the far side of the island overlooking the ocean in the days before the stars might appear. Gazing at the night sky like an ancient astronomer, he would note the various constellations but keep his gaze focussed where the Pleiades would rise. There were legends about these stars. Honpain, the women who taught the Yabob people how to make pots was said to have come from the Pleiades and she returned there on a rope after an argument with the people. The *likon* would remember all this in his lonely vigil and as soon as the stars were seen he would blow on his conch shell. The men would then rush to the village and beat the heavy *garamut* drums to wake the people who all rushed down to the water and bathed before the sun rose to avoid calamities for the following year. Those who did not bother to bathe ran the risk of being attacked by a *no* fish or a crocodile in the following months (Mennis, 1981b: 6). Mager describes the *no* as being only 12.5 centimetres long but very fierce. He added that, “the young people were all anxious to rush to the sea so they would be healthy, tall and beautiful” (1952: 18). It was also time to have a yam feast to celebrate the coming of the New Year.

On 27 November 1871, Maclay noted the customs during the full moon:

The full moon appeared majestically above the trees and I have now come to the conclusion that the shouts we heard were raised in honour of the rising moon, recalling as I do that at the appearance of the moon, the natives utter some particular cry, as if to welcome its rising. As I have noticed, the natives hold special gatherings at full moon; they pay each other visits, the inhabitants of one village visiting the inhabitants of another village. They go on such visits much more decorated than usual and their singing on such nights, which is a kind of penetrating and protracted howling can be heard as far as Garagassi (Sentinella, 1975: 69).

Of course the moon was a great marker of time and plans were made according to it. For example, they might say, “in two moons time” we will go trading etc. For the Bel people, every phase of the moon had a descriptor, even the days before the new moon, the people would say, “only the dog and the cat can see the moon we will see it tomorrow”. Or they might say, “the moon has appeared like the edge of a spoon” (almost first quarter) The moon was called *fulei* and the full moon is described as a shield. Again,



By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*The Fish at Riwo. (Rosalie Christensen)*

the time the moon takes to rise each evening after the full moon is also noted. At first it is said the moon has cooked spinach and rises early; in the next stage, the moon has eaten grass tips and so on. The people saw the moon as a woman and, when it is morning before it rises, it is said she is menstruating. Circles around the moon are seen as an omen that someone is going to die. When there is no moon the villagers had a rest day and stayed home. This happened also when someone died (Mager, 1952: 86).

Each village in the Bel group, while following the general traditions of the Group as a whole, developed their own separate traditions and myths as well.

### Riwo

The Fish at Riwo:

*A long time ago, the fish went to singsing or dance on the Island of Riwo. When the men and women in the village went to work in the gardens, the fish leader, Langor, used to go and search the village to see if there were any people there. Then he would go back to the beach and call out to his friends the fish – langor, bacel and others to come and meet and have a singsing. They would stay there all day until mid afternoon and then they would go back to the sea.*

*When the men and women returned from the gardens, they would see bits of pulpul (leaves) or body decorations on the ground and say, "Who has been here? What people have been dancing while we were away"? This continued to happen each day until they decided that on the following day one man would stay behind in the village while the rest of them went to the gardens.*

*The next day, the man was hiding while Langor came to search the village. He looked and looked but did not find anyone so he went back to the salt water and called out to the fish. They all came out to sing and dance. The man who was hiding saw them dancing. Then at three o'clock in the afternoon, the fish returned to the sea and a little while later the men and women returned from the gardens.*

*"Who came while we were out"? They asked the man.*

*"It was not people who danced, he answered, "it was the langor fish, and others".*

*When the people heard this, they said to one another, "Let's pretend to go to the bush and then come back and hide near the village".*

*So they fooled the fish. They took their canoes and went and hid in the bushes further around the point. The fish then came out as usual to sing and dance. Suddenly the men jumped from their hiding places and rounded up the fish. Some got caught in the trees. Some were tangled up in the vines and others got bogged in the muddy ground. A few escaped to the sea. From that time on the fish never again danced in the village of Riwo. (Legend from Madang)*

This legend may be referring to a tsunami when fish were washed ashore.

Riwo is close to Sek Island and it is the furthest of the Bel group in the Madang Harbour. At least one of the clans traced origins to Yomba Island and so were Austronesians. They were the builders of large canoes but did not make pottery because there was no clay for them. Even in building canoes, they were not as keen as the Yabob and Bilbil who lived in the open sea. The Riwo still saw themselves as traders, as part of the Bel group and friends of the Bilbil and Yabob people. They were like brothers but, like brothers, they also fought. However some researchers saw them as being rather retiring.

The Riwo were reputed to be cautious and half-hearted overseas traders who seldom spent a happy night away from home and they excluded themselves from extensive and intensive trading partner relationships (Pech, 1991: 38).

Pech concluded that the Siars were the foremost canoe builders of the Bel group and that would include the Riwo, Yabob and Bilbil. The only problem with this is that the Siars did not have the incentive to build the large canoes as they did not make the pots which were the main item of trade and were reliant on the Yabob and Bilbil pots for their trade exchanges. These latter two villages have often been seen as the major canoe building centres in traditional times. Living on islands on the open sea they had to be skilled sailors and builders of these canoes for their very survival, whereas the Siars lived in the comparative safety of the Madang Harbour with easy access to land. The Riwo and Siars were both strong trade friends with the potmakers of Yabob and Bilbil and ventured to Karkar and the Rai Coast as part of their fleets. The Riwo were also famous for their canoes particularly for carving the canoe hulls which were bought by the Bilbil as the base for their great trading canoes (Mennis, 1980b: 44; 1981b: 49).

Dau, of Riwo Island, told of the origins of his clan who were from the inland bush. It was a story of non-Austronesian and Austronesian speakers meeting together on the island of Tabad.

Using sign language, they taught each other about their different customs. Those from the sea (Austronesians) demonstrated the use of their canoes and cooked fish for the bushmen while the bushmen showed the newcomers which trees they could use for their canoes and gave them taro to eat. Much of world history concerns the meeting of people and interactions whether friendly or hostile.

*Origins of clans in Riwo Village*

Origins of Clans in Riwo Village		
Clan	Sub-clans	Place of origin
Tabad	Takalafun Lelukanen Miu	Tabad Island. Before that the Tabad came from Yomba Island.
Badinanen	Azunanen	As above
Binogaz	Kumuiang Taupain Kadudoman Bazimuf	From Sek Island 7 generations ago
Siazagaz	Dabag	Came from the point near Nagada Plantation
Dauzagaz	Dujun Dugaten	From Duad island near Riwo
Mitiuntibun	Damonanen	
Malapau	M-fonen M-panenen	Came from Nobonob in the bush

Dau:

When the Tabad man saw the bushman, he was worried that a fight might start and he might be killed. He shook with fear but the bushman took some taro out of the little *bilum* from around his neck, and offered it to the Tabad man. They had to use sign language, as they did not understand each other. The Tabad man shrank back. He did not want to take the taro as he thought it might be poisonous.

The bushman spoke with his hands, “No, It is good food. You eat it”.

But the Tabad man shook his head. So the bushman broke the taro and ate it.

The Tabad man watched him eat it and swallow it. The bushman said, “It is good, it is my food”. The Tabad man watched and then took a tiny piece and put it on his tongue and he turned it around in his mouth and then swallowed it. He waited for an hour or so to see if he would die. But, no, he was all right, so he took a big chunk and ate it. Then he became a friend of the bushman. The two of them marked a day for an exchange. The Tabad brought fish and traded it for the bushman’s taro. My Tabad ancestors did not know how to make a garden. They did not have knives, tomahawks etc., only a pointed stick. The bushman showed them how to dig the ground, burn the rubbish and plant the young bananas, taro and yams.

After that, they often had market days and watched their gardens grow. They made a canoe but it was not strong and broke in the sea. Later on, they decided to make a canoe from hardwood. They cut planks and tied them on with vines the bushman collected from their area and used *dim* to putty up the holes. They both lived on Tabad Island for a long time with their families, others came and their descendants were divided into three clans or *panudaimon*, the Lelukanen, the Takalafun and Asunanem. Dau’s ancestor, Balim, was alive when there was a big fight between the Riwo and the Tabads.

The Riwo invited the Tabads to a *singsing*. While there, some of the women were trying to entice the Tabad men and trouble started over this. The Riwo men sent a message to their allies on Sek Island. They got a Bilbil pot and put into it some red juice made from the *talad* plant. They sent this pot of red liquid to Sek to tell them to prepare for war. The Sek prepared for the fight and called on their allies who gathered at Sek Island and waited for dawn. Then they got into their canoes and followed the reefs between Sek Island and Tabad.

Dau describes the fight:

On the morning of the fight, an old man on Tabad got up early and went down to the beach to wash his face. He looked out to sea and saw the line of canoes. He didn’t see clearly

and thought the canoes were a long shadow across the water. “It is only dawn and the sea is still in darkness”, he thought and he went back to his house. He hadn’t been there long when the fight began. Many died but some escaped. Some went to Dogea and some to Riwo. Balem, my ancestor was a young man at the time of the fight. When my ancestor, Dauz, saw the fight was over, he wondered where they could go. A long time after that fight, the Tabad bought land on Riwo with pigs and plates. So Dauz, with the help of Balem, began a new settlement here at Riwo. My ancestors lived here and I live here. We have joined with the Riwo now, but before we lived on Tabad Island.

From the above account it can be seen that, to get people on side, the pot with the betel nut mixture is the concoction that invites other members to join in a fight or a revolt. If a member of the Bel group took some of the red concoction, it was a sign they were willing to join with their allies. Bek, of Riwo Village, dated the story about the origin of Riwo to the time before Kilibob and Manup so it was in the realms of antiquity.

### Bilia

Peter Lawrence described the Yam people as a small group including the Bilia, Kranket, Siar and Panitibun people living on four small islands within the Madang harbour. He said they cultivated the yam in their gardens and had extensive coconut groves. But the people themselves say they belong to the Bel group with Bilbil and Yabob. Traditionally they had been keen fishermen and the builders of large canoes

The first description of Bilia Island is found in Finsch’s book:

Our next island, Bilia (Eickstedt Island on the German chart), is separated from the mainland by such a narrow boat passage that the branches of the trees on either side literally form a roof. On the north of Bilia Island, a passage opened up into a second broad basin. In itself this makes an excellent harbour and was later named Prinz-Heinrich-Hafen when our warships arrived. This harbour is to the north-east of the main harbour and is protected by a slightly larger island (Gotz Is.) and a very small one (Koch Is). Both of these islands are heavily forested and uninhabited and joined by a coral reef, accessible through the Dallmann entrance. Both harbours form marvellous hiding places in which many ships could be concealed (Mennis, 1996: 50).

And later again:

Bilia (Eickstedt Island), although larger than Siar, has a much smaller population and is poorer in every way. A cluster of coconut palms indicated that it was inhabited. Because of the dense forest that covered the island, we only found the village when we discovered the entrance to a lagoon at the north-eastern point. This pretty lagoon in the centre of the island formed the island into a miniature atoll. The main

part is much higher than an actual atoll and covered with much better soil. On the eastern edge inside of the lagoon stood a few very poor and small houses. The people were very friendly, only one man was unruly and yelled as if he were mad, - which in fact proved to be so. This was a rare occurrence. Pottery was also made at Bilia, but the product is not as nice as in Bilbil. There was a meeting house, and here I discovered something new. This house named szirit, was small in keeping with the village; the style of building the same as the large ones in Bilbil. The two sides of the gables were almost covered with woven mats and coconut fronds, so only a small space for a doorway was left open to crawl through. On the open gable point hung carved wooden fish, like the ones in Siar, but were smaller and not as good. Inside, were the usual resting place (barim) and the large drum (do) (Mennis, 1996: 56-57).

## Siar

*Long ago, some people from Bagabag visited the Lilung Clan on Siar Island. As they were leaving, the Lilung gave them some marita fruit to take home with instructions to boil it in a cooking pot and then pummel it with a stick. But the Bagabag people did not listen. They didn't boil it but pummelled it with small sticks and spears. Angry that they could not eat it, they said, "The Lilung people are tricking us. Just wait until they come to visit us". Later the Lilung Clan sailed their large canoes over to Bagabag and they stayed for a few days.*

*While they were there, the Bagabag people went to the masalai (spirit) place and caught a snake and tied it up with the food in the canoe on the side that did not have an outrigger. They told the Lilung people not to eat the food out at sea, "wait until you see your place, before you take the leaves off the food and eat it". So the Lilung did as they were told and when they saw the snake, they jumped into the water and swam ashore. The snake went ashore too and climbed a coconut tree.*

*Later, when the men were making a feast, they sent a young boy to climb up this coconut tree to get nuts for the feast. While he was up there, he found the snake. The villagers told him to wrap it up in the matting of the coconut tree and drop it down with the nuts. So he did this and the people took it back to the village and put it in a large drum, blocking the top. Bubule, the old woman, knew the snake was a spirit and she told her grandchildren not to eat it. The rest of the people ate the large snake and they all died.*

*Bubule took her two grandchildren and ran away to Nagada. Her granddaughter was Smeipand and the boy was Boniau. (They could have been cousins). They married each other to keep the Lilung line pure as that is what their grandmother wanted. They had two children Boniau and Suai. Suai lived*

*on Siar Island and is the informant of this story, Sungai, was descended from him. Boniau's descendants went to live on Riwo Island and began the Yaz line there (Legend told by Sungai of Siar).*

Otto Finsch visited Siar Island in 1884 when the island was known as Dsiar. He found the island was smaller than Kranket Island and heavily forested, with only a few coconut palms. It had a lot of inhabitants for its size and the people had a domineering position in the area as even the Kranket people were frightened of them although they liked to have them as allies.

Finsch described his visit:

We landed on the beach on the western side and inspected the village. The houses are very scattered, very large, well built and stand on low poles. In front of the door is an entrance, which is covered on both sides by the overhanging roof. I even discovered the meeting house of the men, called *dasem*. Set slightly apart from the rest of the village, it was hidden under the trees. Two very large drums (*do* or *garamut*) were new to me. As the men pointed out, each had a large hole drilled in one end, making them easier to move when a rope is attached.

Apart from the lower pig jaws, there was only a wooden carving, the like I had not seen before, hanging from the square beam. It was a fairly large carving made from one piece of wood, depicting a female dog which we determined from the three rows of nipples, the animal had its front legs tied together and was named Agaun. As expected it was not for sale. The people, however, were happy for me to draw their piece of art. I was unable to discover the meaning of this unusual figure but possibly it had nothing to do with



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*House on Siar Island in the 1880s (Otto Finsch, 1888a).*

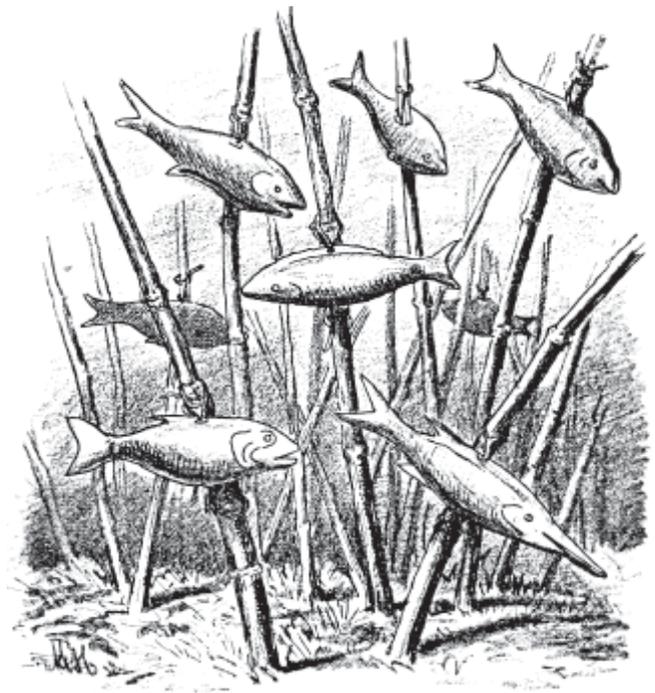
ancestor worship. Wooden statues like this were created by the imagination and mood of the people and their existence may be purely incidental and may have no special meaning.

The fish, carved from wood, which we found not far from the meetinghouse on Siar surprised us because of their unusual construction. They were stuck onto or were hanging from large bamboo poles, which decorated an empty place and appeared to be under some kind of taboo. At first the natives did not want me to look at their unusual monument. — These ji (fish) were a fair size at times (60cm to 1.80m) — made from one piece, painted and so naturally shaped, that one could recognise the different species. — Wooden carvings of fish, as we have already seen in Bilbili, are very common and are a distinctive mark of the fishing industry, which flourishes here. — The fish traps and fishnets are distinctive on Siar. The pretty fishhooks named aule are made from a round polished stick of tridacna, on which a hook made from tortoise shell or bone is tied, or they are made completely from tortoise shell. — The inhabitants of Siar did not appreciate the steel fishhooks, as they did not see the advantage of them.

The Siar canoes were similar to the ones in Bilbil but did not have S-shaped beaks. Instead there was a curved prow, which was decorated with nautilus shells. The latter decoration was fitting only for the canoes of the headmen (Mennis, 1996: 51-56).

There are seven clans on Siar Island, Waifun, Lilung, Dikfon, Badalon, Sibontain, Banablau and Mizimu with each clan having its own particular mythical ancestor and totem. The Waifun Clan claimed descent from a noted ancestor who was the war-chief and a magical practitioner and also an excellent carver and master builder of canoes. The war chief on Siar and in other Bel villages was generally also a sorcerer and made magic before a raid or battle, not only to make the allied fighters strong, but also to make the enemy weak. In the case of an ongoing feud within the village, a sorcerer from another village could come and help settle the dispute as an outsider. If a man or a member of his family had been harmed by another person, he could vent his feelings by beating a war-cry on the garamut, beating out the person's tattoo in their anger. Although Kranket and Siar had their battles, they were generally allies with the same language and background. When there was warfare against non-Bel villages, the Siars could depend on their allies and summoned them through the garamut.

When building their canoes in pre-contact days, the Siars has access to their own bush, which provided the materials needed even for the large canoes, *belangud* or *wag*. (It was noted earlier how the language changed over the years in different villages.) They had specialist canoe builders who made magic over the adzes used to shape the hull and also over the *dim* used to fill the cracks of the canoe. Hannemann said that on Siar Island, “despite the democratic spirit which the Melaneseans in north-eastern New



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Fish Trap near Siar Island in the 1880s (Otto Finsch, 1888a).*

Guinea manifest in most of their dealings with each other, it is quite apparent that the first families who settle on an island or somewhere on the mainland near Madang claimed superior rank” (Hannemann, 1944: 15). But the canoe builders on Bilbil and Yabob were also premier canoe builders and had the special magic for each stage of the building of the canoes and also over the *dim*. Maclay mentioned the Bilbil's prowess as canoe builders and he saw them in action in 1871. He lived closer to Bilbil than to Siar and Hannemann lived closer to Siar, so through their writings we can see the slant of their descriptions. Perhaps it would be safest to say that, as a whole, the members of the Bel group were all premier canoe builders. However, conclusions drawn may depend on the origins of the informants.

Pech concluded that the Siars held the dominant role in canoe making and trading along the Rai Coast. He said the Krankets and Yabob were hampered because their Rai Coast friends, the Mindiri and the Bai, had been forced back by hostile attacks whereas the Siars did not have this disadvantage. In fact, the Mindiri were allied to the Siars, but not to Kranket, Yabob or Bilbil as has been noted by Pech. The Mindiri were attacked and massacred by the Yabob and Bilbil people over a pottery monopoly (See later in this chapter). The Siar people rescued the few Mindiri who managed to escape the massacre. As a result, when the Germans banished the Siars to the Rai Coast after the 1904 revolt, they were welcomed by the Mindiri in gratitude of their former assistance. The Yabob and Bilbil, far from being allies of the

Mindiri, were their rivals in the pottery trade and it was this rivalry that caused the attack.

Although Pech described the Siars as the foremost traders in Astrolabe Bay, we have Maclay's description of the Bilbil Islanders as, "the best seafarers in the whole region" (Harding, 1967: 23)

It is true that the Siar language is known far along the Rai Coast and they did take part in trading expeditions, sometimes alone as far as Sio Island. Sometimes they would have joined in with the Yabob and Bilbil since they were dependent on them for the pots and their protection at sea. Gurnass, also a headman on Siar, said that, when the Lutheran Mission first came to Siar Island, the people did not want them and were going to kill the missionary, but he was able to escape when one old woman warned him. He then gave up his attempt to establish a mission station and instead went to Kranket Island. Later, the Siars understood the purpose of the mission and the missionaries were then welcomed back to Siar Island.

Siar is a beautiful island very close to the coast. Over the years it has been a favourite fishing and swimming spot for Europeans from Madang. But, in those early years when the German were colonising the area and creating plantations by clearing the bush and the large trees needed for their canoes, the Siar opposed them along with their allies, the Kranket Islanders. As the clearing of their bush was a threat to their old way of life, they revolted against the Germans and planned to kill them all. The result had dire consequences for the elders on the island, nine of whom were tied up and shot. The long term effect of this punishment was a growing caution when dealing with any authority down almost to the present time.



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*House on Kranket Island in the 1890s (Lajos Biro, 1899).*

## Kranket

*After Kilibob created Karkar, Bagabag and all the smaller islands along the north-east coast, he placed a pair of human beings on each one of them. He shot off pieces of land from the mainland of New Guinea while sailing along with his canoe and when he reached Bilbil Island his bowstring broke so in his anger he threw his bow across Astrolabe Bay onto the land and thus created the Finisterre Range. Thereupon he withdrew to Long Island and is supposed to be living there paying no attention to the human beings he created. Shortly after his arrival there he sent two messengers, Kumuzau, a fish, and Sepazik, a bird, to Gedaged Island (Kranket) to ask for fire because his own had become extinguished. The Kranket people gave him fire but in return requested the two messengers to ask their father to send them some obsidian, because their hair and beards had grown long and they had no means of cutting them. Kilibob sent his messengers back to Kranket with the obsidian but since then they have not heard of him. They thought that if Kilibob came back he would burn them all in a big fire (Myth from Kranket, after Dempwolf, 1908).*

Kranket Island is a small island off the coast of Madang town and is also known as Graged or Mitibog and, geographically, lies in the middle of the Bel group. Riwo and Siar are within the harbour whereas Kranket is at the entrance to the harbour and Yabob and Bilbil are around the coast in the open sea. Because of their position, the Kranket played an important role as an ally to all the other villages. The Kranket Islanders were conscious of the common bonds of the Bel group tracing back to Yomba, although at least one clan had a different origin. Madmai's genealogy is ten generations deep, originating with Berma and Glomba, two of the ancestors who escaped from Yomba before it erupted and sank. They apparently tried to live on several other islands before coming to Kranket.

The Kranket Islanders were amongst the first to see large sailing boats passing them. They called them *anut wag* or god's canoe. They also have traditional stories before Maclay came of a large boat with sails that went past but they could not come into the harbour. They saw the fire and smoke from the ship. The men on board drank bottles of whisky and threw the bottles over board. The people found the glass bottles and did not know what they were. They thought the *masalai* in the sea had made these things.

Later another ship (perhaps Maclay's) came close to the place where the lighthouse is now. They anchored and the white men got into their dinghies which the people called plate-canoes as they reminded them of the Rai Coast plates. At first the men on the boats beckoned to the people to come in their boats with them but the people ran away. Later, they went out on the large plate to the ship. They went on board and were given rice they thought it was white ants' eggs and threw them away. However, they liked the paint, knives and tomahawks that were given them.

Finsch had the following to say about an early glimpsing of Kranket Island then called Gragar:

As with all the islands of the “Archipelago of the Contented People”, Gragar consists of thick coral rock and is heavily forested. It has only a few coconut palms, I counted only seventy. The island possesses two small villages, Gragar and Tebog, each with about 12 to 15 houses. Gragar is the larger village and gives the island its name. In general the people have no proper name for their islands or strips of land, but call them after the most prominent settlements.

Each of these two villages had a meeting house, small and insignificant without any ornaments or carvings. Inside were only the usual shelf beds, drums and shields and the lower jaws of pigs. A couple of these jaws were latter served carefully wrapped in leaves, like a pieces of boiled fatty pork meat. These were hung up as a reminder of the just celebrated feast, a *marsap*, instead of the *ai* as they are called in Konstantinhafen.

As no women are allowed to participate or even to listen to the sounds, I was not at all surprised by their absence. As usual, the men were armed as a precaution against our unusual visit. The feast had gathered many participants from neighbouring islands, who went home in their canoes with bowls brimming with food. I’m sure they had plenty to tell about us, the foreigners (Mennis, 1996: 34-35).

When Finsch arrived, the people were just finishing a *meziab* festival in which a number of young men had been initiated into the tribe. The *meziab* celebrations were extraordinary, as it was a time when there was freedom of trade and movement of people



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

Women and children on Kranket Island 1890s, ten years after Finsch’s visit (Lajos Biro, 1899).

on a great scale. The trade friends of the Bel people were able to travel fearlessly over a large area without fear of being attacked. Each village attended the festival in rostered order, which meant that each festival could take several weeks. It was also a time when the Bel partners could be the hosts for all their trading friends who were usually their hosts on the long trading trips. The Bel people were accustomed to being the feted visitors in place after place along the Rai Coast – now this was a chance to repay this hospitality.

### Yabob

*There was once a young man, Sebul, who lived on Yabob Island. One day, he was walking down to the water when he caught sight of Laupain, the girl who was promised to him in marriage. She was tapping a pot into shape. He watched her and loved the curve of her arms and breasts as she patted the pot with her stick, but he noticed that her skin was mottled in colour.*

*Pointing to her arms he asked “What’s happened to your arms.”*

*“They are covered in sores”. She cried sadly. “The disease is spreading all over me.”*

*“It does not matter” soothed Sebul, “You will still be my wife. As soon as my family have paid the bride price we can be married.”*

*“Promise me that once we are married you will never leave me!” cried Laupain.*

*“Yes I promise and even if I die first my spirit will come to visit you.”*

*“And if I die first, I will visit you,” Laupain said sadly because she already felt sick.*

*Sometime after this the dreaded skin disease spread all over Laupain and she lay dying in the village with Sebul at her side. “Remember what we promised”, he whispered. He washed the sores on her arms and legs, but it was no good and Laupain soon became unconscious.*

*The women sat around her mourning. They sprinkled powder on her face, decorated her body with dog teeth necklaces and wrapped her in woven mats. Sebul helped to carry her to the grave, but he was overcome with grief. Running off into the nearby bush he began to howl his grief “Oo Oo Oo” he yelled and beat the bushes with a heavy stick. So great was the noise that the villagers thought it must be the tambarans coming so they ran back to the village leaving Laupain lying in the grave.*

*Meanwhile poor Laupain woke up and found herself lying in the hole. “Help, help” she called. When Sebul stopped*

his grieving sobs, he heard her cries and crept up to the grave. He trembled, "Your spirit has come to get me."

"No, No not my spirit, but really me", Laupain whispered, "I was not dead, only asleep."

At this, Sebul helped her out of the grave but they covered it over with earth as if she had been buried. "Come with me", Sebul urged and led her to a bush house hidden from the village. Everyday after that, Sebul fetched her food from the village and bathed her sores in the seawater until they were healed and she was her beautiful self again.

"It is time for you to come back to the village", he said one day. "I want to show you off to the other men. You are not a devil woman, but a real woman and very beautiful. I will put on a singsing in the village soon and invite people from near and far. I will dress you in the finest way and show you off to them all."

When the night for the feast arrived, Sebul gathered the finest decorations. In her hair, he put white feathers and around her neck the strands of the dog teeth. Her body glistened with red oil and she wore a colourful grass skirt about her waist.

Sebul himself wore his finest mal and tusks of a large pig hung from his neck. His well-combed hair had a fine headdress of feathers and dogteeth.

As they set off up the track to the village, Sebul said to her, "You must hide from the villagers. Wait until I call out to you to bring me my tobacco."

So while Sebul went strutting off amongst the dancers, Laupain hid on the edge of the village and watched the men dancing and singing. After a while, she noticed they were getting tired and knew they would soon be sitting down and calling for their wives to bring the brus tobacco. When the men called out, the women brought the brus and then sat together on one side of the mats, as was the custom. Laupain waited for Sebul to call her.

At last he bellowed out, "Laupain, Laupain, bring me my brus".

There was a stunned silence amongst the men. They all looked at one another. "The man is mad," they whispered. "He calls for Laupain, but she has been dead for two moons now."

But Sebul was not listening to them. He was looking towards the place where Laupain was hiding. Laupain knew the time had come to show herself. Picking up the brus, she moved slowly towards the dancers. Immediately all heads turned

towards her and all were amazed. Some shrieked and rushed to their houses. Others stood with their mouths open.

"This girl who died has now come back," they whispered to one another and they were afraid because they thought it was her spirit.

Then Sebul said in a loud voice. "This is no tabaran woman who has died and has now come back. She did not die. I rescued her from her grave and looked after her in the bush house. Tonight, she wants to return to the village."

Laupain held out the brus for Sebul and stood wondering what to do next. Dare she go over and join her mother and the other women on their side of the mats. She decided to stay with Sebul while he explained to the men what had happened.

The women edged closer listening to Sebul and looking at Laupain. Then, at last, her mother said, "Laupain have you no shame! Sitting with the men. You should have given Sebul his brus and then joined me."

So Laupain got up and followed her mother home to her house and once more she lived in the village of Yabob.

Finsch described Yabob Island in 1884:

North of Bilbil we passed three small densely forested islands of which only the middle one, Yabob, was inhabited. The village people there waved green branches inviting us to come ashore. We could not stop but had to steam further along the coast, which was thickly covered with forest. Because we saw only one village and there was no other smoke or sign of people, we concluded it was sparsely inhabited.

We neared the "Thirty Islands of the Archipelago of the Contented people", a labyrinth of island and passages of which the nature can be established only by future research and examination (Mennis 1996:33).

The two Yabob islands are situated to the northwest of Bilbil Island. In 1939, Aufinger estimated "the entire Yabob population, from the islands and the mainland, number 200 to 250 heads" (Aufinger, 1939: 277-291). They doubled their population by marrying into Riwo, Siar and Kranket, people whom they regarded as their brothers. But, like brothers, they also had their fights and disagreements.

Yabob is the sister village to Bilbil and the two island villages were in close proximity.<sup>2</sup> They went trading together and supported each other in time of warfare. There was also frequent inter-marriage between the two villages. This kept the pot making women on their home ground, thus securing the monopoly of the pottery trade.

## Bilbil

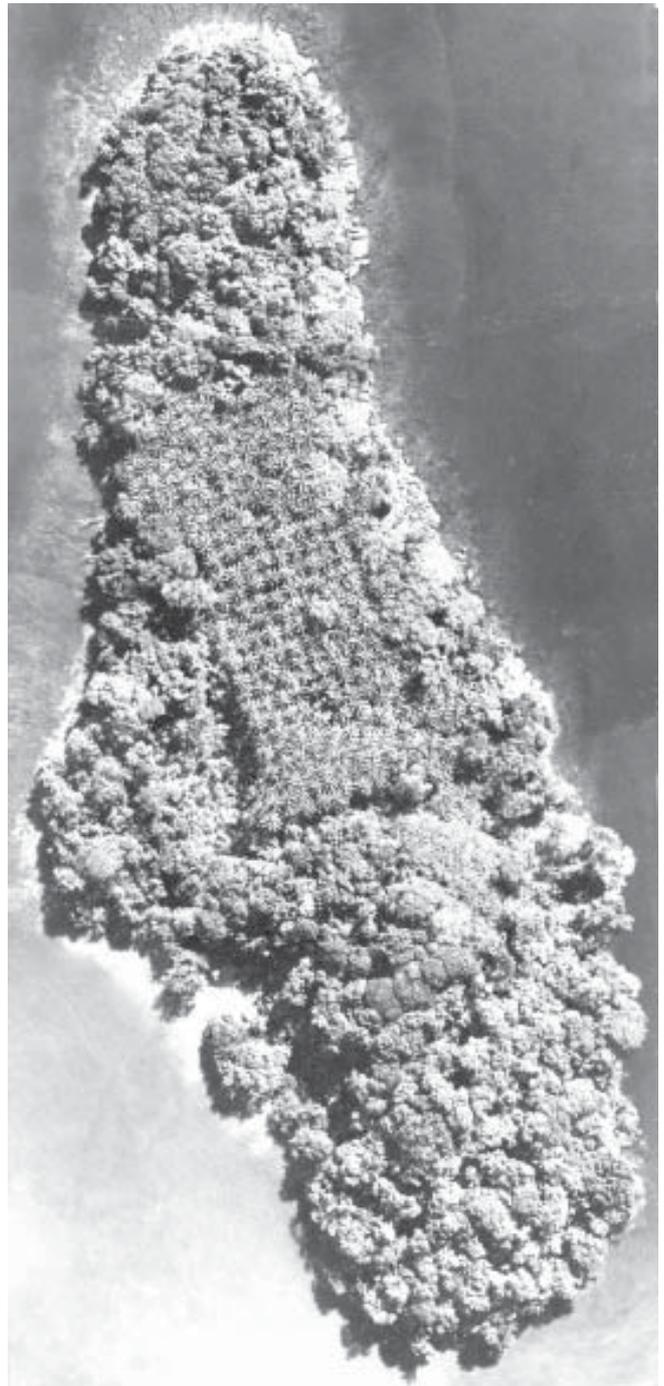
*Once, long ago, the god Anut came to Bilbil Island. He was white-skinned and came from a good place where there was plenty of food. Anut came and made the land at Bilbil Island. He slept there and created Ngur from clay and then he made a woman called Kananui. The flat area on the island is called Kananui and the mountain is Ngur. At first Ngur did not have a house but lived in a hole and, when he wanted to close off the entrance, he made magic. He did not have to look for food but just called out for it and it came.*

*Anut also made two boys, Salilon and Sumsum, and two girls, Sionpain and Duguspain. Kilibob brought them to Bilbil Island, where they were adopted by Ngur and Kananui. Salilon was a tabaran and married Sionpain and they began the Dugus Clan. Ngur gave the likon magic to Salilon who gave it to his son Kasanre. They had the power to control the sea. Sumsum married Duguspain and they began the Luan Clan.*

The Dugus Clan has a genealogy going back 10 generations to their ancestors Salilon and Sionpain, who were the first people to arrive on Bilbil Island along with Sumsum and Duguspain. They were probably the original ancestors who came from Yomba Island, bringing the art of pot making and canoe building with them. After the people had been settled there for about two generations, Arop (Long Island) erupted. The ash from Arop covered the island and the people huddled in their houses and every now and then some of the men went outside to brush the thick layers of ash off the roof to prevent the houses from collapsing. Being unable to explain the situation, the Bilbil attributed it to sorcery and blamed the bushmen for the calamity. Because the ash destroyed most of the gardens, they faced starvation for many months. Accustomed to trading their pots for food, they were now starving and unable to trade for several months as their trade partners in other villages kept what little food they had for themselves and as seed for planting new crops.

Bilbil Island itself is only small and consists mainly of coral reef. As Bellwood suggested, the latecomers in all the migrations received the worst geographic places for agriculture. However, the Bilbil people turned this situation around and, being forced to turn to trade to survive, developed a monopoly on the pot trade. They built large sea going canoes and traded for hundreds of kilometres up and down the Madang and Rai Coasts exchanging pots for food, wooden bowls, *mal*, pigs, paint for *singsings* as well as other items. Living on this infertile island, their culture was affected by the natural environment in many ways.

The island is shaped like a large footprint, which identifies various sections of the island. On the heel of the island is the land belonging to the Murpat Clan and the land in the middle belongs to the Luan and Gapan Clans. The front of the foot belongs to the



*Aerial view of Bilbil Island, looking like a giant footprint. The only beach is visible on the lower left of the photograph and was where the trading canoes were lined up when Miklouho-Maclay visited in 1871 and Otto Finsch in 1884. The Dugus clan owned the land at the bottom of the photograph including Ngur Hill, which had very stony ground and was difficult to cultivate.*

Dugus Clan with a sub section the Dugus Lat having the higher land and the Dugus Tan the lower area near the only beach on the instep of the foot. Because the beach is only small, it is divided into clan areas with part of it, the *lilung lang*, for the common use of all the clans for canoe building and storage. Tracks all over the island lead to the ocean side where the people enjoyed the cool breezes in the afternoon. This cliff side was also used to jump off into the sea. If the young boys hesitated or did not jump far enough, they could land on the rocks below with dire consequences.

The first European to travel to the coast of Madang and leave a record of his visit was Miklouho-Maclay, who visited the area in 1872. He liked the island and saw it as his second home. He described the island as covered in jungle with several very large trees. He mentioned the beach where the village was nestled and the steep cliffs on the other side where the waves roar in. Overall, it was the view of the coast and out to sea that gave him the notion that it would be a good look out point for the vessel that was supposed to be coming to pick him up after his sojourn on the Rai Coast. He even picked out a place for a hut but, in the end, thought the island too crowded.

Maclay noticed the large trading canoes pulled up so high on the beach they appeared to be in the village itself:

When I was getting ready to go, it rained very heavily and I decided to remain and spend the night on Bili Bili - to the evident delight of the inhabitants. Because of the rain I could not leave my things in the boat, so I asked them to show me the place where I could spend the night. They suggested to me the hut or cabin of one of the large canoes drawn up on the beach (Sentinella, 1975: 129).

Otto Finsch arrived on board the Samoa in 1884 and noted the large canoes decorated with colourful bunting. He admired the rich culture of the Bilbil people:

Everything here pointed to affluence and wealth. The houses were larger and more substantial than the ones seen before, as were the richly adorned natives themselves. Bilbil is an affluent island and the inhabitants, who are the aristocrats of Astrolabe Bay, constantly have to maintain their position. The ugly spear and arrow wounds, which I saw on the bodies of several warriors, bore witness to this. Although their war-like appearance gave them superiority over the coastal tribes, they were also protected by the position of their island. Their prosperity was due to their being diligent and industrious (Mennis, 1996: 27).

Finsch described the village on the Island as having about twenty-five houses, "very solidly built and erected on strong posts above the ground". This fits in with what Maia, an old village leader of Bilbil said in 1976. Because the ground was too hard to dig foundations, they had to invent new ways of making house posts.

They shifted whole stumps to support the houses. Each house accommodated several families with a hewn ladder leading to a loft. Armed with his gun, Finsch wanted to collect some bird species, particularly the white fruit doves, which were perched in the large bread fruit trees. These were the white pigeons that appeared on migrations and stayed on the island. Because they were special to the people, Kain, who had been a friend of Miklouho-Maclay, was given the job of calling the birds up every year with his special magic. Sometimes the people would climb the trees to pull the birds off when they were nesting but Kain never killed them, they were like his totem and he was probably appalled at the way Otto Finsch just shot them in the big ficus tree.

Finsch wrote:

From the giant trees, including large breadfruit trees, the dull hum of the white fruit doves (*Carpophaga Spilorrhoea*) sounded and we bagged many of them. Like everywhere with these children of nature, the first shot had the same effect: general shrieks and a wild escape! But soon the more mature youths got used to the bang and admired the action of this unknown sinister weapon. At a later excursion along the coast, the smarter Bilbilites endeavoured to make good use of our superiority and serve their interests: we should fight and destroy an enemy tribe! (Mennis, 1996: 22)

Finsch purposely made friends with the people as he had an ulterior motive – to make a peaceful settlement possible when the German warships arrived to claim the area for Germany. "We had formed a good relationship with them, which was part of the purpose of the expedition." And he added that, "for missionary undertaking there is no better place than Bilbili. — I can best recommend this island to the first German missionary who may find the calling to bring the 'Light' into this region" (Mennis, 1996: 32,33).

The Bilbil people were a proud island people and depended on their distance from the coast as a protection against their coastal enemies many of whom never ventured out to sea. If need be the Bilbil men could dress for a fight with their large back shields and bows and arrows. Around their waists they wore the *mal* made from beaten bark. They painted themselves in black for fights and red for feasts, using as their mirror, their reflections in the many rock-pools that dotted the stony outcrop on the seaside of the island. To frighten the enemies they wore black wigs with cassowary plumes feathering out on each side. Great adventurers and traders they were fearless sailors but only if they had the protection of the *likon*. On the island, the houses were closely packed together because of the lack of space but, in front and underneath, there was room for the women to make their famous pottery.

The people of Bilbil Island saw themselves as important in their own right. Like the people of Mailu in Papua, they saw their

island as the hub of the universe (Saville, 1926: 29). They may have admitted that the Siassi traders made better two tiered canoes; they may have thought that the Manam Islanders had superior magic; they may have admitted that the Mindiri pots were better for cooking certain foods, but they had their own strong belief in themselves as a people. After the German Government set up a colony in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, the Bilbil people felt threatened by these intruders. For years they had dominated Astrolabe Bay together with other people of the Bel group. Their big men and their large canoes held a strong position with their pot business.

Maia gives a description of life on the island:

The women worked on the pots in front of the house. They had pigs, dogs, cats, hens - small ones some red, white or black. Many flying foxes lived in the caves there. Migratory birds, some black and some white, came to the island in the dry season and some perched on branches in the trees, others on coconut fronds. The men climbed the trees and caught them one by one as they sat huddled in a line and filled their bilums up. Now they don't come any more. The magic men used to summon the migratory birds with a special ritual and then they would come. The flying foxes would be killed with bows and arrows. The yams were dug up and kept in the yam house. Some are put aside for several months until the shoots appear and then they are planted about October.

We caught small fish using *umbenes*, fish traps. We also had fish baskets as well as nets to trap the fish. The big fish were killed with bows and arrows. We killed sharks in this way as well. At night, we lit *bumbum* to attract fish. We had a poisonous rope, *weremer*, to stun the fish.

The *likon* would get the tanget leaves and fasten it to the plants at the beach. Then, at full moon, he would call out for the fish to come. This was when the fish called *ningau* used to appear. If the *likon* did this then the fish would come. The large birds would swoop down to get the fish. The men would see the birds and come to get the fish. Using fishnets, the men stood on the beach and caught the fish in the early morning when they came close to the shore. And then they gave the fish to their wives to cook. At night, the fish would go out to sea again. The fish were shared out amongst all the village people and everyone had lots. Later if there were fish left over they would smoke it and take it to their bush friends in exchange for taro and other food.

The women make pots all the year around. They might get up and start to make pots and then do other work. When it was time to make the pots again, one woman might decide to stay at home and not go to the gardens which were on the mainland. There weren't many gardens on the island as it was full of houses. The houses on the mainland had bush shelters for the people staying overnight. Sometimes, if the

bushmen were hungry, they would come and steal food from the gardens and there was big trouble. In the daytime, they could watch the gardens but not at night. There were many battles over stolen food and the bush people had to pay compensation.

Maia had a story of a strong earthquake that hit the island around the time of Miklouho-Maclay's visit to the Rai Coast. No one was badly hurt on the island but the village was in chaos. Pigs squealed in terror and children ran crying to their mothers. Kain, headman of his clan, called his friends, Madmai and Gad, to hurry and get in the canoes. He was concerned for the women on the mainland who were there collecting clay for the pots and working in their gardens. Half way across Gad pointed behind them. They turned to see an enormous wave bearing down on them. It caught their canoe and, lifting it up, sped towards the coast. The canoe was tossed on to the top of a large tree as the wave rushed inland sweeping all before it. When the water subsided, they carefully climbed down the tree and saw dozens of fish stranded on the beach. Then they heard shouts and saw the women running towards them. As they had been gathering clay up on the slopes they had been safe. Now it was time to be happy everyone was safe. They rushed around gathering as many of the fish as they could to take back to the island. This tsunami may have been the one that occurred in March 1888 after the collapse of the Ritter Island volcano (Ward and Day, 2003).

Maia's family lived in the middle of the island but not far from the beach. On one side was the Dugus clan and on the other, the Luan clan had many coconuts. There were many houses on the island and the people enjoyed quite a good standard of living as described by Otto Finsch. (see Chapter 9) However, after 1904, when they were banished to the Rai Coast by the Germans, the houses deteriorated. The people returned demoralised. Even their *haus tambaran* was broken. They still had their *palangut*, but they just paddled the little canoes to the mainland when they needed to go to the gardens or collect clay.

There were about two hundred people living on the island in the 1880s and there was always plenty of activity. *Singsings*, marriage feasts, ceremonies for initiation, preparations for trading trips and welcoming feasts when the traders returned home. Visitors sometimes came from many other islands to visit or to trade their wares for the pots. Fights sometimes broke out and the Bilbil would summon their allies to help. They were feared as strong warriors. They sometimes sailed over to the mainland at night and attacked the bush people with blood curdling yells in a dawn raid before retreating once more to their island. They were safe from attack by the bush people in their island refuge as these villagers did not have canoes and were afraid of the sea. But, sometimes, the bush people attacked the Bilbil in retaliation when they landed on the mainland to collect the clay for making pots. The women had to be heavily guarded by the men while they worked if retaliation was expected.

Maia explains the move to the mainland:

The Dugus had lived on Nigur Hill on the island and they were tired of making houses on top of the stones. They said, "let's go and live on the mainland." The Dugus clan dug deep holes for their posts on the mainland and were happy. My father and the others cleared the bush and then built their houses. Previously the bushmen did not live nearby on the coast but some distance away in the bush, because they were frightened my ancestors would kill them. The Bahors lived in the bush but in the German times they moved down near us.

The people stayed on the island for a while after returning from their banishment on the Rai Coast, until the old men said, *maski*, let's go and live on the mainland. We haven't got many canoes. It is too difficult to row over all the time". One or two old people stayed behind on the island and continued the old life but the younger people all went to live on the mainland.

### **Karkar Island Villages**

Maclay knew about the Karkar Islanders when he lived on the Rai Coast in the 1870s when he commented that the inhabitants of Bilbili and Karkar, living on the open sea and occupied with fishing and sea creatures, were adorned with ornaments of shells, fishbones, tortoise-shell, etc. (Sentinella, 1975: 81). Dorney notes that Karkar Island has two distinct language groups even though it is only twenty kilometres in diameter. The Takia language, spoken by the people on the south part of the island, is about 1500 years old and the Waskia language spoken on the north of the island is related to the New Guinea mainland phylum belonging to an ancient heritage (1990: 32).

The Takia people of the southern part of Karkar belong to the Belan group of Austronesian speakers. They were also part of the Bel group trading system and were middlemen for the pots and traded them further afield. Some pots were traded with the Waskia people who lived on the northern part of Karkar in exchange for the red ochre found near Urugen. Some pots were exchanged for *kunum* (wooden bowls) and bows and arrows with the people living in the middle of Karkar. The Karkar people were important trade partners of other members of the Bel group who obtained their wooden bowls, mortars and pestles as well as red ochres, dogteeth ornaments, dogs, hand drums, woven armbands, galips, (canarium) and also canoe hulls for the larger canoes from Karkar. Anthropologist, Romola McSwain, noted that the Karkar Islanders had three different forms of trade: trade between the Waskia and the Takia; trade between the coastal and the inland people on the island; and trade between Karkar and the mainlanders (1977).

The caldera on Karkar takes up the middle of the island, surrounding the central cone, Bagiai, which sometimes erupted sending ash and rocks in fiery explosions. Because of the volcano,

the people on the mainland viewed the sorcerers on Karkar Island as having strong magic. But, not to be outdone, the Manam Islanders had the more obvious cone rising high in the air which also erupted so the sorcerers there were credited with being the strongest in the whole region.

### **The Ham Group in the Gogol Valley**

Deep in the Gogol Valley live an interesting group of Austronesian speakers. They also trace their ancestry to the big island that erupted and sank, and they went to the Gogol via Bilbil Island.

This oral tradition was backed up by Z'graggen when he noted that:

The Ham people originated in the Bilbil clans and, according to their oral history, were cut off from the others by a natural catastrophe. The Ham people are now completely surrounded by non-Austronesian speakers and cut off from the sea; this apparently brought about the aberrant nature of their language (Z'graggen, 1975: 39).

A genealogy was traced which included both the Bilbil and the people of the Gonua Clan in the Gogol in a common ancestry.

Geti said that: his ancestors had come from the island that sank off the coast of Bilbil and Yabob. With Geti's testimony, we are viewing Yomba Island from a distance. Although this Ham group in the Gogol are geographically isolated from Bilbil and surrounded by non-Austronesian speakers, they have retained the story of the island sinking and their relationship with the Murpat Clan on Bilbil. These coastal dwellers who moved inland to Ham and Gonua lost all their techniques for canoe building, fishing and all the cultural paraphernalia that went with it, the terms, magic, customs and techniques and some trade items, but they retained their pots which they traded inland and to the coast. But even their pottery style changed from the original style and, through mixing with the neighbouring styles, has undergone a convergence into a new style (Mennis, 1978: 2-78).

### **Mindiri Village**

Mindiri Village is situated on the Rai Coast, some distance from Madang. They too are Austronesians and some clans trace a common ancestry back to Yomba Island. Meinpain, who was the main informant, married Bille of Kranket Village but was previously from Mindiri Village. Her ancestor, Idu, escaped from Yomba and went to Mindiri with his two sisters, bringing the knowledge of making the pots with them. They found a different type of clay from that which the Bilbil and Yabobs had so they made black pots with smaller mouths. This is not to suggest that the pots found in Mindiri were not closer in style to those made previously on Yomba Island. The Mindiri also built canoes, but of a flimsier type, and took part in trading, but were not as adventurous as the Bilbil.

Meinpain:

Idu knew how to make the pots. He brought this pottery knowledge to Mindiri from Yomba Island. Yomba was not near Mindiri, It was in the “big saltwater”. Kranket was a long way from it and so was Mindiri. When the island went down, Idu and his two sisters went to Mindiri. They lived at Kiafkun Point that is still there. When Idu first went there, his language was the same as the Krankets they all had the same language but they have changed it a bit since then. My mother and I used to make the Mindiri pots when we lived there at Mindiri. When we came to Kranket we stopped making them because we did not have the clay. Sometimes my mother went to Yabob and stayed a month so she could make pots in the Mindiri style. These she sold to the Karkar people. At Kranket, I married Bille. He belongs to the Yanupain Clan and his brother Magop is the leader of that line.<sup>3</sup>

The Mindiri built their pot trade up to such an extent in the 1860s, that it threatened the Bilbil/Yabob industry. They clashed and there were many fights. In the end the Yabobs treacherously invited the Mindiri to a feast on their island while at the same time telling the Bilbil to arm themselves for a fight. During the festivities on Yabob Island, the Bilbil warriors holed the Mindiri canoes, broke their spears and then stormed the feast, killing most of the Mindiri. They kept a few as servants and the Siar people later rescued them. The time Miklouho-Maclay came, Mindiri Village had been burnt and was shifted to another site. But the Mindiri did not forget the kindness of the Siars. When the Siar

people were banished from their villages in 1904 after the Germans had killed their leaders, they stayed with the Mindiri. Male of Siar, a young boy at the time, remembers, “I remember planting coconuts there. We stayed at Mindiri first but later we built another village in the bush behind Mindiri” (Mennis, 1980b: 36). Male dated this fight to the time of his grandfather, about 1870, just before Maclay arrived. Maclay noted that the Mindiri Village had been burnt down and they had shifted to another location (Sentinella, 1975: 272).

The Mindiri people call their *masalai*, Pezamat, which is also the name of the boar tusk ornament, which the men hang on their chests. This masalai lived in the big bush place, which is very sacred. Like many other of the Bel group, the Mindiri men had a *haus tabaran* and the women were warned not to go near, as they would get very sick. The Wagum clan once carried out the work of Pezamat. Godok and Sapung were the guardians of the *masalai* and if anyone were sick these two men would make the magic to heal them but they would demand a pig be killed to make it work. The *masalai* did not eat the pig but these two men and their friends did. Once they had eaten the pig, the people were supposed to get better.

1. Lawrence said they had no knowledge of weaving but was probably referring to weaving clothes.

2. The past tense is used here because the Bilbil people no longer live on the island, but on the mainland opposite. The Yabobs, however, continue to live on their island, which is close to shore and also on the mainland opposite.

3. Meinpain is the only female informant. Usually the women marry out of their places and are not very informative about the history of their husband's village. Meinpain married out of Mindiri, one of the places I was interested in. In fact both Bille's and Meinpain's ancestors come from Yomba Island.

Origins of Clans in Mindiri Village	
Clan	Place of Origin
Wagun	From Yomba or Mindiri Islands
Sarlindi	Off-shoot of Wagun
Bailong	From the point that broke off the mainland
Kiaf Kun Watung	Origin unknown
Kiaf Kung Panpanu	From the same point as Bailong. This point broke during a tidal wave.
Wilong	This clan came from another point when many people died.
Panudain	This is the original Mindiri Mainland Clan. Wilong is under this clan



By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*Manup made a lalong canoe and sailed away. (Rosalie Christensen).*

## Chapter 3, Magic and Mythology of the Bel People



*The two brothers, Manup and Kilibob, lived at Budup with their mother and father. They thought that if they killed their father they would have as much knowledge as he did. Their mother was cross with them, "you should not have killed your father." The two brothers were frightened by their mother's anger and accused each other. They continued to argue in this fashion and their mother was angry and showed them her stomach where they had both been in her womb. The two of them were very ashamed, but it did not stop them fighting.*

*Manup made a canoe but Kilibob made a large boat. The two of them fought and fought and then they rested. They went to Karkar and fought and then they left. When Kilibob came to Riwo, my ancestors were here. He went to Kranket, Bilia, Bilbil and Bogati. He gave each place singsings and feasts and all the customs of the ancestors. Then he left for the whitemans' land. My ancestors used to say, "later on he will come back and bring good times for us". When the whitemen came, they thought they were Kilibob and Manup bringing the good times. When the Japanese came, they thought again about Kilibob. The story was that, when Kilibob came back, there would be fighting. Men with the mal would appear and bring cargo. So when the Japanese arrived and we saw they were wearing mal, our thoughts went back to our ancestors and we said to ourselves, "true, now the good times will come up" (Related by Dau of Riwo).*

Two-brother myths are common to Papua New Guinea and are very ancient. Over generations small variations may have been added or different versions may have been created to record historical facts for posterity. It is understandable that the village people, unable to record their history in written form, might keep their history alive in their myths, handed down in the storytelling around the fires at night.

Rufus Pech in his discerning book on the Kilibob and Manup myth-dream suggested that, "non-literate societies are dependent on myth to give them the 'true story' of the situation in which they find themselves. — To the extent that updated variant myth versions are accepted by their hearers in the retelling, they achieve a measure of objectivity and validity through the continuing consensus" (1991: 90). But this is describing the myth-dreams as if there was little historical evidence in them.

Not all myths in Papua New Guinea have historical significance but some myths may have real events imbedded in them. The versions of the two-brother myth found at Budup and other places in the Madang area incorporate the story of the fight between Kilibob and Manup, the ship Kilibob built and the *lalong* Manup made. After Kilibob sailed from Budup, he created Sek and Riwo Islands and put men on them with their customs, language and rituals. He then carved out Dallman Passage, which is now the main entrance to Madang Harbour. Next he "shot off" Bilbil and Yabob Islands with his arrows and sailed to the Rai Coast and Siassi, promising to return.

Versions of the myth, collected by Rosalie Christensen in Aronis and Mis villages, also describe the large ship with sails that Kilibob built at Budup (Christensen, 1975:128, 135). If a sailing ship had been wrecked on the coast at Budup sometime in the distant past, this fact may have been incorporated into a new version of the myth; Budup became the birthplace of Kilibob and Manup; and it is the place where they fought and where Kilibob built his large ship.

The question remains: can historical evidence be drawn from origin traditions in Papua New Guinea or other countries? Writing on this subject, W. Jojogo said:

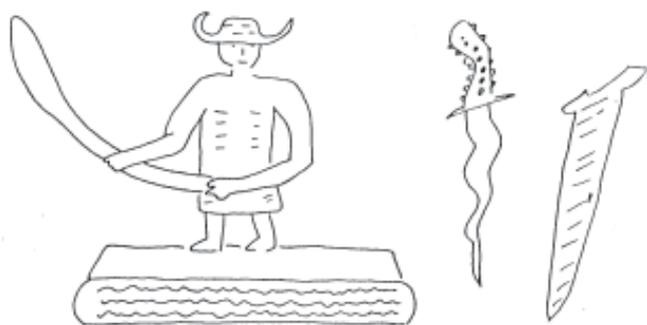
To many scholars of the west today, legends are folktales and do not have historic significance, but their assumption should not absorb the thoughts of Papuans and New Guineans because they were perhaps the recorded historical events that have been transmitted from generations through the medium of story telling (1975: 104).

This may be so, but how can we verify the history that may be contained in these legends? Speaking of African historians, Jan Vansina wrote:

Historians faced with the problem of reconstructing the past of oral societies such as the African one did not rely solely on a study of oral traditions. They sought help from other sources, primarily archaeology, linguistics, ethnographic data, biological facts, as well as written data from visitors to the society. (1971)

How much history is imbedded in this myth of Kilibob and Manup? The following details may have historical significance: the geographical position of the myth at Budup; the ship at Budup; the artefacts from the ship; the sailors; the new islands in Madang Harbour; new men put on the islands by Kilibob; and ownership of the myth. Some anthropologists working in the Madang area have not looked for possible historical links in the Kilibob and Manup myth, or, for that matter, any other myth. Peter Lawrence in his *Road Belong Cargo* gives a comprehensive look at cargo cults but missed the historical connections, which might have given these myths a deeper meaning. He did mention that some of his informants between 1953 and 1958 described Kilibob's vessel as a European ship, others as a large native canoe. Lawrence quotes Dempwolff, a German doctor interested in ethnography, who hinted that a ship may have been, "conceived but it is not absolutely clear" (Lawrence 1964: 70). But in the discussion that follows it can be seen that there clearly was a ship involved: a ship that was washed ashore at Budup and which left mementoes of its visit.

Lawrence said various villages claimed to be the birthplace of Kilibob and Manup and the place where they had the fight. "Their birthplace was generally accepted as Karkar Island, although the Seks (Budup) and Milguks separately claim the honour for their own area." This may be right because the two brother myth legends are found right along the coast of New Guinea to the north and south as well as in Rabaul where they are called To Purgo and To Kabinana. The brothers have different names in different places. The version of the Kilibob/Manup myth that I was interested in was a local one in the Madang area. In many interviews I had with informants from Bilbil, Yabob, Kranket, Siar, Kauris, the birthplace was usually stated as being at Budup, just north of Sek. Most of the people who claim ownership of the myth are of Austronesian stock, which could point to an early ownership of the myth by this group of people.



*A bronze statue of a legionary and a dagger and scabbard found at Budup in the 1920s. (Drawing by Franz Moeder).*

I was living in Madang in 1976 and, researching how much history there was in local myths, I decided to go to Budup and inquire what historical evidence there was in this particular myth. It was a long shot and I felt foolish at the prospect. My friend, Pall Tagari, clan leader of Bilbil Village, accompanied me and introduced me to Larnau, the clan leader of Budup. Larnau was quite an elderly man and very knowledgeable. When I asked him the location of the fight between the two brothers, Kilibob and Manup, he said without hesitation, "come I'll show you!"

We drove down the road and he directed us to an area near Budup called Doylean where he assured me the two brothers, Kilibob and Manup built their ship and canoe. Larnau indicated where there had been a large hole, now covered with thick undergrowth and tall trees. Larnau's father said there had once had been an anchor, planks, hammers and a chain in this place. Pointing out two channels, which ran down to the sea Larnau said they were the original channels created by the tidal wave which had swept Kilibob's ship ashore. Was it possible that there had been a tidal wave in the past, which had become assimilated into the myth? This would explain why Kilibob and Manup had been credited with such magical qualities. I thanked Larnau for his help and returned to Madang.

Subsequently, Father Noss, Missionary of Halopa, told me that his people (inland from Budup) had stories about a large sailing boat that was stranded by a tidal wave. The boat had sails and was bigger than any boat they had ever seen – and the people on board were white. Further over, the Sigu people had stories of the men who landed at Budup and slashed their way through the bush to the top of the Adelbert Range with steel knives. People came from everywhere to see the slashes on the trees and compare them to the small impressions their own stone axes made.

Franz Moeder, a mixed race man who had lived on Sek Island as a boy, remembered being visited by an old man called Ngangai, a local headman in the 1920s. Ngangai told him that when his father was a boy he had seen this sailing ship at Budup about the 1800s. It was before Maclay's time because Ngangai met Maclay on his visit to Sek in the 1870s, and showed him the site where the ship had been overhauled and some of the artefacts that had been found. "The people of Sek showed Maclay a *telum Anut*, which the sea brought up to one of the islands. This was a female figurehead of a European vessel" (Lawrence, 1964: 65). Lawrence refers to this and rightly assumed that there must have been a shipwreck somewhere, but as he did not have any further evidence, he took it no further.

According to Ngangai, the boat or ship had apparently been stranded on the reef during a tidal wave and had become so badly damaged, the sailors had pulled it ashore and repaired it in the hole where Kilibob is said to have built his ship. They lived there for many months, learnt to speak the local language and before they sailed away, they said they would return (interview with Franz Moeder, 5 July 1977). The fact that they said they would

return bringing cargo and the good times could have sparked the first cargo cult.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1920s, Franz Moeder visited Budup with Father Hirsch, a missionary from Sek. In the hole itself (the one Larnau had pointed out to me) and in the surrounding villages, they found four steel daggers, two bronze statues of bronze legionaries and some ship fittings and even a wine stand. The daggers had carved horn handles. The steel blades were old and rusted but were the type that sailors wore in their belts. The scabbard was made with two pieces of wood and had no carving on it. It is thought that the daggers were Malay kris. The statuettes were made of copper. One was holding a sword with the blade pointing down and the other had the blade facing upwards. The stand of the latter was ebony and there was lacework on the side of the base. They wore copper crowns and had two black horns and were carved in great detail with breastplates and leg plates and mounted on ebony stands. Franz Moeder drew a likeness of one of the statues and the dagger and scabbard.

Of all the evidence, this was the most important and the most convincing that there had once been a sailing boat in the area. Portuguese or Dutch sailing boats must have gone past the North Coast of New Guinea on exploring voyages, but only now was there evidence that they had called into or had been washed ashore on the North Coast of New Guinea. Moeder used some of the ship fittings he found at the site for a new boat. The items found at Budup graced the schoolroom at Sek for many years until Fr. Hirsch SVD packed them up with many other artefacts and sent them to a museum in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Who were these white men who came on this ship? Were they in fact the first Europeans to have lived even for a few months on the North Coast of Papua New Guinea? The first definite landing of a European on New Guinea soil was that of Jorge de Meneses who landed on the Northwest coast (Irian Jaya) in 1526. He called it the Ilhas dos Papuas or the Land of Fuzzy Haired Men. In 1545, a Spanish Captain sailed along the North Coast and called it New Guinea after the Guinea Coast in Africa. From then on many European trading ships passed along the north coast of Papua New Guinea and it is conceivable that one of these ships became stranded at Budup early in the nineteenth century. Lawrence's research had hinted that there might have been a shipwreck somewhere in the Madang area that predated Maclay's sojourn there.

In the light of this evidence, there is proof that an earlier sailing ship landed on the Madang coast sometime around the 1800s. Whether these sailors were able to salvage their wrecked boat and make it seaworthy again is a matter of conjecture. According to the myth of Kilibob and Manup, they did sail away, promising to return one day. This then would have been the original cargo cult of the Madang Coast. It was the first time the people had witnessed the possessions of a foreign people who promised to return bringing the good times. It is also true that the Kilibob and

Manup story had a lot of history embedded in it. When this foreign sailing boat suddenly appeared, it would have made a big impression on the people, and they would have assimilated it into their myths. The original myth may have been similar to that found on Manam Island in which the two brothers each built a canoe. The older brother built a superior canoe which survived the rough seas (Lutkehaus, 1995: 31).

Budup continued to be an important basis for cargo cults. After the war, when the Letub Cult redeveloped, the local missionaries were concerned about the effect of this cult on the people and on the work of the mission. Because of this, the Bishop of nearby Alexishafen came to Budup and blessed the site of the shipwreck (Larnau of Budup, interview, 1977). This was in the effort to squash the cargo cult but, in fact, it probably brought fame to the site and fanned the flames of the cargo cult. Pech also mentions the, "seminal significance of Buidup [sic] as a mythological site" (Pech, 1991: 171). The site at Budup is now considered sacred by the local people and is connected with the cargo cult in which Kilibob and Manup feature.<sup>3</sup>

In many versions of the myth, Kilibob shot arrows to make the islands at Sek, Riwo, Siar and Kranket and carved out Dallman passage. Just how old are these islands? Could the origin myth of Kilibob and Manup be trying to explain the sudden appearance of these islands in the distant past? According to earth scientists, the islands in the Madang area are probably no older than six thousand years and could be a lot younger. These islands in the Madang Harbour are a chain of reefs, which rose from the sea as part of a process of uplift caused by the northward movement of Australia and New Guinea.

Father Noss SVD reported that the Halopa oral traditions tell of big earthquakes and a tidal wave, which had swept over the land and then retreated far out to sea causing a very low tide. Many of the reefs were left exposed and parts of it were never covered again. They became the new islands along the coast, Riwo, Siar, Kranket and Yabob (Interview, 15 September 1976).

Whether the C14 ages of the raised reefs match this account is a matter for further research. This part of the myth may have belonged to the ancient version.

Bek, an old clan leader of Riwo Island, said that, before his ancestors went to live on Riwo, the island was bare, as also was Siar Island. "These islands were all just reef and then they got higher. Sek was first, later Riwo rose and men lived on it. Then Bilia Island rose up and a man from Bilbil Island went to live there". Bek's ancestors had left Budup and gone to live on Riwo Island after it rose from the sea. The story of Manup and Kilibob came after they were settled on the island (Interview at Riwo Village, 11 May 1977).

Again the myth describes the new men put on the islands by Kilibob. In all the bush areas along the Madang Coast, the people claim that their ancestors already inhabited the inland when the

Bilbil, Yabob, Riwo, Siar and Kranket people came to live on the islands. The island people agree. "The bush people were here first, we came later." If they came later, from where did they come? These island people spoke the Austronesian languages, which suggests that these communities have links with other Austronesian speakers on the North Coast and elsewhere. Sibud of Siar said, "my ancestors came from Yomba, an island which sank into the sea. Some people came here and others went to the mainland. Some of the ancestors swam away on dry coconuts, some were killed and others fled in canoes. Of those who escaped some went to Bilbil some went to Yabob, Siar and Kranket" (Interview, 31 August 1977).

This may point to a common ancestry. Peter Lawrence said the Sengam, Som, Yam and other seaboard peoples shared a complex of origin myths, which the sub-coastal and hinterland people did not possess. I would also include the lower half of Karkar Island and the Yabob and Bilbil people who are all Austronesian speakers with a common ancestry as well as sharing common myths.

From these arguments, it can be seen that there are quite a few factors in the Kilibob/Manup myth which may have historical implications: the geographic location at Doylan where Kilibob and Manup fought and built their ship and canoe respectively; the ship that had been stranded at Doylan near Budup; the European men who came ashore with steel knives; the new islands that rose from the reef and the new men who came to live on them. These are all facets in the Kilibob/Manup myth. Proving this sailing ship was real means that the crew who lived at Budup and Doylan repairing their ship were the first outside visitors on the Madang Coast, pre-dating Miklouho-Maclay by some forty years.

This Kilibob/Manup myth probably did not begin with these newcomers, but they made so large an impression that it was added on to a myth already existing in the area. The fact that Kilibob had promised to return bringing cargo did, however, lead to a cargo mentality amongst some of the people. When other people like Maclay or Finsch or the Germans came, these were all initially thought to be Kilibob returning. When the cargo was not forthcoming, the people were disappointed but never gave up hoping. Before the war, the Letub Doctrine and Cult sprang up and Peter Lawrence was surprised that it began near Alexishafen (Lawrence, 1964: 92). If he had delved into the historical facts in the Kilibob/Manup myth at Budup as described above, he may have found his answer.

When thousands of Japanese came bringing cargo in large ships, they were viewed as Kilibob's men returning. Even the Japanese occupation money, showing a point of land with several coconuts on it, added credence to this belief: The Madang people interpreted this as a depiction of Budup point and called it Kilibob's money. When the people welcomed the Japanese, they may have been loyal to a tradition far older than the Australian Administration to which they were supposed to show their loyalty.

## The Meziab

The Mager Dictionary states that the *meziab* was a very important part of the traditional religious life of the Bel people. "The *meziab* were generally believed to be the spirits of the ancestors constituting a social unit and spoken of in the singular. Most of the time the *meziab* were not in the village or *darem* (men's clubhouse) but gone overseas with their canoe. When the head of a village and his supporters wished to honour their ancestral spirits, they would call up the *meziab*. This consisted in collecting the *kag*, and the short and long pieces of bamboo from the *darem* and putting them in water. After this they made magic to make their voices strong for blowing into these bamboo pipes. Then the young men were initiated into the secret cult of the *meziab* before being led to the *darem* house where the men again reproduced the voice of the *meziab* by playing on the bamboo pipes. Other sacred instruments were the bullroarers, which were swung around in the *meziab* to make a whirring noise. The women and children were told the sound was the voice of the spirits, particularly those of their dead ancestors. "There were also flutes, *korsi*, or *kasuzi*, with two holes made from a coconut which were blown in the *darem* before the *meziab* ancestral spirit arrives in order to prepare the way for him and warn the women and children to flee" (Mager, 1952: 139). If anyone uninitiated would look upon the sacred pipes and flutes, it meant death for them. Once the owner of the *meziab* had cut open a coconut, it was the signal for the dance to begin.

The dancing would continue for three or four weeks. During this time there was much feasting on pork and other food, which had been prepared for the *meziab*. While the *meziab* ate the spiritual part of the food, the initiated men would eat the substantial part. The dancing and feasting expressed the solidarity of the society composed of the spirits of the dead and of those living. The boys that were considered old enough were initiated into the secrets of the *meziab* and taught the laws and customs of the tribe at this time. They were now to perpetuate the customs of the ancestors, and any one deviating from these would be beaten with clubs or spears (Mager, 1952: 199).

The novices were circumcised and crescent shaped wounds inflicted on the temple. After the wounds had healed and the boys came out of hiding, the women and children were told that the teeth of the *meziab*, who had swallowed the boys and then regurgitated them, had caused the wound. The women looked upon the boys as new and wonderful beings. While the *meziab* danced, the gables of the *darem* house were decorated with the *sima* ornament, a long piece of coloured bamboo (Mager, 1925: 286). The women danced around the outside of the *darem* but at a distance and then went into hiding when the *meziab* descended from the *darem* onto the village compound at the completion of the ceremony. Here they would be treated with a feast of pork and other food and, "then escorted to their canoe, in which they would sail away until called again. The instruments of the *meziab*

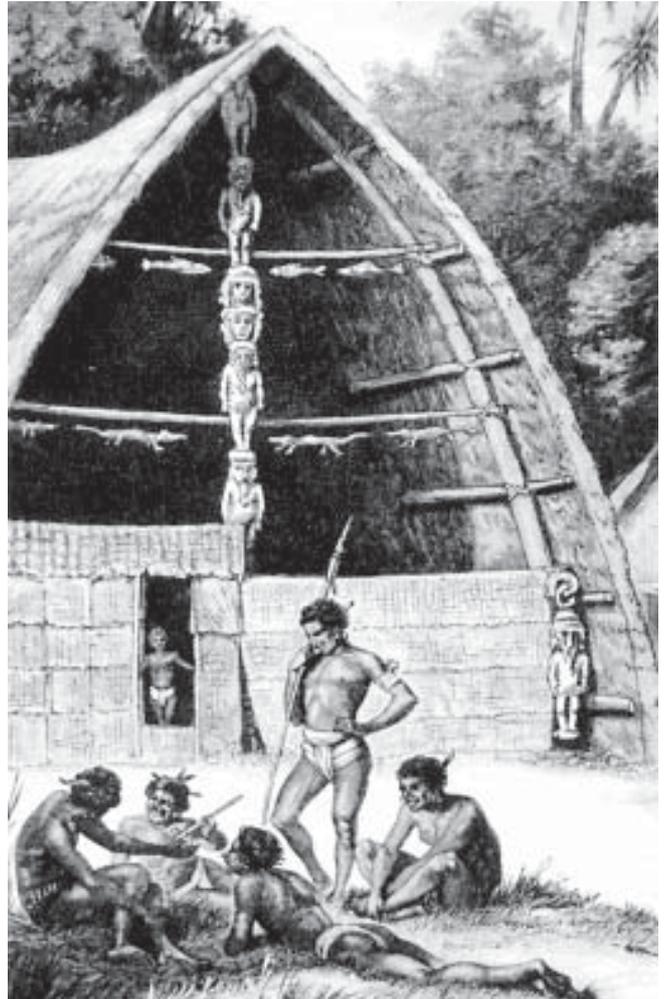
were at this time hidden in the bush until nightfall when they were brought back into the *darem* and hidden in the attic” (ibid,199-200).

Rituals were an important part of the people’s life as expressed in this belief of the spirits or *meziab*. Much of the cultural system of the traditional society was centred on the *darem*: it was where the customs of the clan were passed onto the next generation; where the dancing and feasts associated with the *meziab* were held (Mager, 1952: 199). The *meziab* was so ingrained in the beliefs of the people that they were prepared to revolt against the German Government to keep it. The meeting to do so was held on Bilbil Island in 1904 in the *darem* (*dschelum*) described by Finsch twenty years earlier:

Our attention was soon distracted from everything else when we saw the large meetinghouse. This house called *dschelum* consists mainly of a roof that reaches all the way to the ground. The open front is supported by a twenty foot high open carved post called *Aimaka*. It consists of four nude male and two female Papuan figures standing on top of each other and is painted red and black on a white background. The thirty-foot long beams, which carried the roof on either side, were in any case the most artistic part of this remarkable building. Each of these two beams were adorned with a nearly four foot high figure of a Papuan which, in a remarkable way, was itself cut out from the same beam and hung from it like a chain link. In fact a true masterpiece for the stone axe and shell tools, which I have not seen done in this way before or since in New Guinea, and only someone with an understanding of the Stone Age and can imagine himself there, can fully appreciate it.

The main part of the inside formed an eight-foot high platform made from split bamboo, which served as a sleeping area for unmarried young men as well as foreign guests. It was indicated to me that even Maclay had slept here. These big houses were not only bachelor houses but in general are clubhouses for the men. For this reason the female sex was not allowed to enter, and a ban that has a particular meaning in the taboo form, can easily lead to a mystical and religious meaning. This building was not a temple and neither were the woodcarvings gods, as every missionary would have immediately interpreted it (Mennis1996:18-19).

At one of these feasts on Karkar Island in 1891, the festival lasted for several days and during the first part, the young initiates were fed meagrely and received instruction about the secrets of manhood. On the night of the ceremony, the boys were lined up trembling for the emergence of the *meziab* from the cult house. Looming up at the frightened boys in the ghostly light of the fire, the five ghostly masked figures emerged and began to beat the youths with canes pretending to tear them apart as if they were being swallowed by the *meziab* and made whole again. This was



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Dschelum or darem, men’s house on Bilbil Island  
(Otto Finsch, 1888a)*

followed by an eerie sound high then low in pitch, said to be the voice of the *meziab* itself. A slight circumcision followed this.

The following incident exemplifies the dire consequences that followed when a woman flouted this taboo.

Story of Sibor Village:

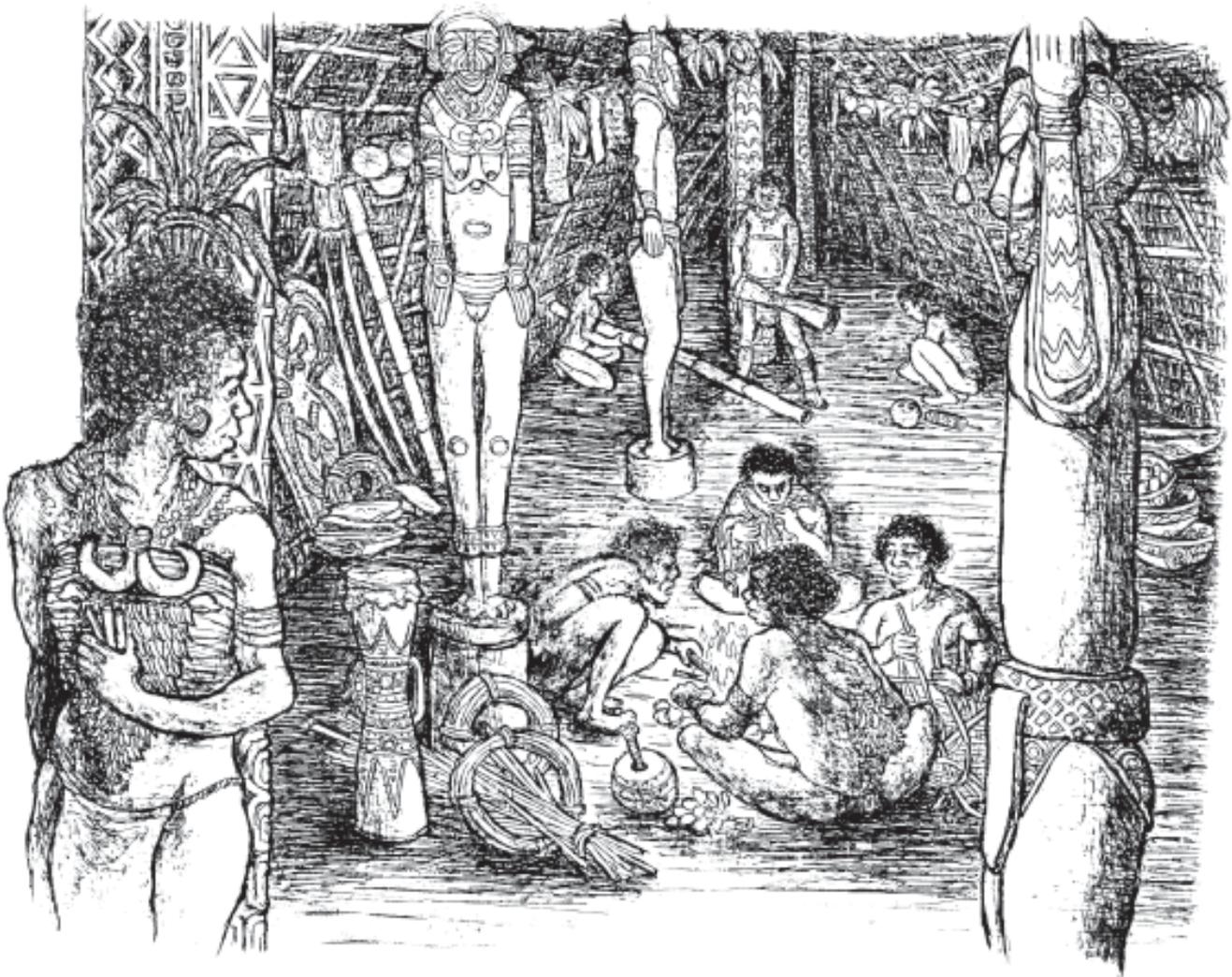
*There was once a village called Sibor near Yabob. Long before the white men came, the Yabob people used to gather their clay from a site near this village. This used to annoy the Sibor people and they often made trouble with the Yabobs. So although the two villages were neighbours, they were not friendly. One day something happened in Sibor that caused the whole village to be wiped out by their enemies. It happened this way.*

*A Sibor woman was preparing the evening meal and needed water from the spring, which was quite a long way off. She set off with her waterpots but forgot to build up her fire so, by the time she returned, the fire was quite dead. She wondered where she could get a fire-stick to re-kindle her fire.*

*The closest fire was in the men's house, the darem. Even now, she could hear mournful sound of the tambarans (spirits) talking. This bold woman knew it was forbidden for women to enter the darem especially now that the meziab were there, but this did not deter her. She decided she would dress in her husband's mal (bark loincloth) and his decorations and go into the darem to get a firestick and be*

*out before anyone noticed. So she wrapped her husband's mal around her waist. She tied her breasts flat with bush vine and hung the boar tusks from her neck.*

*Then she crept through the darkness to the darem. She glided through the small doorway and going up to the fire she picked up a fire-stick. As she stood up again she noticed several men sitting on the platform blowing the long flutes. "So", she thought to herself, "it is not the tambarans, but only the men. They have been fooling us". She crept out of the darem with the fire-stick and went home blowing on it, thinking that no one had noticed her. Back in the darem, most of the men continued playing on the flutes unaware that a woman had discovered their secret. Only one man suspected*



By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*Inside the darem, men's house, in Sibor village. A woman caused turmoil when she entered this secret place, which was forbidden (Rosalie Christensen).*

*anything. He followed the woman home and watched as she re-kindled her fire with the fire-stick. Then peeping through a crack in the house, he saw her undo the bush vines, which tied her breasts down, and he saw she was a woman.*

*“Oh”, he whispered to himself. “This woman went into our darem and knows our secret now. Our sacred house is sacred no longer.” Full of shame, he went back and told the other men what had happened. They knew what they must do now for there was a law that once the secret of the darem became known by the women, the village must be destroyed by other villagers.*

*“This darem must be destroyed now”, one man said sadly.*

*“And our people of Sibor must die”, added another.*

*“Yes”, agreed another shaking his head, “our sacred flutes have been seen by a woman”.*

*So they sent word to every village around, to Yabob, Bilbil and the bush people that the secrets of the meziab had been disclosed. A big force of warriors came and destroyed that village and killed all the people so that now there are no descendants of Sibor Village. Their bones were all buried together on the hill near Yabob Village and to this day no one will eat the bananas that grow in this place (Related by Ber Nanci of Yabob village).<sup>4</sup>*

This story illustrates many interesting things about daily life in all of the Bel villages. There were strict laws about the men's house and the women knew they would be killed if they entered it. The men wore the traditional *mal* and the boar's tusks. Although Sibor Village was near the clay deposits, the women did not make pottery. Even in those days there were strong-minded women who were ready to defy the restrictions laid on them by the men. One wonders if this woman had entered the *haus tambaran* before without being noticed by the shadowy figures of the men. Was she lazy and forgetful? The women had to remember many details in their daily life like collecting water and not letting the fire go out. The women on Yabob Island had wells from which they could draw their water but the Sibor women who did not live next to spring water, had to walk for kilometres to fill their containers with water.

There seems to be three separate myths that explain the origin of the *meziab*. Hannemann gathered stories that implied it seems to have come from the Rai Coast near Galek Village. The following three myths are a synopsis of Hannemann's stories.<sup>5</sup>

The first myth explains the origin of the sacred gourds and flutes:

*A large tau once grew in the foothills near Galek Village. The trunk was from the tau, but the branches were from various trees, such as wild mango, breadfruit, and others. One night, an Irandung man went out hunting small game.*

*When he came to the vicinity of this tree, he heard it talk. He quickly went home and told the people who came to see and listen. They decided to chop the tree down. At long last the final blow was struck and it fell down. On the place where the tree had been, stood a wedagez tree and a vine. These twined up on a bubul (fig) tree. Amongst these two a gourd grew with fruit for a meziab instrument. At night the gourds sang and danced. Hearing the different voices, the surrounding villages heard them and took the seeds and planted them.*

*A man named Faygai gave the villages their meziab. He called the name of each village and put taro, yams, bananas, coconuts, betelnuts and pigs on a pile, performed magic, gave them a gourd and sent them away. Thus he did to all the villages around about and gave them their meziab.*

This may have been the origin of the *meziab* musical gourd instrument but other things were added as well. At the time of the *meziab*, the young boys were instructed on the rites to make them handsome. This is borne out in the following story found in Hannemann's work and from the village of Muz on the Rai Coast:

The second myth explains the origin of the bullroarer used in the *meziab* and why women were banned from witnessing the rituals:

*A man went fishing on a reef with his wife. Nearby, their baby slept in a bilum hanging from a bough of a tree. A man from Saror Village came and abducted the child. He was careful to conceal the bilum on his back with tree-cloth (*tapa*). Years later when the boy was quite big he said to his foster father, “If you kill me, I shall do something extraordinary”. This he did and the spirit of the boy revealed the secrets of the meziab.*

*The man must cut down the piziz tree, split the trunk in halves and cut off a piece as long as a man's arm. Then he must take aerial roots of the aiau and fasten a bamboo rod to this handle the length to about three times the length of the handle. He was to swing this instrument in a circle above his head to produce the voice of the meziab. The man carried out these instructions and sent his wife into the woods to try out the bullroarer. However she could not make it work. She swung it round and round, but it did not give forth a sound, only her breasts flapped against her body, pappappap. So she gave it up and said to her husband, “You go and do it. I will cook the food; you look after the meziab and I will serve you”. That is the reason why women are not allowed to take part in the meziab celebrations and are not permitted to see the instruments.*

The third myth describes a young man, Salpot, who taught the *meziab* dances:

*There was a young woman in Galek Village on the Rai Coast, who was wellborn and possessed a perfect figure. However,*

her brother, Salpot, was deformed and had large lumps on his legs and arms. When he asked for water or a little tobacco she would say, "If you were a shapely boy I would not mind giving you these things but since you are a cripple I do not care to do it". At this treatment, Salpot left the village and built a house for himself under an aiau tree and ate its fruit. One day, a flock of Kay birds landed on the tree. When Salpot killed one of them, the rest swooped at him and knocked him down. He was conscious only of the voice of the birds.

"We are not Kay but Meziab", they told him and then taught him the magic of the *meziab* instruments, the gourds, bamboo and flutes that gave off an eerie sound. They also taught him the *meziab* dance. The following day, Salpot crept home to his family weeping. As he moved, he lost the lumps on his body and became very handsome. Over the following days, he taught the village men the dance. Because he had lost his ugly lumps, his mean sister did not recognise him and wanted to marry him, despite his warnings that he was her brother. He was so ashamed he climbed a gog tree and killed himself by falling on his arrows. Then his sister did the same. Later the men performed the *meziab* dance, which Salpot had taught them.

It was at a secret meeting of the *meziab* on Bilbil Island that the plot against the German Government was hatched in 1904. At this stage the Bel people were not only angry at the loss of land, but they were furious at having their lives regulated to working on roads and filling swamps. The men wanted to continue celebrating the *meziab* in the *darem* particularly at the time of initiation of the young men and this upset the German officials, who viewed the accompanying feasts as a great waste of time and a threat to the development of their colony. The people missed the freedom of dancing and singing for weeks as they pleased and it was partly because of this infringement of their privileged position and the German's opposition to the *meziab* that caused them to revolt.

Pech emphasised that to have a proper atmosphere for the *meziab* to take place, there must be peace for two years as this:

Guaranteed the security of young relatives of trading partners going through the initiation process in the host community and allowed freedom of movement for trade on an extraordinary scale. Finally, it provided complete immunity for large groups of men, who could confidently leave their women folk and minors at home while they attended the concluding ceremonies of the initiation cycle. This climax could be drawn out over several weeks to allow all of the guest groups involved to be rostered for attendance and participation in the ceremonials and associated feasting. The complex organisation that all this involved drew complimentary comments from several early European observers. (1991: 40).

The Lutheran missionaries viewed the *meziab*'s sacred instruments and rituals as satanic and insisted that the *meziab* be exposed to the women before the people could be received into the Lutheran Church. The missionaries in particular were against the secrecy of the *meziab* and the attitude to the women it brought with it. They encouraged the people to burn their sacred flutes and other paraphernalia so they could join the church. One of these ceremonies was held in 1919 at Kranket Island and at this ceremony, the sacred objects were revealed to the women, (Fugmann, 1978: 264).

H. Wagner wrote that:

The most debatable mission method of the period was the use of the ban on the sacraments of the Lutheran Church in order to discipline and to awaken Christian congregational members who, according to the missionaries, displayed inadequate zeal in putting away old customs and in encouraging Christian customs in the villages, or who were lax in selecting and sending out missionaries to the unevangelized (1996: 172).

It seems that later the Lutherans were critical of this practice of their forebears. By the 1970s, there would also be a reversal on the ban of initiation ceremonies. The people were encouraged to retain some of the initiation rites, as they prepared the youth for adulthood. This gave them a sense of belonging to the clan and taught them obedience and social mores.

An authority on the subject was Gernot Fugmann, a Lutheran missionary, who wrote:

Initiation was still important and remained an integral part of their changing culture, despite the fact that in 1919 the village leaders of Graged revealed the *meziab* cult publicly, followed by the burning of cult objects. The issue remained controversial and had evidently not been accepted unanimously among the Bel villages, because initiation rites were still performed in certain clans. Some boys were sent to the Rai Coast where they had traditional trade and marriage links. A few were initiated near Madang. The initiation rites were formally revived among the Bel villages in 1939. The reason was that the young generation did not obey the village rules anymore, they lacked energy and their attitude did not reveal vitality or virility (1978: 265).

Fugmann found that there was no objection in the modern church to the initiation ceremonies as modified to take into account religious sensitivities. They are now not used to introduce the young men to a secret cult but prepare them for life. Although the ceremonies he witnessed had no prayers or religious side, there was nothing anti-religious in it. The young men needed the initiation ceremony, in which the elders taught them the rules of village life and they learned to obey those in authority.

Fugmann, in his article concluded that Initiation was good for the youth, “a remedy has been found to solve the problem of tribal disintegration. In preserving and promoting identity with the traditional culture, their tribe, and their roles as men, initiation becomes necessary and as such constructive and not destructive. This alone justifies its continuing practice” (Ibid).

### Secret Language

The Bel people had a secret language, the *tok bokis*, that they used while sailing to confuse the evil sea spirits who might be listening to them. Aufinger (1939) first described this secret language or picture language in Madang. The men in the 1970’s were still familiar with its usage. If they were travelling in a canoe they would refer to the sails as, “the wings of the bird” to confuse the spirits (Mennis, 1982: 170). As the Bel people visited many villages of various language groups, they did not develop a trading language to the same extent as the Motu who stayed in the same Gulf village for months and had needed to communicate with only one other language group. From personal experience, the Bel people were adept at learning other languages. Pall Tagari, of Bilbil, could converse in many local languages but further research might reveal there was a trading language in Yabob/Bilbil as well.

Aufinger wrote about the the two different types of *Geheimprachen*, secret language, or *tok bokis*, of the islands near Madang. The first is a poetic language of metaphors and pictorial phrases, which everyone understands immediately. So a twig becomes the hand of a tree. He then refers to another type of language by which the speaker hides the true meaning of the sentence. Only those who have been taught know the real meaning. It can be used to exclude outsiders, women and children and even the demons and spirits. In the picture language, expressions from the local language are used but they have secondary meaning quite different from their apparent meaning. A man becomes a male pig; betel nut is now referred to as “something for our mouth”; the float of a canoe is now “for the soles of our feet” (Aufinger, 1942: 634-635).

The second type of secret language has a different vocabulary altogether. The grammar and some words are taken from ordinary language, but there are so many foreign words in the speech that it is unintelligible to those who have not learnt it. Some of the words are invented and others are borrowed from neighbouring language groups. Aufinger says that his informants told him, “originally, this secret language was invented to mislead the evil

Secret language with the equivalent words and the words that replace them.			
Graged Word	English meaning	Secret language	Meaning
lai	sail	banid	wings of a bird
wak	canoe	lagalag	wood for canoes
yarum	bilge water	tanaid	our entrails
tamol	man	dauai	male pig
pain	woman	palaik	secret for women
panu	village	ul	bird's nest
ab	house	ul	bird's nest
fi	bow	panapan	shoot arrows
tibud (european)	spirit	folanen tea	having no g string
tim	wind	pilipalti	tossed by the wind
nimad	arm	banid	wings of the bird
bol	pig	tan pilian	secret word for pig
yeb	betelnut	auwad nen	for our mouth
sam	outrigger	ned aten	soles of our feet
ayad	booms	ned	feet
yamel	cloth clothes	sinilon	skin
niu	coconut	afad	name in secret lang
nal	drinking water	mididiu	secret for water

Collected by Fr Aufinger (1945: 634-5).

spirits of the sea who, it was believed, understood the direct language of the people. The seafaring words of the secret language are those best remembered —The translation of the secret word cannot be given because it was not even known to the user. It is like an alternate vocabulary” (ibid: 633). Aufinger collected his information in the 1930s and it is interesting to compare his account with testimonies collected in the 1970s, forty years later.

In the 1970s, Bashan of Bilia Village, then a very elderly man, was the most knowledgeable of my informants on this subject. He said that the Karkar, Bilia and many others used the *tok bokis* when travelling in their canoes. The reason he gave for using this language was the same as Father Aufinger mentioned. “It would be no good if the water spirits heard us in the canoe, so we *tok bokis* to hide our meaning” (Mennis, 1980b: 84).

Bashan gave many examples of *tok bokis*:

If you went out in the canoe and felt hungry you could not say, “I’m hungry”. No you had to talk in a secret way. You had to mention a rope called *mabud*. If you cut this rope then the leaves fell limp very quickly. So the boy would say, “they have cut the mabud rope and it wants to cry now”, which means, “I am hungry and ready to fall down”. If they saw the water had got into the canoe, they would say, “*Yu outim bel bilong yumi*” and then you would go and bail out the water.

Again if the wind did not blow the sail along, they would say, “*banid miliau!*” That means, “my hand is weak” or “our wings are slack. We can’t paddle that far. Let’s cook some food and wait for the wind to start again”. If they went along and saw a house on the beach or the point they couldn’t call it a house, they would call it *us* which means the “pig’s nest”. If they were out sailing and they saw the smoke of a fire they could not say, “that is the smoke of a fire” they had to say, “*sub gal*” which means, “we have a big sickness”. If they saw a big canoe coming, they would say, “*sig a sub*”. If they saw a man coming, they would say “*gasan i kam!*”. This means a bush or a tree (Mennis, 1980b: 83-4)

This *tok bokis* is the first type of secret picture language described by Aufinger. It uses words from normal language, but with quite a different meaning from the apparent meaning. (Aufinger, 1942). The secret language in the narrow sense using unknown or foreign words as an alternate vocabulary was not mentioned by Bashan.

### Magic

Speaking of the Ngaing people on the Rai Coast, Lawrence noted that they had many types of magic magic . The Male Cult of the Ngaing was similar to the *Meziab* cult of the Bel group in that bullroarers were twirled and the women and children warned to keep out of sight of the ceremonies. The Ngaing had magic for every part of their lives – for warfare, for gardening, for the weather and to ensure that the trade in dog’s teeth and Siassi beads would continue. The ancestors, once called upon, were duty bound to respond and protect their descendants in all their undertakings. “For agriculture, a garden leader breathed Meanderi’s<sup>6</sup> secret name over the shoots of her crops before planting them around a special shrine” (Lawrence, 1964: 17).

The Bel group also had many different types of magic owned specifically by their group (Morauta, 1974: 19). There was magic for fighting, for gardens, for hunting and for peace making. For warfare, special incantations would be said to their creator beings, Kilibob and Manup, as they dressed for a fight and these names were reinvoked as they attacked their enemies. Similar rituals were held before a trading trip to ensure good trade in artefacts and that the weather was favourable. Later when the traders were sailing, they would again invoke the spirits of their ancestors. As they were seafaring peoples, the magic for weather, winds and calming the seas was of paramount importance. Aufinger, a priest-anthropologist, studied the weather magic of Yabob Village in the 1930’s when the old rituals and spells were still remembered. Yabob is near Bilbil and was founded from the latter (Mennis, 1981a: 33-4). The two villages had the same weather magic although different spirits may have been addressed. Aufinger’s detailed account is fascinating because the Yabobs and Bilbils alike have forgotten most of this magic. However, they remember some aspects, which Aufinger does not include. These oral testimonies plus Aufinger’s work together should provide an overall insight into the weather magic of the Yabobs and Bilbils.

Fr Aufinger was one missionary who could see the beauty and poetry in these old customs. He wrote that he was anxious to record them because, “the old culture was dying out since European contact began”. Ber Nansi of the Madib Clan on Yabob remembered Fr Aufinger as being very interested in the culture and wanting the people to retain as much as possible. Aufinger’s account of the magic tallies with the memories of the elders in some ways, but not in others. He gives the details of the ceremonies, spells and names of the spirits who were supplicated. He does not call the weatherman *likon*, but it is obviously the same person. Aufinger would have understood the plight of Sangal, the last of the *likons* who was caught between two sets of beliefs.

### Weather Magic

The name for the weather magician amongst the Bel group was *likon*. The last of the *likon* on Bilbil was Sangal who died during the Pacific War in 1943. Both his brother, Kasare, and his son, Lalu, were my informants and gave an interesting insight into his life and work. Sangal’s *likon* title was hereditary and the tools of the trade were handed down from father to son. These included knowledge of the rituals, the sacred slates or stones, the names of the little *likon* spirit men and various powers.

Since the magic knowledge was only passed on from father to son, the line of knowledge was very tenuous. A father could die before he passed on the knowledge and all would be lost. Sangal did not pass on the knowledge to his eldest son as he died when still young. Lalu should have received the knowledge then, but the mission came and Lalu never learnt the magic in any detail (Mennis, 1981b: 5). He did, however, learn the general knowledge of the *likon*, as did Sangal’s brother, Kasare. The testimonies of both these men tally closely, but both deny knowledge of the magic which would include details of the magic incantations and ceremonies. While *likon* was the name of the weathermen it was also the name of little dwarfs or *tambarans* who lived in the *likon* house. They were actually the ones who controlled the elements, but Sangal in turn controlled them. Lalu explains it as follows:

These little *likon* men each had power over certain elements. Some had power over the wind, some over the rain, etc. My father, Sangal, knew the names of the individual *likon* men. He would sing out to the one he wanted and ask him to control the elements he had power over. Sangal controlled the *likon* and the *likon* men controlled the rain. They talked and the rain began, they talked and the rain stopped. They talked and the sun shone brightly. If Sangal wanted the dry season to finish and the wet to begin he would talk to the *likon* and they would heed him. Other people would come and ask Sangal to stop the rain or make the sun shine and he would do this. It was his work (Mennis, 1981b: 5-7).

The only other informant who mentions these little *likon* men was Kasare, Sangal’s brother. It would be reasonable to suggest that the *likon* men were part of the secret knowledge passed from

father to son. This knowledge is no longer regarded as secret, as these men are now Christians. Kasare described the *likon* men as, “little people like children who lived in the house. If I came into the house they would hide from me. If I went out and everything was quiet they would come out and play. They would tell things to Sui, Sangal’s father who looked after them. Sangal too looked after them. He sat and talked to the *likon* men and they appeared to him in dreams” (Mennis, 1981a: 43). Most of the *likons* came from the Gapan Clan as it was one of their specialties to provide this service. At the time that Awak (Maia’s father) lived on Bilbil, the head *likon* was Sui and his son, Sangal, was being trained for this important function. Sui was a close relative of Awak.

### Wind magic

Much of the weather magic performed by the *likon* dealt with the winds. This magic could be divided into four groups: to start the wind for becalmed sailors; to cause the right wind to blow; to change the wind; and to calm wild winds. Haddon & Hornell stated that, “when becalmed the natives (in Astrolabe Bay) summon the wind by whistling or blowing on conches (shells) like European sailors” (1937: 294). Pall said the men blew on conch shells to summon the wind. Maia, pretending to be a *likon*, explained the work of the *likon*:

If there was no wind for instance, I would sing out, “*Yawarti*, eh you wind, start blowing, take this canoe to the shore”. All right, then, the canoe would go ashore. On the other hand, if the wind were too rough, I would think about *yawarti* and chew *kawawa* and spit it out. The wind would slacken then so we could continue our journey (Mennis 1981b: 106).

When Kasare was asked whether Sui used the slates when he was trying to calm the wind he answered, “yes he would hold his hands like this and then he would talk into his closed fist. He would say, “you *likon* you must give us good wind””. (Mennis, 1981b: 43). Sangal did not have to be in the canoe to control the water according to Lalu. If he were still in the village, he would notice the rough sea, say his magic formula and think special thoughts and then wash in the sea, which would then become calm.

Some old men described the wind magic:

Men made magic over the wind and they taught this magic to their children. If a man wanted to go to another place he made this magic. If he wanted to go to the North Coast he had to go and see the *likon*, the man who makes the wind magic and say to him, “I want to go to the North Coast”. The *likon* talked to the wind in the direction of Bogati and told it to blow towards the North Coast. We call this wind, Jawan. Now there are no men who know this magic. Now the wind keeps its own time (Hannemann, 1939: 113).

Sometimes, Sangal instructed other men to use magic over the wind but not always successfully. Pall remembers one occasion when Sangal instructed Han on how to control the wind while he was on a trading trip. Han made the magic, but he had not listened properly. He did not thrust the *gorgor* leaves in the direction they wanted to go. Instead, he waved the *gorgor* around his head in all directions. The wind blew everywhere. The men asked who had made the magic and were told it was Han. General knowledge about the work of the *likon* is found in many of the testimonies in the Madang area. Maia, Damun, Pall of Bilbil, Kasare and Ber of Yabob, Bashan of Bilia and many other informants described the *likon* and their work. The *likon* would make the magic and the wind would lessen and the sea would be calm, the rain would cease and the sun would come out. (Mennis, 1981b: 82)

Damun added that Sangal, the *likon*, would fasten *tanget* for the wind so it would, “take the canoe where they wanted it to go”. He confessed to scant knowledge of the *likon* and his work. Each of the five canoe trading villages had its own *likon*. Bilia, Kranket, Siar, Yabob and Bilbil each had a *likon* controlling the weather. One wondered what happened when opposing winds were summoned by two different *likons*. Bashan explained that the 5 *likons* would meet once a year to discuss the control of the wind and the weather. However, if one of the *likon* was absent from this meeting and a canoe was subsequently lost in a disaster, then they might accuse the absent *likon* of the mishap and ask him what the trouble was and make peace with him (Mennis, 1980b: 78).

Bashan of Bilia described the work of the *likon* in controlling the wind:

The *likon* calls out to the wind and fastens the *tanget* on the wood. He knows what wind will blow the next day. If it is the *Rai* Wind Season he must stop it blowing and start the *talio* wind in the morning. The crew on the canoe say to the *likon*, “you must look after us when we are out at sea”. The *likon* also sings out to every point along the way. There are *masalai* at every point. They would say to them, “see this canoe we have made it with our hands. You can see it, but don’t break it up. If we come up to your point, you can see us, but don’t get cross, don’t stop us”.

The *likon* stands up on one point (of land) and calls towards the other points where other *masalai* live. It is like a telephone. He knows the names of all the other points so he calls out to them. In the morning before dawn he has a wash and bangs around with the twigs of the *sibon* and sings out to the *masalai*. Then the men bring the canoe down to the sea as the sun is rising. He hits the canoe with the *gorgor* and sings out to all the *masalai* on every point. “You *masalai* look at this new *samting*. We want to sail in it, now you look after us.” Then he hits the canoe with the *gorgor* and throws it into the sea. Now they can go. (Mennis, 1980b: 69).

Although he does not list wind magic separately, Fr Aufinger does describe it indirectly. He wrote that the Yabob people needed a good southeast breeze to visit their friends on the Rai Coast. In this case the sea magic is adapted for favourable winds and special spells are said, moving his head to the beat of his hand drum, the magician addresses the good spirit:

*Oh Namungo,  
Blow a southeast breeze  
From your mouth  
In your hand I place a drum  
I put flowers in your hand  
Band your arm  
Nod your head  
The southeast breeze will come  
From your mouth  
Keep standing still,  
Lest the sea get rough again*

(Aufinger, 1939: 290-1).

#### **Magic stones or slates**

Then there were the slates or stones which were kept in the *likon*'s house and were supposed to have magic qualities. Kasare described them as being like the slates of Moses. They were kept in a large basket in the *likon*'s house and it was in this basket that the little *likon* men also resided. (Mennis 1981a: 42). Kasare said that his ancestor brought the slates with him when he came to Bilbil Island. Along with three other men, Singisungi, Gad and Sekarius, he was the first to arrive there. (Mennis, 1981a: 65). Again Lalu is the only other informant who mentioned the slates. He said that Sangal would hold them in his hand and talk and talk and then he would wash his hands in the sea (Mennis, 1981b: 7).

The Mager Dictionary describes the *likon* as a sorcerer or a magician who is supposed to be able to control the weather. A stone, the *likon pat*, is listed and is described as: "a round black gabis, magic stone, which the creator god Kilibob dropped into the sea for the people to use for weather control especially to cause rain" (1952: 169). Aufinger also describes a black stone, which the weather magician uses to calm the sea (1939: 287). From the description, it would seem that these stones are obsidian flakes, probably traded from Talasea.

#### **Magic for sickness:**

If a man was sick, someone would call the *kadal tamol* to come with his bush medicine which is made from bark and vines. The *kadol tamol* would first say the magic words over the medicine to ensure that it worked and then would spit some of it on the skin of the sick man, as well as giving him some to drink. Sometimes, ginger was added to make it stronger. The *kadal tamol* mixes the ginger with betel nut and if it goes bright red then the man will live. However, if a man has a high fever, the *kadal tamol*

will say that someone must have made sorcery over him and he will die. People come from everywhere to try to find the one who has made the sorcery over the sick man. Sometimes, the sick man is given a human bone to hold, as it will give him power and knowledge of who made the sorcery over him. His relatives sit around to hear what he has to say.

Another type of sickness happens as a punishment to thieves. If the owner had put a magic spell over his possessions to protect them from theft, then those who steal his galip nuts, betelnuts or pigs will get sick (Hannemann, 1939).

When a man dies his soul, according to Maia, goes to Degasub on the Rai Coast, where Tinigai guards the entrance to the underworld. After a man dies, his body is decorated, his hair plastered with red clay and he is dressed in a *mal*. Betel nut and *brus* are put near him so he can chew on it on his way to Dagasub. Tinigai inspects the dead souls to see if they are tattooed properly and have holes punched in their ears and through their nose. If they do not, he kills their souls and devours them. Meantime, his relatives mourn and wail over him.

#### **The people's view of their history**

How did the people themselves view their own history? One old man said, "you ask us about this 'cargo talk'. It is like this. Everything that we have was created by its own particular deity, taro, yams, pigs, slit-gongs. If we want to grow taro, we perform ritual to the taro goddess and so forth. All right, you white men come with your goods and we like them, so that we ask ourselves, 'who and where is the god of the cargo?'"

The Kilibob and Manup myths were only a partial view of their understanding of the past.

They used their genealogies to trace a common ancestry and common bonds with others in their groups or, as in the Bel group, with each other. Through the years, they were able to keep in contact with one another through their extensive trade networks. Since contact with outsiders, this identity has continued to knit the Bel people together as a group. But other scholars have adopted Lawrence's attitude that the people themselves possessed little idea of their past. As a result, most accounts of the history of the Papua New Guineans in the Madang area begins with the arrival of the Europeans in the 1870s when documentation began with the diaries of Miklouho-Maclay. The Takia on Karkar Island had a genealogy tracing them to their ancestor Karkar, who was regarded by McSwain as a mythical ancestor who had helped Kulbob make factories for the people. He arrived about nine generations ago and began the Takia line. In fact this genealogy ties in well with those collected on the coast for the same Austronesian language family. Maybe Karkar represents the group of Austronesian people who escaped from Yomba and who settled on Karkar Island making canoes and trading with those on the coastal villages who spoke a similar language and whom they saw as having a common ancestry.

Later, in the time of German Colonialists, when they saw the European culture, the people thought that there must be some secret to the cargo and the cargo movement has continued to the present day. The cargo cult affected the traditional trade patterns all the way through. The trade of those early visitors to the North Coast of New Guinea, early 1800's, left enough evidence to show that they had come and somehow had promised to return. Knowledge of these people was transmitted through the trading links and through their myths. The people on the Rai Coast knew about it and associated it with their god, Anut, so when Miklouho-Maclay came on the scene they thought his ship was *Anut's wag* and treated him with respect.

The *Tamolimol*, as described by Pall Tagari, were wild men - their hair was like Europeans but they lived in New Guinea a long time before the Europeans came. They had one long leg and one short leg and two long arms. They were shy people with long nails on their hands and feet and liked to eat bananas. They did not have houses but lived in caves or just sat under big trees or under the *saksak* palms. Although they looked wild they were not monkeys or possums but real men. Their cry is loud Oiiiiiiiiiiiiiii. One *Tamolimol* would stand on one side of the bush and sing out to the other *tamolimol* on the other side. Their job was to look after the wildfowl chickens and the *muruk* eggs. The people believed you shouldn't touch these eggs because the *tamolimol* looks after them. The *tamolimol* did not live on the islands - only on the mainland. Some of them live near where the Bilbil women went to get the clay for their pots. The women were not afraid of them. When the Rai Coast people or the bush people made a garden they would ask the *tamolimol* to look after their garden and not let anyone steal from it or the wild pigs destroy it.

Once a man was surrounded by his enemies who were going to kill him, Suddenly they heard a big noise Oiiiiiiiiiiiiiii. They thought it must be the *tamolimol* so they all ran away. If men from the village went to the bush and saw the wild bananas they were not allowed to eat them because it was the food of the *tamolimol*. One Kranket man went to the bush to start a garden. He cut a wild banana. That night when all were asleep the *tamolimol* came and fought him over the bananas. The fight lasted all night. In the end the Kranket man won and the *tamolimol* ran away. Men were afraid to cut the wild bananas of the *tamolimol* but they were happy that the *tamolimol* looked after the gardens and pigs.

The sorcerer was a villager who took part in village life like anyone else but he had special powers. If he wanted to make *sanguma* he would mark a wild pig or wallaby or even a crocodile and his soul would enter one of these animals. Because of this, the people hesitated to kill animals. If they needed food and saw a cassowary in the bush they might kill it but if it were near the village they would be afraid it might be possessed by the *sanguma* man. One old headman described how the sorcerer might hold your gaze while he picked up some rubbish you had left lying

around with his feet. He then took this and wrapping it in a banana leaf held it over the fire while muttering some magic words so you would get sick and even die. Of course when someone did die, the villagers tried to discover who had made the magic over that person. The people often lived in fear of the sorcerers. There were many things they were frightened of. The sorcerer could even make magic over their footprints. Ginger is often used in cooking and in sorcery because of its hot nature. The men would chew the ginger, which was supposed to make them strong and courageous and then spit it against the spirits when they were trying to cure a sick person. It was also used as a remedy for stomach-ache (Mager: 230).

The old men who represented the ancestors in the village could frighten the youth into obeying them. Mager said, "their *tibud* watched over the customs of the people so that their offspring would not depart from them" (1952: 322). When there was an earthquake, flood or drought it was thought that someone had angered the *tibud* and they had to make restitution to them before everything was right again. The sea has its own *masalai* and if you go sailing you must be quiet or the sea spirits will get angry and the sea will get rough. Not all *tibud* were bad and if people are travelling they might ask their own *tibud* to protect them and even go in front of them to confront the *tibud* in the next area. Nearly everything that could not be explained was attributed to the *tibud* who were thought to be white. Because of this, when the white men arrived they were thought to be *tibud*. The people also believed in *Anut* an important ancestral spirit or *tibud* and he was appealed to in magic (1952: 7).

The people often said the word *medapep* if they tripped over a root or had something fall on them when walking in the bush. A *medapep* is a spirit causing bad things to happen. If someone is dying then it is seen as *medapep* or if a pot turns out badly. If, for instance, a certain fish dies and turns its belly up it might be a sign that someone is about to die. If a pig digs a big hole according to Mager it is seen as a bad omen as it is like a grave and people might quickly fill in the hole. Even if a pig is found with its belly up while lying sleeping in the sun the people will hurry to get it up as that too is a bad sign. If a rat cries or bites you in the night you would call *medapep*. Fireflies were also considered to be omens if they flew around you. The shooting stars are called the spirits of men going to the underworld (1952: 194). If a branch breaks in the bush it is considered *medapep*. Mager said there were at least 30 kinds of events, which might be considered to be *medapep*. The Tolai people also have a similar belief about shooting stars and spirits of men going to the underworld.

Even the cry of the crow is called *medapep*. Pall Tagari remembered when he was at school on Karkar Island. A villager man had climbed a kapok tree in the bush. He must have got dizzy because he fell and broke his neck and died. The people were looking everywhere for him. Then the crows cawed loudly

and circled his body and the people were able to find him at the base of the tree. The people considered the crows to be the radio of the bush.

1. Rev Dick Heuter said incomplete myths could spark cargo cults. See Chapter 13.

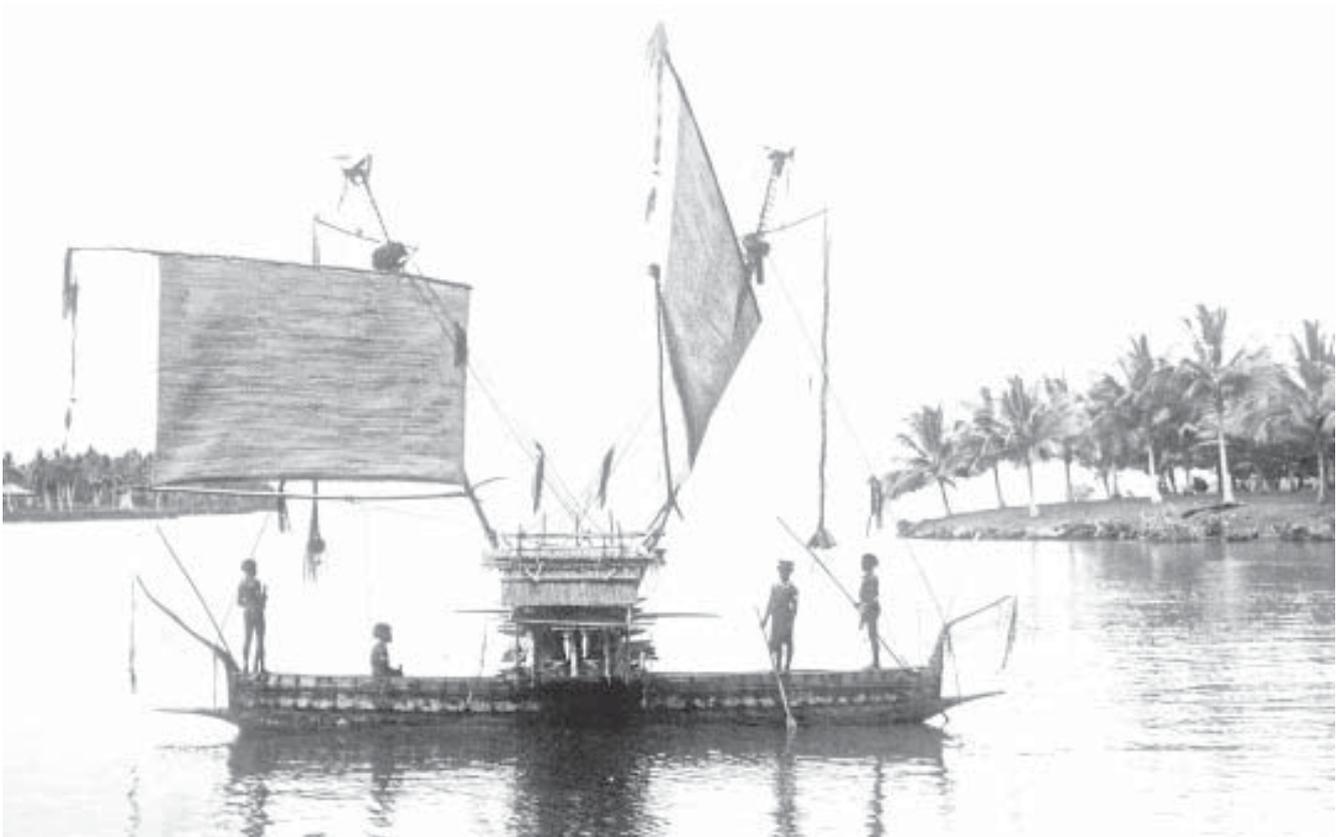
2. Presumably the Lateran Museum in Rome (See Lawrence, 1964: 191) but my subsequent enquiries have proved fruitless.

3. See Chapter 13.

4. In the 1970s, the author was shown the place on a hill near Yabob where the bones of the people of the Sibor people were buried..

5. A fuller account of these myths can be found in Hannemann, 1955: 5-8.

6 A local deity on the Rai Coast.



*An Astrolabe Bay Canoe in 1905. This two-mast palangut was sailing near Kranket Island in Madang Harbour. (H. Bethk, 1905).*

## Chapter 4, Austronesian Canoes of Astrolabe Bay

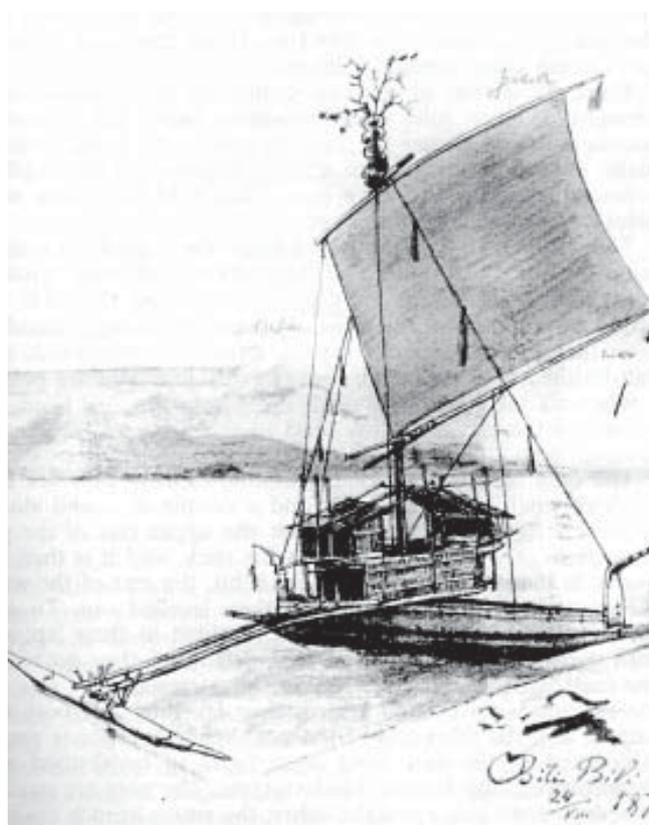


*At 4 o'clock, a sail suddenly appeared from Cape Observation. It proved to be a large pirogue, of a peculiar construction with covered accommodation on top in which several people were sitting, while only one person stood at the helm and managed the sail. I had not seen such a large pirogue in the neighbourhood. The pirogue went in the direction of Gorendu, but in about five minutes another one appeared, still larger than the first. On it there stood a whole little house or, perhaps, more exactly, a large 'cage' in which there were six or seven natives, protected by a roof from the hot rays of the sun. On both pirogues were two masts, one of which was inclined forward and the other backwards (Sentinella, 1975: 40).*

Miklouho-Maclay was the first to write about these canoes in 1871 and was amazed at their size and beauty. Made from bush materials with tools of shell, bone, wood, bamboo, stone and decorated in bright ochres, Astrolabe Bay was once studded by these canoes, plying their way in fleets to the Rai Coast from the Madang Islands. Limited by their own environmental factors, the Yabob and Bilbil people set up trade networks to access other people's environments. This is why the large trading canoes were such an important part of the trading system. The physical environment of the Yabob/Bilbil area was too small and the soil too poor to sustain gardens for growing yams or even rearing many pigs so they lived by trading their pots for food, weapons, decorations and utensils and even materials to build the canoes needed for trading.

The people of this Bel group, the Bilbil, Yabob, Bilia, Riwo, Siar, Kranket and Karkar people achieved a high standard of technical achievement in building these canoes. Spier states that, "the three major elements of the technological input are knowledge, resources and labour" (1970: 3). Each of these elements was important in construction of the canoes. Knowledge came through the Austronesian tribes to which the Yabob/Bilbil people belong. This is shown in the similarity between their trading canoes and other canoes in the area, but the technology may have originally come from Asian seacraft centuries earlier (Haddon & Hornell, 1991: 155-160); the resources needed to make the canoes were found locally or imported using the earthenware pots as collateral; labour was found in the village itself, with the older generation teaching the younger one. All these together made it possible to produce the highest form of village technical output, the trading canoes.

To say that material culture is determined only by environmental factors is to omit people's technical development, which gives them some control over the environment and their own cultural development. This explains the diversity of material culture in adjacent areas. People adapt to their environment in quite different ways, according to their beliefs and customs. This is evident in



*Sketch of a lalong, by Miklouho-Maclay in the 1870s (Sentinella, 1975).*

the objects that each culture produces; the way the artefacts were made; or the purpose for which an object is used.

Schlereth stresses the need to have detailed accounts of the technological processes in making artefacts because we, "can learn about human behaviour from the objects that human beings have made or modified" (1985: 26). He also believes that artefacts

have been difficult to access and to store and that if they are photographed, drawn and described, then knowledge of them becomes easier to access (Ibid: 15). The technical knowledge of producing the artefacts may have originally been introduced or invented within the culture. Spier divides material culture into innovative and diffusionary. The innovative ideas were developed by the people themselves and are closely related to the environment. Diffusionist ideas, on the other hand, have been brought into a culture from outside. When people settle in a new environment, as the Yabob and Bilbil did twelve generations ago, they brought a set of beliefs, customs and technical knowledge, which they then adapted to the new surroundings

Damun of Bilbil said that the general word for large and small canoes was *wag* and that there were four types of canoes in the Bel group. The name given below are the ones in Bilbil for the different types:

### Small Canoes

The *kaut* is a small canoe used in a safe harbour. Up to three metres long, they are used for fishing and are still made today in Astrolabe Bay. It is common to see many of these small canoes drawn up on the beach in front of any of the coastal villages.

The *mirirog* is a canoe which was built in coastal villages from Madang to Finschhafen. In Kranket, this style of canoe was called *pizigizag* and in Takia, on Karkar Island, it was known as *ai ragarag* (Mager: 1952). The hull was a shaped log about 6 metres long, but not hollowed out. The men would shape the log like a canoe and nail the *domo*, connectives, on top of the hull and then tie the outrigger on. They made only one platform and a small barricade of bamboo to protect the cargo from falling down and, after putting the mast up and tying the sail in place, they were ready for the sea. Because the log was not hollowed out at all, it is doubtful whether this craft would actually qualify as a canoe. It is part outrigger canoe, part raft and of a most unusual design.

Because the *mirirog* were not made for very rough seas, and as they were only flimsy, the Bilbil sailed them only as far as Bongu and Bogati and they were not used in the long trading trips. These canoes had the advantage that they did not swamp easily as the sea lapped over the hull. Sometimes, when the steersman stood on the end of the canoe, he was standing in the sea, as the water washed over the end of the canoe. If they did break up in the sea, they were easily replaced not having built up sides. Damun, himself, did not see any of these canoes, but his father mentioned there had only ever been one or two at Bilbil. More evidence of their existence comes from Baio of Ohoru village near the Gogol Bridge. "We Mabor people used to build a certain type of canoe which was not hulled. It just had a log underneath." They called the canoe, *ragragwag*. "The sea washed over the hull, but could not go inside. They had a small house, on these canoes on one side" (Mennis, 1981b: 74 - 77).

The Bilbil and Yabob may have copied this style from the coastal people. Baio said that the coastal villages used these canoes to sail to Siassi. There is plenty of evidence that this type of canoe did exist. The Bilbil made their beautiful two-mast canoes, which took so much time and effort but, if hard-pressed, they would build a *mirorog*, an easily made vessel, to sail to Bongu.

### Large Trading Canoes

The trading canoes that are discussed in this book are the one and two mast canoes of Bilbil. The length of the hull determined whether the canoe would have one or two masts as the hull had to be about ten metres long before it could support two masts. It needed to be balanced and long enough so that the force of the wind in the sails did not push the front of the hull too far into the water. Damun said that if you had two masts on a short canoe, the sails would hang too far over the water and the canoe would sink. There were not as many two-mast canoes, *palangut*, as one-mast canoes, *lalong*. Bashan said that previously Bilia Village had only one *palangut* and the same at Kranket. There were many *lalong* at both places (Mennis, 1980b: 76).

The *palangut* were often a speciality of one clan. According to Ber of Yabob, the Kakon Clan was the main clan to build the *palangut* on Yabob Island and they held this right by tradition. In Bilbil Village, the Luan Clan were the master canoe builders of the *palangut* and even controlled the canoe building of the other clans. Whether they built *lalong* or *palangut*, the canoe villages had a "patent" over their style and if other villages tried to imitate them, there could be trouble. Baio of Ohoru told how his ancestors, the Mabor, were involved in a big fight with the Bilbil when they copied their style of canoe without permission. The Bilbil beat their *garamut* to declare war and the Umuin people, who sided with the Mabor, did likewise. The fight was at Umuin on the beach and two men were killed on each side. The Bilbil then said to the Mabor, "now the fight is over. Two on your side have died, Mupet of Umuin and Kaku from Mabor. Now you can make canoes like ours if you want to but not other places". They shook hands and made peace (Mennis, 1981b: 75).

Bashan said that the *palangut* built by the Bilia were exactly the same as those of the Bilbil. Gabud, Madaig and Los of Kranket said their canoes were very large and that the Kranket and Siar people used to sail to Karkar and to the Rai Coast together. The Siars were friendly with the Mindiri people, whereas the Krankets were friends of other villages. Pech said that the Siars once made the largest canoes in the Astrolabe Bay, but there are different opinions about this in the various testimonies. Maybe it depends who your informant is. Pall of Bilbil said that the Bilbil and Yabob made larger canoes than the Krankets and Siars because the latter used their canoes mainly inside the harbour. He added that the Sidor men on the Rai Coast copied the Bilbil styles of canoes when one of their men married into Bilbil and learnt the technique (Mennis, 1981b: 42). In describing a *palangut*, Derr said that, "the sails on a *palangut* are near the middle of the canoe. One

inclines in one direction and the other in the other direction and they can make the canoe cut through the waves quickly” (Mennis, 1980a: 98). There are many stories of the famous canoe builders of Bilbil. Kasare spoke of his father, Sui, who owned a *palangut* in which he sailed to the Rai Coast to procure *mal*, plates and other things for pots. When Sui was making his *palangut*, he received help from his clan and, for the bigger jobs, all the clans helped him when needed (Mennis, 1981a: 55).

When Damun’s father, Nomu, built a *palangut* on the Margui Lat section of the Bilbil Island beach, he collected the material from the bush on the mainland opposite Bilbil Island. It took him only a month to make the canoe as he had 20 to 30 men helping him from all the clans. When he sailed to the Rai Coast in 1935, he had six crewmen with him. Pall had a story about his grandfather, Bais, who bought the hull of a Siassi canoe with breakwaters carved with crocodiles and men. Onto this base, he built the usual Bilbil superstructure for a *palangut*. He was very proud of this smart looking canoe, which carried lots of cargo (1981a: 55).

The Mindiri were also builders of large canoes but, being Austronesian speakers, this craft was probably indigenous to them and not introduced. The Mindiri were also potters and traders and, at one stage, threatened the monopoly of the Bilbil pot trade to such an extent that the Bilbil attacked them treacherously at a *singsing* and killed many people (Mennis, 1981b: 93). From the evidence from Mindiri and Ohoru, it seems as if the Bilbil were fiery traders ready to attack if they felt threatened by people stealing their canoe styles or pottery trade. It was true they were great warriors but then they had to be, for their very survival.

The *palangut* was the largest of the canoes, being from 10 to 12 metres long. The *lalong* was a smaller canoe, being less than 10 metres in length. According to Mager, these canoes were used widely in the Madang area from Karkar, Riwo, Siar, Kranket, Bilbil and Suit, and down on the Rai Coast to Singor and Bongu. There were widely differing names for these canoes of Astrolabe Bay. In Siassi they were called *de wang* and, in outward appearance, their two mast canoes were very similar to the Bel craft. The main difference between the two canoes is the crocodile shaped prow of the Siassi canoe instead of the curved high breakwater of the Astrolabe Bay canoes. Linguistically and culturally the Bilbil are very close to the Siassi people, as both spoke Austronesian languages. Trading in overlapping areas on the Rai Coast, the sailors would have observed each other’s canoes.

Both the *palangut* and the *lalong*, according to Haddon & Hornell’s definition, would be a five-part canoes with the hull, the wash-strakes on each side and the breakwaters at each end and an outrigger on one side. Maclay described a *lalong* he saw on the beach at Bilbil Island, which he visited in 1871. But even Maclay did not sit and watch the whole process of building the canoe. He described the finished object and was a bit vague about

certain features, for example the caulking. Maclay sailed along the coast in these canoes and found them very comfortable. Little did he realise that the Bilbil and other island people would cease to build them within 70 years. When land was alienated along the coast, canoe trees were cleared to make way for plantations. Able-bodied men began to leave their villages to work on the plantations and goldfields and other young men went to school at mission centres and the art of canoe making began to fade.

Maclay gave an account of their construction:

These pirogues (canoes) deserved attention because of their construction. The pirogue itself is distinguished from the small ones, solely by its measurements. The length of some of them was up to 10 or 12 metres. In order that the pirogue will not swamp too easily, a long plank is “sewn” to both sides of the hollowed out trunk, or there may be two, one above the other. In the sides of the pirogue and also in the planks, holes are made through which is passed a flexible thin cane, tying the plank to the pirogue itself. The chinks and gaps left by the holes are caulked with wood from some kind of tree pulverised and soaked in water.

The prow and stern are finished off with a high, sometimes curved, board, which is also carved. On one side of the pirogue is an out-rigger, attached to the boat by two crossbars. On the crossbars of the outrigger is a platform on which, in the large pirogues of Bili Bili, a whole hut is constructed, about two metres long and four to five metres wide. In general, everything in the pirogue is fitted out very conveniently and nowhere in the hut was any space wasted. I found the proposed accommodation very convenient for me, being lighter and cleaner than a hut, and the idea came to me right away to use a similar large pirogue in due course for visiting the villages along the coast (Sentinella, 1975: 130).

Malinowski, a famous ethnographer who lived amongst the Trobriand Islanders between 1914 and 1920, warned about making the canoe a fetish in itself by just studying the object in isolation. He insisted that, “sociological data regarding ownership, ceremonies and customs of the canoe’s construction, a sort of typical life history of a native craft – brings us nearer to the understanding of what the canoe truly means”. (1966: xix). In studying the construction of a trading canoe in Madang, I followed Malinowski’s advice of studying the customs associated with building and sailing them as well as the object itself. Haddon and Hornell wrote that little was known about the canoes of Astrolabe Bay particularly their rigging. So our endeavour to reconstruct one of them in 1978 was important in this regard if for no other purpose.

Horridge felt that one of the drawbacks of Haddon & Hornell’s work was that it was not an interdisciplinary work on canoe types, nor did they mention the distribution of certain types of pots and

trade items by the canoes or even the ceremonies at canoe launchings and the beliefs of the people owning the canoes. In fact, they view canoes in isolation as museum pieces and not as an integral part of village material systems. Horridge tried to overcome this drawback in his own study of the canoes of Bali and Maldura when he mentioned beliefs and ceremonies of launching a canoe (Horridge, 1986). However, items of trade or trade routes were not dealt with in much detail. Even so, he did use an interdisciplinary approach and I was able to make some comparisons between the canoes and ceremonies there with those of the canoe builders of Astrolabe Bay.

Many stories have survived about these canoes and their part in the trading system, the *dadeng*. The canoe was also a vital part of the trading networks along the coast and out to the adjoining islands long before the Europeans ever came to live there. It was canoes like these that enabled settlements in New Guinea along the coast to trade with other communities over thousands of years.

Ber Nansi of Yabob describes the building of a new canoe:

My father built a big canoe and we went to the Rai Coast and were away for two months and then returned. We took *tambu* shells from Sek and Kranket and *paspas* decorations from Karkar. Sometimes the Yabobs and Bilbil would go together. Beg once had a *palangut* built by Keni, his father and I went with him on a trading trip. In the past, the Yabobs bought hulls from Sek, Siar or Kranket. There were plenty of *lalongs* but only two *palangut*. The Kakon clan were the ones who made the *palangut* on Yabob Island. We of Madiboro made only *lalongs*. On Yabob, I watched Keni make his *palangut* and when the women were making the *dim*, I helped them getting the scraped *dim* and taking it to the men. I saw them make the planks and the deck and place the mast and the sail. When the canoe was finished, we had some customs, pretending to shoot at the canoe and throwing water and pawpaws at it and then we cooked a pig. We travelled to Dawang and Malalamai and then we returned. It was a big new canoe and it was filled up with pots that were not sold quickly, so we went to many places and bought many things. We got *mal*, plates and blankets made from *tapa* from Bonga, Malalamai, Sel, Mur. They all cut the big trees and beat them and made these large blankets like big mats (Interview, 1979).

Fleets of these canoes from Kranket, Siar, Yabob and Bilbil would set off together with their *tanget* leaves fluttering and with colourful designs painted on their sides. Their trading friends knew the canoe clan by the totem on the top of the mast. Also each clan on Yabob, Bilbil and others of the Bel group had their own distinctive calls and the traders on the Rai Coast could hear this piercing sound across the water and get the trade items ready. A *lalong* could take 40 large pots, a crew of 6 and some passengers whereas a *palangut* could take 100 pots, a crew of 10 and many passengers.

The Karkar men usually made *lalongs* although they also could make *palanguts*. The Karkar, Sarang, Sek, and Riwo people used the hulls for the canoes as trade items, with the price in pots being determined by the number of pots that could be lined up against the hull.

### Building a canoe in traditional times

In the following pages, we imagine the scene in the 1870s on Bilbil Island when Kain, friend of Miklouho-Maclay, was building his big canoe. Kain and his friend Madamai were sailing men of the sea. They and their friends traded in their large canoes as afar afield as Karkar 75 kilometres to the northeast and the same distance along the Rai Coast to Sio. These trading trips were undertaken once or twice a year in the months of May to July before the angry *karag* wind whipped up the seas. They carried between 40 and 100 large cooking pots in the potcage on each canoe and exchanged the pots for many trade items at many villages along the way. A whole set of customs, magic rites and ceremonies grew up around these trading trips. As canoes only lasted about five years, building them was a regular occupation in the village. A large *palangut* showed the complicated technical skills of the men who built them. These canoes are important to study in detail for many reasons. Firstly, they were the most skilled product that the Bel people produced. Secondly, it was through these canoes that the traders obtained *big man* status in the whole of the Madang area. The men saw themselves as patricians of the sea, slave to no man and master of the trade routes over hundreds of square kilometres. It was this that brought them into a headlong clash with the Germans when the latter were establishing their new Colony.

A canoe was once a tree standing straight and tall in the forest, protected by bush spirits. It was cut down and hollowed and then put into the sea, the domain of jealous water spirits. If the right incantations were not pronounced over the tree to protect it at every stage of this transformation, then tragedy would befall, not only on the canoe but also on the traders who sailed on it. Discard these magic ceremonies and the people believed the canoe was no longer protected against evil spirits.

There were many stages in building a canoe from the felling of the tree to the final stage when the beautiful craft stands ready on the beach fluttering yellow bunting hanging from its mast. The totem of the clan stood on top of the mast and along the sides colourfully painted strakes supported the large pot cage, built to store a hundred large red cooking pots. As the trading vessel's function was to transport the large pots, the potcage was the dominant feature of these canoes. Thus its form followed its function, as did many other items of material culture.

From the initial stages the men would appeal to the spirits for help. Before they cut the chosen tree down, the men talked to the *masalai* in the tree so that the tree would not split when it fell. This was seen as a natural way of co-operating with Mother

Nature. To the ancestors, it was common courtesy and also a way of ensuring protection against spirits. These people were animists and every living thing had a spirit that should be respected. Bashan said, “who is it that lives in this tree? You cannot be cross with us. We want to cut your tree now. You should be sorry for us. You must not break this canoe. We want to cut the tree. You come down and help”. They hold the tomahawk up and say, “we will cut the tree with this. We want to cut it down because it is no good. You go and live in another tree”. So the men believed that the *masalai* came down and went to another tree. (Mennis, 1980b: 65).

Malinowski collected the magic spell associated with cutting a tree down. It expresses the same sentiments as Bashan attributed to his ancestors:

Come down, O wood spirits, O Tokway, dwellers in branches, come on down! Come down, dwellers in branch forks, in branch shoots! Come down, come, eat! Go to your coral outcrop over there; crowd there, swarm there, be noisy there, scream there.

Step down from our tree, old men! This is a canoe ill spoken of, this is a canoe out of which you have been shamed, this is a canoe out of which you have been expelled! At sunrise and morning, you help us in felling the canoe, this is our tree, old men, let it go and fall down! (1932: 127)

Kain and Madamai were at one with nature! Wholesale destruction of a forest would be abhorrent to them because the forests were their storehouses providing materials for their tools, houses, canoes, fish traps, wooden plates, *mal*, ornaments; in fact, everything they owned and worked with came from the forest, which they treated with awe. Kain and Madamai also said special incantations over the stone axes, asking the local *masalai* to keep the axe sharp. If these words were not said, they believed it would take a long time to cut the trees down. As it was, it might take four men a long time to fell one, with one or two chopping at the tree and being replaced when they became tired. Each night the men burnt the chips in a fire to prevent the *masalai* from putting them back on the tree overnight (Mennis, 1980b: 65). Since stone axes required so much effort for such small results, it would be logical for the men to believe that someone must have been placing some of the chips back on the tree like some Irish leprechaun. Malinowski said, “when stone implements were used, this must have been a laborious process, in which a number of men were engaged in wielding the axe, and others in re-sharpening the blunted or broken blades. The old technique was more like nibbling away the wood in small chips, and it must have taken a long time to cut out a sufficiently deep incision to fell the tree” (1932: 128).

Once the tree had fallen, it would be measured for the length needed and cut accordingly. The men shaped the log before transporting it to make it lighter. A path was cleared through the

bush and a long vine rope was tied around the end of the log and rollers were laid on the muddy ground so that the log could be pulled along. The men then pulled the log over the rollers and as the log passed over a roller, it was shifted forward. There was much ceremony connected with shifting the log from the bush to the village.

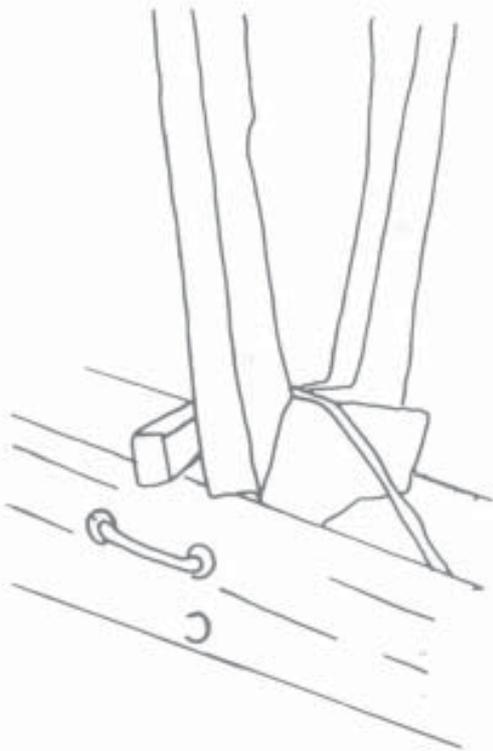
Bashan, of Bilia Village, mentioned the ritual involved in hauling a log to the village:

The men hit the canoe to evict the *masalai* telling them to return to the bush. It is hard work to pull a log, so they make it a game. Some hit the log and the backs of the men pulling the log with *gorgor*, ginger stalks. Then they throw the *gorgor* into the bush so the *masalai* will leave. These men used to think that the *masalai* made the canoe heavy. When they came to the beach, they slept and waited till dawn and then pulled the log around to the village. As the rope was very thick, it was difficult to cut, so they put it on a piece of wood and addressed the spirit inside. “You who are inside (*papa blong rope*), you clear out. I want to cut this rope now” (Mennis, 1980b: 66).

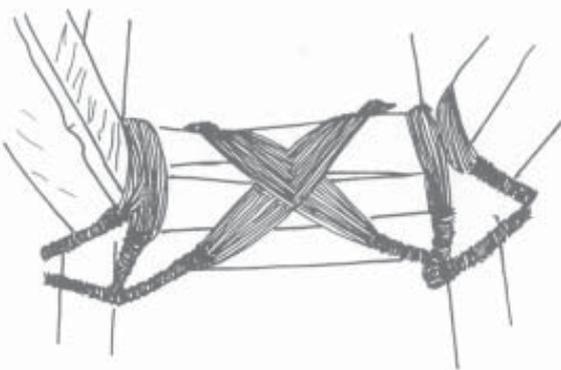
In the Madang area, the payment for helping transport a log depended on the resourcefulness and cunning of the helpers who were known as *bog* after the fish eagle. (This term was used from Riwo to the Rai Coast). In payment for their effort, the *bog* group could take anything they could lay their hands on, betel nut, net bags, pots, or even a young girl, from the owner of the log (Mager, 1952: 36). Although hulling the log was a very long process, the ceremonies associated with hauling the log are similar. Now the men began to use the *tok bokis* or the secret language to confuse the malevolent *masalai*. Instead of calling the hull *wag hun*, they would call it “the belly of a man” in their language. One man might say, “I want to sharpen this adze so I can take out the belly of this man now”. The huller then implored his ancestors or the friendly *masalai* to help keep the axe sharp (Mennis, 1980b: 68).

The canoes and parts of canoes of Astrolabe Bay were themselves seen as important trade items at every stage of their construction. The Bilbil paid for them with pots, which were lined up the length of the hull to determine payment. Materials used for the superstructure were cut from the bush by villages on the coast. They would then send smoke signals to the Bilbil that the material was ready to be collected. The Bilbil sailed to the coast and paid for the bush materials with more pots. Once the canoes had been completed, they could be bought by other villages as trade items.

When the Kranket and Karkar Islanders made the hulls, they transported them to Bilbil Village using a temporary outrigger. They hollowed the logs, lashed the *giaman saman* and a flimsy sail and brought the canoe to Bilbil where the men removed the sail and the outrigger and built up their own canoes. Traditionally, there was quite a ceremony when a new hull arrived at a village. The Bilbils would be so happy to see the new canoe that they



*The tilau, or elbows, made from the buttress of a tree are set along the top of the hull in matching pairs. (Anton Gideon, Papua New Guinea National Museum)*



*The milil lashing that joins the pairs of tilau together. (Anton Gideon, Papua New Guinea National Museum).*

would throw seawater over the owners and pretend to beat them with *pangal* (Mennis, 1981b: 49).

The Bilbil men sometimes obtained logs from the Gogol River when it flooded and whole logs and trees would float down the Gogol and out to sea. Those that were stranded at Bilbil Island were used for canoes or houses. Sometimes the men sailed their large canoes up the Gogol River to a branch where an island was formed in the river. On arrival, they slackened the sails and cut the material they wanted. On the return they would put up the sail up and carry the material to the island.

As the canoes had sides built up with split planks, it was necessary to obtain logs from the bush to make the planks. The method of converting logs into planks was widespread in Papua New Guinea. Aitape is a long way from Madang but the method of turning a log into planks is virtually the same.

Richard Parkinson said of an Aitape canoe:

The wash-strakes are made of softwood. The tree is split down the middle by means of an axe and then placed with the flat side on the ground, the iron blade is shifted round so as to form an adze and the round part is shaved off leaving a rough and uneven board about 3.7 cm thick. They are lashed to the upper edge of the hull and to each other by long liana, which is very strong and about 0.5 cm thick (1900: 31).

The framework style used in the Bilbil canoe is quite widespread. According to Haddon and Hornell, the Tuam (Siassi) and Kalingi canoes are very similar. "There are four pairs of knees, the horizontal limbs of which are tied together. The vertical limbs are tied to the strakes, presumably the elbows rest on the edge of the gunwale planks" (1975, Vol II: 157).

The Trobriand canoe at the National Museum has three wash-strakes attached to knee joints. The horizontal parts overlap and are lashed together while the vertical parts are lashed to the wash-strakes. The knee joint is called *gelu*. There are two of them just like in the Bilbil canoe and they are lashed together in a similar way. Geoffrey Mosuwadoga, of the National Museum, showed me a discarded *gelu* from the Trobriands. It is exactly the same shape as the *tilau* used in the Bilbil canoe.

The *damdam*, breakwater, for the ends of the canoe were cut from the long surface roots of trees often in the shape of an S. As in the case of the *tilau*, the trees do not need to be cut down to obtain these roots. The wood is very tough and outlasts many other parts of the canoe and is a very ingenious use of bush material. The *damdam* was cut from a number of trees, the *gau*, the *tau* or the *katul*. Traditionally, *damdam* could be purchased ready made as trade items. They were brought from Riwo, Sek, and Kranket with pots in much the same way as the hulls were purchased. (Mennis, 1980a: 100).

Otto Finsch described the breakwater of the canoes: “in Astrolabe Bay, the trunk of a tree 30 feet long is used as the hull of a canoe. Above the hull are two planks to heighten the sides of the canoe. To fill the gap between the planks is a high S-shaped breakwater” (1888b). The breakwater devised by the Bilbil bears witness to their artistic abilities. The gracefully curved shape gives the canoe the appearance of a Viking ship.

Comparative Terminology for breakwater in Papua New Guinea:

Bilbil	<i>sohor</i>	Mager
Bilbil	<i>damdam</i>	Mennis
Siar	<i>saforz</i>	Mager
Swit	<i>sapor</i>	Mager
Kranket	<i>safoz</i>	Mager
Takia	<i>sikor</i>	Mager
Bogadjim	<i>dedem</i>	Biro
Bongu	<i>ghebun Saura</i>	Biro
Tuam (Siassi)	<i>dumdam</i>	H & H
Siassi (Kowai)	<i>sapor</i>	Karang
Kalingi	<i>nasa pawla</i>	H & H
Trobriand	<i>tubwekaya</i>	Geoffrey Masuwadoga

The putty for caulking, the *dim*, is made from the bark of the *dim* tree which has quite a rough texture on the outside. The inside is soft and sinewy and when it is soaked in the bilge water in the canoe it makes ideal putty for filling the gaps and making the canoe watertight. The tool used to insert the *dim* is made from a pig’s hind leg and is known as a *dim sol*. The thick part of the bone forms the handle and the other end is sharpened so that it serves both as a trowel and a poker, an excellent tool for applying putty. Caulking the canoe was quite a communal effort - this was the only part of the canoe construction with which the women helped. The *masalai*, *Dobuk*, *Dabag* and *Ligin* were once invoked to keep the canoe watertight. *Dobuk* is the name of the canoe *masalai* in the Bilbil language whereas the other two are from the Kranket language.

Miklouho-Maclay saw many Bilbil canoes in the 1870s and described the caulking. “In the sides of the pirogue and also in the planks, holes are made through which is passed a flexible thin cane, tying the plank to the pirogue itself. The chinks and gaps left by the holes are caulked with wood from some kind of tree pulverised and soaked in water” (Sentinella, 1975: 130). Later Maclay saw that it was scraped from the *dim* bark.

Richard Parkinson detailed the correct process:

All joints and holes are caulked with *yeim*. The bark of the *tjeim* tree is steeped in water in the hull of the canoe, then the sticky juice is scraped off from the inner side of the bark

with a shell and mixed with charcoal obtaining by burning the spongy inside of the stalk of the sago leaf. Thin slates of the areca-palm wood are inserted under the lashings and over the seams inside and out. The *tjeim* is rammed in with a chisel made of hard wood or bone; a stone is used as a hammer. Holes or flaws are repaired in the same way; the *tjeim* hardens in a few days (1900: 31).

He adds that some seams are caulked with pounded kernels of nuts of *Parinarium laurinum*. Parkinson’s reputation as an ethnographer witnessing the process first-hand would give his description much credence. The fact that Parkinson’s description tallies closely with that given by Astrolabe Bay men at Bilbil and Siar put paid to the idea that the caulking was “shavings dipped in resin” as Maclay said. According to the Mager Dictionary, the word for putty was *dim* (1952: 65). This was the name of the tree from which the bark was obtained. However Mager had the process partly wrong when he said, “the bark is pounded and then used to fill cracks in a canoe.” The bark, as we saw, was not pounded but soaked and the inner red flesh is scraped out and used for caulking.

The timber used for the outrigger booms, or *dom*, was from the *yand* tree. It is also the name of the booms themselves. Before the booms could be added to the canoe hull, the inside of the hull had to be emptied of the bilge water, which had turned putrid from having the *dim* soaked in it. The booms were laid on the outer side, over the mother *tilau*, which had not been shortened. The booms overlapped the hull by at least a metre and the ends were tapered. Later they formed the support for the lower platform.

Otto Finsch described the Bilbil canoe as having, “two curved booms, each connected to an outrigger approximately 14 feet long by a pair of under-crossed sticks” (1888: 83, 84). Miklouho-Maclay’s description tallies with Finsch’s (Sentinella, 1975: 130). The *lalong* had two outrigger booms, as did the *palangut*, unlike large canoes from the Trobriands, which had many booms. The difference may be found in the design of the Bilbil canoe. Each large boom lies across one side of the large pairs of *tilau* to which it is lashed and the canoe is thus limited to two booms, however long it is.

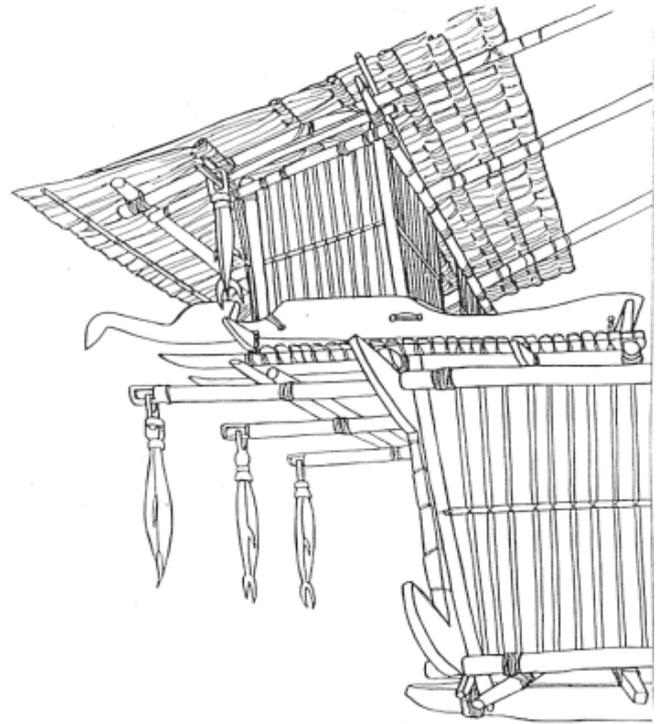
The Trobriand canoe in the National Museum has eight booms, but each one is much thinner than the Bilbil ones. Malinowski describes the process of attaching the booms to the Trobriands canoe. Aptly, he called the booms, poles and the connectives, sticks:

The big, solid log is put alongside the canoe, and a number of short, pointed sticks are driven into it. The sticks are put in crossways on the top of the float (*lamina*). Then the tops of these sticks are again attached to a number of horizontal poles, which have to be thrust through one side of the canoe-body, and attached to the other. — When these sticks and poles are bound together, there results a strong yet elastic

frame, in which the canoe and the float are held together in parallel positions, and across them transversely there run the several horizontal poles which keep them together (1932: 139).

Miklouho-Maclay's first impression of these large canoes was that there was a "whole little house", on the canoe but then he qualified this by saying, perhaps more exactly, a large "cage". In describing the canoes at Ali, in the Aitape area, Richard Parkinson describes the cargo holds as "crates" or at least his translator does. He wrote, "a prominent feature of the large canoes is the raised central platform with a crate at each transverse end" (Haddon & Hornell 1975 III: 304).

Occasionally two clans from different villages used the same totem which may have led to some confusion when trading friends were waiting for canoes. Take for example the Bila Matuk clan and the Gapan clan of Bilbil who both have the same totem. Sometimes having the same totem can mean a common origin of two clans. The Kakon Clan on Yabob and the Gapan clan on Bilbil both have the same totem, the cockatoo. The man who began the Kakon clan was Bukuk who previously came from Bilbil. When he



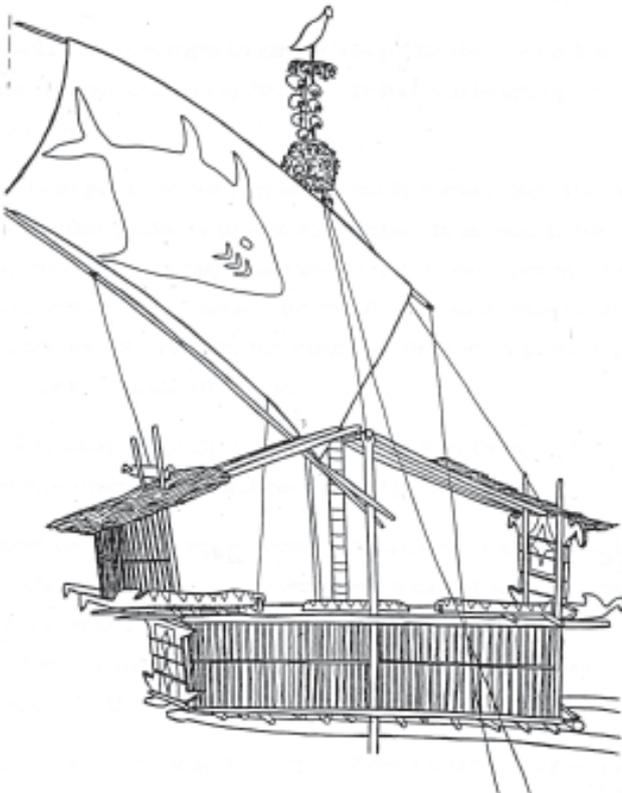
By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*The mawarden above the pot cage. (Rosalie Christensen).*

shifted to Yabob, he took his totem with him (Mennis, 1981a: 34). Apart from these historical links, it was against their custom to use the totem of another clan (Mennis, 1980a: 43). If the bushmen stole the totem of the canoe and used it on their houses, there would be big trouble also according to Pall of Bilbil. "There was a serious traditional law about this as the totem was for the canoe and nothing else" (Mennis, 1981b: 42).

The totem was like a flag at the top of the mast which identified the canoe for villagers along the coast. They would see a canoe arriving and say, "the Dugus clan from Bilbil has come", etc. If they had particular trade friends with that village, they would hurry down to the beach to greet them (Mennis, 1981a: 28). The design on the sail of a canoe likewise indicates where it is from. The Bilbils had a large red fish whereas the Karkar people had a design of the tail of a fish which curved like a fan. When the whole canoe was visible, it was obvious which of the traders was visiting. The drawings on the side of the canoe are painted in white, red and black. The parts of the canoe which are bartered come apart, stored under the house and pulled out for the next year, tied up again and re-decorated.

When the canoe was launched, the owner of the canoe paid those who had helped by killing a pig and having a large feast. In the 1920's, Nomu did this as payment for those who had helped him build his canoe. In this case, the helpers came from the three



By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*Top view of the along showing the sail and the totem on top of the nautilus decoration. Notice the pot cage which could carry up to a hundred pots (Rosalie Christensen).*

clans in Bilbil, Murpatt, Dugus and Luan. These feasts were called the *opim dua* of the canoe.

#### Bashan of Bilia:

The people drench the crew with seawater. They hit the water with branches and wet everyone. It is a new canoe. They shoot the top of the mast with arrows. They sing out, “You *masalai* you cannot sit down on top there. You must leave. It is our canoe now. We are happy with it”. They did this and then pulled the canoe into the water. (Mennis, 1980b: 69). When the canoe is finished the men test it on the water to see if the ropes are slack and if it is watertight. They bring their *kundu* and sing the song called *Bazok*. I can’t sing this; the *big men* knew it.

The *likon* sings to each piece of wood that was used to make the canoe. He sings these names and beats the *kundu* until morning. Then the men would burn some leaves, which would burn up like firecrackers. They would burn bamboo too. In the morning they put the canoe in the water. If there is only a small wind they would stay on the beach and wait for the *talio* or another wind to blow. Then they race in the water with the other canoes for there would not be just one canoe, but many.

The *palangut* goes first because it has two sails and the *lalongs* follow. They go to Kranket or Yabob or Bilbil. Then come home and talk about the canoe and whether it is running smoothly or the ropes are still too slack. If this were the case, they would bring the canoe onto the beach remove the ropes and fasten them again, making them stronger. Later, they will decide on a day to go to the Rai Coast or to Karkar. They fill the canoe with pots and put them in the basket. Then they sail to Karkar and sell all these pots and the Karkars give them *galip*, pigs etc. (Mennis, 1980b: 63-4).

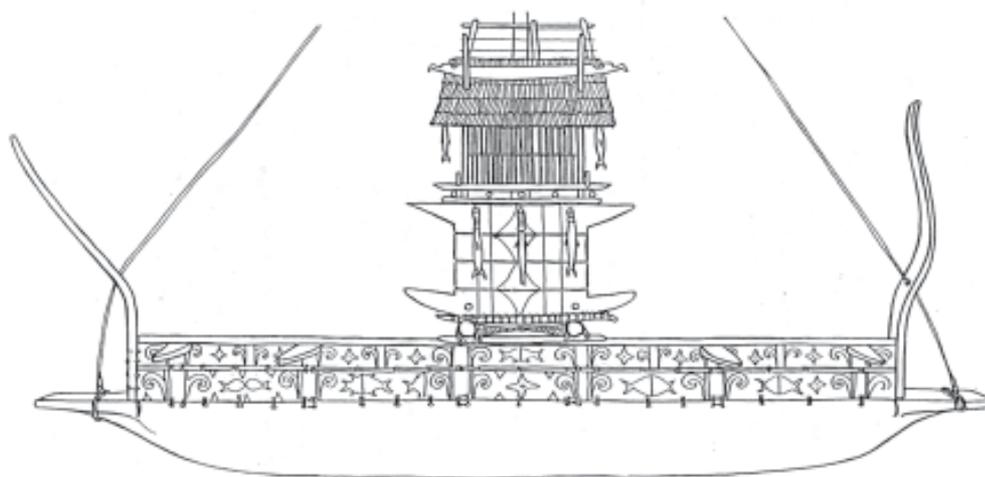
When a new canoe visited the Rai Coast, there would also be *opim dua* ceremonies at each village. Men throwing spears and firing arrows at the mast would greet the canoe. The bow would be hit with coconuts as a welcome and to “open the door” or *opim dua* of the canoe to the trade items on the canoe. Damun of Bilbil said that this welcome was extended to all the canoes during the 1935 trip. Once the canoe had been opened, the pots were laid on the sand and exchanged for other trade items in the village. Usually the trade was between a particular clan on Bilbil and a particular clan of the village that was being visited. Within these two respective clans, there would be individual trading partners. Often trade friendships lasted for years. The ceremonies were much the same whether the canoe was a new one or an old one that had been renovated.

Sungai of Siar describes the reception at a trading village:

The *big men* would display the canoe all around and the host village people would pretend to attack it. They would hit a dry coconut on the front of the canoe and say, “you must cut the seawater like a snake, you must work hard. You have a long mouth to leap over the waves”, then they would call out the name of the canoe. They would also pretend to attack the boat-crew and the captain with pieces of wood. Later they would go and eat and praise the canoe builders for their fine canoe. Next day they would go to Sek and Riwo and the same celebrations would be held. They would sleep there and the next morning they would go as far as Bilbil (Mennis, 1980b: 44).

According to Mager’s dictionary, a *baz* is a spell used to ward off evil spirits and to render ineffective the *naiz*, black magic. Such incantations were used for canoes, gardens, lovers etc.

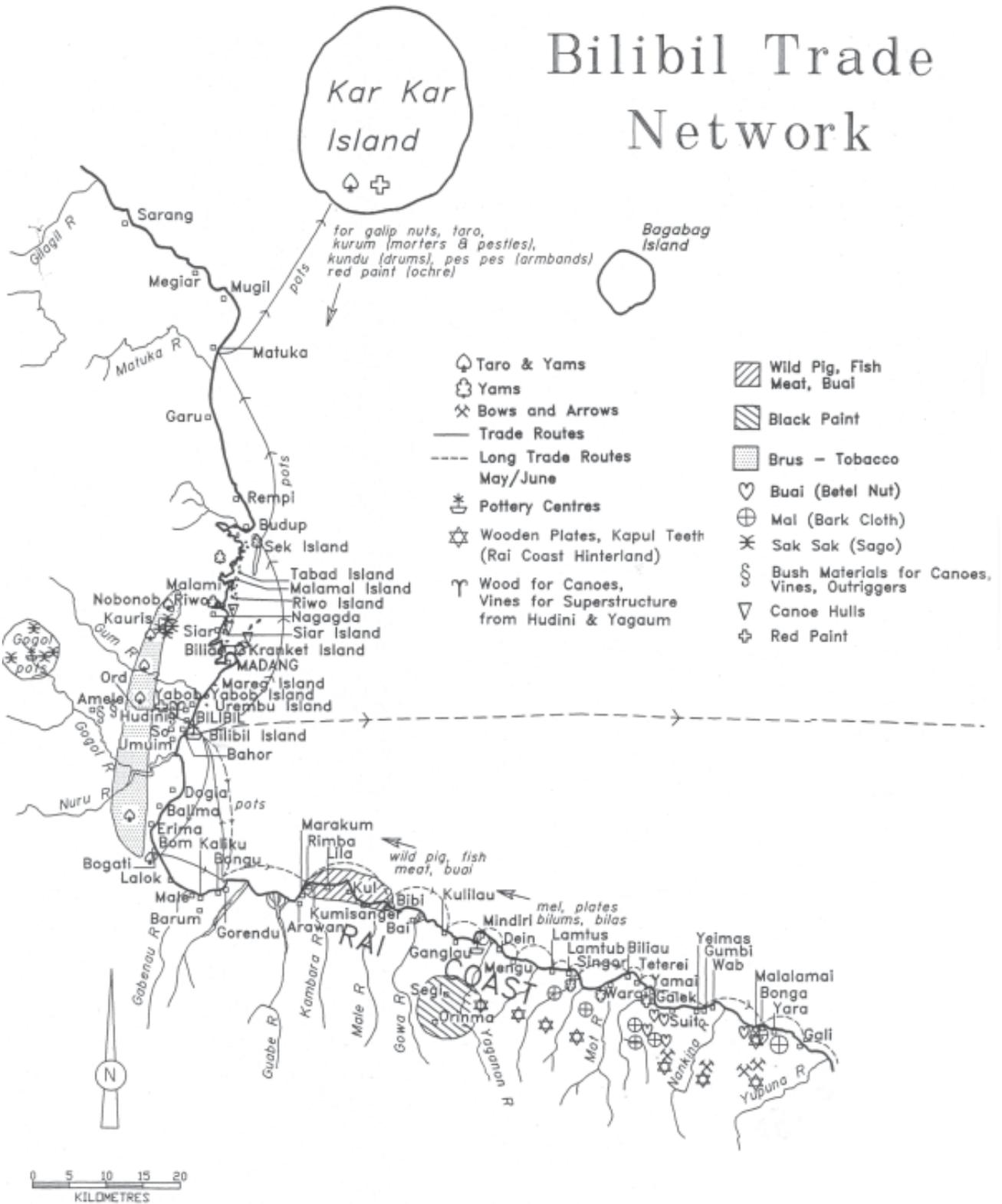
Note: A detailed description of the building of a one mast canoe, a *lalong*, may be found in Chapter 15 and in Mennis, 1982



Side view of a lalong showing the fish decorations. Note the breakwaters at each end (Rosalie Christensen).

By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

# Bilibil Trade Network



Kar Kar Island

for galip nuts, taro, kurum (mortars & pestles), kundu (drums), pes pes (armbands) red paint (ochre)

Bagabag Island

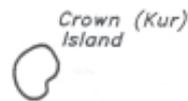
- ☐ Taro & Yams
- ☐ Yams
- ☐ Bows and Arrows
- Trade Routes
- - - Long Trade Routes May/June
- ☐ Pottery Centres
- ☐ Wooden Plates, Kapul Teeth (Rai Coast Hinterland)
- ☐ Wood for Canoes, Vines for Superstructure from Hudini & Yagaum
- ☐ Wild Pig, Fish Meat, Bual
- ☐ Black Point
- ☐ Brus - Tobacco
- ☐ Buai (Betel Nut)
- ☐ Mai (Bark Cloth)
- ☐ Sak Sak (Sago)
- ☐ Bush Materials for Canoes, Vines, Outriggers
- ☐ Canoe Hulls
- ☐ Red Paint

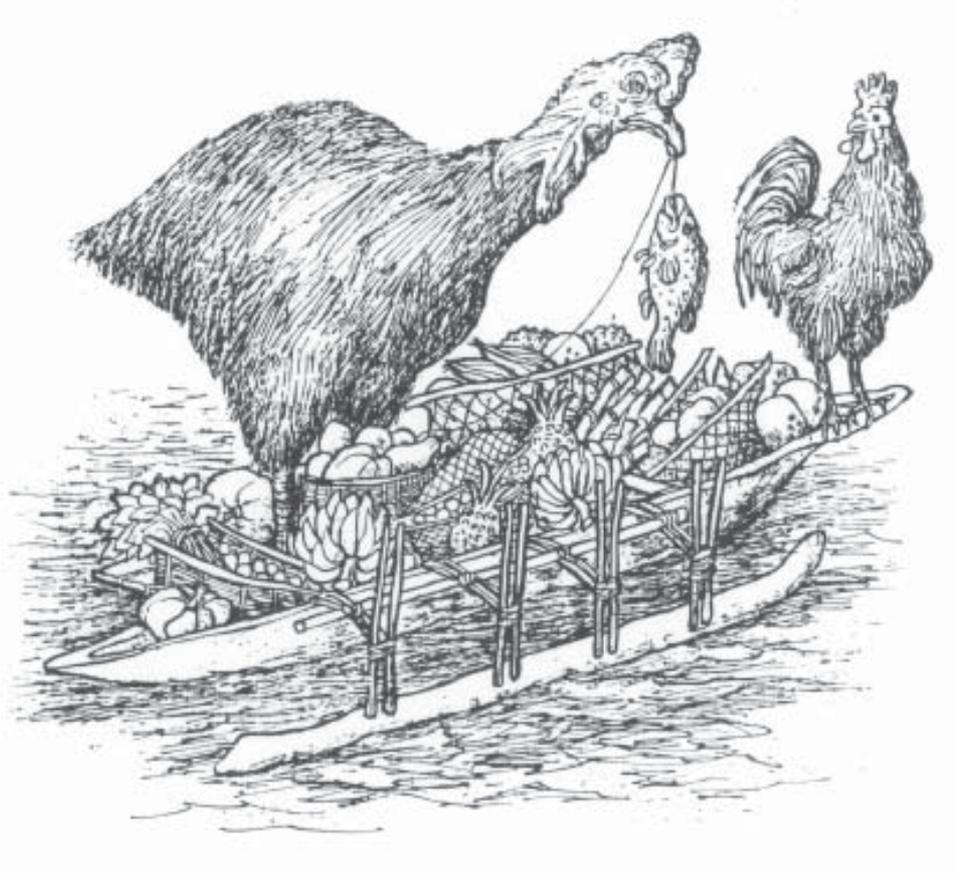
Peter J Edwards

# Bilibil Trade Network



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 🍷 Taro & Yams  | 🐷 Wild Pig, Fish Meat, Bual                    |
| 🍠 Yams   | 🖌️ Black Paint                                 |
| 🏹 Bows and Arrows  | 🚬 Brus - Tobacco                               |
| — Trade Routes   | ♥️ Buai (Betel Nut)                            |
| - - - Long Trade Routes May/June                                 | ⊕ Mai (Bark Cloth)                             |
| 🏺 Pottery Centres  | ✂️ Sak Sak (Sago)                              |
| ☆ Wooden Plates, Kapul Teeth (Rai Coast Hinterland)              | 🌿 Bush Materials for Canoes, Vines, Outriggers |
| 🌳 Wood for Canoes, Vines for Superstructure from Hudini & Yagaum | 🚤 Canoe Hulls                                  |
|  | 🔴 Red Paint                                    |





By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*The muruk and the rooster going on a trading trip. (Rosalie Christensen)*

## Chapter 5, Trading in Astrolabe Bay



The muruk (cassowary) and the fowl both made a canoe and agreed to sail it to the Rai Coast on a trading trip. When they had put the canoe in the water, the fowl sat up on the platform and the muruk stayed below and steered. The wind blew on the fowl's feathers and they fluttered back and forth. They looked so pretty that the muruk became jealous and requested a feather. So the fowl gave him a feather, which the muruk put in his tail. The muruk was still not satisfied and demanded another feather. The fowl handed this over and the muruk added it to his tail. Because the wind did not make the same noise in these feathers as it did in the fowl's feathers, the muruk became angry and he broke the canoe with his claws.

"Look, I have broken the canoe with my claws!" he called to the fowl thinking that now the fowl would drown.

"I am all right," the fowl called back. "I can fly, but what about you?"

The fowl flew off to a village on the Rai Coast leaving the muruk clinging to the sinking canoe. The muruk pleaded with the fish to take him ashore but they would not listen. Then along came a friendly turtle and he pleaded with him. By this time he was standing in the seawater in the canoe, which was sinking rapidly.

"If you take me", he pleaded, "I will give you some betel nut, taro and bush tobacco".

So the turtle agreed and he carried the muruk to the shore. The crafty muruk said, "you stay here and I'll go and get the betel nut I promised you".

The turtle became suspicious and tried to leave saying, "no I can't stop I must go," and he walked off. The muruk hurried after him and turned him over and tied one leg to a tree. Then muruk went off to tell the villagers to come and kill the turtle. While he was away a rat came and spoke to the turtle.

"What did the muruk tell you?" he asked.

"He said he would get me some betel nut and taro and other things because I helped him to get ashore."

"He is tricking you," replied the rat. "He has gone to get the villagers to kill you, but I will help you and he set to work to chew the rope vine. Only a little bit remained when they heard the men approaching.

"Just lie still," whispered the rat to the turtle. "The men will try to shoot you. When they try the third time pull hard on the rope and it will break and then jump in the water."

The men came with the muruk and all happened as the rat foretold. The turtle jumped the third time and landed with a splash in the water and swam off. The men tried to shoot it in the water, but their spears fell short. They were so angry they turned on the ungrateful muruk and speared it instead (A trading myth told by Pall of Bilbil Village).

This shows up the perfidy of one's so called friends or trading partners who cannot always be trusted. The fowl and the *muruk* had begun as trading friends but jealousy put an end to the successful completion of the trading trip. Often canoes were swamped out at sea just as in the story. However, the traders usually helped each other safely ashore not like the fowl who flew off to a village leaving the *muruk* to his fate.

The *muruk* certainly deserved what he got. Even when the turtle came to the *muruk*'s aid, the latter was ungrateful and tried to get the turtle killed. He was ready to go any length to make friends with the Rai Coast villagers he was visiting and was punished in the end. It shows that the people had legends rather like the Aesop's Fables which were to teach a lesson. This story also shows many aspects of trading: the people from around the Madang area went trading to the Rai Coast; the village people gave the



Bycourtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*Woman sitting holding a pot and betel nuts, both important in the trading negotiations of the Bel group. Other traditional trade items show are the garamut behind her and the decorations and the bilum she is wearing.*

traders betel nuts and small pieces of taro as gifts before they started the exchanges of pots for trade items and that negotiations on trading trips did not always go smoothly.

Traditional trading systems were used by the people to extend their relationships on a supra-family level to other villages. There were also myths of the first trading voyages in which each tribe believed, giving credence to the ancient nature of the trading system. The Wogeo had the story of Mafofo and Wongka; the Manam Islanders, the story of two brothers, Mumboa and Liboaba; and the Bilbils the story of Kilibob and Manup. All of these culture heroes were at odds with each other and took part in some myths or spiritual journeying to show people the way. Sometimes the historical facts in myths are more difficult to see than in others, but it was one way that history was passed down from one generation to another. They also emphasise the importance of trading partners. Trading in goods and food has been practised along the coast of Papua and New Guinea for many thousands of years and was a very old aspect of their culture (Allen, 1977: 388-391).

In the Kilibob and Manup myth, the two brothers had a fight after Manup stole Kilibob's wife. Kilibob left Budup and created islands on the way towards the Rai Coast, the direction the men travelled when they went trading. Manup sailed his canoe in the other direction, later they met again.

This myth is very similar to that of the Motu two-brother myth, which is always known as the myth of the first Hiri trading voyage of the Motu people. There were two brothers, Taurama and Kumea, who were hills near Pari Village. Taurama was the elder

of the two brothers. The fertility around these hills was so great that people from over the area used to come to trade with them. The two brothers were happy but then Kumea stole his brother's wife and the two brothers fell out. Kumea was sent into exile. He left, taking many people and fertile lands with him to the Gulf. That is why the other brother, Taurama, has to visit him to get the sago (T. Vagi, Pari Village, Central Province, interview, 1995).

Surely the Bel myth is also an origin myth of the first trading trip and should not just be seen as the precursor of the cargo cults there as anthropologist, Peter Lawrence, would have us believe (1964: 65). Because Kilibob promised to return bringing the cargo, Lawrence viewed this myth as the basis for the first of the cargo cults in the Madang area. However he was limited in his analysis of the myth as it is also the myth of the first trading trip and, as Lawrence, mentioned Kilibob and Manup were invoked during trading trips to protect the canoe (ibid).

Rufus Pech, who wrote at length on the Kilibob and Manup myth, stated that it was also a myth of the beginning of the trading system:

One of the two of them or both of them, are credited with the establishment of a special maritime culture, the founding of distant new colonies and the initiation of an overseas trading system. These two are usually described as an older and a younger brother. The older brother may be considerate, conservative and imitative, the younger one wilful, imaginative and inventive, or vice versa. Further one may be a skilful craftsman, the other inept; one may be a crafty trickster, the other a stolid dupe; one a wandering trader, the other a stay-at-home-gardener (1991: 28).

The maritime trade systems in Papua New Guinea can be compared with the inland trade systems. In the Highlands, the distance traversed was rarely more than 16 kilometres (Hughes 1977: 302) and tribes would be involved in Short Distance Trading and Middlemen Trading for a number of items whereas, on the coast, large sea-going canoes made it possible to cover great distances. The Bilbils travelled up to 160 kilometres eastwards and westwards (Bodrogi, 1979: 270). By travelling in fleets of canoes, these traders had some protection against enemies and a quick escape. On the other hand, Highland traders had no similar method of protection and this was the main limiting factor on the distance traversed. Hughes explains, "that the presence of enemies not physical distance, was the principal obstacle" (ibid). The main purpose of these trading trips was the acquisition of food which the Coastal Bilbils, being deficient in gardens, depended on for subsistence.<sup>1</sup>

In the Highlands of New Guinea, the people were self-sufficient in their garden plots and could afford to trade for other items. Furthermore, since the terrain and climate were similar over a wide area, the same crops were produced thus lessening the incentive to trade in foodstuffs. However, the Highlanders needed

fibres and woods and shell ornaments from the lowlands and the coast and traded for them. Hughes wrote that, “while the large scale and famous ceremonial prestations involved the accumulation and distribution of large quantities of pigs and staple vegetables, for most of the highlands regional trade was not for staple food” (1977: 204).

Some coastal areas produced specialty crops not readily available in other areas. The Wogeo Islanders traded *galip* (canarium nuts) and a large nut called *wasek* for yams, tobacco, pots and shell scrapers from the coastal villages which did not produce the nuts. In the Siassi end of the North Coast, the production of differing food crops explains the pattern of trading in some areas (Harding, 1967: 242).

In both coastal and highland areas some goods travelled enormous distances through intermediaries - in the Highlands, salt, stone axes, pottery, shells and pigments were traded over an area exceeding eighteen thousand square kilometres. On the coast, obsidian from Talasea travelled extremely long distances both along the coast and into the interior. Intertribal trade played the most important role in the communication system. In fact it was the very basis on which many other relationships rested, for example, marriage.

#### **The *Dadeng*, Trading Trips in Astrolabe Bay**

The canoe was a vital part of the trading networks along the coast and out to the adjoining islands long before the Europeans ever came to live there. It was canoes like these that enabled settlements in New Guinea along the coast to trade with other communities over thousands of years. For the size of the village and the number of sailors, Bilbil Village was held in high esteem. Although the

island’s population was estimated at only between 200-250 in 1888 (Harding, 1967: 14), and there could not have been more than 60 able bodied men to sail the canoes at any one time, they were known far and wide for their trading system and they saw themselves as at the centre of their own trading system. This encompassed villages to the north, as far as Sarang and Megiar on the coast; Karkar Island to the north; villages in the Madang Passage including Kranket, Bilia, Siar, Riwo and Panutibun Islands; inland villages in the Gogol Valley and many villages on the Rai Coast and inland areas. Like the Siassi people, they were middlemen for a great variety of trade items.

Bellwood mentions “three overlapping trading spheres” centred on Tami Island, the Siassi and Bilbil Island, in which, “hundreds of ecologically and culturally specialised communities are involved, exchanging root crops for coastal fish, coconuts and pottery and three groups of sea-borne middlemen” (Bellwood, 1978: 103). Other anthropologists, historians and archaeologists who have studied the Siassi trade network of the Vitiaz Strait (Bodrogi, 1979: Lilley, 1985: 60-5; Harding, 1967: 13) tend to view the Bilbil network as insignificant and a subsidiary of the Siassi trading system. However their system was as important as the Siassi system. Although there was a certain overlap between the Bilbil and the Siassi and Tami Islands trade systems, many artefacts were exclusive in the three trading spheres. The Rai Coast was the area of greatest overlap. Here Bilbil pots were traded for Siassi and Tami goods: pig tusks and dogteeth ornaments coming from Siassi, and wooden bowls from Tami were exchanged for Rai Coast pigs, bark cloth, wooden plates and Bilbil pots etc in a myriad of trade negotiations. Perhaps Bellwood was correct when he described Siassi and Bilbil and Tami as three overlapping trading spheres.



*“The pots were our money.” A pile of Bilbil pots ready for trading.*

The Bilbil people had a sense of identity in the fact that they were long-distance traders, and the makers of canoes and pots. The small rocky island of Bilbil was inhabited until the early 1900's when the people shifted to the mainland. On the island each of the clans had its own men's house where the clansmen would gather and relate tales of their prowess on the high seas. Since the island could not provide subsistence for its people, they had to resort to trading and planting gardens on the mainland and making pots, the clay for which was collected on the mainland. Their large canoes were capable of carrying up to a hundred large pots in the pot cage (Harding, 1967: 196). Finsch describes seeing thirteen canoes on the beach on Bilbil Island in 1888 (Mennis, 1996: 15).

Bodrogi postulated with Harding that the Bilbil were on the periphery of a larger trade system ranging from Bogia around to Tami Island but the Bilbil saw themselves as the centre of their own intensive and extensive trading sphere. Harding does not see this system as being exclusive as, "these overseas voyagers sustain a significant development of interregional specialisation and created thereby a regional economy" (1979: 269). Although the basic object of the *dadeng* may have been to get food, the Bilbil people traded in many other goods. Their specialisation in pottery and their monopoly over it led to quite of high standard of living on the island, which was remarked on by Otto Finsch in 1884 (Mennis, 1996: 16).

Apart from food, there were many trade items exchanged for the Bilbil pots: on the Rai Coast bows and arrows, wooden bowls, *mal* and shells for decorations, possum teeth and dogteeth would be exchanged for pots; Bongor and Singor had *kangal* (bird feathers); *brus* (tobacco) came from places from Nobonob to Bogati and Bongu; *galip* nuts, drums, *paspas* decorations and wooden bowls came from Karkar Island.

There are broad categories in trading: Long Distance Trading; Short Distance Trading; Middlemen Trading; and Ring Trading. Within these categories, different roles are played depending whether the trader is the host or the visitor. Early this century, nearly every village in Papua New Guinea took part in at least one of these types of trade as active givers or receivers. Each category had its own rules and customs to be followed. Hosts had to ensure the safety of their visitors or risk losing their reputation and they had to welcome their visiting trade partners and ensure that they were adequately fed during the visit. Miklouho-Maclay noted an example of this while on a trading trip with the Bilbil chief, Kain, when he witnessed the village people being upbraided for not playing host properly by killing a large pig to welcome them (Sentinella, 1975: 274). The visitors also had to follow a set of rules. If they were an inland tribe, they had to make sure they had appeased the spirits of the unfamiliar territory. They could not look back for fear of disturbing the spirits. They had to ensure their own safety by not taking too many risks or venturing too far and they had to bring the trade items that the host village wanted.

Peter Lawrence describes trade as being formal or informal:

Informal trade went on continually. On the Rai Coast, Ngaing brought bowls and bark cloth to the coast, and returned with fish, salt, dry coconuts, pots and valuables. At Madang, mainland groups exchanged wooden plates for pots and valuables from the islands. For formal trade, the Madang groups assembled canoes (1964: 27).

So informal trade would be the short distance trade, which was carried on continually, and formal trade, the long trading trips, which required so much preparation and depended on the winds and the weather far more than the informal type. The long trips to the Rai Coast usually took place between the months of May and July. For months before the women would have been busy making the hundreds of pots which were carried in the potcage on the canoe. The *likon* would choose a day and the women would hasten to make their pots, fire them and dry them in the sun. The men would get decorated and paint the canoes. They killed chickens and gathered to have a feast. Then the men would beat the drums and the women would fill their netbags with pots and rush down to the canoes. If the canoe were a *lalong*, then two men would be busy filling up the pot cage. If it were a *palangut*, it would take four men to fill up the larger pot cage. Once loaded, the pots were protected from the sea by *limbom* leaves placed on the top and sides. The pace was feverish in the village during the preparation for a trading trip and shows the high level of organisation of the society.

In researching the trading system, taped evidence of the former traders themselves is of paramount importance. The Bilbil men in the 1970's could still remember going on trading trips before the war. Pall Tagari provided the details of one trading trip:

We went to Rimba on Astrolabe Bay. Then we went to Siliau near Saidor, next we went to Biliau. Some stayed here, but papa and I went on to Yeimas. We pulled the canoes up and ate. We gave them pots and there were some men from Wab here too. Next day we went to Seure and gave them pots. Our friends came down from the bush and gave us betel nuts and smokes. We slept there. Now the custom when we went visiting the Rai Coast was for the people there to shoot a pig. Next day we went to Mun. All our friends there shot a pig and cooked it. We sold the pots for *mal* or plates and *bilums*. Then we went on to Yara. Some canoes went there and some on to Bonga, which was our last stopping place. We stayed there for a month waiting for our friends to prepare things for us and for the wind to turn.

Then we returned to Mun and others called into Seure. They fed us and we went to Yara. Some canoes went in here and others to Wab to get what was owed. We all met together afterwards at Siliau. We left and all the canoes together went to Rimba. This was where my father came from so all the relatives and uncles came down to see us and talk and laugh.

We stayed here and they cooked food for us and we sat on the beach. They cooked the oil of the coconuts here.

Then the men said, “tomorrow we will go back home to Bilbil. There are many people waiting for us”. After their return, there was much dancing and feasting and the people at Amele, inland from the coast would hear the drums and say to each other, “the Bilbil men are home from their trading trip” (Mennis, 1980b: 87-89).

The main reason for the trade was economic. The people traded the pots for those food items which were needed during the lean and hungry times of the year and for many other items. Pots were seen as an item of currency. “Pots were our money”, they said. However, once a more complex economic system was introduced with the coming of the Germans, the traders and the buyers of pots were no longer content with using the pots and other trade items as currency. The rocky islands that the Yabob and the Bilbil people lived on were by nature infertile and even though they grew gardens on the mainland, there were a few months of real hardship when the people would starve without the food that was exchanged for the pots. Pall Tagari said the following food was exchanged for pots: taro, betel nut, sago, sweet potato, *galip* nuts and meat (Mennis, 1981b: 54-56).

Much of the pot trade was for the large taro tubers from Bogati, Sehan and Nobonob from May until August. January and February was the time for the small taro. Pots from Bilbil and Yabob were traded for yams from Siar, Riwo, Kranket, Malamal and Sek Islands in the Madang Harbour area and from Galek, Warai and Singor on the Rai Coast. The Bilbil people would store the yams in their yam houses for the time of the big winds in August, which prevented them from venturing out in their canoes.

The Bilbils were also the middlemen for a great number of items traded between Karkar Island and the Rai Coast and the Siassi Islands. Conflicting oral traditions about the extent of the Bilbils’ sailing may be the reason why there is a discrepancy between the accounts found in the early German records. Harding quoted Krieger as saying that the Bilbils, “regularly travelled to Umboi Island [Siassi] and the Finschhafen area, sailing during the North-west season and returning by the South-east trades”, and that the Umboi Islanders ventured in the other direction and stayed at Bilbil Island (1967: 196). Damun of Bilbil denied that the people went to Umboi, they only met them on the Rai Coast but he stated that the Umboi Islanders visited Bilbil Island quite often and waited there for the winds to turn before returning home (Mennis, 1981a: 25).

Another reason for the *dadeng* was social. The contacts that were made in other villages by the canoe crews were wide reaching and their fame travelled far beyond the furthest village they traded with. They were the visitors to villagers along the Rai Coast and these people rarely reciprocated the visits. This meant the traders were the instigators of the trade and played a proactive role on

their trade missions, whereas the people they visited were the hosts and had the less active role in the transactions. While the traders may have been out-numbered, their skills and crafts as pot makers were valued and the host villagers gave them the deference that was usually demanded. So we see the village chief, Kain, of Bilbil Village, upbraiding the people on the Rai Coast for not providing a pig to welcome them. There was great prestige to be gained from going on a trading trip and the names of great traders like Kain, Mul and Dadau went ahead of them far and wide so it became part of the system to keep up their social obligations.

Trade friends were an important component of the social life of the trade system. The relationships with trade friends on the trip were also important. Bonnemaïson believes that it is in the relationship of man with his place that, “a feeling of identity is forged”. Trading partners shared this identity with their partners, so that they had an identity in the social structure of the villages visited (Bonnemaïson, 1985: 32). Within the village context, the *dadeng* played a large part in the life of the village. Just as most of the work in the village is divided amongst the men or women, so also it is with the construction of the canoe. The work of building the canoe was nearly all done by the men, although the women helped with making the *dim*, and sewing the *pit* mats for the roof. While the men were building the canoes and preparing for a trading trip, the women were busy making pots for trading.

Although the economic need for food and artefacts was the basis for the trade, there were also social obligations that needed to be fulfilled. The Bilbil renewed social interaction with their trade partners, usually on a friendly basis, as they were regarded as the patricians of Astrolabe Bay (Harding, 1967: 23)

Austronesians generally were seafarers who traded over large areas of sea and the islands in their immediate area. So the Trobriand Islanders had the *Kula* ring; the Motuans the *Hiri*; the Bilbil Islanders had the *Dadeng*, a trading circuit to Karkar Island and the Rai Coast. The long trading trips like those of the Bilbil and the Hiri were seen as spiritual journeys. Bonnemaïson wrote that in Vanuatu, the journeying was, “carefully controlled by the group, which endowed it with a purpose and celebrated it as a rite, — In particular, departures for other islands by outrigger canoes involved a whole social organisation, lengthy material preparations, the acquisition of navigational techniques and special rituals” (Bonnemaïson, 1985: 32ff).

The Bilbil and Yabob people believed that when they died their spirits would go to Degasub on the Rai Coast. Maia once said, “When a man dies the women gather around and wail and the dying man hears them and knows that his last hour has come. Then his spirit goes to the Rai Coast to Degasub where Tinigai protects the entrance to the spirit world”. It is a strange coincidence that the Motu people see the Gulf area as the place where their spirits will go when they die. In both the *Dadeng* and the *Hiri*, the traders are visiting the place of their ancestor spirits and where

their souls will go when they die. This itself would provide a spiritual basis for the journey.

Sea Magic was used before the canoes were taken out to sea. The sea magician took betel nut lime, pepper, a stone axe, a bowl called *dod* made from banana leaves, a straw broom and finally a piece of obsidian. The magician takes all these things to the village square and the same ceremony occurs as for sun magic, but different spells are used. He puts all the things mentioned on the ground and the weatherman sat near him. *Koniak*, an alcoholic drink made from roots, is drunk and then he turns the drinking bowl and says:

*O Dongekpain, O Rorpain*  
*Make the sea quiet*  
*Look upon Id-auwan Strait (near Karkar)*  
*Look upon Cape Sogorom*  
*Put one foot on Id-auwan*  
*And the other on Cape Sogorom.*

Then he spins the bowl again - -

*O Dangekpain, O Rorpain*  
*I give you betel nut and pepper.*  
*Kilibob, O Manup,*  
*I give you this special axe,*  
*Smash the middle of the sea*  
*And smooth the waves.*  
*I break the black stone for you.*  
*Hit the waves of the sea with it.*  
*Oh Dangekpain, take this broom,*  
*Please look down and make the flat sea last.*

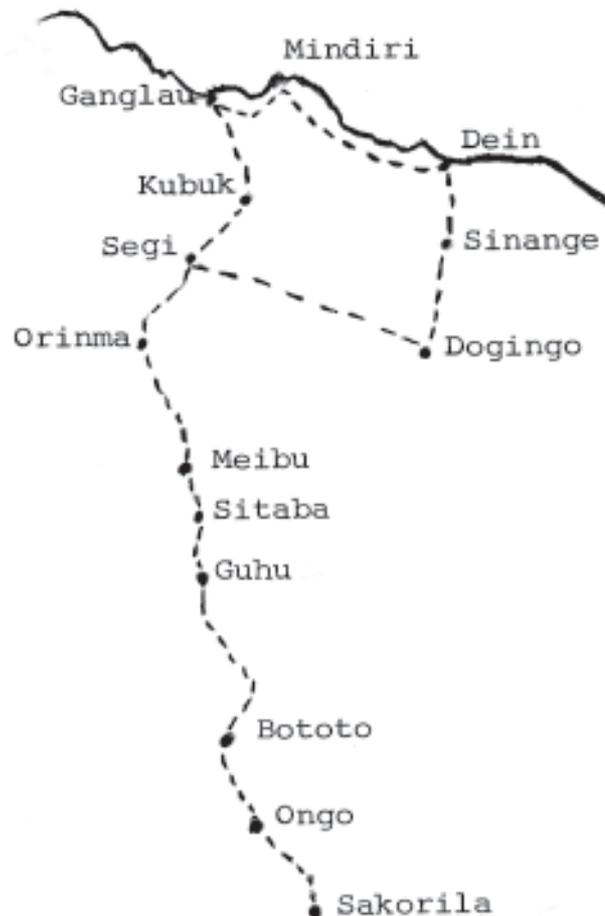
The Yabob believe that it is the sea monster *Wagawag* and the two women spirits, who cause the storms because they let out the storm from their mouths, ears and bottom. Another spell is made calling them to close these orifices. Finally the dog, *Tarangau*, is called upon because he can devour the wind.

The magician chants:

*Now I grasp the wind*  
*And push it into Tarangau's mouth*  
*I cover the entrance to Kuluk*  
*With a large mal blanket*  
*I close Tarangau's mouth.*  
*And put his tail in the hole.*

Furthermore, in the Madang area, connecting paths between villages whether over the sea or land, took on a spiritual as well as a cultural and social meaning. Traders ventured out armed with weapons of both a physical and spiritual nature so they can be protected against the bad spirits and sorcery. Connections between the traders and the people they visited were on the same level as family connections within the village. Because traders were always outnumbered, they depended on their trading friends for protection. Their trading partners were important links in the chain and treated the visitors as part of their family. This courtesy was repeated in each of the places where they had trading partners.

The Bel group shared the myth of Kilibob and Manup with many other coastal villages. Kilibob called in at many places along the coast, "at each coastal village he put a man ashore, giving him the power of speech, food, plants, a bow and arrows, a stone axe and adze, rain and ritual formulae" (Lawrence, 1964: 22).



*Map of the inland trade route from Mindiri on the Rai Coast. The Mindiri traded pots for other inland artefacts to these villages.*

The Bel traders were protected spiritually against the difficulties they might encounter by the supplications and prayers of the *likon*. Even Pall, a Christian, said, “the *likon* made strong magic over the wind. He could make the *dadau* wind strong enough to blow the canoes to Siassi. — This was the time of the big magic when the *likons* could make the sea very rough”. The rituals were important to ensure the success of trading trips in obtaining items necessary for their livelihood. Sometimes artefacts purchased on trading trips became part of the religious life of the people. The flutes and bullroarers, as we have seen, were used in the *darem* house to warn the women and the uninitiated that the spirits of the ancestors were about to arrive. The wooden ornaments were worn in the armbands in initiation ceremonies and during the *meziab* and were viewed as sacred objects.

In preparation for a trading trip, the women made hundreds of pots. At the same time they had to do the cooking, using stored food from previous trips, while the men built the canoes. As the time approached for the fleet of canoes to depart, other canoes would appear from Kranket, Siar and Riwo to join in the trading trip. They were members of the Bel group and expert canoe builders, although they did not make pots. Krankets, in particular, made the hulls for the Bilbil canoes and could trade food for Bilbil pots which they could then trade on. This overcame the problem that they did not make pots themselves. The women in Yabob and Bilbil tapped away at their pots and more canoes laden with clay would arrive from the mainland. This would be distributed amongst the houses, as at that stage all women were potters. Finished pots were carefully carried to the canoes where the men stored them in the pot cage, carefully wrapped in leaves. From now on the pots became the property of the men to be used for business.

Maia’s description:

The *likon* would choose a day and the men would tell the women to have their pots ready. The men would get decorated and would paint the canoes. They would kill some chooks and gather to have a feast. Then the men would beat the *garamut* and the women would fill their *bilums* with pots and others would just hold them and then they would rush down to the canoe. If the canoe were a one-mast then *lalong*, would be busy filling up the pot cage. If it were a *palangut*, it would take 4 men to fill up the pot cage. Then they would put the *limbum* leaves on the sides and top to protect them from the sea. Then they would say “Tomorrow morning we will go in our canoes.” Before they left the men would tell their wives to work hard and not get cross. If the women laughed and fought and got lazy the men would not be able to sell their pots. They would bring them all back again. One time, a woman misbehaved and her husband returned with their pots, being unable to sell them.

Around about May, the *likon* had to pick the best time for the trading trip and he “organised” the weather so that the winds

would be right and the seas not too rough so that the artefacts could be gathered safely. As previously mentioned, he had magic he could use to quell rough seas or bring out the sun. These ceremonies were long and he had to observe fasts so that they worked. The winds were of paramount importance for a successful trip. He would intone, “Oh Sagui, oh Bipoi, now I give you ornaments! Betel chalk I make, betelnut and pepper I give you. A loincloth, a long good one, I tie [around your loins]” (Aufinger, 1939: 277-291). The men would instruct their wives to be chaste and work well while they were away. Any immoral behaviour and the sale of their pots would be jinxed. As the men headed off they would sound the conch shell in the particular “code” of their clan until they were out of hearing (Mennis, 1981a: 74). The fleet of canoes left Bilbil Island together: the canoes from Yabob, Riwo, Kranket and Siar as well as those from Bilbil Island. This gave them protection not only from enemies, but also against the high seas. If one canoe was swamped then another would be able to pick up the survivors.

Strict discipline was maintained at sea. The captain was in undisputed charge of each canoe and it was his responsibility to train the crew so no harm was done. Masil said, “If the captain says, ‘the *rai* wind is blowing so turn the sails’, then you must obey him” (Mennis, 1980a: 91). Derr remembered one occasion when a Rai Coast man was travelling on the canoe and would not listen to instructions from Mul. “My father got very cross and pushed that man into the water. He swam around and we sailed on a bit. Then we stopped and threw him a paddle, which he grabbed and swam over to the canoe. After this he listened to my father and obeyed him” (Ibid: 92).

The following villages were near Bilbil and were frequently visited: Bahor, Umuin, Malanga, Garim, Dogia, Balima, Erima, Bom, Bogati, Lalok, Male, Kaliku, Arawan, Marakum, Rimba, Lila and Kul. The following villages were visited on the longer trading trips: Kumisanger; Bibi; Gowan River, Kulilau; Ganglau; Mindiri who were special friends of the Siars; Dein; Lamtub; Singor; Warai; Biliau, where Luan clan had trading partners; Teterai, where Gapan clan traded; Yamai, where the Yabob and Dugus clans traded; Galek, where Gapan and Dugus clans traded; Suit, where Murpatt and Dugus clans traded; Yeimas, where Dugus clan traded; Gumbi, Yabob’s trading partner; Wab, who were Dugus clan’s trading partners; Suri, which had only a small population and traded with the Dugus clan; Saidor traded with the Dugus clan; Fangger, Mur; Baru, Sel and Mom all traded with the Gapan clan; Dawag with the Dugus clan; Suere with the Murpatt and Dugus clans; Yagomi traded with Yabob and the Gapan clan; Kangurere with the Gapan clan; Malalamai was a big village and traded with the Murpatt, Dugus and Gapan clans; Bonga with the Luan and Gapan clans; Yara, Gali and Roinji traded with the Murpatt clan; but Singorokai, Kiari, Malasanga and Sio, had many clans visiting. As Pambu was on the coast beyond Sio, the traders did not go there but traded indirectly through Sio.



much of their time travelling on their canoes trading their pots. To such an extent that Miklouho-Maclay noted that his village friend, Lalai, like the other Bilbil men, did not develop strong calves in his legs like the mountain people because of his “life spent on a small island and in a pirogue on journeys between the villages” (Sentinella, 1975: 74). Host villages had to welcome visitors and make sure their trade partners were adequately fed. The fact that the Bilbil followed the role of visitor rather than host may have characterised their system of trading in many ways. They seldom had to stay home ready to play the more passive role of host but were free to visit many villages, all anxious to welcome them and secure their trade items. They were free to live a life of adventure, assured of a welcome wherever they went in their trading zone. Even the bushmen knew not to harm the women when they were collecting clay from the mainland, for no clay meant no pots.

Betelnut chewing was a widely followed social habit. It was chewed with trading partners to cement a friendship, and as a guarantee that the trade items would be forthcoming on the return trip. Trading partners in the coastal villages were often given orders for bows and arrows or wooden plates from inland areas which they exchanged for the pots when the Yabob/Bilbil people arrived in their canoes. Exchange of trade items took place in the village square or in the houses of the trade partners.

Trade friends were important to the Bel people if they wanted to retain their name of *bigmen* in each of the villages they visited. Trade friends were seen as brothers (Harding, 1985: 48). To break the ties with a trade partner had very serious implications. It could happen through lack of generosity or lack of courtesy either on the part of the trader or host partner. This meant every measure was taken to ensure the partnership remain cordial.<sup>2</sup> Because the Bilbils were often the visitors, they had the upper hand in the trade negotiations and could dominate the transactions.

The traders stayed down the Rai Coast waiting for the wind to turn and this could take several weeks. On the return trip, they had to call in to all their trading friends again to pick up various items. Brookfield and Hart mention two types of exchange of goods as being transfer and trade. The latter are goods, which change hands to areas outside the contact area whereas transfer refers to goods where the receiver and originator are known. (1971: 316). These contacts on the Rai Coast would incorporate both types of exchange. The Bilbil people would use some of the trade items immediately, for example, betel nut, fresh meat and taro. Other items, for example, wooden plates, tapa cloth and bows and arrows would either be used by the people or exchanged



*Bongu Village, Rai Coast, in 1994 with the houses still built with local materials.*

again for other items of trade as the Bel people were middlemen for a number of items which they traded on to Karkar Island.

After a trading trip, the women back on Bilbil had kept a lookout for the canoes and, as soon as the sails were sighted, they would busy themselves with cooking a large meal for the men. Later there would be dancing and feasting.

In the 1970s Derr, Clan Leader, of Bilbil Village described how the traditional feast was prepared:

First you line up all the pots, a hole is made in the ground for each one and the pot is fitted into the hole carefully. A leaf is put inside each pot - and then they are filled with taro, yams and pork. After this the leaves of the *hombor* are added. The mouth of the pot is called *birio*. Then little fires are made around each pot. When the food is cooking well, water is added to the pots and the fires are made stronger. When the food is finished boiling, the fires die down and it is time to bring the wooden Siassi plates out to dish out the food. Mats have also been laid out and leaves put on top so the plates can be laid on them. There is a plate for each of the men and their families. Before they eat, the man who organised the cooking must get the plates and put one beside each man. the wife of each man comes and sits beside him and their children too with their little plates. The old man then distributes the food to his family.

Afterwards, the women pick up the plates with half the food and go back to their houses and put it in their cupboards and the men all sit around and chew betel nut, smoke and have a drink of *aiu*. This drink is made from the *aiu* tree, by cutting the roots and putting them in the sun with the leaves. When

they are dry they are beaten and then stirred in the shell of a coconut with water. After all the rubbish is taken out with *kunai* grass, it is put in a little shell to drink. It is like wine. If they get drunk, they fall asleep and get carried back home.

It is interesting to compare traditional sailing methods used in Papua New Guinea with the system of navigation described by David Lewis amongst the smaller islands scattered around the Pacific. The latter steered by the sun, stars, currents, and clouds and were even guided by the appearance of birds (Lewis, 1972: passim). Because they sailed far out of sight of land they needed as many aids as possible. This was a different situation to that found in Papua New Guinea where the islands are mostly near the coast. The traders rarely sailed out of sight of land and so they did not need an elaborate knowledge of the constellations etc. They mainly needed to know the winds and currents. If they studied clouds, it was to look for possible warnings of storm at sea, not for the presence of some unseen land in the distance (Mennis, 1980a: 116).

In his discussion, Lewis compares the Siassi methods of sailing with those found necessary in other oceanic islands:

The basing of a wind compass on shore landmarks would be impracticable on oceanic islands for any but restricted travel within sight of land or to give the most approximate bearings. In Vitiaz Strait, between New Guinea and New Britain, where the Siassi do use a "compass" based on local geographical features, both these criteria of visible landmarks and short passages apply (Lewis, 1972: 78).

Thomas Harding agrees that the Siassi do not depend much on navigation since they rarely travel out of sight of land, but he adds, "Rather it is a question of having the fortitude and skills necessary to cope under frequently perilous conditions of wind, wave and current" (1967: 26). Finsch described the Bilbil sailing skills in 1888 and in many respects they are similar to the Siassi and Trobriand sailors. "The Bilbil natives are not great sailors. They may go as far as Karkar, a distance of 40 miles [65 kilometres], but they never go out of sight of land, nor do they put to sea in rough weather - but on the whole the sea here is calm." (1888: 83-85). He does not mention whether the Bilbil ventured out at night using the stars to navigate by. First-hand knowledge of this is found in the diaries of Maclay who lived there before Finsch. In 1877, Maclay travelled on a large trading canoe sailed by Kain and Hasson.

He commented on their navigational ability:

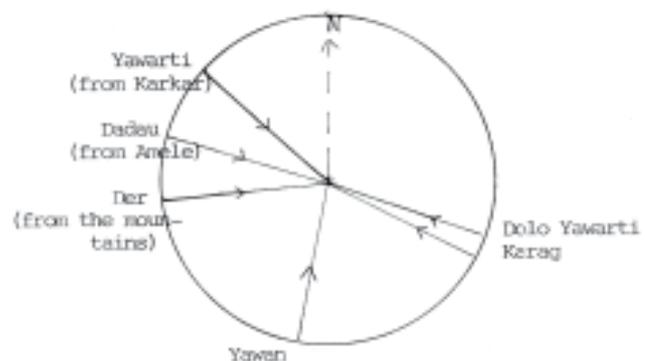
They have studied this area, the prevailing winds, their periodical changes, the currents, the convenient places for landing along the shore etc. It was therefore quite natural that I should leave to my companions all the navigational part of the expedition, persuading them only that we stop at each village as long as would be necessary for me. Kain

and Kitem explained to me that all the travel from one village to another along the coast will be done in the evening or at night, utilizing the shore breezes which blow uniformly every night, beginning an hour or two after sunset and continuing until dawn. During the day, it would be impossible for us to struggle with the opposing sou-wester which sometimes blows very fresh. So, about 8 o'clock in the evening, the natives of Bongu helped the Bilbil men to push both heavy *vangs* into the sea. The wind was insignificant so that we moved forward very slowly (Sentinella, 1975: 270).

One hundred years later when they were only the traders left, Damun of Bilbil reminisced about sailing trips and using the stars to sail by at night:

We used to sail by night because the sea was not rough and the men were happy to sail then. They would sail along the coast and look out for the different points of land and the mouths of the rivers etc. At dawn, when the Rai wind rose, they could venture further out with the help of the wind. At night, they would sail slowly and did not like to lose sight of land. They looked out for the big stars not the little stars. I do not know their names. One star which they watched for was the morning star called *Boi* and when they saw it they would say, "the dawn will be here soon. Here is the big star to show us the way". However, if we were going to Karkar, we would not use the stars because it is an island. We would wait for the morning and see the island and then head for it. When we went to the Rai Coast we used the stars. The *Boi* star must be on the sea side and then we would leave (Mennis, 1981b: 15).

This compares favourably with Maclay's account of setting off from Bilbil Island with Kain at 3 o'clock in the morning in August 1872. Kain apparently put off getting up, "with some excuses as if it was earlier than usual" (Sentinella, 1975: 202-3). It is interesting to compare their lack of intimate knowledge of the



Wind chart showing the direction of the winds in Astrolabe Bay.

Wind Chart, Madang area.												
Time	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
0000 to 0600	Yawan land breeze			<b>D O L D R U M S</b>	Yawarti or Dadau night breeze used by traders before dawn			Yawan land breeze	Yawan night breeze			
0600 to 1200	Dadau and Yawarti NW winds		Dadau Dere breeze		In April, winds are variable. Then the SE wind, the Dolo Yawarti prevails. Good for trading			Wild Karag SE winds. Dangerous for canoes	D O L D R U M S		Yawarti and Dadau winds	
1200 to 1800	Dadau Dere										Dadau Dere breeze	Strong Dadau not good
1800 to 0000	Yawan land breeze				Yawarti night breeze			Yawarti wind	Yawan night breeze			
	Wet season			Dry season					Wet season			

stars to the vast knowledge of the heavens that the Caroline Island sailors had. They sailed by 32 constellations which they used in a star compass and did much of their travelling by the stars (Lewis, 1972: 62). Damun points out in his testimony that the men sometimes used the stars to guide them along the coast provided they could pick out landmarks to help them. This was part of their navigational techniques and not to be underestimated.

### The Winds

The consuming interest of the Bilbil sailors seems to have been with the winds, their strength and direction. Both these factors were of paramount importance to all sea-going traders on board sailing canoes in the Pacific. Pall said, "before you leave you must think of the wind and make your calculation". He was speaking of the *dadau*, the north-west wind which begins to blow sometimes at 4.30 p.m. Pall warned that the *dadau* does not last long and the wind may change before you arrive at your destination and it is dangerous to sail in the dark. "So be careful of sailing in the afternoon" (Mennis, 1981b: 47).

Because Astrolabe Bay is hemmed in by islands and mountain ranges there is not the multiplicity of winds found in oceanic islands like the Cook Islands where there are 32 winds on the sailors' wind compass, making one wind for every point of the compass. (Lewis, 1972: fig.6). The Bilbil sailors have six main winds and corresponding breezes from the same direction. The wind compass for Siassi, as given by Lewis, is very similar to the one I was able to compile from testimonies of the informants in Bilbil (Mennis, 1981b: 15). It can be seen then that the physical environment had a direct effect on the trading system. Not only did it necessitate trading in the first place because of the poor physical nature of the soil but the men who sailed the canoes followed the pattern of the favourable winds and used landmarks

and stars to guide them. Their navigation techniques depended on the winds that occurred in the Rai Coast area and across Astrolabe Bay. Knowledge of the winds was very detailed, and while weather magic was used to ensure the right wind, they also used their knowledge of the winds to ensure a safe passage.

The *dadau* and the *yawarti* are the winds of the northwest season. During the wet season, these are the prevailing winds. The *dadau* blows from Amele towards Bilbil Island. In January and early February, it was used by the sailors to go to Rimba, Kul and Singor, but the wind could strengthen during the day. If the sailors were not careful, the wind would blow them straight to Biliu (Mennis 1981b: 46). In March, the *dadau* slackens to a breeze, the *dadau dere*, which gives way to the *yawan*, the wind from the south. The time of the doldrums is in late March and early April. In April and May, the *dadau* blows very early in the morning and was used to go to the Rai Coast by the trading canoes. By mid-morning, the winds blow from the southeast in these months. In December, the *dadau* begins again very strongly. It is not good to go trading when this wind is blowing. However, canoes can use the southerly *yawan* land breeze if they leave long before dawn and arrive before the *dadau* blows from the opposite direction. (Mennis, 1981b: 50-51).

In January and February the *dadau dere* starts blowing at 4.30 in the afternoon. Pall warns that this too can prove hazardous for sailors hoping to arrive at their destination before dark. This wind does not last long and may change quickly, in which case the sailors would find themselves off course and in the darkness, two things to be avoided (Mennis, 1981b: 46). The *dadau dere* is much the same as the *talio* or *yawarti* wind in strength. According to Mager's dictionary, the northwest wind is called *dadau* in quite a large area of Madang from Riwo to Bilbil; from Takia on Karkar to Kranket it is named *dadau*. On the Rai Coast it is *dadau*. Mager

Trading by the months, seasons and winds.				
Month	Season	Wind	Trading Trips	Crop
January	Wet	Dadau and Yawarti northwest winds prevail. Dadau Dere in the afternoon. Yawan is a night land breeze.	Can travel early in morning. 1000 to 1300 too rough to sail. Yawarti from NW OK.	Small Taro. Plant Yams.
February	Wet	Same as January, but Dadau, not so strong.	Use Dadau to go to Rai Coast. Return with Yawan land breezes.	Small Taro.
March	Wet	Early morning Yawan then Dadau Dere until late afternoon. Late March, start of doldrums.	Good time for Rai Coast. Return early in morning before dawn.	
April	In between season.	Doldrums. Morning, Yawan. Afternoon, Yawarti.	Yawan takes the canoes to Sek in the morning. Return with Yawarti but, if at Rimba, come home in morning.	
May-July, Trading season	Dry	Dadau from north overnight and the Dolo Yawarti from south east prevails during the day until late afternoon.	Leave before dawn using Dadau to go to the Rai Coast and could sail back to Bilbil by the Dolo Yawarti in the afternoon.	Big Taro from Bogati and Sehan.
June-July	Dry	As above.	Both Dadau and Dolo Yawarti are good trading winds	Harvesting of Yams and Taro.
August	Dry	Karag from the south-east in the day and is a dangerous time to sail. Yawarti returns in the late afternoon.	Winds too strong for sailing during the day but, by 1600, the Karag has dropped, and Bilbil canoes can use the Yawarti to go to Bogati, Saidor, Mindiri on the Rai Coast.	Galips from Karkar Tapioca
September	Dry	As above.	As above	
October	In between season.	The doldrums. Yawan in early morning, then Dadau Dere		
November	Wet	Dadau or Yawarti changing to Dadau Dere in the afternoon.		Hungry months
December	Wet	Dadau is stronger, blows until 1730 when the Yawan starts.	Not a very good time for trading.	

also mentions that the various *dadau* winds are named after certain places e.g. *Guntabag dadau*, *Surou dadau* etc. (Mager, 1952: 52).

The *karag* is the wind feared most by all sailors in Astrolabe Bay. *karag* means an angry man. It always refers to a wild wind because the usual wind coming from the same direction is called *dolo yawarti*. As soon as the *dolo yawarti* strengthens past a certain point it is called *karag*. The *karag* blows from the direction of Saidor towards Bilbil so it is a southeast wind. August is the month when this wind is strongest. (Mennis, 1981b: 45). It is interesting to compare the information from the transcripts with the diary entry for 23 August 1871 by Miklouho-Maclay:

Got ready to go to Tiara (an island and a village of the same name) which lies I don't know myself where, but as there is a fresh nor-nor-west wind blowing and a strong swell, the natives asked me to wait for good weather. A nor-nor-west blowing from the open sea is usually accompanied by a considerable swell and is called by the natives *karog*. The west-northwest is also a very common wind here, but it is not accompanied by big waves, for it blows from the shore; it is called *yavar* (Sentinella, 1975: 201).

This diary entry is for August when the *karag* does blow strongly, but Miklouho-Maclay has the wind direction as nor-nor-west, which is amazing as this is the prevailing southeast season. One possible answer maybe that scientists in the 1880's described the wind direction by the direction the wind was blowing toward and not from. In this case his nor-nor-west wind is our south south east. This is more or less confirmed by his entry for July 1877 on his second trip to Rai Coast. In this diary entry he is sailing along the coast from Bongu towards Saidor in a south east direction and he says, "During the day it would be impossible for us to struggle with the opposing sou-wester which sometimes blows very fresh". The wind could not possibly be opposing if it was blowing the same way as they were sailing. He is obviously referring to the southeasterly wind, *dolo yawarti* or *karag* which does get fresh at this time of the year. Harding quotes a wartime intelligence report about Siassi which is in the same weather zone as Bilbil. Harding said that the prevailing winds were from the southeast during May to November and from the northwest during January and February. "March, April and December are uncertain months, where winds may be expected from almost any quarter, often springing up and dying down very suddenly...The south-

east winds usually reach rather high velocities and continue so for long periods of time” (Harding, 1967: 12).

There is a story by Pall of a well-remembered battle against the *karag* wind:

One day my father and I were going to Karkar and we called in to Sek Island to see Dazub who was a friend of my father’s. One of the women had died in the hospital at Alexishafen. We sat in the *haus boi* and heard all the women crying for her. My father said, “We will never get any sleep here”. So we put the Chinese-made boat in the water and set sail for Karkar. We left Sek Island and sailed through the night. About 5 o’clock in the morning a strong *karag* began to blow and buffeted the boat.

Before the *karag* began, we had had an easy journey with a good wind, but now the sea was very rough and we were blown around. The stay wire on the boat broke, so we held on to the rope that hoists the sail. The men held on and gradually lowered the sail and turned the boat. Then we went ashore at Karkar at a place called Biu.

The sea was very rough and the Karkar men were very surprised to see we had come in such bad weather.

“Why did you come?” they asked.

“Well, we were at Sek and the women were wailing and we couldn’t sleep, so we thought we might as well continue our journey, but then this *karag* came”, my father told them. So then we stayed with the Karkar men and the *karag* blew for many hours with rough seas (Mennis, 1981b: 51).

The *dolo yawarti*, which is known as the brother of the *karag*, blows from the same southeast direction from Siassi and Arop towards Madang. If the traders were at the Rai Coast and wanted to return, they would use this wind. It blows mainly from May to July, which are the best trading months. It was during these months that the long trading trips took place (Mennis, 1981b: 51).

The *yawarti* is known as *talio in Tok Pisin* and this is also the name for the monsoon season. It is the North North West wind, blowing from Madang or even Karkar. It follows the coast and turns slightly so it is a good trade wind, taking canoes to Saidor and Sio. This wind was used in the trading months from May until July very early before dawn, when the *dolo yawarti* starts. In January and February, the *yawarti* blows from Karkar until 2 or 3 in the afternoon, when the *dadau* blows again (Mennis, 1981b: 46). Pall said, “The *yawarti* can get very strong and break the outrigger and mast. If you want to use this wind you had to leave early in the morning before it gets too strong and then pull the canoe ashore when the wind is strong” (Mennis, 1981b: 46).

Most months, a land breeze, the *yawan*, blows from the SW in the morning until 0600. The *yawan* was used to travel from Bongu or Bogati back to Bilbil Island. *Yawan* starts again at 1700.

Pall lists four ways a trading canoe could turn over while in the rough seas. The outrigger could go down too far and the rest of the canoe could topple over. The outrigger might go too high in the air and the canoe would overbalance, sending the outrigger right over the mast. This would happen if the wind were too strong for the sail. The canoe might dip down too far in front and the canoe could be blown over. This happened if two masts were put on a small hull and the wind blew strongly from behind. The canoe could topple backwards if the wind caught the sail too strongly. If the canoe looked like sinking there was a certain procedure to follow. ‘We would cut off the outrigger, together with rope and then we would hold on to this and float to the mainland. “We would cut the vines, which held the planks and tie them together with the platform, mast and outrigger. The hull and sail would be cut off and sink” (Mennis, 1981b: 53).

When sailing, the traders always kept watch on the sails. Pall said, “when the wind blew on the outrigger side you had to turn the canoe so the wind blew on to the *tai* side (the side without the outrigger) and then you could sail well. Later when you came ashore to trade and wanted to go out again, the steersman had to turn the canoe again so the wind blew again on the *tai* side”. The men would pull on the rope used to pull the sail around “so the wind blew on it, but you could also turn the canoe (i.e. with the steering paddle) to give wind to the sail. If the wind suddenly changed direction and strengthened the men would slacken the ropes to turn the sail. If they didn’t do this, the canoe would fall over. Alternatively they could roll up the sail to save the canoe” (Mennis, 1981b: 104).

Los of Kranket described one near tragedy at sea in the book, *Buk Tomalai Suliken*.

Once 5 men decided to go trading in their large canoe. The canoe belonged to two *bigmen* on Kranket, Mapalsen and Malbak. They set off with another canoe for the Rai Coast. As they neared the Rai Coast, the *karag* blew from the south east towards Bagabag. One canoe managed to go ashore but the canoe with Malbak and his friends was blown towards Bagabag in the high seas. The men threw off some of the cargo as they thought they were sinking - their *saksak* and pots. The canoe was blown ashore at Boriau passage on Bagabag, where they were met by Bison, who had previously met Malbak on Karkar. The men stayed at Bagabag Island and later they went to Karkar where the people put on *singsings* and feasts. They lived there two or three months. Meanwhile the second canoe from Kranket returned home with the news that Malbak’s canoe had been blown out to sea and probably had sunk in the big seas. The Kranket people then mourned Malbak and Mapalsen and the rest of the crew as dead.

They hacked at their coconut and betel nut trees and destroyed them. They put on their clothes for mourning and sat and drank their *kognac* and worried about the men dying

at sea. Two or three months passed then one of the men on Kranket Island heard a kundu drum beating a happy tune out to sea. He ran to the beach and saw Malbak's large canoe, "I think the men who were lost are coming here," he said. He went down and saw the canoe and welcomed them ashore.

We thought you were dead and the people here have broken everything you owned. Then they all went to the village and everyone was delighted to see them. They took off their *bilas* for the dead and sat down and talked to them. (Hannemann, 1939: 112-3).

Another story tells of a trip ending in tragedy. Once when Pall Tagari was a young man, he was selling pots at Rimba with Tagari, Jumei and Kason when a canoe was lost offshore. It was December and the Singor people had risen early to use the southerly land breeze to cross Astrolabe Bay. They were on their way to a *singsing* at Hudini and were hoping to land at Bilbil before the *dadau* rose. Their calculation must have been out as, before they landed, a strong *dadau* rose and blew them back. It became rougher and rougher and they were defenceless against it. Many hours later the canoe arrived back in the Rai Coast, 5 hours' sailing away. However the sea was too rough for them to land.

Pall and his friends saw the canoe in the rough waves. They got a long pole and tried to help the people ashore, but it was all to no avail. The Rimba people were blown back again to the open sea. The canoe, which was a one-mast, drifted away, while the men on the beach waited anxiously. The canoe sank in the big waves and only one man survived. His name was Budinaio and the sea carried him up on to the beach. A Singor man on the beach accused the Rimba people of not helping the people on the canoe and accused them of causing their deaths. Many Singor people came to Rimba while Pall was still there to find out what happened. The Bilbil were witnesses and when they were asked if the Rimba people had killed the Singor people, they replied in the negative, "They tried to help, but the wind blew the canoe towards Siassi". Budinaio, the man who survived, was the best witness to what really happened and the Rimba people were cleared of the deaths. This story shows that people along the coast were certainly expected to help traders who were in trouble. It shows too what happened when the sailors miscalculated the winds and their arrival time. If they were caught by a contrary wind, they could be blown right out of their course with dire consequences to cargo and passengers. This tragedy was in the end attributed to sorcery, or lack of the right magic.

It was very rare that the inhabitants of an offshore village did not take part in trade of some kind. For this to happen, the people would need to be self sufficient in food but not proficient enough in any specialised product to need to trade off the surplus. One island that would almost have come into this category was Bagabag Island that was in line with Karkar and Long Islands. Harding quotes Miklouho-Maclay, writing in the 1870's. "The

inhabitants of Wag Wag (Bagabag Island) possess no canoes in which they could come to the New Guinea coast, they are not visited by anyone and live wholly to themselves." (Harding, 1967: 24) But even in its isolated position, Bagabag was visited occasionally by traders from Siar and was mentioned in one of the oldest legends of the Siar People. Derr of Bilbil contended that the Bilbils did sail to Bagabag on planned expeditions. Earlier, Los recounted how a large canoe was blown off course to Bagabag and the men, Malbak and Mapalsen, were mourned as dead. While at Bagabag, they met Bison whom they had met previously on Karkar (Hannemann, 1939: 112). There must have been some contacts between Karkar and Bagabag for this to happen. This was an old story, probably dating from the pre-European time, and shows that Mikloucho-Maclay's deduction about Bagabag was inaccurate. We have already seen a legend of the Lilung Clan on Siar Island that states there was quite a traffic in trading canoes from there to Bagabag and back. Even if there was little trade with the outside world, contacts would need to be maintained for inter-marriage with other tribes or groups. It is evident that traders were sometimes blown there by strong winds and in heavy seas as in the story above about sailors being blown to Bagabag.

The Siassi were overwhelmingly Long Distance Traders. Their islands barely gave them enough subsistence for survival, so they were obliged to venture far afield in their large seagoing craft. Even the Bilbils admired these craft as the Siassi could sleep overnight at sea.

The Siassi were the middlemen for a great many items but also produced canoes and wooden dishes, pigs' tusks and dogs' teeth ornaments. Most of Siassi trading was for pigs or for items that could later be traded for pigs from inland New Britain and the New Guinea mainland. The Siassi obtained pots from Sio, from villages on the south coast of the Huon Peninsula and from Bilbil and Yabob. Many of the pots were traded to New Britain and Umboi. "The possibility remains that inter-cultural relationships, in addition to physical habitat, have acted to limit the sea orientation of most of the Vitiaz Strait societies. That is to say, the overseas traders may have sought to preserve their monopoly of the carrying trade by attempting to curb the maritime activities of others". Here Harding is speaking of past events; from what he could see at that moment, there was no inter-Siassi competition (Harding, 1967: 25). Damun of Bilbil said that the Siassi did not formerly come to Bilbil. He added that when the companies set up plantations in Bogati and Madang they brought Siassi in as labourers and this established friendships between the Bilbil and Siassi.

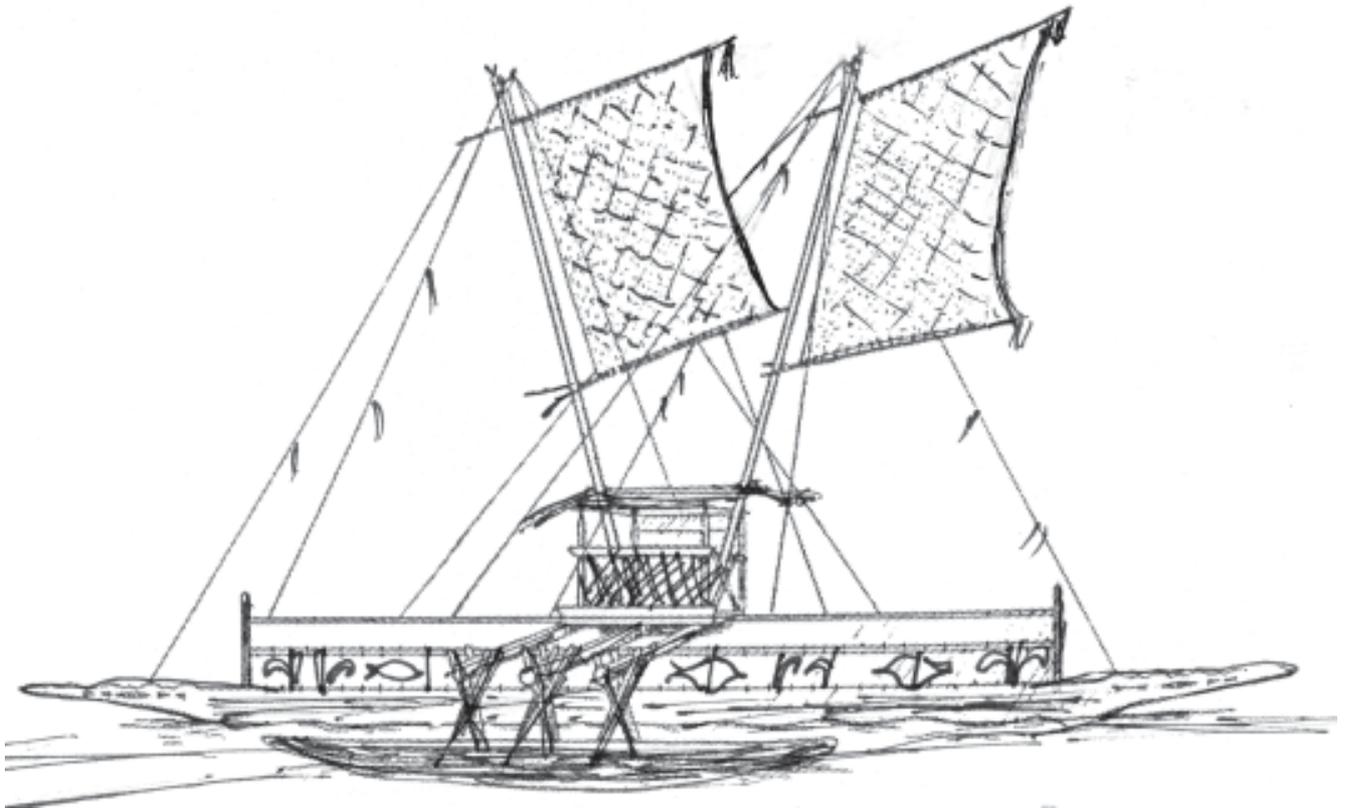
Sidi of Siassi also had the story of the Siassi being blown ashore at the Gogol River where the people found them. He did not say when the trade between Bilbil and Siassi began but mentioned the trade items they brought as being wooden plates, dog teeth and pig teeth and in return they would buy Bilbil pots and Karkar pigs and paints. The Bilbils were the middlemen for the items from Karkar. The Bilbil pots, he said, were taken to New Britain

for bride price payments (Mennis, 1981b: 98). The Siassi also sailed with many other canoes in convoy to protect each other in bad seas. They sailed to Sialum, Sio, Finschhaven, Tami, Bukawa and the Rai Coast, as far as Bilbil (ibid).

Hannemann tells of a story he heard in the village of Dain on the Rai Coast. It was suspected that someone from Dain Village had killed a man in Pizen Village and the latter sought revenge. Inviting the Dain people to go on a trading trip to the Siassi Island, the Pizen men built large canoes with sails whereas the men from Dain only built the *mirorog* type, not even hulled. They all sailed together towards Siassi. On the way, the Pizen men killed the men from Dain Village in their small canoes. Only one small boy was saved as he was hiding under a *pangal* frond. Later the Siassi people adopted this small boy. One day, a long time later, he was taken to Pizen village to visit his sister-in-law and recognised his father's totem on one of the oars stored there. Then he realised that the Pizen people had killed his father and relations. Again it was time for revenge. Dain Village then called on their allies to help and invited the Pizen to a great feast. "We have taken the black paint off," they said. There was feasting and dancing and the Pizen people were full of food. Suddenly, warriors from

neighbouring villages surrounded the Pizen villagers and killed them." This would have led to further payback killings. It shows there were quite a few contacts between the Siassi people and those on the Rai Coast (Hanneman, nd: 14).

But what do the scholars say about the trade between Bilbil and Siassi? We have seen that Schurig said there was regular trading between the two places (Schurig, 1930: 56). Harding, on the other hand, believed that most of the Madang pots, which reached the Siassi Islands, were traded through intermediaries particularly with Sio and Malalamai on the Rai Coast (1967: 130). His conclusions tally with those of Derr. However he also adds that, "In recent years, canoes from Malai (Siassi) have sailed to Madang itself to procure these pots". (Harding, 1967: 37). Whether there was direct contact between Siassi and Bilbil traders is academic when discussing the extent that Bilbil pots travelled eastwards. Garong of Siassi said that his people traded Madang pots to New Britain (Mennis, 1981b: 96). Westwards, the pots were traded through intermediaries as far as Prinz Adelbert Harbour on the coast opposite Karkar Island (Krieger 1899: 162 cited in Schurig 1930: 60).



*Siassi canoe (after Haddon and Hornell and Neyret).*

<b>Bilbil/Yabob Trade Ring.</b>		
<b>Imports</b>	<b>Exports</b>	<b>Middlemen</b>
<b>From Rai Coast:</b> Wooden Plates Bows and arrows Bilums Axes Mal Black Paint Mindiri Pots Pig meat	Bilbil and Yabob pots and canoes	Wooden Plates and Mal from the Rai Coast.
<b>From Tami via Sio:</b> Headrests Bowls Drums Clubs	Bilbil and Yabob pots	Wooden Carvings from Tami
<b>From Siar, Kranket, Malmal and Riwo:</b> Taro Yams	Bilbil and Yabob pots	Mindiri Pots Gogol Pots
<b>From Gogol:</b> Pots Bush Materials Saksak Paint (From Hudini)	Bilbil and Yabob pots	
<b>From Karkar:</b> Galip Nuts Mortars and Pestles, dishes and red paint	Canoes and pots	
<b>From Siassi:</b> Pig Tusks, canoes, obsidian	Bilbil and Yabob pots	Obsidian from West New Britain
<b>From Sarang and Korak:</b> Tobacco, Korak pots	Bilbil and Yabob pots	

Anthropologists, historians and archaeologists who have studied the Siassi trade network of the Vitiaz Strait, (Lilley, 1985: 60-65) tend to view the Bilbil network of Astrolabe Bay as off to one side in location and interest. However, the Bilbil were the centre of their own network encompassing villages to the north, as far as Megiar; Karkar Island; villages in the Madang Passage including Kranket, Bilila, Siar, Riwo and Panutibun Islands; inland villages in the Gogol Valley and many villages on the Rai Coast and inland areas. Like the Siassi, they were middlemen for a great variety of trade items. Although the Bilbils had connections with the Siassi people both indirectly and directly, there has been some disagreement as to the extent of the contact. Even the accounts found in the early German differ.

Harding summarised the discussions as follows:

The range of Bilibili sailing, the extent of their trading sphere, is not clear, and there is considerable disagreement among the early German sources on this point. According to Krieger, the Bilbils regularly travelled to Umboi Island and the Finschhafen area, sailing during the Northwest season and returning by the Southeast Trades. The Umboi Islanders, the Bilbil's "principal friends," accompanied them

on the return voyage to spend a season on Bilibil Island, during which time they applied themselves to the manufacture of plaited work. Furthermore, the Tami Islanders sailed to Bilibil in order to trade their products of carved wood and tortoise shell for clay pots (1967: 196).

This seems to be an exaggerated account by Krieger as the Umboi islanders were not great sea traders and did not build large trading canoes, (although they did on occasions buy one from the Siassi). Krieger seems to be confusing the Umboi islanders with the Siassi islanders. Harding prefers the first-hand evidence of Maclay who noted in 1887 that the Bilbils did not travel past Sio, on the Rai Coast. If he had visited the area ten years earlier or later, he too might have reported a different set of facts (Sentinella, 1975: 276).

A reason for these discrepancies is evident in the testimonies. Trading relationships appear to have undergone changes. There was a time when there was little interaction between the Siassi<sup>3</sup> and the Bilbil, except through middlemen, most notably the people of Sio, which was once the furthest the Bilbils ventured. But a mishap changed the status quo. Garong of Siassi had an interesting story of a time when a Siassi canoe was blown off course to the mainland near Yabob. The women saw them there and were

anxious that the men did not kill these men. They defended them saying, “They have women and children the same as you. What have they done wrong?” These Siassi people stayed at Yabob for three months waiting for the *Rai* wind to change to the *Talio* wind. As they were leaving for home, the Yabobs gave them *tanget* plants to grow in Siassi. These plants grew and grew for a long time, but suddenly in 1904, they turned dry and the Siassi took this as an indication that the Yabobs were in trouble. They made the trip back to Yabob and found that their friends were in trouble with the government (Mennis, 1981b: 95). From this time on the Yabobs were friendly with the Siassi people. Some of them married Bilbil women. The Bilbil pots, which the Siassi took home, were traded across to East New Britain for *mal*, *bilas*, beads, *muruk* and decorations (Mennis, 1981b: 95).<sup>4</sup>

Derr, one of the oldest informants, said that he did not go to Siassi when he was young. However, he added, “The old men who lived on the island used to go ... but then they had the *likon* or weathermen to keep the seas calm”. Even so, Damun said that the Bilbils went “as far as Yara (ie Malalamai) on the Rai Coast and (they) did not go to Siassi. In the other direction they went as far as Sarang and Karkar” (Mennis, 1980a: 101).

Kasare of Yabob (and previously Bilbil) gave the most detailed description of the Siassi visiting Bilbil Island:

Siassi Islands are close to Sio and the Sio people used to go there and get paint, dogteeth, pig teeth, and long plates called *dau* and *tambu* from the Siassi. The Sio people would then trade these plates with the Bilbil people for their pots. The Siassi people also used to come to Bilbil to buy the pots. They would bring *dau*, *kundu*, dogteeth and pigteeth. Siassi canoes were bigger than the Bilbil canoes. If the wind died down, they could sleep in their canoes on the sea. They had more space for cooking on board. The Bilbil were amazed at them. If they came to Bilbil (Island) their canoes were too big to pull upon the beach and they anchored out at sea. They would pull the canoe close to the shore and walk to the front and then jump off onto the beach (Interview October 1975).

Kasare was very old when interviewed and he either saw these canoes himself when he was a child or received the information when he was young. From this description, the Siassi made these long trips, but of course it does not mean that the Bilbil sailed to Siassi in their canoes which were not as big or as seaworthy. The main area of overlap between the Siassi and the Bilbil was the Rai Coast where Bilbil pots were traded for Siassi goods. Pig tusks and dogteeth ornaments coming from Siassi would have been exchanged for Rai Coast pigs, *mal*, wooden plates, Bilbil pots etc in a myriad of trade negotiations.

Harding does not see this larger area as being exclusive as, “these overseas voyagers sustain a significant development of interregional specialisation and created thereby a regional economy”. The Bilbil people were Austronesian speakers and one of their characteristics was that, like the Motu on the Hiri voyages, they were seafarers who carried out trading over large areas of sea and islands in their immediate area.

The long trading trips like those of the Bilbil and the Motu were seen as spiritual journeys. As Bonnemaïson wrote of the people of Vanuatu, the journeying was “carefully controlled by the group, which endowed it with a purpose and celebrated it as a rite. --- In particular, departures for other islands by outrigger canoes involved a whole social organisation, lengthy material preparations, the acquisition of navigation techniques, and special rituals” (1985). Because the Bilbil Islanders relied on the mainland for many of their essential supplies, they developed trading friendships with them. The people of Yagaum and Amele needed the pots for bride exchanges and cooking, so it was a two-way arrangement. The Bilbils exchanged pots for wooden bowls and more importantly for food. Although there were ceremonies at each port of call and special procedures for the men to exchange their goods, the trade was mainly for economic reasons rather than for social reasons in similar style to that described for the Kula Ring by Miller (1977: 388)

Inland trading routes for the pots followed tracks, with each group trading with the next one and further from the coast. The Mindiri were the middlemen for the bush people as far inland as the

Rai Coast Trade		
Imports	Exports	Middlemen
Bilbil Pots Gogol Pots Tami Bowls Sio Pots Yams and sago	Mal Mindiri Pots Betel Nut Taro Sweet Potato Bilum String Finsihed Bilums Bows and arrows Fish Coconuts Dogs and dogs' teeth Bowls	Axes from inland Bows and Arrows from inland Tami Products Bilbil Pots Gogol Pots Tobacco

Orinma, trading wooden plates, taro, sweet potatoes and bows and arrows, for pots. The Orinma people would then have their own market days for other inland villages. They would beat drums to invite the people from Meibu, to come and they in turn would call the people of Sitaba and Guhu, Bototo and Ongo to come to Orinma to trade items for the Bilbil pots. There were different messages that could be sent by the garamut drum: "Time for a market day at Orinma", "Time to go to the coast for a trading day with the Bilbils", or "Time for a party". (See map).

The Siassi and Tami wooden bowls and plates were highly valued because they were delicately carved and came from a great distance. Some had been traded for other items over a long way and ended up in Bongor and Malalamai where they were traded on with the Bel people for pots. The Siassi and Tami *kundu* drums were also bought through the middlemen on the Rai Coast. Pall saw them being made at Rimba on the Rai Coast. The main producers of the boar's tusks were the Siassi and Tami people. They would extract the upper teeth, of small pigs and the lower teeth would then grow long and curved (Mennis, 1981b: 56). The most valuable pig's tusks are those that are almost circular (Harding 1967: 47).

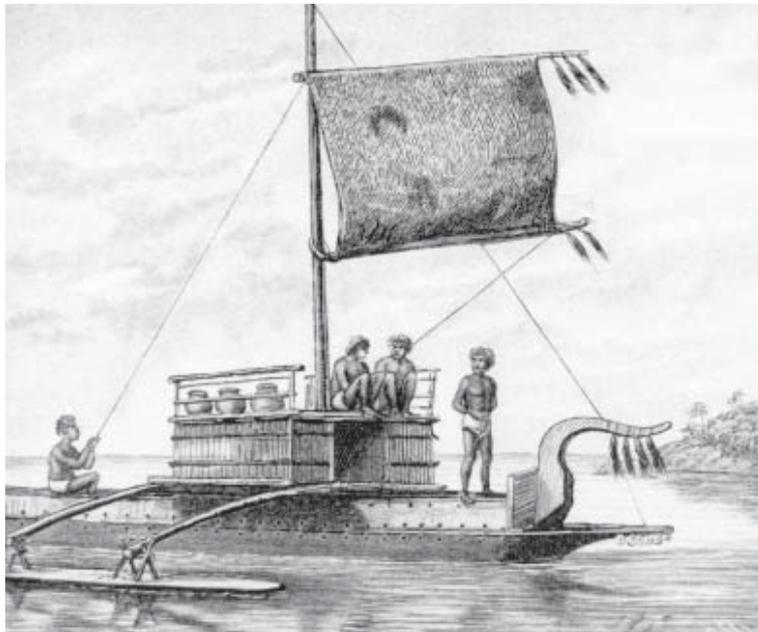
The Tami, numbering about 200 in the early 1900's, were traditionally influential traders around the Huon Gulf, the north-east coast of New Guinea and the west coast of New Britain. (Coote, personal communication, 1976) They were the makers of the specially prized Tami plates with ornate engravings. These were sought after in the trading exchanges, eg in Sio, where they were exchanged for Bilbil pots. The Tami also traded *kundu* or small hand drums for these pots.

The *dadeng* trade system of the Yabob/Bilbil was the basis of a rich material culture in the respective villages involving the initial planning by the village leaders in the project and the ritual and ceremonies that were followed including the protection through magical powers. There was tremendous prestige gained from going on a trip and the many social connections made on such

occasions. Then there were the ceremonies: the singsings of welcome and the feasts for the returning heroes or the grieving for those who had been lost at sea. Oral traditions of past trading trips which were told down through the generations, were linked to the mythology of the first trading trip of Kilibob and Manup giving credence and historical meaning to their traditions.

As we have seen, there were economic, social and religious aspects in the trading system. The environment determined the places the traders could visit. The *palangut* and the *lalong* of the Bel area could be beached and pulled up on rollers when they went to visit their trading partners along the coast, whereas the larger and heavier Siassi canoes had to be moored off the beach. The economic reasons were the need to trade the pots for food so the people did not starve in the dry months of the year. There were social implications in the trade as well, as the men were able to meet people in many other villages along the coast. These trade partners were important for both trading systems as the Bel

traders travelled to a succession of villages and needed to have trade partners in each place. The spiritual aspects of the journey required protection against evil sea spirits, which might otherwise jeopardise the trading trip. Environmental factors such as poor soil and lack of sufficient garden areas played a part in the trading system of the Bel group. By bartering their pots the traders gained access to many other artefacts, including wooden plates, weapons, decorations, masks, tools etc which will be examined in the next section of this book.



*Traditional Astrolabe Bay Canoe on a trading trip in the 1880's  
(Otto Finsch, 1888a)*

1. It may, however, be argued that the people who provided the food for trade often expected specialised goods in return. Taro and yams in exchange for pots or plates was often the norm.
2. Even to this day, villages along the coast know what clans their forefathers bartered with and this could be part of a grand reunion for the future.
3. The Siassi referred are the inhabitants of the Siassi islands and do not include the Umboi Islanders (unless specified). The people of Umboi were not great sailors). Kasare of Yabob did say, however, that his people traded with Barim on Umboi island.
4. This story may be very old, as it was part of a myth of origin of the first Siassi man.

## Chapter 6, Pots for Products



*A man from Yabob sat on his canoe on the beach and looked at the Pleiades stars.*

*“Is it possible that one of those stars is a woman?”*

*A little bird called the kirikindal, or kingfisher, nesting in the leaves at the top of the canoe heard the man.*

*“There is a woman there, do you want me to go and talk to her?”*

*“Yes,” answered the man, “tell her I desire her”.*

*The bird did this and the woman offered to come down to earth in the middle of the next thunderstorm. “Tell the man to make a hole in the roof of his house and I will come”.*

*So the woman, Honpain, spoke and so the bird told the man. That night the man made an opening in his house and later Honpain came down in a storm. He hid her in the attic of his brother’s house and when his brother kicked a bladder ball in through the opening he discovered her.*

*He said to his mother, “you are not as beautiful as the woman in the attic”.*

*Honpain later married the Yabob man and they had a son. One day when the child was older, Honpain went to the gardens on the mainland, leaving him in the care of his grandfather. Unfortunately some grasshoppers got burnt when they were being cooked and the child threw a tantrum. The grandfather scolded, “that comes from your mother not being a Yabob woman. That comes from her being a woman from the sky. You have made me angry”.*

*When the child told his mother what had happened, she said, “Oh my son, It is true. I am not a Yabob woman, I am a mountain woman, a sky woman”. So she spoke, but she was angry with the grandfather and decided to return to the stars. Her father let a rope down from the sky. Honpain began firing a pile of pots and when the smoke surrounded her, she climbed up the rope with her son on her back and returned to her people. Then she cut the rope, which fell back on a pile of pots breaking them into fragments. One developed two holes, which was the first water pot (after Dempwolff, 1911: 63-102).*

Could there be any historical truth in this story about Honpain, the woman who brought the art of potmaking to Yabob, and which has been passed down in the oral traditions of the Yabob people? Honpain’s arrival seems to have been heralded by a storm and her departure may have been a time of violent earthquakes. In this first recorded version, Dempwolff mentioned that Honpain is from the stars but also stated that she was from the mountain or the sky. Yomba Island had a mountain on it according to some of the informants. The fact that Honpain was described as having come from the sky is not unusual for newcomers to the area. When Maclay came to the Rai Coast, the people thought he was from the moon (Greenop, 1944: 63). It is



*A Yabob water pot.  
Honpain was credited with  
making the first Yabob  
water pot.*

doubtful that Honpain was just a mythical bringer of the pot tradition but, maybe, she was one of the people who escaped from Yomba Island when it sank. In Yabob traditions, she is said to have taught them their way of making pots.

According to other informants, Honpain may have left Yabob at the time there was a big earthquake, which would account for the broken pots. Honpain belonged to the Kakon Clan and this story may be their way of establishing their rights to the pot making industry. The Yabob water pot with its two holes is said to be a legacy from Honpain, who broke the pot when the rope fell on it from the sky. This earthenware water-



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Earthenware pots in the 1890s, obtained from Balaj and Bilbil villages (Lajos Biro, 1899). Balaj village does not appear on modern maps, hence there is doubt as to which village is referred to.*

pot, *nomu*, with two openings from Yabob Village has an incised design on its side and it was used traditionally to obtain water from the wells, which were found on the islands of Yabob and Bilbil.

This text of the myth does not mention the fact that Honpain taught the women of the Kakon Clan to make pots and yet Clan Leader Balem Beg, Damun and Kasare of Yabob said that before Honpain came, they had no pots. "Honpain taught them to make pots" (Mennis, 1981a: 18). The fact that Honpain taught the people this new art would have given her superhuman powers in their eyes. Her arrival was connected with a man out fishing in his canoe. He may have rescued her from the sea during a storm and hidden her in his house with the story that she came from the stars and had magic powers as evidenced by her knowledge of the art of pot making. Damun of Yabob Village had another tradition about the origin of the pottery on Yabob. He said his ancestor, Bukuk, had first gone to Bilbil when he escaped from Yomba Island and, later, he came to Yabob Island with his wife who was a pot-maker (Mennis, 1981b: 66). She may well have been the Honpain in the story above.

Whatever else, these traditions show the strong position of women in the old culture. They were the makers of pots, the basis for the Bel people's economy long before there was any outside contact. This gave them more power economically than they have in more modern times when men tend to dominate the scene. Because they were omitted from the rituals of the *meziab*, they had little power in the religious sense. However they had a sense of unity in their communal work gathering the clay and preparing it for the moulding as well as instructing the next generation in the art. Their purity when the men were away on a trading trip ensured the success of the trade negotiations. So a good living, clever potter was a valued member of the society. The houses on Bilbil Island were built with room underneath for the potmaking business as Finsch noted, so even the architecture of the village was matched to the women's needs.

It is interesting to study the pots from Ham Village whose pots were made from coils of clay and not with the stone and paddle method. The people of Ham have common ancestry with the Bilbil people but are now completely isolated from other Austronesian speakers. (Mennis, 1978: 42). As a result, their pottery has been influenced by the non-Austronesian neighbours, even their name for a pot, *mis*, is borrowed from their neighbours.

Technical styles of pot making were often localised in a certain area. Thus, the Usino people made an elongated style of pot and the Ham people another style. There was mutual respect for the “copyright” on the different styles and technical details were kept a secret. Because the Yabob/Bilbil were so reliant on the pottery trade, they guarded the knowledge jealously and any woman from these villages who married outside was banned from making these clay pots in other villages, even though the correct clay might be available and the women had the technical skills. Like all good businessmen, they feared competition. If the pots were no longer desirable items, the whole framework of their business would crumble and they would cease to have access to the artefacts from neighbouring villages. Because of their poor physical environment, they needed their pots for survival. No pots; no buying power. This worked the other way as well. As Gain of Bilbil pointed out the, “Hudini, Yagaum and other places were anxious to trade their food for pots. If they fought the Bilbils, they would no longer have pots or even *mal* and wooden plates for which the Bilbil were middlemen in the traffic from the Rai Coast” (Mennis, 1981b: 3).

Pot making was women’s work. While they were busy making the pots, the men built the canoes. The women would hurry down to the canoes with the finished red pots. When the trading trip was about to begin the pots would be stored in the pot cage, carefully wrapped in leaves. Now they became a part of the men’s business and used for their purchasing power. For example, the pots could be used to buy the hull for the next canoe from the Kranket or Karkar people. Traditionally, a pot could be traded for a *bilum* full of taro (the *bilum* not included). In many places, they were the local currency traded against pigs teeth, food, wooden dishes, and bows and arrows. In cooking, the pots were made large to hold quantities of food and used for cooking taro, yams and meat. During a feast long lines of these pots would be used to cook food for dozens of people. It was through the pot that the people could boil water as no other receptacle they had would make this possible.

Although the basic object of the *dadeng* may have been to get food, the Bilbil people traded their pots for many other goods on the Rai Coast. These included: bows and arrows, wooden bowls, *mal* and shells for decorations, possum teeth and dogteeth which would be exchanged for little pots; Bongor and Singor had *kangal* (bird feathers); *brus* (tobacco) came from places between Nobonob, Bogati and Bongu; galip nuts, drums, *paspas* decorations and wooden bowls, mortars and pestles came from Karkar Island. In all of these, form follows function: while net bags need to be of an elastic quality and stretch to carry the load; the pot must be strong enough to be carried, be fire proof, watertight and stable; the wooden dish should not leak, but is not fire proof and the tapa cloth must be pliable and soft as it is used as a garment. Each in their own way fulfils their purpose.

In trading transactions of pots for artefacts, the distinction is made between gift exchanges and formal exchanges of economic

significance, which can also be called trade. Gift exchanges cover any gift that is given for the sake of friendship rather than of trade (Brookfield and Hart, 1971: 316). Thus the Bilbil and Yabob traders would be greeted on arrival with betel nut and a gift of a pig, which would be killed and eaten in a village feast of welcome. Later the formal trade exchange took place.

Trade items could come in many forms as Pall mentions. Anything from feathers to food, wooden plates to pig’s teeth could be a trade item. He thought pots were easier to use as an item of currency than money. But once a more complex economic system was introduced neither the potters nor the buyers of pots were content with using only pots and other trade items as currency.

### Yabob and Bilbil Pottery

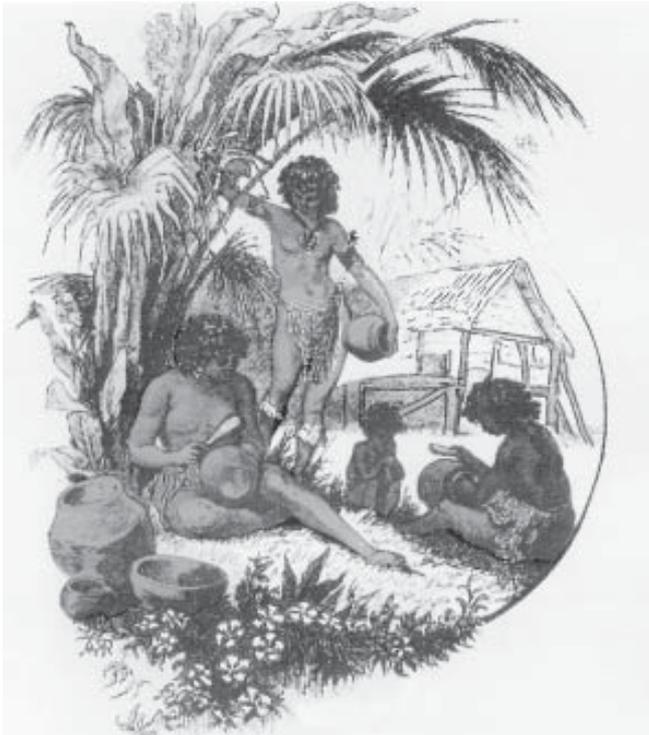
Miklouho-Maclay wrote about the pottery in 1872:

I had the opportunity to see the production of the pots for which the Bili Bili is famous along the coast of New Guinea for scores of miles. It is not surprising that Bili Bili turns them out in such quantities, since the manufacture of pots occupies every family, and in every hut, under the roof stand rows of finished and partly finished pots. The manufacture of pots falls to the share of the women. I followed the whole process, beginning with the mixing of the clay with fine sand, up to the firing of the finished pots.

The implements used for the manufacture of pots are limited to two or three small boards and a pair of round stones, somewhat flattened on both sides. At first, with the aid of the small piece of flat wood, the upper rim is made from clay, which is then left to dry in the sun. When it has hardened somewhat, the rest of the sides of the pot are added bit by bit and smoothed out. The correct shape is given to the pot by holding it on the knees, the woman inserting her left hand with a round or flat stone in the pot, holding it against the internal surface of the wall and with the right hand striking on the corresponding place on the exterior with a flat piece of wood, evening out at the same time the surface and the thickness of the pot.

When the pot is ready, it is first dried in the sun and then baked on a layer of brushwood covered with leaves and then sticks, etc. After stacking the pots in several rows one on top of the other, and covering the whole pile with light brush, it is set alight. All the pots have approximately the one form, although of varying size. There is very little ornament on them, occasionally a row of points round the neck or a kind of star. Sometimes these ornamentations are made with the fingernails (Sentinella, 1975: 131).

The pot trade seems to have been both utilitarian and social. Although their need for food had to be fulfilled and paid for in pots, the Bilbil men also felt the need to keep up their reputation as great seafarers and traders and renew social interaction with



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Potters on Bilbil Island, 1880s (Otto Finsch, 1888a).*

their trade partners. Because they were so often the visitors to other villages along the coast, they were able to be aggressive and maintain their monopoly on the trade. They were outgoing and tough because they depended on the trade for survival. This Bilbil pottery industry compares with that of the Amphlett Islanders in the Trobriand area of Papua New Guinea. Here the Amphlett occupy a similar position of a monopoly over the pottery industry. “Their manners over this transaction are distinctly haughty, and they are well aware of their value as potters and distributors of pots to the natives” (Malinowski, 1932: 282).

In 1884, Otto Finsch compared the Bilbil pottery making with earlier techniques he had witnessed in Port Moresby. In both places it was the women who made the pots, which were the central pivots of the trading expeditions:

The island is famous for its pottery and that trade, which like everywhere else in New Guinea, rests in the hands of the women and happens in the same way as it does on the south-eastern coast. The pots are made with the help of a flat stone and a small wooden mallet, used to evenly spread out a lump of clay, which requires a good eye.

The firing happens in the same simple way as in Port Moresby, in the open. The pots, which were carefully dried in the shade, were lightly covered with wood and when it was lit they were kept in the high temperature for only a short time. But the product appeared to be on the whole

quite durable and, at times, more elegant than that of the southeastern coast. I saw amongst other things pots that were decorated with bumps. The often-insignificant nail imprinted patterns were not really important but, as in Port Moresby, a trade mark. As my sketch shows, a potter is at work on the peculiar globular shaped pots, which are the same as nearly every else in New Guinea. Here, two types of pots are made, one with a wide opening for cooking (*bodi*) and one narrow as a water container (*io*). As Port Moresby is the centre of pottery and the trade of pots on the southeastern coast of New Guinea so Bilibili is the same to Astrolabe Bay and even further (Mennis, 1996: 28).

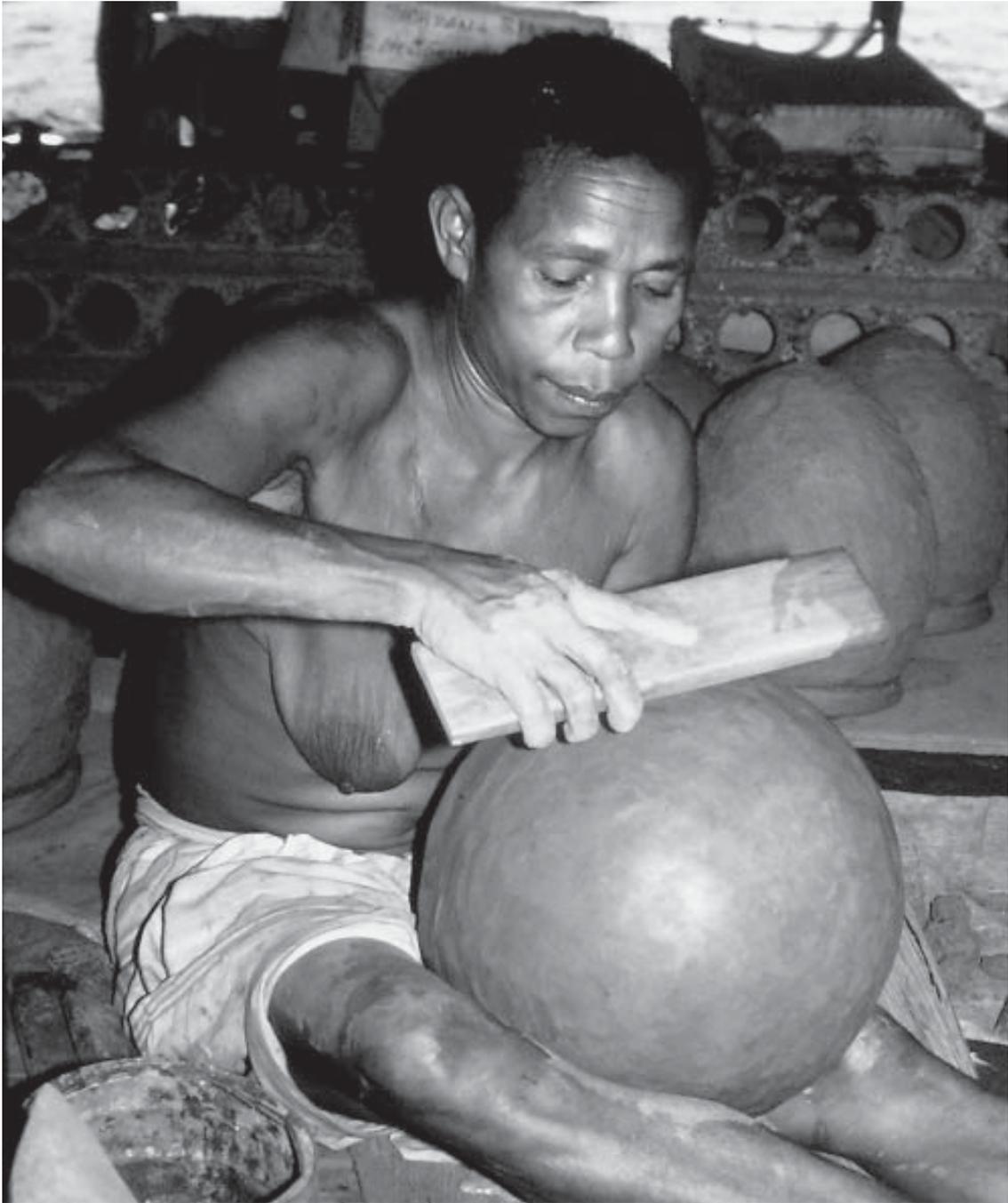
Although May and Tuckson (1982) wrote that the Motu and Bilbil pots were quite different in texture and clay type, Finsch noted three areas of similarity. Firstly, they were fired in the same way; secondly, the markings on the pots were like a trademark of the person who made them; and thirdly, they were at the centre of the trade network along the coast. There are also other points of similarity. The fact that the potters were Austronesian speakers and that the women made the pots is interesting. In some places, for example the Gogol area near Madang, it is the men who make the pots. Finsch was wrong in his conclusion that only the women made pots.

In 1975, Brian Egloff of the Papua New Guinea Museum made a preliminary survey of eighteen pottery bearing sites along the Madang Coast and on Karkar and Long Island. The archaeological deposits of pottery found at a site at Malamal village near Madang, and was found to date around 550 years ago (about 1400 A.D) (1975: 1).

In discussing his survey, Brian Egloff comments:

In the coastal Madang area an archaeological survey located a number of historic and prehistoric sites once occupied by pottery using peoples. The pottery recovered from these sites is directly ancestral to the modern industries of Yabob and Bilbil, particularly with respect to the predominate vessel form and the presence of a red slipped surface finish. — Three archaeological sites have been recently investigated on Arop, an island 15 km east of Madang. The island lies within the historic Bilbil trade network — the sites lie underneath a volcanic ash, which was probably deposited shortly after A.D. 1700 (1975: 14).

The dating of this pottery would have implications for Yomba Island Pottery. Further investigations would show where these shards originated. When people were living on Bilbil Island, gathering the clay could be quite a hazardous undertaking as the clay deposits were at Margui on the mainland. The men had to sail across to the mainland in the large canoes or else paddle across in the small canoes. The women needed protecting as the bush people might snatch them for wives. However, the bush people hesitated to do this because of the value they placed on the pots which the women made. Once a woman was captured,



*Sibol making a pot in Bilbil village in the 1970's. The same technique is used and she is making the same sized pots as in traditional times but, within a few years, many pots shrank in size to meet the demands of the tourist trade.*

she would no longer make pots as this was forbidden by Bilbil tribal custom. The more potters on the island the better for the coastal villages, who probably valued the pots more than anything else.

Regardless, the Bilbil men stood guard over the women while they dug for the clay and would have helped to transport the heavy balls of clay to the canoes. Mager made an interesting point in his dictionary, that it was the men who were the clay gatherers and that they did the first kneading (1952: 341). Although there

may have been a time when the men helped with collecting the clay and removing the grit, no Bilbil informant mentioned this. It was always regarded as women's work. Maclay's account in 1872 made no mention of the men taking part. The men used to build the canoes and the women made the pots. From my own personal observations, the women carried out the whole process of making these pots, but this is not to say that Mager's theory may not have been correct at certain times.

In the 1970s, I accompanied the women to Margui to collect the clay. At this stage Bilbil Village was on the mainland so there was no problem of having to transport it over to the island. It was about a 30 minute walk inland to the clay holes. Once they had scooped the clay out, they formed the clay into large balls and put them in the *bilums* or string bags. Five or six balls in one bilum was so heavy that it was difficult to lift it from the ground let alone carry it back to the village. Two women helped lift the bilum onto another's back and they walked one behind the other along the narrow track back to the village where the clay was stored under the houses to dry out. When the women needed clay for their pots, they broke the lumps apart, placed some clay on top of sand laid on a large piece of bark and hammered it with a stone, *pati*. These flaky pieces of clay were then put on a large piece of bark, sprinkled with water and left for at least two days. Again they were pounded, mixed with sand and water and shaped into a mound of wet clay. After drying for a few days, the mixture was now ready for use.

The women then picked up some of the wet clay kneaded it like dough to form an oval shape. The top of the pot is formed with deft fingers, which swirl it around to get a symmetrical shape. Next a hole is made in the middle of the lump with the *pati* and then, using the *pati*, the hole is enlarged so that gradually a rough pot shape emerges. The pot is finally shaped by using a paddle tapping on the outside against the *pati* inside. Once a pot is shaped it is left to dry for about four days and then a decoration is added on the outside. Next a slip is painted on the outside of the pot

which is pre-heated against a fire. Once a lot of pots have been prepared in this way, it is time for the firing in a wooden trough made from the dried stems of coconut fronds and other sticks. At the bottom of the trough, dried leaves, sticks and fronds are laid and the pots nested into them. Other dried leaves and grass are thrown on top and the mound is set alight. The dull brown pots now turn a bright red and are left to cool. The pile of red pots is now ready for sale. In the old days, the finished pots became the property of the men and it was their business to sell them. "The pots were our money" was a common saying of the Bilbil men as they looked back on their past when their large canoes plied back and forth on the Astrolabe Bay buying and selling trade goods.

Nowadays the men don't go trading except, occasionally, on the coastal boats; they don't go hunting nor do they need to guard the women when they collect the clay. On the other hand most of the women's jobs remain: pottery making, gardening, child-rearing and cooking. As in many villages, it is the women who carry the burdens of keeping the homes going although their position in the village is not commensurate with this. The men tend to sit around, talk or plan meetings and work in the council. They help in the gardens or build the village houses when necessary and unload the ships at the wharf, but the women do the hard work of survival.

Sillitoe (1988: 559) suggests that amongst the Wola people, the men are responsible for the heavier work and use the tools that require arduous work eg adzes and axes and the women do the soft work. This also happens on the coast to a certain extent as well: the men make the fences, houses and canoes. However, when it comes to carrying heavy loads, women are not considered soft. From personal experience, I have seen Highlands women carrying very heavy loads and Bilbil women carrying five or six large balls of clay in a net bag back two kilometres to the village to be made into pots. In Yabob/Bilbil, the men did the heavy work of constructing the canoes, the women helped at only one stage of the construction and that was the scraping of the *dim* putty from the *dim* bark which had been softening in water.

May and Tuckson's book, *Traditional Pottery of Papua New Guinea*, is a good source of information on pottery generally, particularly in giving historical notes on pottery on every place. They also had samples of clay analysed by the CSIRO<sup>1</sup> and the chemical content of the clay used in the various areas is included in their book. This expert information is invaluable when comparing pottery from different areas. For example, "The Bilbil clay body is very



*Pots being fired on the beach at Bilbil village. Dry material is heaped on top so the fire reaches a high temperature very quickly with the pots turning bright red.*

plastic and is yellowish brown. It has a low smectite content, high quartz and some feldspar” (1982: 171). They also recorded pottery making and pots throughout Papua New Guinea at a time when the pots were still being made. In some of these areas, pots are no longer made. Sadly, the Yabob women no longer make pots. In 1994 it was noted that their clay deposits were under threat from trans-migrant people who built squatter houses right up to the village. Former clay holes were being filled with rubbish from these houses, which was sad for the few old Yabob women who made the pots. They were also being threatened internally by the village men arguing over land, which could be put aside for a pottery house. Being so close to Madang, the village will soon be swallowed up by the town. (Yabob potters had ceased production by 2000.)



*A Mindiri pot in the Papua New Guinea National Museum, which is similar to a Bilbil pot.*

Mindiri Village, situated on the Rai Coast, is Austronesian speaking and the women traditionally made pots. The Mindiri people had a thriving pot trade of their own before the arrival of Miklouho-Maclay in 1871. In an interview in 1977, Wangum and Bail of Mindiri Village spoke of the many villages that Mindiri traded with and how the Yabob/Bilbil men attacked them to gain the monopoly of the pot trade (Mennis, 1981b: 91).

Their pottery is described by May and Tuckson:

The Mindiri range of vessels is almost identical to that of Yabob-Bilbil. The cooking pot, *bornda*, is similar to the *bodi* but generally lacks the sharp-angled shoulder. Characteristic of the *bornda* are the bulges located below the shoulder and running around the widest portion of the vessel (1982: 169).

According to Derr Mul, the Bilbil people quite liked the Mindiri pots because they were thick and strong. It might take longer to cook in them, but the food was sweet. In the 1970s, there were only a few women still making pots at Mindiri. They once made water pots but stopped making these at the time of World War 2. They also made the sago cooking pot called *magob*. Ethnographer Biro compared the shape of some artefacts on the Rai Coast to local fruits during his visits in the 1890s and one of these was the *magob*, which copied a four cornered jungle fruit in design.

It was late in the 1970s that my son John, his friend Mako, Pall Tagari and I made the trip down the Rai Coast to Mindiri. The sea was quite rough before we even left Madang but we stuck it out and sat clutching the railings for the few hours it takes to make the trip. We passed Yabob and Bilbil Islands and then travelled in sight of the coast with its rugged terrain rising to the

Finisterre Ranges. It was a beautiful clear day and the white billowy clouds gathered along the top of the Finisterre Range against the deep blue sky. As soon as we anchored at Mindiri, the people were on hand to help us unload and carried our gear up to the village. One problem I noticed, was the lack of nearby drinking water for the village. The village women had to take containers a long way to fill them up and bring them back to cook the food. Washing was taken down to the river where the women had designated areas.

Most oral traditions of the Mindiri trace their ancestry back ten generations to Yomba Island, just like the Bilbil, Yabob, Kranket and Siar people. They belong to the Austrolaban sub-group of Austronesian speakers. There is some linguistic evidence that this was correct as the Mindiri speak an Austronesian language. In July 1977, I interviewed

Mainpain, a direct descendant of Idu who, with his two sisters, escaped from Yomba hundreds of years ago. Together they brought the art of pottery making to Mindiri and married into the people already living there. Mainpain said, “when Idu first went there, his language was the same as the Krankets, but it has changed a bit since then”. Meinpain and her mother and grandmother all made pots in Mindiri Village.

It appears that pottery was a thriving industry in Mindiri until just before Maclay arrived in 1871. So much so that the Yabobs and Bilbil felt that their own industry was being threatened. When they went trading down on the Rai Coast, no one wanted their pots because they had already bought from the Mindiri. It was a case of getting rid of the opposition. The legendary aggression of the Bilbil is borne out by the oral traditions about this fight they had with the Mindiri. It began with the Mindiri fighting the Bilbil on Bilbil Island. Then, following that fight, the Yabob men tricked the Mindiri by inviting them to nearby Yabob Island for a big feast to celebrate peace between them. The unsuspecting Mindiri walked into the trap and while they were enjoying the feast, the Bilbil holed their canoes and broke their spears. Too late they realised the danger they were in and the resulting slaughter is noted in both the Mindiri and Yabob/Bilbil traditions.

Wangum of Mindiri Village throws light on the order that the events occurred in his version of the feast and fight:

There was once a big fight [over pots] between the Mindiri and the Bilbil. The Mindiri got into their canoes and fought the Bilbil at Ngur Island. Afterwards the Bilbil fought the Mindiri at Mindiri Village. Then the Yabobs went to Mindiri

and invited them to a feast at Yabob Island. The Yabobs tricked the Mindiri into believing there would be a feast to celebrate the peace. Then they went to Bilbil Island and told the people there to prepare for a big fight. While the Mindiri were feasting on Yabob Island, the Bilbil holed their canoes and broke their bows and arrows. As they left the feast, the Mindiri were slaughtered. Three survivors were rescued by the Siars. Later on when the Germans were here and exiled the Siars, Bilbil, Yabobs and Krankets, the Siars came here to Mindiri where they had good friends because of this (Mennis, 1981a).

Male of Siar was a very old man when interviewed in the 1970's about this massacre:

My grandfather, Wak, was living on Siar Island with his son, Sukbal, when the fight between the Mindiri and Yabob took place and the Mindiri were killed. The Yabobs tricked the Mindiri and fed them and talked to them. The Mindiri left their bows and arrows in the canoes and some of the Yabobs crept back to the canoes to break the strings on the bows. After the Mindiri had eaten, the Yabobs and Bilbils started the fight. They fought and fought until only 3 young Mindiri were left. The Yabobs gave them to the bush people at Amele. The names of these three boys were Kistamon, Kasan and Siso. Later on the Siar people looked after these boys and the people became friends.

I, Male, was twelve or so when I went to the Rai Coast after the Siar Revolt (1904). I remember planting coconuts there. We stayed at Mindiri first but later we built another village in the bush behind Mindiri (Mennis, 1980b: 36).

However May and Tuckson, the authority on pottery in Papua New Guinea, suggest quite a different order of events because Maclay makes no mention of Mindiri pottery while he lived on the Rai Coast up until 1883, they conclude that the Mindiri did not learn the art of pot-making until 1907 when the Bilbil were on the Rai Coast.

May and Tuckson wrote:

In 1907 after further problems, the remaining populations of Yabob and Bilbil and some of the island people were exiled to the Rai Coast. It seems that there are no records of whether they made pots there, but it is possible that these Bilbil people started the pot-making of Mindiri; it was not reported by Maclay on the Rai Coast during his time there up until 1883 (1982: 166).

However, the diaries of Miklouho-Maclay do give us a clue as to what did happen. He mentioned the village of Mendir (Mindiri). In July 1877, Maclay was journeying down the coast on a Bilbil canoe with his good friend Kain, of Bilbil Island. He wrote:

At one place Kain pointed out to me that here had been the village of Mendir, but it had been burnt down and was

abandoned by the inhabitants who settled in another place (Sentinella, 1975: 272)

Maybe the lack of pottery and the burnt village were connected. If the fight had already occurred, the Mindiri would still have been recovering and moving to their new village site and not manufacturing many pots. Since Maclay was travelling with the Bilbil on their canoes, Kain guarded Maclay jealously introducing him only to their friends. The Mindiri were considered opposition in the pot trade. It is significant that Kain gave Maclay no reason for the burnt village.

It is almost certain that the Mindiri did not learn the art of pottery making during the time the Madang people were banished to the Rai Coast in 1904. Both Mindiri and Siar Island traditions state that it was the Siar people, who stayed with the Mindiri. Ber of Yabob also said that, "the Bilbil people went to Rimba, the Yabob to Yeimas, the Biliau to Suit, and the Kranket people went to Wab on the Rai Coast". Derr of Bilbil did say that a few Bilbils went to Mindiri to collect clay as that was the only place clay deposits were found in the area, but they only made a few pots and there is no indication that they taught the Mindiri at this time (Mennis, 1980b: 36; 1981a: 59,88,97; 1981b: 24-25, 91-9).

We may conclude then from the testimonies that the Mindiri brought the art of pot-making with them centuries ago from Yomba Island and set up their own pot trade and were so successful that they were about to break the Yabob/Bilbil monopoly on the pots. As a result, they were attacked by the Yabob/Bilbil men at a feast on Yabob Island. Evidence shows that this happened towards the end of 1870. The survivors fled to Siar Island, where they made such good friends that, thirty years later during the time of the Siars' banishment by the Germans in 1904, the Siars stayed with the Mindiri on the Rai Coast. Because they did not make pots, the Siars could not have taught the Mindiri the art of pot making. By the 1970s, there were only a few women still making pots at Mindiri and, soon after, they ceased to be made at all.

The story of the Mindiri pottery is quite fascinating involving as it does monopolies, feasts and treachery on the part of the Bilbil and Yabob men. Archaeological investigations may eventually establish the age of the Mindiri pottery and when and how it was introduced. Meanwhile, in studying past traditions it is possible to sequence events in chronological order by logical analysis of the information whether precise dates are known or not.

Unlike the usual Austronesian tradition, Gogol pots are made by the men from coils of clay, which are flattened at the base of the pot. Women prepared the clay, removing the grit and stones. This change in gender roles may have come about because their village is situated inland and the men could no longer fulfil the important role of canoe builders as their counterparts on the coast did. Here in the Gogol, women are allowed to prepare the clay by removing the grit and stones (May & Tuckson, 1982: 182). According to their records, the people in the bush beyond the Gogol area make pots the same as those in the Gogol but in those places both women



*Gogol pot , left, is made by men using the coiling method. The central pot is a Bilbil pot and on the right is a Barum pot.*

and men made the pots. This is the same story as I got from the Women at Baiteta, near Rempì Village.

Rosalie Christensen described the making of Gogol pots as she saw it in 1975:

In the villages closer to the Gogol River, men make these pots. A strong yellowish clay is dug from under the ground, wrapped in leaves and brought back to the village. A palm *limbum* is put on the ground and the clay [is laid on it and] pounded with a stick and worked with the hands to get out the stones. The clay is then rolled on the *limbum* to make many long thin 'fish lines' (these are very even and thin like snakes or about the same diameter as a pencil). The bottom of the pot is made by coiling one of the fish-lines around and around in the hand. The fingers are then used to smooth the inside. The pot walls are built by continuing to add thin fish-lines of clay, and smoothing the inside surface so the 'coils' are firmly stuck together. The hands are kept wet to avoid breaking the surface of the clay. When the pot shape is complete, the outer surface is marked with a stick to make designs. There is a great variety of ways the outer surface can be decorated or finished. The potter finishes the decoration in the way he pleases or decides is best. The outer surface can also be wiped gently with water and, left without any other finish. This leaves the coils clearly showing on the outside. The inside of the pot is then wiped with pandanus leaf until very smooth.

When finished, the pot is put inside a house for several weeks until strong. It is then tied with durable bush ropes and hung over a smoky fire inside the house for about one month. A good, clear day is chosen for the final firing or cooking. A pile of wood is made. It is usually like a round or square fence or enclosure with enough space in the middle for a pot to fit. The wood is set on fire, and when burning well, the pot is placed inside the enclosure, bottom first. The pot is turned while firing to make sure all parts are adequately fired. The test of adequate firing is the colour of the clay. If it turns red, then it has reached the correct temperature. When the fire has burned down and the pot is cool, the pot is tested. In some places a special sap or gum from trees, that has a red colour, is painted on the pots (*sim* or *simen*.)

While a new pot is being tested it is *tambu*, and can't be used until the potters are sure it's all right for cooking. The first test involves heating the pot over a small fire. When the pot is hot, a small amount of water is put in the pot and boiled. If this is all right, then more water is added and boiled. Then a few leaves or a bit of food is boiled in the pot. If this is all right (the food is tasted), then the contents of the pot are dumped out and the same testing procedure is repeated a second time. This procedure of testing the pot is done four times. If by the fourth time the pot is still performing well, then the potters know it is all right and can be used for cooking. Until the pot is judged satisfactory, it is *tambu* and is considered young and unproven (1975: 88-89).

Sometimes one variety of pots was traded against another variety for various reasons. The Bilbil used to exchange their pots for the Gogol pots, which have a small opening at the top. They liked to cook the sago in these pots because they made it tastier. The Bilbil bought Gogol pots from Gouua, Boi and Atu. The Gogol people in turn were happy to buy the Bilbil pots because they cook the food more quickly than theirs. Other Gogol places, Bor, Atu, Sehan, Tulimu and near Amele, made the pots with the long bases. All kinds of pots were used in bride prices. Sometimes there may be a three-way exchange. For example a man might kill a pig to exchange the meat for pots, which he could trade then for objects for a bride price.

The Ham villages are located in the low hills, between the Gogol and Naru rivers. The people are Austronesian speakers, but their name for a pot is *mis*, which has been borrowed from a neighbouring non-Austronesian language. In nature, these pots are midway between the shape of the Bilbil pots and the coiled pots of the Gogol proper which have a pointed base. Pall of Bilbil had this to say about the Gogol pots:

Bauk, Atu, Gouua, Sehan, and the villages on the highway road near Amele make the pots with the long base. The Bilbils like to cook the *saksak* in these pots. They make the *saksak* sweet. So the Bilbils exchange their pots for Gogol pots. These pots have a small opening at the top and the water does not boil over. These Gogol people at Gouua, Bauk, and Atu, buy Bilbil pots too because they cook the food quickly (Mennis, 1981b: 57).

The Bilbil were always ready to exchange their pots for Gogol or Mindiri pots because the food tasted differently. The Gogol pots were also used as part of the bride price alongside Bilbil pots. Colin De'Ath witnessed a marriage exchange transaction in the Gogol. There were two platforms full of gifts. One platform was for the father and one for the mother. Although this wedding took place in the late 1970's, there were still many traditional items amongst the gifts. He set out his description as follows:

<b>Father's platform</b>	<b>Mother's Platform</b>
3 round plates (Rai Coast)	3 round plates (Rai Coast)
8 long plates	8 long plates
33 pots, half from Gogol, half from Madang Coast.	36 pots half from Gogol, half from Madang Coast.

(De'Ath, 1979: 43).

Madang Province has a great variety of pottery along the coast, inland on the high slopes of mountains and in the valleys and along the rivers. May and Tuckson travelled the length and breadth of the province and described pottery in many places. For example in the Kokon area over looking the Ramu River where the men made the ovoid shaped pottery and also carved bowls.

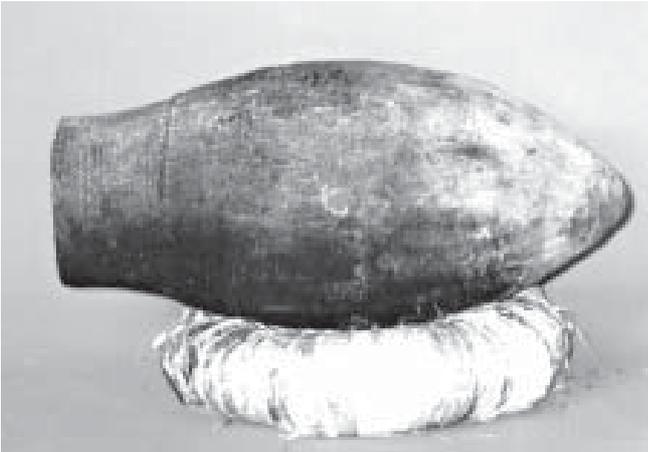
The Usino people traditionally made long-shaped pots, but would have been too distant to be an integral part of the Bilbil pot trade. However, May and Tuckson found that there were at least two pot making village in the group and state that there was an ancient track "going from Usino patrol post through Begasin, eastward through Bau country and finally through Amele to the villages on the coast" (1982: 188-9). If that were so, then Usino pots may have found their way to Bilbil through many middlemen, but it would not have been on a large scale. The Usino language groups belong to the Rai Coast stock.

The Rawa people on the foothills of the Finisterre Ranges, overlooking the Ramu River, are interesting as they traded their pots with the Bena Bena people across the River. This was a hazardous trip for the traders but it meant the Rawa pots were widely distributed and, in the 1970s, were even seen in the Goroka Shows. Often marriages took place between the two tribes. Rawa pots are rather roughly made with a neck about as wide as the lower part of the pots. They are ovoid in shape and would need much support to be used for cooking.

The people of Moro Village on the North Coast, did not make pots but were avid pot collectors and were famous for their *brus* which was eagerly sought up and down the coast. According to John Dunbar in 1994, small amounts of the *brus* was given to the guests initially as a present before the negotiations began and then larger amounts were used as a trade item. Even though the Yabob and Bilbil did not always travel that far up the coast, their pots were traded by middlemen along the coast and inland and bartered for other pots or pigteeth.

Occasionally the Yabob sailed to Moro bringing their pots in exchange for *brus*, spears, bows and arrows and wooden plates. At other times, the Karkar Islanders acting as middlemen brought Yabob pots to Moro to exchange for the *brus*. Traditionally, Moro people are thought to have come from the bush and one of their ancestors, Bakuk showed them how to make canoes and catch fish by using fish-traps.

Korak village is about halfway between Madang and Bogia opposite Karkar Island. They belong to the same non-Austronesian language which is grouped in the Adelbert Range Super-stock, as are the people of Malala village and are closely related linguistically to the Waskia people on the northern part of Karkar Island. In the 1970s a few of the older women were still active potters on a small scale when May and Tuckson did their research. The Korak pots were seen as heavier and took longer to cook the food than the Bilbil pots. Often Korak was the first port-of-call for the Yabob trading canoes when they ventured along the North Coast. After they left Korak, they went to Dugumur and on to Medibur where they had trading partners. The Yabob pots were more famous here than those from Bilbil. (The reverse happens on the Rai Coast).



*Madang Province has many shaped pots. Top left, Usino pot. Top right, Efu pot. Bottom left, Baiteta pot. Bottom right, Bosman pot.*

Paul Siang of Korak, interviewed in 1994, said that his village used to trade their pots and *brus* for baskets, galip, and live pigs with the Karkar people:

Our people used to go to Karkar to trade. We sailed there in our big sailing canoes in June when the winds weren't too

strong. Each clan had its own name for their canoes. Gowa Clan called theirs *Kambual*, Tome call theirs *Saranguel*; Korando, *Marara*. We would exchange our clay pots and then come home again. Our families had trading friends on Karkar and we still have them, but we have lost contact now. At the time of the ancestors, our people planted *brus*

and exchanged things with the Karkar people. My mother and grandmother used to make pots with the clay from Mount Kunumum and cook taro and bananas in them or used them for presents.

Derr of Bilbil said that the Bilbil and Yabob men used to trade with Megiar, which is near Korak and on the coast opposite Karkar Island. The Karkar men would go to Megiar, Sarang and Matuka to buy the dogteeth. The Karkar people did not have the right type of pigs to make the pig tusks and used to get them from Siassi (Mennis 1981b: 24-25).

Formerly Aronis Village was inland behind Megiar about 1½ hour's walk but it has since shifted closer to the coast. They had friends in the villages of Kurum, Garup and Baranis who belonged to the same Mugil language group. It is strange that they counted the Megiar people as their traditional friends as they were Austronesian speakers but it seems there were marriage ties between the two villages. Aronis and allies fought the Sarang people who lived on an offshore island. The Sarang were Austronesian and spoke a common language with the Megiars. The fights may have been land disputes when the Sarangs tried to take over some of the coastal land and they succeeded in doing this in the end. As the Krankets were allies and trade friends of the Sarangs they helped them in their battles even though they had to travel quite a long way in their large canoes.

It is strange that the Megiar fought the Sarang as they had the same origins and spoke a similar language. Many of these village relationships were love/hate affairs. They could fall out sometimes but, after a feast of friendship, the rift would be healed. Because the Megiar already had a foothold on the coast, they were forced to develop friendly relations with Aronis, Kurum and Baranis people, their bush neighbours, or face annihilation.

According to Martin Sugor, who was born in 1926, the Megiar sailed their large canoes to Karkar Island, to trade with pots which they traded for their *brus*, *bilums*, and the *buai* called *tawan*, which blackens teeth. Sometimes the Aronis people went with the Megiars. They would all have drowned if they took to the sea on their own as they belonged to the bush and could not sail.

Martin of Aronis said:

My ancestors used to go to Megiar to trade for pots. Some of the Aronis people were married into Megiar and we gave them presents of bows and arrows, *paspas*, *bilums* and this ground or clay, which makes the teeth black, and cockatoo feathers. If we arrived in the morning we would sit down with the Megiars and have a feast with them and smoke the *brus* and return to our place in the evening. Before we left we filled bamboo containers or coconut pots with seawater and carried it back to our bush place to add to our food. Later we bought salt from the tradestore. Megiar people would also give us fish and, in exchange we gave them dogteeth and other things.

Baiteta villagers were once pot makers and there are Baiteta pots in the National Museum in Port Moresby. They were a gum-nut shape similar to the Barum pots. The pots were called *waik*, and were exchanged for *bilums* and bows and arrows and they were also used for bride price payments. The bush areas past Baiteta also made pots. Antonia, who is about 75 years, old told us how the people used to dig clay out and prepare it for potmaking. Then they took a lump of clay and made a hole and then shaped the pot. When a batch was made, they fired them and later traded them. Antonio showed us one of the other types of pots with a coil around the top, which were made by the men and are similar to the pots found in Karog and Efu. The bottom part is shaped and then the top is made with a long coil around and around. Antonio said that the bush people used to send pots to them too.

The Bosman people on the Ramu River about 20 km from the mouth once made very large cooking pots. May and Tuckson described their pots:

Two types of cooling vessels are made. The first is a wide-mouthed ovoid vessel with a pointed base and everted rim ranging in size from 28 to 40cm high. This type is not decorated. The second is a semi-spherical pot with a rounded or slightly pointed bottom. It can be restricted or straight sided and the top rim is bevelled (1982: 199).

1. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (Australia)



## Chapter 7, The Material Culture of Astrolabe Bay



*Like everywhere, only a feast gives one the opportunity to see the people in full regalia; I certainly made full use of this. The hair, carefully teased in a cloud, is coloured red and is kept in place by two dedal. That is the name of the 3 to 5mm narrow, daintily perforated band, made from finely split plant fibre, whitened with chalk, which look as if it were crocheted and is one of the most charming decorations, which I only found in this area. Usually a long vertical streak to the forehead and nose, a lateral streak on the cheeks, and at times a white circle around each eye is painted. When a lot of the expensive red paint is left over, nothing is saved and the entire paint is used, and even the back as well receives their beloved red paint. Yes, even arm bands, ear rings, the tips of their spears and arrows are also painted, because red is the colour of joy to the people and only exceptionally is it used as a sign of war.*

*Around the ankles and knees, wide bands of red braided grass were worn; sometimes they extended from the ankle to the calf. The latter adornment is seldom seen on young people, who prefer to wear 10cm wide body girdles, ja sigilon, which are made from the same material. They are braided so tightly around the body and fasten the waist in an unnatural, and to our way of thinking, unhealthy way. I cut one of these girdles from the body of a twenty-seven year old man whose circumference was only 65cm. These girdles are also popular on the southeastern coast of New Guinea and are thought to be dashing. Apart from these body girdles, they also wear, but rarely, a very narrow body string made from dolphin's teeth, bali, and the already mentioned, gogu of Bogadjim, which are known here as popok, are the most valuable (Otto Finsch describing how villagers dressed for a feast in 1884).*



The Bel people had access to a wide variety of artefacts through their trading system, including weapons, tools; musical instruments; objects needed for sacred rituals; items of dress and decorations; and even other pots. In traditional times, an environmentally poor culture could be enriched through contact with neighbouring cultures with different artefacts. To an outsider like Otto Finsch, the people of Bilbil in particular appeared to be more richly adorned and to have achieved a higher standard than their neighbours through the exchange of their locally produced pots. Notwithstanding the fact that their environment was very poor, they were able to build up a rich culture and hold a powerful position in the area through diligence and sailing skills, which enabled them to access other cultures.

In defining environment, Spier differentiates between the natural environment of the bush, mountains, rivers and sea and the cultural environment, which is man's way of adapting to the natural environment. Spier says that no man can live in a wholly natural environment because he will change it in some way (1970: 10-13). What were the factors that prevented the people in this study from manufacturing certain artefacts? It was firstly their lack of access to the raw materials they needed and secondly, the lack of technical knowledge. A study of the micro-environment of the

*Kranket Island man ready for a singsing in the 1880s (Otto Finsch, 1888a).*

By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

area shows that while the large area may have the same temperature and rainfall, the location of just a few kilometres away may have quite different resources, depending on the soil content. For example, some places may have clay deposits; others red ochre; some areas may be rocky and infertile, whereas others may have rich volcanic soil which produces the hardwood trees necessary for wooden plates, mortars and pestles and canoe hulls.

The material culture of any society changes, depending on what is available at a particular time. To obtain information on what the material culture of the Bel people was before the advent of Europeans, Miklouho-Maclay, Otto Finsch and Lajos Biró are all good sources of information of the trade and trade items in the nineteenth century.

In a pre-literate society, identification of artefacts was achieved with the use of totems, symbols or individual designs etched on the artefact. This is particularly so with objects that are plentiful and may get displaced. In many areas of Papua New Guinea, men marked their arrows, which not only facilitated their retrieval, but also established who fired the arrow as in the case of battle or the hunt (Sillitoe, 1988: 545). In the Bel area, this practice features in the origin myth of the two brothers, Kilibob and Manup who lived near Sek Island. When Manup's wife stole one of Kilibob's arrows and forced Kilibob to incise the design on her, Manup recognised the design and attacked Kilibob (Lawrence, 1964: 22). For ease of recognition, their creators often incised arrows in some way and a later owner added his own special mark to further identify them. Biró has an illustration showing the ownership mark on a spear (Biro, 1899: 69). In 1884, Finsch observed that arrows could be quite differently carved even though the shaft was made from the same material of light reeds (Mennis, 1996: 24).

The women marked their pots with their own design so they were easily recognisable. When making pots at the Warana festival in Brisbane, in September 1995, pot maker, Marin, from Bilbil Village, had her own design. This is important in any disputes over pot ownership. Identification on pots could backfire because, if a woman's pots broke easily, she would be identified as the producer of shoddy work. This identification of pots made the task of the men easier when they went on the long trading trips. When unloading the pots, they would need to know which ones their wives or unmarried daughters had made.

Overall, many artefacts were important in the traditional life of the Bel villages and led to a higher standard of living; for example, mortars and pestles from Karkar and wooden bowls from the Rai Coast were needed in preparation of special dishes which the Bel people excelled in, thus allowing for better food presentation. A favourite food was the *kadar* which consisted of shredded coconut wrapped in leaves and steamed in a fire. This is then mixed with unsteamed shredded coconut and beaten in a mortar with a pestle before being served on a wooden bowl (Mager, 1952: 131). Taro, part of the staple diet of Yabob/Bilbil, was once bought with pots

and then cooked in pots after being peeled and then beaten in a mortar with a pestle (ibid).

Decorations and items of dress were imported as trade items. The Bel villagers did not only wear what they could obtain from their immediate environment, but wore clothes obtained through the trade system: the *mal* from the Rai Coast hinterland; and grass skirts from the coastal villages. Spier stated that, "the biological needs of man, as related to environmental problems (of drought, heat and cold) may be expected to channel thoughts in certain environments" (1970: 10). The poor quality of the soil on Yabob and Bilbil Islands led to their need to build canoes to travel to other places for their very survival. It says much for their stamina that they were able to overcome so many obstacles to become the most outstanding and successful entrepreneurs in Astrolabe Bay. Their high standard of living would not have been possible without the artefacts they obtained through trade. Study of these artefacts has shown that quite different objects can be manufactured in adjacent communities.

Thomas Schlereth sees a close association between an artefact and material culture. There is a strong link between "physical objects and human behaviour". He comments that there "is always an assumption of the material behind the culture". Overall he places limitations on the use of the term, "although the scope of the material in material culture continues to be expanded in various directions, this does not mean that it includes a totally unrestricted spectrum of all possible objects" (1985: 5).

Material culture has been described as, "the tangible elements of a culture made and used in human society that are the purposive products of learnt patterns that are not instinctive". Reynolds also describes material systems as, "each item in a material culture has its own material system and each culture may, therefore, be seen as a mass of parallel overlapping and interlocking systems" (Reynolds, 1987: 155-7).



Some coastal regions had a closed trading sphere meaning most artefacts were traded exclusively and did not travel to other trading areas (Allen, 1982: 196). However, certain items like pots and bowls were exceptions to this rule as they were traded outside the system. For example, Bilbil pots were traded as far as New Britain through the Siassi Islands. The pots were seen as valuable cooking vessels as well as favoured trade items. Despite exceptions like this, trading systems could be said to be exclusive for most trade items.

We shall see that, in the Madang area, these artefacts included those made from hardwood from Karkar Island and the Rai Coast: wooden plates, hand drums, mortars and pestles. These were carved in such particular artforms that their origin can be identified

on sight by experts in art, by the casual souvenir collector and of course by the people themselves. Bodrogi postulates that artforms in New Guinea were limited by trade and that certain form of artwork prevails in a certain geographical area and were rarely traded outside an that area. He developed the concept further identifying different styles amongst the trade items and categorised them according to “distribution of elements and types” and added that each trade system had its own style of artwork in its artefacts (1979: 267).

Artefacts can be divided into several categories: weapons, tools, clothing, ornaments, musical instruments, domestic objects and perishable goods.

Otto Finsch gave a detailed list of the **weapons** in Astrolabe Bay in 1844:

The bow and arrow play only a minor part compared to throwing spears. The bow is made from palm wood, six foot (1.8m) long, mostly flat, without any decoration, and a sinew made from split rattan. In comparison the arrows are made without exception from light reed, with a round spike part, which is a third or quarter of the entire length (1.30m to 1.40m). The spike hardened by fire is often decorated with differently carved, notched saw-like teeth or a barb, and consists rarely of a pointed carved wing bone of a bird. Pointed spiked arrows are used for shooting fish. I did not perceive any catapults, usually a favoured weapon of the South Seas people.

They have clubs but rarely use them. They are heavy flat narrow battens, one to one and a half metres long, mostly made from palm wood, usually widened at the bottoms and narrower at the handles and decorated with an indented pattern. This form of club can be found nearly everywhere in New Guinea, as opposed to the artistically drilled through stone knob cudgels which are only found in particular areas of the south-east coast (Mennis, 1996: 22-24).

Biró noted that, in the 1890s, for a *tamol* (local villager in the Astrolabe Bay) not to have a weapon would be unthinkable – without weapons not even a visit would be possible. Furthermore, “if a man only carried his

spear he would be regarded as only half-armed”. Weapons were not necessarily a sign of hostility but more a form of protection as the people were peace loving. Weapons were also used in hunting and there were many opportunities so it was essential to have your bow and arrows. In time of war, weapons were a necessary means of protection in the traditional life of the people in Papua New Guinea (Biró, 1899: 104).

Biró commented that the bow and arrows were a relatively new weapon in the area when he lived there in 1899. He described the bow as fairly plain and made from the areca palm that is black and elastic. The Rai Coast men did not make their bows but bartered for them from inland villages. Nor did they have a quiver but held the reserve arrows in their left hand pressing them against the wood of their bow. The *tamol* were not known as brave fighters but loved hunting. Arrows were common throughout the Madang area with a variety of designs. Ethnographically, it was unusual to see bows and arrows as well as spears in the same place as happened in Astrolabe Bay. Biro noted that the spear was worth most when it came to bartering then the bow then the arrow and that the spear was the oldest weapon (1899: 105). The palmwood for the bows was not available on Yabob or Bilbil Islands so was an introduced material. Some of the island men could have shaped the bows from introduced material or otherwise traded pots for bows already manufactured. In the trade system in Astrolabe Bay, the Bilbil and Yabob traded pots for bows and arrows at Bonga, Malalamai and Sel which would have come down from the bush places (Mennis, 1981b: 59).

The throwing spears were usually made from areca palm and carved in one piece with the tip sometimes in a different material. A spear wound was very dangerous as it could hit a bone and splinter into lots of slivers. Even with modern surgical instruments it would be very difficult to get them out of the wound. Biró noted that some of the spears were quite different depending on their purpose. Some were for fighting, and not decorated, some for fishing or hunting and others had the owners mark on them. In Bogadjim, Biró bought a dancing spear, a *jour*, which was much lighter than a fishing spear and with a shaft of bamboo which was decorated with bunches of cassowary and *kakadu* feathers underneath the fork. Another dancing sword was waved in the air while dancing. At first, Biró thought it was a digging stick as he had seen a Kranket man using one for this purpose





By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Fishermen with nets in Bongu in the 1890s (Lajos Biro. 1899).*

(1899: 173). Later, when he was in the mountains of Astrolabe Bay, he saw a proper digging stick and realised the previous object was not a digging stick but a dancing “tool”. He saw young men holding these sticks against their shoulders and dancing with them (1899: 176).

Otto Finsch on spears:

The main weapon here as in other parts of Melanesia is the throwing spear, which is a heavy, round stake about seven to ten foot long, usually made from palm wood. The base end is thinned, the point a little thicker and occasionally a few notched teeth or a groove are carved into it. A second kind of throwing spear, named *serwaru*, is also made from a wooden stick, but fitted with a wide lance type (70 cm long) spike made from bamboo and therefore a very dangerous weapon. The bamboo spike is tied with finely split reed and the joint is artistically decorated with feathers and cuscus fur etc.

Biró noted that the *tamol* hunted crocodiles and wild pigs with spears. If the crocodile was not dead at the first spear the men would throw themselves on it and grab its tail while someone speared it again. Fish were caught in fishnets and would be eaten but could also be smoked as trade items. Other times when they were hunting, the people would set a fire in the grasslands and the men speared the terrified animals as they fled the flames. They would also dig pit traps to catch pigs which they then speared (1899: 70).

Spears were an important trade item and were stored on long sea voyages on wooden spear racks that were often decorated. A spear rack in the Queensland Museum has three grooves on it to hold the spears and is 550mm long. Made in Karkar, this rack would have served the men when they went trading to Yabob/Bilbil and the Rai Coast and could have been offered as a trade item. The red ochre paint would have been collected from the ground on the northern part of Karkar Island and applied to the artefact. The white paint was made from lime culled from shells that had been heated over fire and this could have been done on Yabob/Bilbil who also used these spear racks on their canoes.

Mager’s dictionary says that spears were sometimes made from the wood of the *fag* tree, which was an areca palm. A *kabu* was a spear with a piece of cane added at the end of the shaft, some of which are long and others short. A fish spear has two or three points and is called *kidiai* (1952: 146).

Big round shields had a circle carved in the middle called “the eye” and a handle carved on the back. In Bogadjim, Biró bought a little shield, which had been traded from Balaj Village. Specially made carry bags held these shields over the men’s shoulders as they walked. Little shields were only 1cm thick and known as *ssabama* in Bogadjim. They were very plainly carved and only of interest because of the carry bags, giving the men a mobile protection. They were the only shields that had these bags to match. Biró’s conclusions agreed with Finsch who had seen them earlier: “The massive round shields of Bilbili, the *dimu* appear to have been used in exceptional times during a fight as they were

too heavy. Some of them had a diameter of 90cm and a weight of 10kg. Possibly, they served in the protection of the village when attacked by enemies and were kept in the meeting houses” (Mennis, 1996: 24).

Some slings from Bogadjim are in the Queensland Museum collection and these were used to kill birds with amazing accuracy. The pouch was made from pandanus leaves grown on the coast while the string would have come from inland bush areas. Even though they seem flimsy and light, they would have been trade items because of the vine, which was not locally available. During his brief stay there, Finsch did not see any catapults as he called them.

The Bel people were limited by the environment in their choice of **tools**, which had to be made from shell, wood, bone or stone. One tool of interest was used as an awl to put the *dim* putty into the holes of the canoe. Called *dim sol* it was shaped from the bone of a pig. On other occasions, broken pieces of shell, sharp stones or sharpened boar tusks were also used as tools. In 1871, Miklouho-Maclay examined the tools carried around by one of his “native visitors”. He found sharpened bones, which were used as small knives, longer bones which served as needles, and a shell with a serrated edge for scraping coconut (Sentinella, 1975: 86). The Bel could make some tools from shell or bone from their own animals but shaped stones and hardwood tools were procured from their neighbours.

Amongst the artefacts stored in the Queensland Museum is an adze haft, from the foothills of the Finisterre Ranges, from where it would have been traded to the coast; an axe-blade stone was tied to the adze haft and used for chopping down trees and hulling canoes etc. These shaped stones would either have to be collected in their raw state and then shaped or the finished axe heads could have been traded to the Bel, because their islands consisted of limestone uplift and did not contain the right stones.



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

Pall Tagari said they imported stones from Karkar or Siassi:

Before, they did not have steel axes, only stone ones. Bilbils did not have the stones for axes so the *bigmen* used to get them from Karkar or Siassi. It was hard work to cut the bush vines with these stone axes. They would put the vine on top of a piece of wood and then cut it with the stone axe (Mennis, 1981b: 58)

*Small shields in Astrolabe Bay were carried in a bilum when the men were visiting neighbouring villages (Lajos Biro, 1898).*



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Large war shields in the 1890s. The round shape in the middle is called the eye. (Lajos Biro, 1899).*

Mager, in his dictionary, noted that there were different types of stone adzes and axes: “The axe called *adiu* was used to hollow out canoes; *balod* was used to make adzes; an axe with a rounded cutting edge was known as *makak liwon* by the Bilbil people” (1952: 16). The Bel people were familiar with sharpening axes as stone axes blunted easily from use. They could also repair axe handles or make new ones. Stone axes were amongst the first objects to change in the time of first contact. As soon as Mikloucho-Maclay arrived with steel axes and nails, the people could see the benefit of these new tools and were able to adapt them for their own use (Sentinella, 1975: 86) and as a result, stone tools were no longer seen as important objects in the culture. If a more efficient tool became available they would be discarded. This may have been because the stone axes were utility objects and not symbolic as were the wooden ornaments used in initiation ceremonies. These ornaments were highly valued as connecting the men to their ancestors and had a spiritual significance (Mager, 1952: 15). In 1994, an old man was seen sitting in a traditional style *haus win* in a village on Karkar Island with a traditional style bamboo fish trap. The vine he used was called *makos kunda*. It shows that traditional items of material culture are still being made in the old ways. The fish trap he was making was the same as his ancestors had made. These were also found on the North Coast and are the same as those described and photographed by Biro on the Rai Coast. The traps are camouflaged and hidden on the reef to catch the fish.



*Girls wearing grass skirts in 1980.*

Many of the items of **clothing** worn by the Bel were obtained through trade. The *mal* was an essential item of clothing for the men, but boys ran around naked until the age of 7 or 8 and thereafter they wore the same loincloth as their elders. The best *mal*, according to Pall, come from nearby Malalamai and Bonga because they are soft on the skin. Galek, Suit, Biliau, Singor, Mul and Sel had *mal* too, but they were coarse. The mountain people behind the Rai Coast made them and sold them to these villages who traded them for pots. The *mal* was used as a loincloth, as well as a barkcloth cover or blanket. This, again, was the demand and supply situation with the *mal* being an essential item of clothing. So eager were the Rai Coast people to obtain the pots that the supply of *mal* kept pace with the availability of the pots. If the *mal* were large, they would divide them up and made several *mal* for the boys.

*Mal* comes from the bark of certain trees that only have branches at the top. The Rai Coast people grow these trees then they cut them down and beat the bark with a stick. They then take the bark off, beat it some more then paint the *mal* and hang it up in the wind. It is not good if the sun dries them out too quickly, as they must dry slowly. Large blankets were also made by the same process and used by both sexes to wrap themselves in during

heavy rains or fever fits. Some had designs and some were just used for covering things. Pall can remember, "when I was little, we used to use these large *mal* blankets for mattresses and covers. It is all right if you wash them first before you lie on them. Otherwise they are too coarse".

The women in Yabob and Bilbil all wore grass skirts which were trade items from Karkar or Kranket Islands. Their skirts are layered on the side and knotted at the top in pigtailed. The back part of the skirt is always longer than the front. They can be made from fibres from the *woisag* tree, or made from bark as the Kranket Island people do (Mager, 1952: 213). Pall said that the Bilbil people also got these skirts from Malalamai and Bonga (Mennis, 1981b: 59). Even if the Yabob and Bilbil people could make grass skirts, they would have had to import the material because the *woisag* tree only grew in secondary bush. While not common, they could also be made from a type of grass found on the Rai Coast.

Mager gave the name for a grass skirt as *nai*:

The *nai* for small girls is only a narrow apron in front wide enough to cover the *vulva*. Older girls before marriage wear a *nai* with the back part narrower than the front. After marriage, a *nai* with the back part broader is worn. As the person becomes older the back part is made always broader until it covers the whole back part and hardly any opening is left on the side. The back part is always longer than the front (Mager, 1952: 213).

Girls younger than 13 years wore a very small brush apron in front and a longer one behind held on by a girdle from which dangled ornaments of seashells or large black and red seeds. In 1896, Biró commented on the grass skirts worn by the women in Astrolabe Bay. Small girls began wearing skirts as soon as they could walk. Unless married, adolescent girls wore skirts to the knees. As age progressed, skirts got longer and very old women wore skirts down to the ankles. In Bogadjim, the skirt is called *ssebin*, after the plant from which it is made. Skirts of married or young women are always painted in stripes of one colour, either of red, yellow or black. The women showed Biró where they obtained the colouring materials and it proved to be a remarkable dye as the coloured fibres never faded. Biró tried to buy skirts to add to his collection of artefacts but found that once a woman had worn a skirt, they would not sell it for any amount for fear a spell might be put upon them. Girls on the other hand did not have these scruples so their skirts were easily obtained. As the women walked their skirts flapped against the back of the knee (Biró, 1899: 5).

*Bilums*, net bags, were worn on the back like an item of clothing and Biró noted that, if a woman did not have a *bilum*, she would feel inadequately dressed. *Bilums* were also used to store things in the home, to carry things and become a hammock for the baby. They were an essential part of village life and were an introduced

item for the Bel. Pall said, “*Bilum* came from Malalamai and Bonga. The women there made the large ones which were used to put the pots in. *Bilum* string is found amongst the *kunai* in the Rai Coast. It is quite a long process to make a *bilum*, which are made by women. Although the material to make the bags is available in coastal areas, as Pall noted, it was the bush people behind the Rai Coast who made them (Mennis, 1981b: 59). The string is made from the fibres of trees or shrubs of the ficus variety, or from the aerial roots of the pandanus (Ryan, 1972: 732).

Miklouho-Maclay noted that the personal decorations of the village people depended on their place of residence. Those on the Rai Coast, who did not fish much, had decorations predominantly of flowers, leaves and seeds, while the people from Bilbil and Karkar, who had more to do with the sea, fishing, trading and sailing, were adorned with “ornaments of shells, fishbones, tortoise shell”, etc. (Sentinella, 1975: 81). Headdresses were also an important part of village life. Possum skin headdresses could be found in many of the coastal areas. It is doubtful if possums would have lived on the Bel islands as they were too heavily populated - this being so, the fur would have been imported as a trade item.

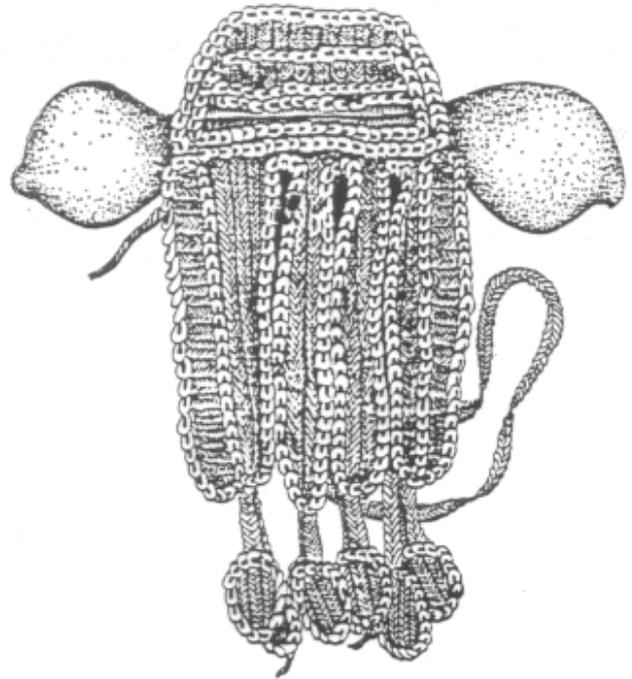
Cassowary feathers feature in a photograph of a Kranket man in the 1880s. His cassowary plumes covered each ear and were held on with combs. Finsch described this man in detail. “Behind each ear a bamboo comb, *gatentau*, is stuck. This comb is decorated with a bundle of cassowary feathers (*tuar*), fresh green delicate fern and pleasant smelling herbs. Cassowary feathers were rare and, more often, white cockerel feathers, or the red tail feathers from the female and green ones from the male of the noble parrot (*Eclectus polychlorus*) were used” (Mennis, 1996: 36).

Biró had illustrations of armbands, which he said were not made in Astrolabe Bay because the people sometimes wore them upside down. He described one with snail shells and tortoise shells; others were plaited from vines. Finsch also described these armbands made from fine red coloured woven grass, which were very wide (up to 14cm) and the edge tastefully separated with cowries as well as flat rings sliced from the base part of conch shells. *Suar* is the name of the wide armbands made from bent tortoise shell, which in fact were their finest artwork. The mountain people could not afford to trade for these armbands (Biró, 1896: 44-5). Armbands are made from “plaited vegetable fibre strips” (Ryan, 1977: 727) with shells or dogteeth added for decoration.



Pall Tagari said that the red armbands came from Karkar and the woven material was dyed with red clay found there; the black ones were from Orinma on the Rai Coast.

*Paspas armband from Long Island in the 1880s (Otto Finsch, 1888b).*



*Bula decoration worn on the chest (Anton Gideon, Papua New Guinea National Museum).*

Although the Bilbil preferred to buy whole armbands from Karkar, they could also make their own from material exchanged for pots. Maia, leader of the Gapan Clan on Bilbil, knew the art and said that the young boys learned how to make them when they were being initiated (Mennis, 1981a: 75). Derr, of the Luan Clan, said the Bilbil were also the middlemen for the armbands and used them as trade items for food (Mennis, 1980b: 65). Informants at Bilbil Village in 1994 agreed that they used *tohn*, wooden ornaments, placed in their arm bands. Some men carved their own *tohn* and added their own designs. When asked (in 1994) if they could sell them to tourists, they objected because they belonged to initiation ceremonies and were not for general consumption as their purpose is sacred.

Boar tusk ornaments, *paramat*, were chest ornaments made by men as a symbol of manhood. Most *paramat* ornaments were made from two tusks tied together with vine. When the pigs were young, certain teeth were extracted so that the lower teeth grew into tusks. In the Bel villages, these tusks were a valued trade item from the Rai Coast including Bogadjim where this ornament originated. Mager noted that the *paramat* closest to being a perfect circle were the most prized of all and were worth a pig. They served “as an ornament of honour for the men on festive occasions. They hung down from the neck and lay on the breast. — They also played an important role in the exchange of gifts to obtain a wife” (Mager, 1952: 247).



*Bali badam* (Anton Gideon, Papua New Guinea National Museum).

Finsch said that the most common neck decoration for the young people, the *darr*, consisted of strings of delicately strung little white shells. Headbands made from the same material are worn, as the ones made from precious dogs' teeth are much too expensive for the young people. For example in Bongu, the small woven breast bags are a man's decoration and slivers of seed kernels from *Coix lacrymae* are in a pretty way, daintily woven in and then hung with tassels of the same materials. Breast decorations made from dogs' teeth are worn on a cord around the neck. Dogs' teeth are made only from the molars which a dog has only four, so that the material is considered as being precious.

Another decoration was the *bul*, which was held in the mouth. Made of the same material as the armband, it could be bought whole or in sections and later made by the Bel group. Mager described the *bul* as the name of the white shelled mollusc (*Ovula ovum*) which was used as an ornament, "a medium of exchange and in divination" (1952: 46). Otto Finsch found this ornament, used in battle to frighten the enemy, in all areas where he travelled (Mennis, 1996: 38). There was also the *bali badam*, a shoulder bag used by men to carry their lime and betel nuts. This was a trade item made from fibre in Kurok Village and decorated with dogteeth, cowries and pigtusks (Christensen, 1975: 109). The *bali kol kol* (Bilbil language), a decoration worn on the back or the front from Efu Village was made predominantly of dogteeth

(canine teeth only), fibre and cowries were also added (Mager, 1952: 15).

Biró describes a container made from the taproot of the pandanus to contain tooth powder. It tasted like brown earth and was used to stain the teeth black. The men carried it with them and also held decorations in their teeth during dances. This tooth powder and the container for it were used as trade items by the Bilbil traders (Biró, 1899: 179).

Earrings were made from a loop of tortoise shell, *damala*, or an engraved ornament, painted red. A special accessory was made from strings of fine thin shell slivers, a half fruit kernel and a few dogs' teeth as a tassel. Usually nose decorations were made from a round pencil thick piece of wood or a pin made from smooth *tridacna* and named *gin*. The rarest were the nose ornaments carved from mother-of-pearl shell.

Biró noted that the people of Astrolabe Bay, particularly the men, took great care of their body and jewellery. Tattooing was unknown; instead the entire body was painted red after being vigorously rubbed with oil. The hair was coloured black with a colouring named *kummu*, which was bartered from the mountain inhabitants.

Biró said:

Head ornaments and hair bands were used for festive dancing: feathered jewellery combs, hair crinklers, nose and ear hangings, tooth jewellery, armbands and associated arm band jewellery and finally neck, breast and ear jewellery. With this large amount of jewellery their actual clothing was rather meagre. The men wearing only the *mal* and the women the grass skirts. They also wore plain bunches of leaves which enraptures the wearer not because of their colour or pretty shape but because of their scent (1899: 28).

**Musical instruments** were important in the village scene, both in the usual *singsings* that were performed, and in the secret men's society. Bullroarers were made by men and for men only, as they were sacred musical instruments. Mager describes bullroarers as being attached to a pole and whirled around to make the whirring sound to warn women and children to leave the area because the ancestral spirits were coming (Mager, 1952: 230). So important were these bullroarers that they would have been among the artefacts shown to the women at the time of conversion to the Christian church (Lawrence, 1964: 55). Biro also described the whirring wooden bullroarers called *tohn*, which were so sacred that he had great trouble buying one (Biró, 1899: 25).

Finsch described the bullroarers found in Bilia Village in 1888:

I accidentally discovered an appliance which the people seem to hold in high esteem and which they did not like to see in my hands. It was a 30cm long, flat, spatula piece of bamboo, in the shape of a paperknife, decorated on one side with a



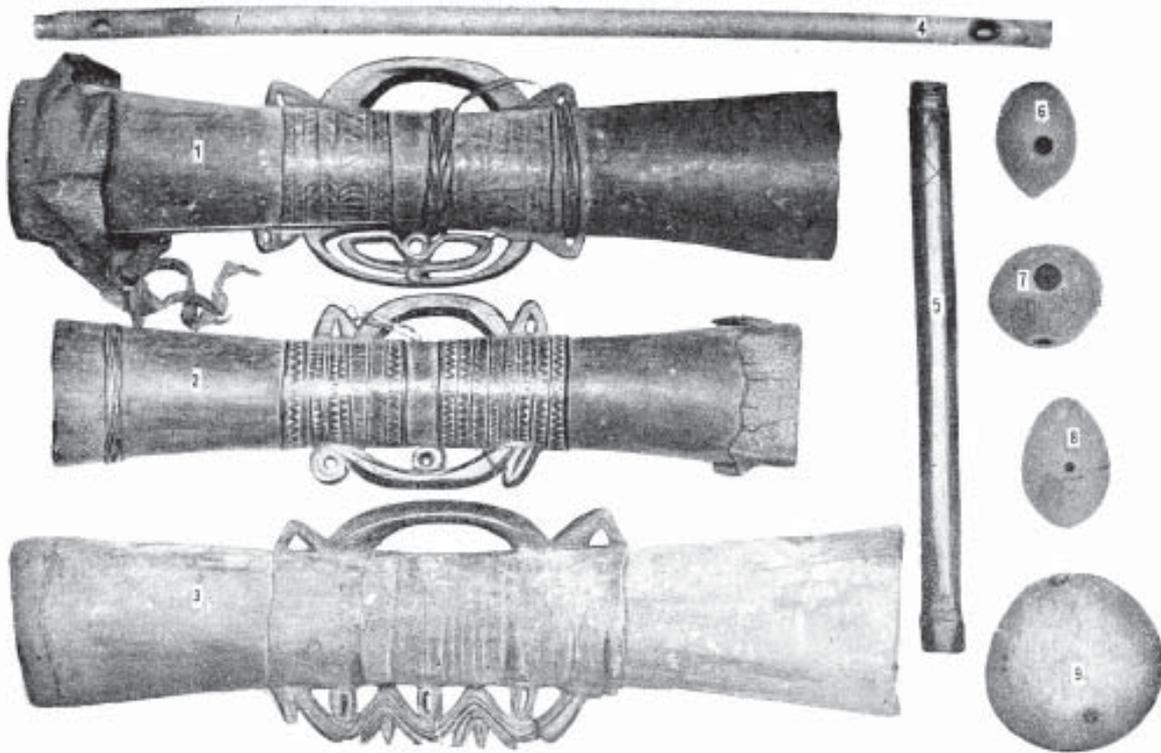
By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Bullroarers used in meziab dancers in the 1890s (Lajos Biro, 1899).*

fine, dainty indentation for which I had bartered several times on board the vessel. At first I thought that this spatula named *tohn* was a lime spoon; but found it was not used for this purpose. Then I thought that it served to break open betel nuts or the like, but in the face of the secrecy, with which this spatula named *tohn* was treated, this interpretation did not appear correct.<sup>1</sup> Never before did I find men honouring a tool so highly. In spite of the high offers not one of the twelve *tohn* could be bought. The same instruments did not appear to be of any worth outside of the *szirit* of Bilia. The purpose and meaning were still not clear to me, and only much later I wondered if the *tohn* could have something to do with circumcision that is practiced on the islands of the archipelago, but this seemed unlikely for several reasons. Like our spatulas, it may have served to mix the red colour, or dusted with chalk to spread or stamp an indented pattern onto their cheeks, as a festive decoration. Red coloured feather ornaments and other adornments were present as well as the *tohn* spatula in the *szirit* house. Like all meeting houses, it was used for initiation ceremonies and for feasts for the men (Mennis, 1996: 56-57).

There is an account about the burning of the magic paraphernalia before baptism in a Madang village at which people from Bilbil were present. "On Sunday, May 4 1924, the great day had come for baptism in Bangame. On the day before [the baptism], the magic implements were burnt" (Wagner, 1986: 123) Among the magic implements destroyed would have been the bullroarers as they were significant in the religious beliefs of the people symbolising the coming of the ancestors to the *meziab* when they were swung around the head.

The music of the Bel group was basic, as there were not many tones. Drums and reed flutes with two holes cannot give complicated music so they were used mainly for the rhythm. The men added the bullroarers as musical instruments and flutes made from gourds were also used. These egg shaped gourds were cut at the stem and drilled through to make a hole in the side and the top to get two tones. The player would cover one of the holes at a time. The flutes, *korsi*, or *kasuzi* with two holes, were made from a coconut and served as instruments of the *meziab*. These were blown in the *darem* before the *meziab* ancestral spirit comes into the village in order to prepare the way for him and warn the women and children to flee. The women and children were told the sound was the voices of the spirits, particularly those of their dead ancestors.



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Traditional Musical instruments in the 1890s. On the left three hand drums, two reed flutes and four coconut flutes (Lajos Biro, 1899).*

One night Biró purchased a polished magic flute, which he was told to conceal while the owner checked to see that there were no witnesses. Then the owner hid the instrument in his canoe and rowed Biró to Bogadjim telling him to be careful as it could bring bad luck and the transaction had to be a great secret. The missionaries later banned these magic flutes but they survived in European museums because people like Biró had collected them.

Biró's description of an initiation ceremony:

During the initiation ceremony, the boys went to the *Assar* house where they fasted and were beaten, and could not be seen by women. Their fathers and guests had to sit outside and eat and whirl the bullroarers and play the drums. While they sit there, the fathers and uncles of the boys made the jewellery for them especially their armbands which were the most important adornment. The big day was the day of the circumcision. No woman was allowed near the ceremonies on pain of death. The initiates lie down near a stream and the operation is done there and the foreskin is thrown into the stream. The penis is then covered to stem the bleeding while other men whirl the bullroarers that are

then touched to the head and face of each boy as a blessing. The boys were now taken to the stream for a wash. They were painted and had the jewellery put on them and then they were fed. [When the wound were healed] they were finally taken home to their mothers (Biro, 1899: 25).

Another common musical instrument is the hand-held drum; a snakeskin is tied on with vine at one end. Mager noted that lizard skins were also used and that the skin was glued on with old honey. The tree used for this instrument was called *tezauz* (Mager, 1952: 319). According to Pall, hand drums were mainly bought from Karkar Island but they also came from Siassi, Tami and the Rai Coast. Tami and Siassi hand drums were not bought directly but from middlemen at Malalamai and Bongor. Pall could not remember if the Bilbil made hand drums themselves, but he did see them being made at Rimba on the Rai Coast.

It may be seen that many of the musical instruments needed for their secret *meziab* ceremonies were introduced items - drums and magic flutes made of long bamboo pipes from Karkar. The *meziab* cult was of paramount importance in their culture and one to be feared.

Hannemann noted that the large drums, *garamut*, were called after the place where they were made, usually from the local tree called *bon*. If a good tree is found, two sections are cut from it and laid on top of logs to dry. The men who carved the *garamut* must do it in secret or it will not have a good sound. They cook food for themselves nearby. Then they cover the finished drum and carry it to the village where they prepare a feast. Here they make a smoky fire and sit near it and, if the smoke goes straight up, the *garamut* will make a clear sound. Everyone listens carefully to the sound of the drum. The owner kills a pig for the workers to ensure that it has a good tone.

A clan leader, Bais, had a large *garamut* named *Kugurus* after the ground the tree was from. It was made at Rimba on the Rai Coast and it was as high as a man's waist and 1.8 metres long. Bais had his *garamut* transported to Bilbil Island on a *palangut*. Tagari watched it come to the island tied under the platform of the canoe. It was not pulled along like a dingy. When it came ashore, the men had to chew the bark of a tree and spit it on the rope to make the men strong when pulling it. The people also threw rubbish on the backs of the men until they had pulled the *garamut* ashore and up to the village. The people killed a pig and had a big party to celebrate its arrival. The men sat around drinking *koniak*. It stayed for a long time on Bilbil Island until the Japanese came and broke it up and used it for firewood. When this *garamut* was beaten, it was heard at Rimba on the Rai Coast and Bogati, Bongu and in the bush as far as Kalegu, Amele, Oba, Sehan and Gonia in the Gogol Valley. Those who heard the noise knew it was the Bilbil men playing their *garamut* and wondered what was about to happen. If a man dies, then the *garamut* must be beaten; if war is declared, then the *garamut* must be beaten to call on the allies. As the sound of the *garamut* travels so far, their enemies will also know that war has been declared and they will prepare for battle. At the time of the New Year when the Pleiades appear in the sky the *likon* will beat the *garamut* to waken the villagers so they can rush to the sea and wash before dawn. This ensured that a crocodile or a *no* fish did not eat them in the next year. Each man has his own call sign on the *garamut* and must learn this as well as the call signs for every other person in the village.

Chewing betel nut is very prevalent in Papua New Guinea. While chewing the nut, lime is added into the mouth by means of a wooden or bone spatula. The bone spatula used was made from the thigh bone of a cassowary. (Daggers were also made the same way and known as *sarur* in the Bilbil language.) Lime containers can be made from various materials – from gourds or sections of a bamboo node and more recently from tobacco tins.

Like the rest of their neighbours, the Bel people indulged in chewing betelnut. They grew some themselves, but also imported them from the Rai Coast along with the lime containers and stoppers. There is a lime gourd in the Queensland Museum from Erema on the Rai Coast. The outside is a dull orange and the opening is 10mm wide.

Biró said that:

Children are not banned from smoking amongst the *tamol* people. The *tivul-tamol* (European) always carries tobacco with him and if he is in a good mood gives away some scraps of the tobacco which rolled in a brittle tree leaf, makes a fairly acceptable *tamol* cigar. I pay little Kafuj my small cigarette tribute. He is standing like a picture with an embarrassed look on his face in front of the verandah. I know he rarely gets any tobacco, as he is obviously an orphan. For instance he does not possess any pretty neck jewellery, made of polished snail slices, like Massongany, the son of the wealthy Labuto. That is why Balifu sits on the main seat in the classroom, and shows off his pretty jewellery. After all, Tjebiau who is the most noble man in the village is his father. Because even in those times and amongst those people equality does not exist (1899: 29)

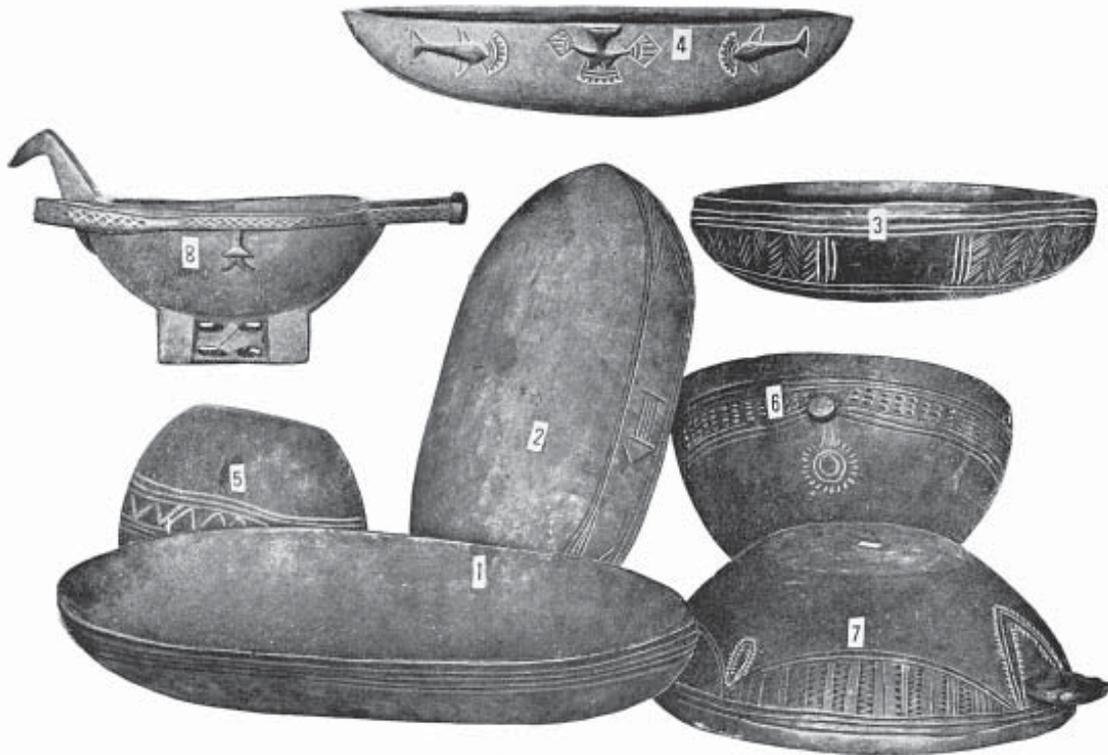
Among **domestic objects** were the mortars and pestles which were trade items over a wide range between Manam and the Rai Coast in the traditional trading system. The tool used to hollow out these mortars, *sarur*, was made of stone and it was used to hollow out canoes, mortars, drums etc. (Mager, 1952: 269). Wooden plates, mortars and pestles, from Karkar and the Rai Coast were exchanged for pots, and were used daily in traditional customs in the Bel villages, especially in preparation of special dishes.

The pestle is the long object, used in conjunction with the mortar, to mash or pound food or grind nuts. Once the custom of preparing certain dishes became part of the culture, the artefacts needed were permanently on the required list and no longer a luxury item. One such dish is called *harong* in Bilbil and consists of a mixture of canarium nuts, cooked bananas, and taro pounded together in a mortar. Mager describes the pestle as a club or a bludgeon as well and it may well have had this function: One word, *saduk*, is used for both (1952: 262). A hardwood pestle in the Queensland Museum has a bird-shaped head with a long neck. Mortars are sometimes called after the purpose for which they were made.



By courtesy, Rosalie Christensen

*Mortar and pestle from Long Island (Rosalie Christensen).*



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Wooden plates and bowls used in the trading routes in Astrolabe Bay in the 1890s. Biro states that the top one is from the Huon Gulf and he was amazed at the design of the water frothing from the mouths of the fish in the carving. The dishes shaped like canoes are from the Rai Coast (Lajos Biro, 1899).*

Wooden bowls are made of hardwood and come in various shapes, oval or round. They can be used to hold taro before it is cooked in the earthenware pots or to carry hot steamed food for the family meal. The Rai Coast produced wooden bowls, which were commonly used as plates by the Bel.

Pall described the plates:

They are called after the beach where they are bought. If they are bought in Singor, they are called *Singor daig* if they are bought from Galek, *Galek Daig*. If they are brought down from the bush places behind Singor they are still called after the beach place from where they are traded. If they were made in the bush behind Singor, the pots are still called *Singor daig*. Some long plates are bought from Malalamai, Bongor, Mur, places near Saidor and Sel. Galek makes long plates from kwila. The Siassi and Tami made a different sort of plate from the Rai Coast ones. They brought them to Bongor and Malalamai and the Bilbil went there to trade the pots (Mennis, 1981b: 57).

Other prized bowls are those from Siassi or Tami islands. These bowls are well carved and were highly desired trade items. They are recognised by the curved design on the side and were particularly prized by the Bel people even though they were expensive. Mager backs this up with the assertion that, "Tami Island, lies over against Cape Cretin. Their wooden bowls are a trade article desired by the Gedaged people" (Mager, 1952: 311).

Biró depicts canoe shaped or egg shaped wooden bowls used for storage of raw vegetables and to put food on during a meal. They were also used to carry seawater for the cooking pots. Not everyone had wooden bowls, poor people using *pisang* leaves instead. Finsch thought the bowls were valuable as they were used in bride prices. Biró found that the best wooden bowls were in the Madang Harbour (but they could have been traded there) (Biró, 1899: 83-85). The culture of the Bel people was enriched by these many traded artefacts, which were used in the traditional material system. They had come to depend on these items to such an extent that many of their customs would not survive without them. For example, their religious life in the *meziab* depended on the magic flutes, drums and bamboo pipes all introduced from Karkar.

The people had beautiful spoons carved from coconut shells and other spoons made from mother of pearl. For many people, a wasps' nest was seen as a delicacy— it was roasted whole and eaten, wasps as well. The wasp nest is like a cocoon and was used to decorate the men's house. Other luxury items were salt, beetles and tobacco. Meat from pigs, dogs, snakes, and lizards is forbidden to children and women and old people. Instead, they have sweet water and snails because they are better for their digestive system (Biró, 1899: 94).

**Perishable items** were also traded. These included large taro, yams, *saksak* (sago), betel nut, *kau kau* (sweet potatoes), galip nuts and meat. The large taro roots from Bogati, Sehan and Nobanob were traded for pots from May until August. January and February was the time for the small taro. Yams came from Siar, Riwo, Kranket, Malamal and Sek Islands in the Madang Harbour area and from Galek, Warai and Singor on the Rai Coast. The Bilbil would store them in their yam houses for the time of the big winds in August, which prevented them from venturing out in their canoes (Mennis, 1981b: 54-56). The Bilbil grew some yams themselves and kept some of those for planting in the following season. Once the German and Australian governments put in new roads this opened up more markets in Amele, Bagasin and many other places.

*Saksak*, or sago, came from places between Gogol and Bogati and inland from Gonua, Atu, Barum, Bur and Didiwala as well from Foran, Silibob and Kauris. When the Bilbil wanted food, they would send the word out and make market days to exchange pots for *saksak*.

Pall Tagari said:

Men from Nobonob to Bogati used to sell *brus*. I have seen that the Nobanob and Amele people buy *brus* in the market. Before, when my father was alive, we got *brus* from Nobanob, Silibob, Kauris and Amele, or we went up that Gogol River to Atu and Dogea. We also went to Bogati and Bongu to buy *brus*. Now I have heard you get it mostly from Bogati and the Gogol River. Bongu does not grow much *brus* now. Atu and Bogati grow *brus* and sell it in the market or to the tobacco factory, *haus tabak* (Mennis, 1981b: 56).

Harding notes that little tobacco is grown in the coastal belt. It appears to grow best in the inland areas and is traded to the coast (1963: 33). Bashan added that *brus* was also bought in Karkar and Ber speaks of people climbing the mountain behind Yeimas for *brus*. Later in the German times, the people were quite happy to accept tobacco as part payment for labour. It was the Neu Guinea Kompagnie's policy to get people into the habit of smoking so that the demand for tobacco would increase (Souter, 1963: 71).

On the North Coast different places were famous for their *brus*. To the south of Bogia, Moro Village was a favourite stopping

place for traders who came for their famous tobacco. The *brus* was given initially as a present before the negotiations and then used as a trade item.

### Trading of Artefacts

The Takia people of the southern part of Karkar are related linguistically and culturally to the Bel group on the coast of Madang, which included the Yabobs and Bilbils. They traded informally with the inland people of the island and also made long trading trips to Manam and the mainland all the way to Bilbil and the Rai Coast. In this way, they became middlemen for Bilbil pots and the Bilbil in turn acquired red, black and white ochres, mortars and pestles, dogs, woven armbands, *galips*, (*canarium almonds*), betel nut (the nut of the *Areca* palm) and wooden plates and drums (McSwain 1977: 18). When they sailed to Kranket and Bilbil, the Karkar would trade the above items as well as canoe hulls for Bilbil pots and numerous other items for which the Bilbils were the middlemen. The *galip* nuts were harvested in May and June so there was a two-way trade; sometimes the Bel group sailed up to Karkar for them and other times the Karkars visited them. The other trade items such as *kundu* drums could be purchased at any time of the year. The *kunum* and the *angor kunum* trade items were the mortars and pestles used for crushing the *galip* nuts.



Man scraping coconut husks into a Rai Coast bowl, Bilbil village, 1970s.

Clans visiting Karkar from Bilbil Village included: The Dugus Clan visited Kavailo to see their trade friends and exchanged teeth, pigs and galip nuts; The Luan Clan went to Kuruk and Dumad, as did the Riwos; The Gapan Clan visited Bog on the North Coast and then travelled straight across to Karkar to Kavailo to see their friends. All clans still go to Karkar and have trading friends there. If they were calling into several places in the old days, they would go first to Kurum then to Dumal, Biu, Dangsi and Kavailo but this did not always happen.

The Takia also traded with the villages on the north coast at Megiar and Sarang. The Karkar people traded wooden bowls, mortars and pestles as well as red ochres, dogs, woven armbands, *galips*, (*Canarium almond*), betel nut (the nut of the *Areca* palm) and drums, dogteeth ornaments and also canoe hulls for the larger canoes or small fishing canoes. The Takia were the middlemen for Bilbil pots, trading them further afield to the Waskia people on the north of Karkar and also to the people living in the bush towards the volcano. The people on the mainland always attributed the Karkar people with strongest magic because of the power of their volcano.

The Yabobs and Bilbils did not go to Sangana or even to Kulili or Wadau, but they did go to Kinim near where the airport is today and there they obtained the red ochre traded from Urugen Village and also *kunum* and *kundu* from the inland people. Another point of call was Kavailo on the southern end of the Island. They gave pots in return and the Urugen people then traded these further inland. So the pots would have travelled far and wide around the island even if the traders themselves did not.

The Bel people called the North Coast area, where the villages of Moro, Malala and Sarang are found, the Laden Coast. *Brus* was the main export of the Laden area. It was good *brus* and many people wanted it. In some areas, the men would roll the *brus* in banana leaves and some with *mangas* leaves. The Madang people visited this area infrequently but their pots were traded by middlemen right along this coast and inland and bartered for *brus* or pigteeth. Korak made pots, which were heavier and took longer to cook the food than the Bilbil pots and so were exchanged for the Yabob/Bilbil ones. The Korak people are non-Austronesian language speakers and belong to the same language group as the people of Malala Village. They were closely related linguistically to the Waskia people on the northern part of Karkar Island and traded with them.

According to informants from Moro village, the Laden Coast people once built large canoes and sailed in fleets of three or four of them right along the coast as far as Bogia and Manam in one direction and Bilbil in another. If they wanted to go to Karkar, they would sail along the coast as far as Sarang and then head across the sea to Kurum on Karkar. At other times, the Karkar Islanders, acting as middlemen, brought Yabob pots to exchange for the *brus*. The Moro people used pots from Suare, Korak and Bilbil/Yabob and traded their *brus* for *kunum* (mortar) from

Manam and Karkar; pigteeth for *bilas* and red paint was bought from Karkar. The Malala people were not potters but were traditionally part of the trading network.

While other members of the Bel group sometimes accompanied the Yabobs and Bilbils on their trading trips, they also traded with them with items such as yams, shells and canoe hulls. Sek and Riwo had the *tambu* shells which abounded in the harbour and the reefs. Flying fox teeth were also traded.

There was constant trade between the Bel people and nearby inland villages on informal trading trips. The main items were tobacco, pig's teeth and large taro. Pall Tagari remembered that many men from Nobanob to Bogati sold tobacco for pots while wood for canoes, vines etc were procured from nearby Hudini and Yagaum. It might be bush vines or logs for the mast and outrigger. Sometimes they would decide on a day in advance and when everything had been cut and dragged to the beach, they would wait for the Bilbil men to come on that day. Alternatively, the bushmen would light a fire and signal the island. The Bilbils would bring pots over to pay for the wood. If however, they had no pots they would use the *dinau* system of delayed payment (Mennis, 1981b: 17 & 59).

The reverse could happen too. The bushmen could get an advance on the pots from the Bilbil if they did not have enough food to exchange for them. The Bilbil people might leave all the pots they had rather than carry them home. Pall said, "later the bush people would give them the food. My father liked the *dinau* system. He thought it worked well. You give people pots and things and later they worked for you or gave you things in exchange".

Imitation *bulra*,<sup>2</sup> made from pearl shell, were obtained from Singor on the Rai Coast (Harding 1967: 48-49). The *bigmen* obtained the real boar tusks and the Bilbils visited Singor regularly. The Sio people once lived on tiny Sio Island and were still there in the early 1930's when Groves visited it (1934: 43). After the Second World War the people shifted to the mainland. The old island trade compared well with the Bilbil trade as the inhabitants depended mainly on their pots for a living. In both places, these were made by the women and traded by the men. The Sio were middlemen for all sorts of items, just as the Bilbils were. On the one hand, the Sio traded the carved Tami Island artefacts to the Rai Coast and thence to Bilbil, whence they were traded once again to Karkar. On the other hand the Bilbil pots, the Rai Coast bows and arrows, black paint and long dishes were traded through Sio in the other direction for Tami and Siassi items.

Both islands, Sio and Bilbil, were inhospitable rocky places where gardening was so difficult that the people resorted to growing vegetables on the mainland.<sup>3</sup> The inhabitants were Austronesian speakers who chose to live on the island, safe from enemy hill tribes and, in the case of Sio, from mosquitoes. They built large seagoing canoes in which they carried products to other islands for trade and barter. Both had trading links to numerous inland

and coastal villages both had direct and indirect trading links with numerous inland and coastal villages.

When Sio women married outside their village, they were banned from making Sio pots in their new village. (Harding, 1967: 37) This happened, too, in Bilbil where any woman marrying outside was forced to stop making pots and her skills were lost. At one time there was even a ban on women marrying out of the pottery area of Yabob and Bilbil. Such was the value placed on the skill of pot making. It was part of monopolising the product as well. Today, both these coastal settlements continue their manufacture of the earthenware pots, which are still bartered for food to the inland and to the islands using more modern forms of transportation.

On the Rai Coast, the Bel group exchanged little pots for possum or dogteeth, from which they made decorations. Bongor and Singor had bird feathers (*kangal*) and from Malalamai, Bongor and Sel came the red feathers of the fowl. Dog's teeth and *kapul* teeth came from Rai Coast. They came from the bush places near Bonga and were sewn together with vines. The inland villagers behind Bonga, Malalamai and Sel made bows and arrows which they traded to the coastal villagers, who were the middlemen buying the cooking pots from Bilbil and Yabob.

There were many artefacts peculiar to the Astrolabe Bay area, if not for their purpose but at least in their design which gave them particular identity. While many places had various pots, plates, weapons and other items of material culture, it was in their design and sometimes the material they were made from that they could be used to identify the area they were from. These artefacts and the earthenware pots they were traded against formed the basis of the economic structure before the arrival of outside influences. The Bel group who traded these artefacts widely in their canoes were the power brokers and when the Germans tried to change the situation the Bel traders took up arms against them.

1. According to Mager, the tohn is a lance shaped piece of wood made from a piece of palm and is carried by the men in their net bags as a love charm. When tied to a string and whirled about the head, it becomes a bullroarer. (1953: 328). It is also a sacred instrument of the meziab

2. Maclay used the term bulra, to describe the chest ornament made from the tusks of a boar. It is also known as paramat or pezamat.

3. Some may argue that this comparison is disparate because it compares the Sio Island as described by Groves in the 1930's with Bilbil Island which was deserted in the early 1900's. But according to Groves, Sio Island had not changed much. So the comparison is still valid.



By courtesy, Queensland Museum

Above: Small dancing decorations, tohn, showing the owner's marks on them. These are inserted into their armbands. These are made from a very light wood.

Below: Pestle from Karkar Island, made from hardwood, is very heavy.



By courtesy, Queensland Museum



*Monument erected in 1971 by Russian scientists on board the Dmitry Mendeleev to commemorate the landing of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay in 1871.*

*On the left is the track he took up to the village.*

## Chapter 8, The People Observed



*As we were beaching the boat, I noticed a narrow path leading into the thick jungle. Impatiently jumping out of the boat, I followed the path into the jungle, without giving any directions to my men, who were busy tying up the boat to the nearest tree. Proceeding along the path about 30 paces, a few roofs became visible among the trees, and a little further the path led me to a small open space, around which stood some huts with their roofs reaching almost to the ground. The village had a very neat and pleasant appearance. The middle of the open space had been pounded flat and smooth, and all around are varicoloured bushes and palms giving shade and coolness.*

*As I was approaching the other hut I heard a rustle and, on glancing round in the direction from which it came, some paces away I saw a man standing as if rooted to the ground. He glanced for a second in my direction and then dashed into the bushes. I went after him, almost at a run, waving a piece of red cloth, which I found in my pocket. Looking back seeing I was alone and completely unarmed, and that I was making signs to him to approach, he stopped. I slowly approached the savage, silently offering him the red cloth, which he took with obvious pleasure and bound round his head (Miklouho Maclay, 1871).*

Sailors on board a stranded sailing ship in early 19th century may have been some of the earliest foreign visitors to the Madang Coast. They left a record of their stay at Budup near Alexishafen which was woven into one of the many versions of the Kilibob and Manup myths. In this story, Kilibob and Manup have a fight at their home village of Budup. Afterwards they both build boats, Manup building a canoe and Kilibob a large sailing ship with many sails. Kilibob's ship was of a type that had never been seen before and he sailed away in this promising to return with good things for the people.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the story was probably a description of a sailing boat that was stranded at Budup with a crew of foreign sailors who came ashore to repair their ship. They left many artefacts of their visit including two small statuettes of sailors holding *kris* swords, boat chains, a wine stand and some other ship's fittings. Wanting to know where they were, they slashed their way to the ridge, cutting the timber with steel knives. The local people were amazed at the strength of the slashes compared to their own stone adzes. There was evidence that this visit occurred as ebony statues, ship fittings and a chain were found there. This led to the belief that the ship's crew were the culture heroes, Kilibob and Manup, and that they would return one day bringing the cargo.

Who these sailors were or what happened to them remains a mystery but the artefacts they left behind are concrete evidence of their visit some decades before Miklouho-Maclay arrived in 1871.<sup>1</sup> However, as there is not much information about them, Maclay can still be credited as the first foreigner to live in the area for any length of time.

Those who collected information on the culture of the local people deserve special mention because, without them, scant knowledge of the local history would have been passed down. The Bel people, like all those of Papua New Guinea, had a rich oral history but once changes were introduced, much of the oral tradition and knowledge about the magic and secret rites was not handed on any more or only in a diluted form.

Each of the outsiders who recorded their memories in written form had their own agenda in doing so. Some, like Miklouho-Maclay, had no intention of changing the people's beliefs, way of dress or other customs. He was a scientist who had come to study and had a high regard for the people. Otto Finsch was an ornithologist, interested in birds and also the local culture, but he had a hidden agenda in investigating the possibilities of a German Colony to be established in the area. Dr Dempwolff, a young medical practitioner with the German Company, learnt some of the local languages and collected many myths, particularly of the Bilbil and Yabob areas. Fr Aufinger, SVD, also collected the beautiful songs to the spirits, which the weathermen sang to influence the elements to produce rain, storm or sunny days. Later the Lutheran Missionaries, Mager and Hannemann, had an intense interest in the culture of the people, their dances, ceremonies and beliefs. Hannemann, in particular, wanted to analyse the dances to determine if any of them were compatible with Lutheran teachings. This was particularly important for the new missions in the Madang area. Sadly he concluded that even the most harmless seeming dances had an element of ancestor worship in them and so had to be discouraged.



*Baron Nikolai Nikolovitch Miklouho-Maclay, the first European on the Rai Coast, 1846 – 1888 (Tumarkin, 1982).*

Peter Lawrence, in his *Road Belong Cargo*, studied the influence of the cargo cults, local beliefs and customs in the Madang area. He was an academic interested in recording the status quo in the villages. I was privileged to accompany him on one of his interview trips and was amazed that the focus of his questions was only on cargo cults. In my work, I had rarely asked about these cults, as I was more interested in their material culture. Lawrence opened my eyes to another level of questioning that influenced my own project. But I was left feeling that Lawrence, too, could have widened his scope. Does this mean that each of us would benefit from being more open? It all rests on the interview as the informants have a wealth of information that we need to access. If Lawrence had questioned further, he would have discovered the whereabouts of a sailing ship that was washed ashore at Budup in the early 1800s.

There were many specialists in the fields of ethnography, linguistics, religion, medicine, natural sciences and anthropology living in Madang or the surrounding area during various stages of the town's development. Maclay was there before there was any outside contact apart from that at Budup; Otto Finsch was also able to observe the local people at this early stage and the accounts of these two scientists are especially valuable. Kubary's time was during the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie's

Administration (1885-1899). Dempwolff's and Biró's visits covered both the time of the New Guinea Compagnie's reign as well as the Imperial German Administration (1899-1914). Lutherans, Hannemann and Mager, and Fr. Aufinger worked in Madang during the time of the Australian Administration before the Second World War, and described the traditional life of the Madang people.

Like all of us, these scientists and specialists had their strengths and their weaknesses. Some had more of an impact on the people than others but they all collected, commented and collated information on the local culture and people who can now have a clearer idea of their own rich culture and history. For this we owe them gratitude. The present collections of the oral history of the old village people add a local dimension to the official history of Madang and also give's the people's side during these times especially how changes impacted on their rich culture and customs.

#### **Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho-Maclay**

Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho-Maclay was born on 17 July 1846 in the Novgorod region of Russia. His mother was widowed early and brought up five children. As a youth, Maclay was interested in scientific endeavour and, after studying at various universities, he decided to go to the Pacific to study marine life. Before he left Russia, Baer, a Russian scientist, pointed out that little was known about the people of New Guinea. Maclay decided to go there to combine his interests in marine life and anthropology. Appearing before the Imperial Russian Geographic Society, he asked them for funds to contribute to his expenses and this was granted. His ship, the *Vitiaz*, was ten months on the way to New Guinea, calling into many ports where Maclay studied the local people. At Samoa, Maclay acquired two manservants to help him. The first was a Samoan called Boy and the second was Olsen, a stranded Swedish seaman. The *Vitiaz* reached the shores of New Guinea in September 1871 as described by Maclay:

About 10 o'clock in the morning the high coast of New Guinea appeared, partially covered with clouds—A high mountain range ran parallel to the coast (marked on the map as Finisterre Range), its height exceeding 3,000 metres. Passing between Rook Island and the coast of New Guinea many low islands could be seen, covered with vegetation. In some places the coast belt became wider. The mountains retreated into the depths of the land and the narrow terraces, approaching the sea, were transformed into broad fields fringed with dark vegetation (Sentinella, 1975: 15).

When they first saw the Russian ship in their waters, the Rai Coast people called it *Anut Wag*, which means god's canoe, but they wanted it to leave. They hit the coconuts and told this strange thing to go away. From the ship, Maclay put quite a different interpretation on the event, thinking that they were offering him the coconut.

A group of savages appeared on this promontory. They seemed very apprehensive. After long deliberation among themselves, one of them detached himself from the group. Carrying a coconut which he placed on the beach, indicating by mimicry that he wished, it would seem, to explain that the coconut was intended for us, after which he quickly hid himself in the dense jungle (ibid).

Next morning Maclay was up early, peering at the coast wondering where to land. At last he pointed out a high point of land to the captain. The place appeared healthier than the low-lying land. When they saw a group of people all heavily armed on the beach, Maclay fearlessly decided to go ashore unarmed. He got into the small dingy with his two servants and held out trinkets of beads, red cotton material and some ribbons as the boat rounded a promontory.

Maclay took particular note of the colours, the sombre colour of the village roofs and houses compared to the bright colours of the foliage. He was about to meet his first villager and he was excited. How often has this happened in history? Captain Cook had many first encounters with the native people of the places he visited. It was a meeting that was to happen again and again during Maclay's stay on the Rai Coast as the villagers came to make his acquaintance. But for Maclay, his first encounter was to remain etched in his mind for the rest of his life.

The man was Tui who became Maclay's good friend and teacher during the time he stayed on the Rai Coast. Maclay described him as having, "a broad flat nose and eyes looking out from overhanging brow ridges and a large mouth". He described his *mal* which was a long piece of bark-cloth wrapped around his loins and between his legs and was also wearing armbands above the elbow. He was not wearing the usual breast ornament, which was a mark of a chief. Although not an important man when Maclay arrived, Tui was to become important through their friendship. The Rai Coast people stared at Maclay wondering if he were a spirit or human. When they saw him with a light they thought he had broken off part of the moon and was carrying it around with him. In that case, he must be from the moon. This was understandable because, at least, they could see the moon but they could not comprehend that there were other countries on the other side of the world. Their own world encompassed the mountain ranges on the one side, the Rai Coast to the south and the islands of Karkar, Arup and Bagabag off the coast.

Miklouho-Maclay first went to New Guinea in 1871 and lived with the people of the Rai Coast during three visits between 1871 and 1883. He was a scientist and a writer and his meticulous diaries of his travels in New Guinea give us have a rich knowledge of the traditional way of life of the Astrolabe Bay people at a time when it had been unaffected by outside contact. He has been described as, "scholar, scientist, explorer, adventurer" (Greenop, 1944: 14).



*Maclay's sketch of his friend, Kain, of Bilbil.*

Tolstoy wrote to Maclay on 25 September 1886, "You were the first to demonstrate that man is man everywhere, that is, a kind, sociable being with whom communication can and should be established through kindness and truth, not guns and spirits" (Tumarkin, 1982: 52).

Maclay has left detailed accounts of the people, the trade and the trading trips from first hand experience. More importantly he described the Bilbil trading canoes when they were a vibrant part of the material system. He described the islands of Astrolabe Bay as, "The Archipelago of the Contented People". His studies of the local people are of immense importance. He measured the tides and the atmospheric pressure, collected shellfish and specimens of animals and explored the Finisterre Range behind the Rai Coast. Stories about him have been handed down from generation to generation so that, even now, anecdotes survive.

The story of Malu, of Gorima Village, who wanted to kill Maclay:

Once in Yabob Village there was a baby boy who was very sick with yaws.<sup>2</sup> His parents tried to heal him, but to no avail. They didn't want to kill him so they went to the forest and got the *pangal* of the *saksak*. They cut it up and built a small platform on a little canoe. Putting the baby on the platform they pushed the canoe out past the waves thinking that the sea would deal with the problem. As the *talio* wind blew the canoe across the water, the parents watched from

Yabob Island until it was out of sight. Carried on the current, the canoe with the baby floated past Bilbil Island and was swept ashore at Gorima on the Rai Coast.

The waves were strong near the beach and threw the canoe with the baby still on it high on the sand. A Gorima man was walking along when he heard the baby crying as the seawater was hurting his sores. Remembering that no child had wandered along the beach that morning, the man followed the noise until he saw the baby boy on the canoe. He picked him up and washed his skin all over. Then he brought him back to the house and said to his wife, "We don't have any children. This baby has sores and has been tossed up by the waves. Let's look after him and if he gets better then he can be our first born". He told his wife this and they both looked after the child. They got special leaves from the bush to rub on the sores and soon the sores were all gone. Then he became their first born and they called him Malu. (Malu means a duck – a good name for a baby who arrived over the water). Later, he was known as a fighter in big or small fights.

This man, Malu, was living on the Rai Coast at the time Maclay was there. For some reason, he threatened to kill Maclay (perhaps because he was always angry at being called a duck and ready for a fight). When Maclay heard about this he said, "I want to see this Malu of Gorima Village who wants to kill me". On his way there, Maclay met some Gorima men on the beach. They talked with their hands because Maclay did not know their language. Then Maclay went with them to Gorima Village and asked for Malu. Malu was in the bush so Maclay sat down and waited for him. He called all the villagers together and gave them tobacco and pieces of cloth. He befriended them all. Then Malu returned and changed his mind about fighting Maclay. But this Malu "man belong fight" was originally not from Gorima, but from Yabob (Told by David Ber of Yabob in 1994).

In June 1877, Miklouho-Maclay himself recorded the threats from Malu of Gorima in his diary. Standing fearlessly in Gorima Village, and surrounded by armed men who did not know him, Maclay proceeded to lay down the law. He told them it was a bad thing to have this threat against him because he had done nothing to the Gorima people and nothing to Abui or Malu who both apparently wanted to kill him. Then he yawned and said, "I am very tired and want to sleep. I am going to lie down and if Abui and Malu want to kill me, well, let them do it while I am asleep, because tomorrow I will leave Gorima." With these words, Maclay went to the men's house, wrapped himself in his blanket and went to sleep. His action had an immediate result amongst the villagers. One can only exclaim, "What a man!" Who else in the face of such danger could sleep so soundly? The people were amazed at his courage and fearlessness and decided he must be like a god and unable to die. Through the night, they talked earnestly together while Maclay slept deeply nearby. Next morning both Malu and

Abui offered Maclay food as a peace offering and insisted on accompanying him back to his hut near Bogadjim (Sentinella, 1975: 268-9).

Maclay made many friends amongst the Bilbil men, he studied their canoe making and travelled in them along the coast reaching places that had hitherto been out of his reach. By travelling with the village men he was able to observe the customs of the trading and the trade transactions at many places. He observed that the traders, as visitors, commanded respect from the host villages who had to follow a set procedure when the traders arrived offering them betel nut and pigs. Bilbil headman, Kain, upbraided certain village people who had not welcomed them properly and the people rushed to do his bidding. Of course the presence of a foreigner meant there were higher expectations put on the hosts.

Maclay gave the Bongu men various "trifles" (as he called them) as gifts, but these beads, nails, fishhooks and strips of red cloth were not mere trifles. They were the first items these people would own which had not come from the forest or the sea. Imagine the impact on the people whose only tools were bone, stone, shells or wood to be confronted with a nail. The red cotton lengths of material must have also been a thing of wonder. The softness of the fabric would have been compared with the toughness of the *mal* cloth that the men wore as a loin cloth. Within a few decades the *mal* would be discarded for cotton material.

Through the introduction of nails, Maclay had an influence on the culture of the people where he lived and through the trade network, with other villages along the coast. These nails were amongst the most valued gifts Maclay gave them and the date mentioned was 20 October 1871 (Tumarkin, 1982: 95). This was the first time the villagers had held steel in their hands and they were incredulous. Here was something that they could not account for, since everything they had to that time came from the bush or the ground. Where did it come from? What was its use? They turned the nails into awls and used them to make holes on their canoes for the vines to be drawn through. They were far too precious to be just hammered in and left, as we would use them. They could be sharpened and stayed sharp far longer than their bone knives. The people were pragmatic. If they found something that they thought was superior to their tools they immediately substituted the new object and discarded the old.

In April 1877, Maclay visited Yabob Island and noted:

Several natives were working on a new pirogue. They were sewing a long plank on to one of its sides. Several corresponding holes were made in the edges of the pirogue and the board. In these a strong vine was threaded through. One such fastening was about half a metre from another and all the chinks and holes were caulked with a material made from the inner layers of the bark called *dim*, which is scraped off and steeped in water. The work was considerable, but formerly it was still more so, because they did not have nails and the natives had to make the holes with stone

implements, in consequence of which the holes were larger; now they grind large nails into the shape of a chisel and very skilfully make small square holes. They were very glad when I showed them that by heating the nail in the fire, they could burn holes, of various diameters, depending on the thickness of the nail (Sentinella, 1975: 258)

It may be argued that the influence of one man on a culture would be minimal, but then Maclay was not an ordinary man. Although he did not try to change the people beliefs as happened subsequently, none the less affected their lives by his very presence. Their belief that they were the centre of the world was gone forever - there was another world out there with large ships and white men wearing clothes and eating strange food. Maclay's feats can be seen in the translation of his diaries by C. L. Sentinella.

In October 1977, when many stories were still circulating about Maclay, Sentinella came to Madang where his book had been published. He was a rather frail elderly man and was happy to see his book at last in print. As he was anxious to meet the people, I took him out to Bilbil Village where the clan leaders, Derr, Maia, Pall, Damun and Gab gathered around. We sat and had a cup of tea with the provisions we had brought. The Bilbil men looked intently at this white-haired moustached man who kept repeating the name Maclay. I acted as interpreter for the day and was interested in the reactions on both sides. When I introduced clan leader, Damun Maklai, I mentioned that it had been Damun's grandfather who was born on Bilbil Island while Maclay was visiting and who was named Maklai after him. Sentinella wanted to hear all the details of that story. We showed Sentinella around the village and he took photographs of the women making pots.

Finally old Maia got quite excited, he pointed at Sentinella, "Is he Maclay's brother?"

The others joined in discussing this possibility in *Tok Pisin* and Sentinella was anxious to know what they were saying.

"They want to know if you're Maclay's brother!"

He laughed, "Tell them I might be old but I'm not that bloody old!"

Sentinella had spent years researching Miklouho-Maclay's diaries and translating them from Russian and he died a few years after his visit to Madang. We felt privileged to have met him.

In 1883, Maclay made a brief third visit to the Rai Coast but the people did not give him as great a welcome as previously, because, in the interim, other foreigners had visited the area. Before he left, Maclay invited Kain and Madmai from Bilbil Island to go with him to Russia. They got as far as Sek and then jumped overboard. According to the Bel people, these two men lost a good opportunity of going to Russia, "the realm of the ancestors" and learning the secret of the cargo (Pech, 1991: 150). At Yabob, Ber Nansi said his ancestor, Tarapu, would have seen Maclay as

also would have Gaulak, Awak and Tabue, who were all brothers of Tarapu, living at this time.

Tomasin of Kranket Island had a story about Maclay's coming to his island and marking a tree to show how tall he was. The tree stood there for many years, but Tomasin thought it had fallen down by the 1970's (Mennis, 1980a: 82). Derr of Bilbil had heard the story about how Maclay had walked all over Bilbil Island with his friend, Kain, a clan leader of Bilbil. We read of this also in Maclay's diaries. Kasare of Yabob mentioned that Maclay often went sailing in Kain's *palangut* along the Rai Coast. Maia used Maclay as a time marker. "After the ash fell, Maclay came". Gab of Bilbil had the most to say of the memories of Maclay. Maclay built a small house at Bilbil at a place called Aiura, which he used as a lookout for ships. He often visited this place from Bongu and looked out to sea with his telescope. Maclay brought pineapple, pawpaw, watermelon and corn seeds and planted them at Bongu. When they grew, Kain ate the watermelon with the skin as well. Maclay said, "No! Not with the skin on."

Initially, the local people regarded Maclay as a deity and with his amazing courage and fearlessness, is it any wonder? He seemed to act in a superhuman way as if he could not be killed. Peter Lawrence commented that the people connected Maclay with *Anut*, the creator-god. "During his first visit, he heard a conversation at Bongu, which he could not follow properly but in which he was obviously referred to as *tamo Anut*" (1964: 65).

Emese Molnar-Bagley had reservations about Maclay, as portrayed by Sentinella, "of a kindly, dedicated humanitarian committed to safeguarding the rights of primitive, specifically the inhabitants of the Astrolabe Bay". She thought that the truth was more complex and mentioned the divinity myth, which Maclay encouraged, and the fact he called himself a "white Papuan" and addressed the people of Astrolabe Bay as his people. Furthermore he attempted "to influence international political decisions regarding which European nation was to gain economic and political control of the area he had lived in" (1993: 20). Miklouho-Maclay had taken part in secret plans to have a Russian naval station established in New Guinea. Indeed, the Russian Navy financed his last trip. He also named the area he landed at the Maclay Coast, and tried to persuade his brother, Michael, to live there. Later he sent a telegram to Lord Derby stating, "The people of the Madang Coast claim political autonomy under a European Protectorate". The European country he had in mind was, of course, Russia, which he thought would protect the interests of the people (Sentinella, 1975: 307).

When Maclay heard about German plans for the appropriation of New Guinea, he was alarmed as he wanted the Rai Coast to be an independent state and that it be known as the Maclay Coast.<sup>3</sup> He warned the people unsuccessfully that other Europeans might follow and take their land. Writing to Bismarck, he appealed to him not to annexe the Rai Coast. In 1886, Maclay attempted to float a colonisation scheme whereby Russians with capital would

travel out to Astrolabe Bay, buy land, and establish plantations that would be worked by local labour (Molnar-Bagley, 1993: 35).

Miklouho-Maclay left the Rai Coast in 1883, never to return, and within two years the Neu Guinea Kompagnie had been established with the development of plantations followed by the establishment of the German Colonial Government.

Although the people of the Madang area have experienced many changes since the time of Maclay, they have kept their own identity. In 1884, they became a German colony which was seized by Australian forces in 1914. In 1921, they became part of the Australian Mandated territory; invaded by the Japanese in the 1940's when village life was disrupted by allied bombing; after the war, reconstruction took place under the Australians, and many areas were developed. Then in 1975, the Madang people along with the rest of Papua New Guinea gained Independence. One person who would have been pleased to see this happen would have been Miklouho-Maclay.

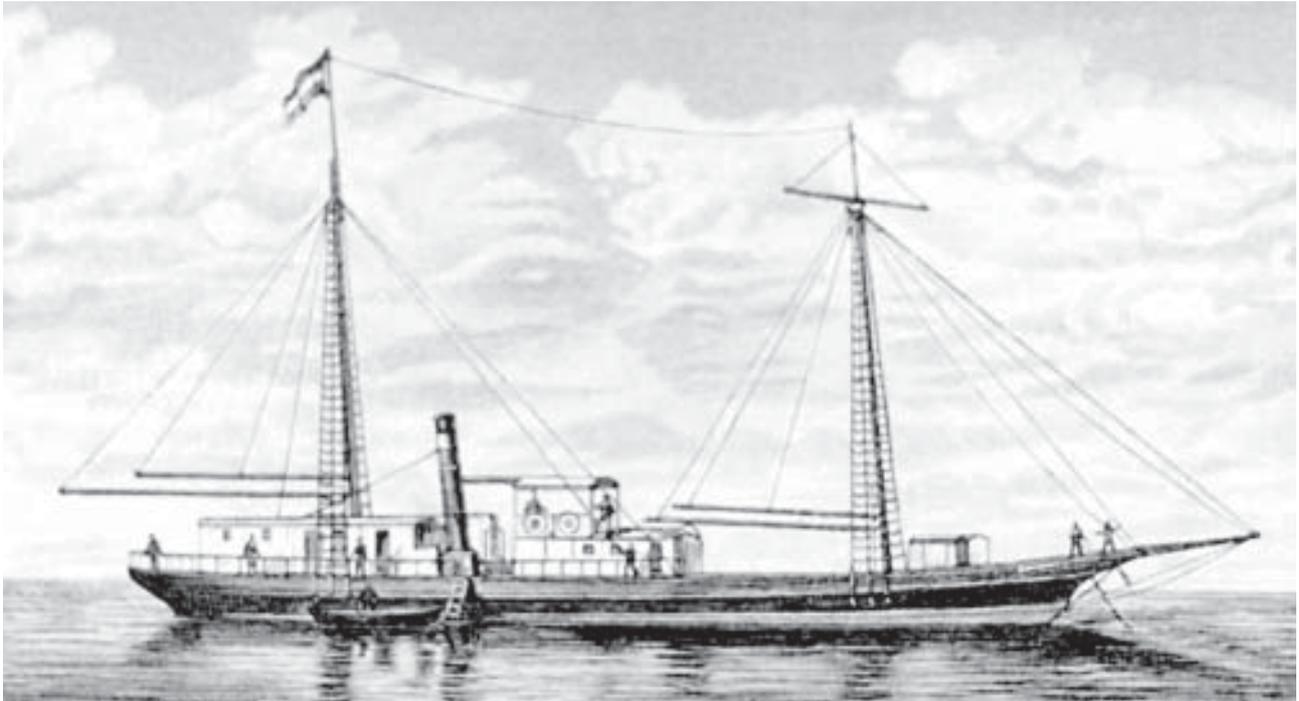
#### Otto Finsch



Otto Finsch was born in Warmbrunn in Silesia, Germany on 8 August 1839. He was a self taught naturalist and travelled extensively in Oceania, visiting Australia, New Zealand and Polynesia from 1879 to 1882. Finsch first went to the Rai Coast in 1881 "on behalf of Von Hanseman's Trading Consortium" (Lawrence, 1964: 35). As an ethnographer and ornithologist, he moved in the same circles as Miklouho-Maclay. Finsch met Maclay in Berlin in 1882 and was familiar with his work on the Rai Coast. As the two men shared common scientific and ethnographic interests, it was natural that they would meet again. When Finsch was in Sydney in August 1884, they both attended a meeting of the Linnean Society. Finsch was an opportunist and, when he met Maclay there, he spoke only of his scientific interests in New Guinea glossing over the fact that he was planning an expedition for the Neu Guinea Kompagnie (Sentinella, 1975: 312). Finsch also supported Maclay's opinion about a bandicoot found on the Maclay Coast. When Maclay heard that Finsch was about to sail again for New Guinea, he unwittingly gave him details of Bongu words and phrases including the greeting *Aba Maclay*. Finsch realised Maclay had ensured him of a welcome on the Rai Coast, and also the means of establishing a German colony peacefully. When he visited the Bongu-Madang Coast in September 1884, Finsch claimed brotherhood with Maclay and thus won the peoples' confidence.

Finsch was a pragmatic man and very patriotic, often mentioning the Fatherland and the forests of his beloved Germany and he used all his power to help Germany annexe northeast New Guinea. In the 1880s, it was a relatively new experience for Germany to establish a colony in the Pacific. Bismarck was unwilling to commit Germany to non-profitable ventures so before Germany could annexe New Guinea, initial investigations and feasibility studies had to be carried out. Great secrecy prevailed, as the race for provinces had to be kept from Germany's archrival, Britain. Otto Finsch was the man chosen by the Germans to lay the groundwork for the annexation. As a scientist, he could visit the area quite openly and while there examine the coast for suitable harbours, rivers and plantation sites for the future colony (Mennis, 1996: 10).

In his New Guinea venture, Finsch had the backing of prominent German businessmen anxious to extend Germany's colonies. One of these businessmen, Adolph von Hanseman, was a successful German banker who helped finance the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 which led to the unification of Germany. He was in a strong political position, and German New Guinea became Hanseman's project: he was convinced that having colonies would enhance Germany's place in the world. Hanseman and Bleichroder formed the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie on 13 May 1884. They then approached Finsch with the idea of making a scientific expedition to the Duke of York Islands and to the Rai Coast. The true objective of the scheme, involving the German South Sea Trade and Plantation Company, would be kept secret, Dr Finsch's journey being given out as having a scientific object (Whittaker, et al 1975: 469).



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Otto Finsch's ship, the Samoa. (Otto Finsch 1888a).*

The most important part of the New Guinea correspondence commences on the 27 June 1884 with a fresh Petition to the Imperial Chancellor to extend the necessary protection and assistance to the projects of the South Sea Trading Company, represented on this occasion by Messrs Hansemann and Bleichroder, eminent Berlin bankers. They represented that their projects, which were in strict conformity with the principles laid down by Prince Bismarck in a recent speech to the Reichstag as entitling them to the protection of the Imperial Government, had been delayed in their execution by an attempt of the Queensland Government to annex New Guinea and the neighbouring islands by the simple Proclamation of a police authority (ibid).

The Neu Guinea Kompagnie had already purchased a vessel and re-named it the *Samoa* for Finsch's expedition. The name itself may have been a false scent for those not knowing Finsch's destination as the *Samoa* was ostensibly fitted out for German trading posts in the Pacific. With an all German crew, they set sail from Sydney in September 1884. Calling first into Mioko, in the Duke of York Islands near Rabaul, with some supplies, the vessel then headed for the Rai Coast.

When Finsch set off for New Guinea on board the *Samoa*, Miklouho-Maclay trusted him to carry out his wishes regarding the people of the Rai Coast. Later, when Maclay heard Germany planned to colonize New Guinea, he was deeply disappointed. He tried in vain to stop the venture by appealing to Bismarck in a

letter. In spite of Maclay's efforts, the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie was established at Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen, originally named after the Crown Prince Friedrich-Wilhelm, son of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Altogether, Finsch made five journeys along the north coast of New Guinea, as far as the Sepik River. He was a serious empire builder, naming rivers, mountains and bays after German royalty. Commissioned by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie to investigate the potential of New Guinea for development of plantations, and to estimate the ability of the local population to provide labour, he set out methodically to do the job. However, the ornithologist in Finsch sometimes took over from the empire builder and he listed birds he saw, identifying them with their Latin names and describing their sounds. Other times his interest in ethnography shone through - on a visit to Bilbil Island, he described the men's house in great detail. Then duty called again and he became conscious of the Fatherland and the interests of the German businessmen.

Otto Finsch's detailed notes of the customs and material culture of the people convey his excitement at seeing this New World. Being a conservator, he could see the importance of saving cultural items for posterity. He did this with his drawings and vivid descriptions. As a scientist, he should be recognised for his great contribution to our knowledge of the Madang people in the 1880s. Finsch has been viewed unfavourably for using his friendship with Maclay to gain a foothold with these people, but this should

not detract from his work as an ethnographer and ornithologist. The fact that Romilly, the British High Commissioner, had done the same thing during his visit to the Rai Coast in 1881 has been played down.

Finsch wrote about his trip to Astrolabe Bay:

Our coastal excursion went peacefully and we saw exceptionally fertile land. The land opposite Bilibil Island is mainly flat, surrounded by low ranges of hills and covered in tropical forest. In the midst of the same lie the wide spread plantations of the Bilbili people, in which mainly yams and sugarcane are grown. The last mentioned grew exceptionally well in large areas. Cane with a diameter of two and a half inches, a distance of four and a half inches between nodes and a length of twelve to fourteen feet was not a rarity. Such sugarcane has come about through continuous cultivation and refinement, thanks to the industriousness of the natives. The bananas grew well, as did the carefully earthed up yams, between which colourful leaved ornamental bushes were planted; everything showed a patterned order, and we could not have expected anything more of ourselves.

Yes! Yes! They understood their agriculture, and what is more, despite their primitive tools they managed the forest. We saw this best at places where clearing had just begun. Gigantic trees lay on the ground, branches had been chopped and burnt. The stumps had been left standing man high, and this gigantic effort had been carried out with stone axes, which in the hands of the natives were not as primitive as one would have thought. We admired how the people had established their gardens. Of course this diligence would be useless to the early settlers as it would have been very difficult to train the natives to work for someone else. .... Numerous canoes accompanied us when we returned to the steamer. The people became quite trusting and brought their wives along to show them the foreigners and to receive presents which they accepted as nonchalantly as if the steamer arrived on a daily basis (Mennis, 1995: 24-27).

From his accounts we can see that Finsch made an accurate assessment of the character of the villagers and their ability to work on their own gardens. He was right in his judgement about their inability to work for others on plantations (at least initially), but the German businessmen pressed ahead anyway. It was a costly error on the part of the Kompagnie when they failed in this endeavour and had to introduce labour from overseas. Finsch was actually writing a report for the New Guinea Kompagnie about the value of the land for future development. The local economy was based on trading surplus food and articles and not on amassing wealth through hard work. Later, they adopted cargo cult activities to get material goods but the cargo was supposed to come spontaneously without any work attached to its acquisition.

Finsch left us a legacy in his descriptions of the culture as he found it. Through the journals and diaries of both Maclay and Otto Finsch, we can picture the scene in the Madang/Astrolabe Bay area one hundred and thirty years ago, before outside contact had affected the area. Finsch's account of his trip to the mainland opposite Bilbil shows that he had his eye on the land for agricultural purposes and wrongly believed that all this land must belong to the Bilbil Island people. He must have passed this wrong information on to Herr Kubary, a Polish adventurer who subsequently worked for the Germans acquiring land in the most unorthodox way.

The German flag was raised officially in Madang on 20 November 1884, claiming the area for the Neu Guinea Kompagnie and bringing it under the German tricolour. Finsch wrote, "the hoisting of the flag itself aroused great pleasure. Its colours (black - sed, white - ruo, and red - fiar) especially appealed to the people as they are the same earth colours that they were familiar with. Soon they would be entirely under the protection of this tricolour" (Mennis, 1996: 62). The fact that others could claim their land would have been incomprehensible to the tribal people of New Guinea. They never sold land as it belonged to the tribe *in perpetuo*. They might, however, have had some idea of the significance of flying a flag as they had totems on their canoe masts to distinguish one clan from another. Finsch was right in his observation that white, red and black were the colours that the people knew as these colours predominated in their designs. They made white paint from lime, red from ochres and black from mud found in swampy areas. Unfurling flags and acquisition of land from the villagers in return for a few axes, or trinkets was enough to establish sovereignty over large areas of land in those colonial times.

It is strange the repugnance Otto Finsch felt towards one of the local villagers who stole a tool from the ship:

A thief was immediately caught in the act. He had just passed a wood plane to his comrade in the canoe, of course not with his hands but with his toes. I have noticed this popular manner of stealing despite strict supervision. Although the young man believed that he was undetected, a fine noose was already around his neck pressing lightly on his throat, and the goods were immediately returned. The sinner went pale with shock. He quietly slunk off after the mishap to the taunting and laughter of his own people (Mennis 1996: 13).

In fact, Finsch and the German officials themselves were "stealing" vast areas in New Guinea, but perhaps they did not feel it this way. Finsch was first and foremost a scientist and sometimes felt uncomfortable with his "main reason" for being in New Guinea. We may argue that perhaps his nationalistic feelings allowed him to be hoodwinked by people like Dallman, Captain of the Samoa, and the German bankers into helping with the annexation of New Guinea. He would much rather be out watching the birds or visiting the villages (Mennis, 1996 passim).

Compared to Otto Finsch, Dallman was even more intent on finding suitable sites for settlements. He did much of the initial exploration of the Madang area in the ship's dinghy. After he discovered Madang Harbour, Dallman returned to Mioko and transferred to the German warship, the *Elisabeth*, to guide the navy personnel to Madang for the official unfurling of the flag on 20 November. Later, Captain Dallman explored the Sepik River much further than Finsch had managed. Thus it may be argued that it was through the work of both Finsch and Dallman that the annexation took place.

Otto Finsch was both an Empire builder for Germany and a scientist in the fields of ornithology and ethnography. After the success of his visits to Astrolabe Bay, the Neu Guinea Kompagnie developed plantations in the area. In recognition of his work, one of the early settlements was named Finschhafen in his honour. Finsch's scientific leanings were borne out in his subsequent years when he held positions in European museums. He published many papers, devoting his last years to ethnography. Finsch, himself, was a gifted scientist with an eye for details, he was also an artist and recorded in illustrations and descriptions his impressions of Bilbil Island which he described during his trip on board the Samoa in 1884. The people were "richly adorned with ornaments made from shell and dogs teeth and with their hair embellished with burning red hibiscus flowers" (Finsch, 1888: 72). Finsch contributed much to our knowledge about the people of Madang in his drawings, maps, and descriptions. He had a high opinion of the people he met there. He noted that the women were shy and did not boldly come on board the ship. "They literally served as a shining example to other people in Papua. A man brought his entire family with him, which consisted of a wife and three children, cute creatures, like most of the Papuan children - and they were so well behaved!" (Mennis, 1996: 27).

Finsch died in 1917.

### **John Stanislaw Kubary**

John Kubary was born in Warsaw, Poland, on 13 November 1846 and, like so many visitors to New Guinea in the late 1800s, was a naturalist and ethnographer. In his early years, he went to Yap to collect artefacts and specimens for the Berlin Museum (Paszkowski, 1987: 261). Then, in September 1885, he was offered a post as an interpreter on board the German warship, *Albatross*, when it called into Yap. He accepted the position and sailed with his wife and small daughter, Bella. The task of this warship was to raise the German flag at many places claiming them for the German Empire. They called in to the Island of Truk before the end of the month and within two weeks, the German flag was raised at Ponape as well as other small islands. The flag had already been raised at Rabaul and Madang in the previous year.

In Rabaul, Kubary managed a plantation called Kurakakaul. A year and a half later he was transferred to the Rai Coast where

the Neu Guinea Kompagnie signed him on as manager of the trading station at Konstantinhafen, also known as Bongu. While Lech Paszkowski viewed Kubary quite favourably, Sentinella painted him in a rather different light. Kubary apparently boasted he was "the Lord God of Astrolabe Bay" (Sentinella, 1975: 327) and acquired large areas of land for the Neu Guinea Kompagnie so they could establish new plantations along the coast. Not long after Kubary arrived at Bongu, he visited Bilbil Island and went to Kain's house as he knew he was an influential leader. Kain greeted Kubary warmly as a brother of Maclay. The next morning over breakfast Kubary managed to buy all the land on the mainland opposite from the Bilbil Islanders for the Neu Guinea Kompagnie. There was no common language in carrying out the transaction between them. The New Guinea men could not write but a thumbprint was good enough and a few trinkets passed hands. The only trouble was the Bilbil men had no idea of what was happening, they were not the landowners and therefore it was not a valid transaction. After completing the business, Kubary invited Kain and his friend for a cruise along the coast to inspect the Compagnie's new property! Sentinella thought Kubary was too zealous in his efforts to please the Kompagnie but he was also a victim of circumstances, having to acquire land as part of his job. Justice Phillip's Judgement, delivered at Madang in 1932 finally settled the issue over this land.

Speaking of the same occasion, Peter Lawrence added the monetary value:

Land was acquired at Madang in 1887-8, when Kubary paid 202.50 marks to the Bilbil Islanders and 54.40 marks to the Yabob Islanders for 5,500 ha., comprising the site of Madang and its hinterland. Neither purchase was valid. The Bilbils and Yabobs had no absolute rights on the mainland, and the true owners were never consulted. Kubary did not even go ashore to survey the land. Although the land was not registered until 1896, Company agents began clearing it in 1892. The native owners protested through the Lutheran mission but the Company insisted on the authenticity of its claims. (1964: 41)

As well as acquiring land for the Neu Guinea Kompagnie, Kubary also explored the Gogol River, the Gum River and Astrolabe Bay, describing the village people, their languages and customs. He also experimented with growing tobacco from small plants gathered locally and others collected by Dr Hollrung by bartering with the local people up the Augusta River (Annual Report, 1886-7: 21). By 1888, it was noted in the German Annual Reports that Kubary's contract had run out. He was no longer "Lord of the Astrolabe Bay" but was back in Berlin where he continued to work for the Kompagnie. He used this time familiarising himself with the "conditions and requirements of the market in Hamburg and Bremen with regard to the handling of timber. Appreciation of the extraordinary wealth of high-quality commercial timbers in the Protectorate will gradually increase accordingly" (Sack & Clark, 1978: 65). Kubary had the insight to realise the potential

worth of the New Guinea timbers, which could be sold rather than just be cut down and laid to waste to clear the land.

Sentinella concluded, “One cannot help but believe that he was in fact consciously exploiting the goodwill and trust to the natives, a legacy of their veneration of Maclay.” Apparently Kubary justified his acquisition of the land on Bilbil Island because, rightly or wrongly, he thought that Maclay owned land on the island and he might return to claim it. This would be an embarrassment to the Neu Guinea Kompagnie as “Maclay could exercise an unfavourable influence, resulting in a change of sentiment among the natives – something against which the Kompagnie had to ensure itself” (Sentinella, 1975: 329).

Feelings towards Kubary were not all negative. He drank kava with the local people and lived with them. Paszkowski wrote that “according to many sources, he was loved and venerated by the native peoples of the Western Pacific and New Guinea” (1987: 262). Paszkowski, however, makes no mention of the controversy over Kubary’s land deals, but concentrates on his contributions to science and ethnography, which were many. Kubary found a friend in Dr Max Lukowicz, the chief Medical Officer of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie who looked after his health and in the end advised Kubary to return to Europe or look out for a place for a grave in New Guinea. Kubary sailed with his wife and daughter to Ponape where he had a plantation. However he had heart troubles and was found dead there on the grave of his only son, Bertram, on 9 October 1896.

The Bilbil remember Kubary as the man who found them work on the plantations and who gave them iron and planks for their canoes. Both Maclay and Kubary gave the people nails, which they used as awls to drill holes in the strakes of the canoes. From this time on, foreign materials and tools were introduced which reduced the time needed to build the canoes. Kubary also collected specimens of butterflies, shells and birds as well as ethnographic material such as spears, bows and arrows from Astrolabe Bay most of which are now stored in museums in Poland. Without Kubary and other ethnographers these items may have been lost forever.

Paszkowski noted that:

Kubary left Europe as a twenty-two year old political refugee without any significant scientific training but proved himself to be a man of great ability and intelligence who was deeply devoted to the sciences. His contributions to human knowledge in natural history, ethnography, anthropology, cartography and linguistics were remarkable. He was praised by many scholars including Otto Finsch (1987: 265).

*Dr Otto Dempwolff, doctor and linguist, 1871 – 1938.*

By courtesy, his daughter, Imgard

### **Otto Dempwolff**

Otto Dempwolff was born on 25 May 1871 in Pilau, Germany. After school, he studied medicine and, in 1893, became a medical doctor when he was twenty-one years old. Two years later, he travelled to New Guinea to become the medical officer for the New Guinea Compagnie, a post he held from 1895 to 1897. Part of his role was to look after the German officers and the coloured workers but he was also expected to research the fevers, which were killing many people. Needing to communicate with the local village people, he made a rudimentary dictionary of the Graged Language.

Very late in life, Dempwolff married and had a daughter, Imgard Duttge (nee Dempwolff), who was born on 8 June 1934. In a personal communication, she wrote:

My father, Otto Dempwolff, was one of the first white doctors in New Guinea. He was a very young man of 24 years when he arrived the first time in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen in 1895. At the end of 1896 the NGC gave up the station of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and moved to Stephansort, which became the station of the “Astrolabe-Compagny”. There was also a hospital with a doctor and an excellent pharmacy. My father returned to Germany in 1897. During a second stay in New Guinea between 1901 and



1903, he studied the problems of malaria with Robert Koch. The third time he went to New Guinea in 1914 was to study linguistics.

Otto Dempwolff was born on 25th May 1871 in Pilau, Germany. After school he studied medicine and in 1893 (January) he became a medical doctor when he was twenty-one years old! After a year in the army he wanted to go New Guinea, but he was too young, so he made two trips to South America as a ship's doctor. From the beginning in New Guinea, he contacted members of the local population to understand their languages. The first language he learnt was called "Geraged". With this knowledge he could understand the Bilbili people too.

From 1895 to 1897, he worked as a medical officer in the German Colonial Compagnie, then in South West Africa until 1905 and afterwards in East Africa till 1911. From 1901 to 1903, he made a malaria expedition in New Guinea with Robert Koch. He was always in touch with the missionaries, who were the first "language collectors". During these early years, he published a number of medical articles and some descriptions about New Guinea languages and a monograph, *Die Sandawae*, linguistics and ethnologies about an East African tribe. In the years about 1908, he decided to occupy his future with linguistics.

When he returned to Germany in 1911, he became a lecturer at the University in Hamburg for African and Melanesian languages. It was after this that he went a third time to New Guinea to study the many different languages but the First World War brought this to an end. He had to return to Germany and was a doctor in the army. In 1919, he returned to Hamburg and became a Professor at the University. In 1931, he became the head of a separate institute: "Seminar für Indonesische und Südseesprachen" that means many Austronesian and Papuan Languages. During these years, he published a lot of linguistic works. The highlights were about Austronesian linguistics which even after 60 years are still a foundation study. Very late in life he married and had a daughter in 1934. He died in 27 November 1938 in Hamburg (8 June 1994).

On New Years Day 1896, after being in the colony for a year or so, Otto Dempwolff met Lajos Biró, newly arrived from Hungary on board the Stettin.

Biró recorded the meeting:

On stepping ashore I was met by a friend of a friend. The doctor of the settlement Dr Otto Dempwolff, — He kindly invited me to be his guest for the few weeks until I was able to set up on my own. In this way I surmounted my first and most difficult problem (Molnar-Bagley, 1993: 12).

Dr Dempwolff helped Biró determine how much salary he would need to survive for each month he spent in the tropics. When Biró became feverish with malaria, the doctor was on hand to help him. Knowing that Biró wanted to collect bird and butterfly species, Dempwolff gave him a copy of his little dictionary so he could communicate with the local people. Biró used this dictionary so much, the local people dubbed him "the man whose thoughts are wrapped in paper".

In March 1896, Otto Dempwolff moved to the hospital on Siar Island. As well as working as a doctor, he showed an interest in the local myths and legends. In 1910, he published *Sagen und Marchen aus Bilbili* (Myths and Legends of Bilbil Island), including the myth of Honpain and the pots, which was recorded for the first time in written form. Dempwolff communicated with the Bilbil in the Kranket language. Between 1905 and 1926, he published six works in academic journals, including an undated Grammar of the Graged language, duplicated at the Lutheran Mission Narer, Karkar Island New Guinea. Returning to Germany, Dempwolff found a posting in South-west Africa from 1899 to 1905. However a chance meeting with Dr Robert Koch, a famous bacteriologist who was studying malaria,<sup>4</sup> led to another trip to New Guinea for further studies. In the Annual Report for German New Guinea for 1901-02, mention is made of the endemic diseases that were affecting the colonists in Madang. Rabaul was particularly affected and it was, "anticipated that the investigations and activities of Staff-Surgeon Dr Dempwolff (now 31 years old), — will lead to a greater knowledge of the causes and also to some improvement. It is greatly to be desired that the researches concocted by this doctor would be extended over a large number of islands as possible" (Sack and Clark, 1979: 238).

Malaria had had a devastating effect on the European population and it was imperative that a cure be found for it. Further on, it was mentioned that, until February 1902, Dr Dempwolff worked in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and Stephansort. The Report for 1902-03 stated:

The investigations by staff-surgeon Dr Dempwolff announced in the last Annual Report have been extended over the desired area. The Malaria Expedition will arrange for the publication of the results. The observations concerning the occurrence of malaria in the two most important areas may be summed up briefly as follows. While the Astrolabe Plain represents a region subject to heavy incidence of malaria, the northern periphery of the Gazelle Peninsula exhibits variable incidence of the disease at various times, and includes some localities which are completely free of malaria (Sack and Clark, 1979: 238).

In the same report under the heading Climate and Health it was noted that several diseases had been rife in German New Guinea. These included epidemics of beriberi, dengue fever on Yomba Plantation, measles in Finschhafen and also whooping cough all of which had to be monitored by Dr Dempwolff.

In July 1905, Dempwolff was again in Africa where 150 recruits from German New Guinea had been sent to quell the riots in German East Africa (present-day Tanzania). Dempwolff was pleased to find some Bilbil men among the recruits and was able to converse with them. Dempwolff considered only half of the recruits were strong enough to fight, having got sick on the long journey to Africa. By May 1906, they were all returning home to New Guinea. Their absence caused domestic crises when they returned home and was the indirect cause of the Second Revolt.<sup>5</sup>

As well as writing articles on the languages in New Guinea, Dempwolff did some linguistic training in Hamburg from 1911-1913 before returning to New Guinea specifically for linguistic research. Beginning his research in Rabaul, he planned to head back towards Madang but the outbreak of World War 1 put a stop to his plans. Governor Hahl was able to get Dr Dempwolff back to German through some clever negotiations. Between 1920 and 1938 when he died, Otto Dempwolff published many articles about Austronesian studies. He built up conclusions about languages from Madagascar and the northern Philippines to New Zealand and Easter Island. He developed a theory that the pure Polynesian type is only found on islands, which are malaria-free. When they moved into malaria infested environments they could not survive except through mixing with the Melanesians.

### Lajos Biró

The nineteenth century was noted worldwide for the growth of nationalism and the explorers and scientists who came to New Guinea were often fired with feelings for their motherland. Miklouho-Maclay from Russia, Finsch from Germany, Kubary from Poland, and now Lajos Biró from Hungary were all ardently favouring their countries' interests. Biró was keen to collect specimens of insects and animals as well as artefacts for the museums in Hungary. Unlike Otto Finsch, who was well financed by the German bankers, Biró had to exist on meagre financial assistance from the Hungarian National Museum. In this he was in a similar position to Miklouho-Maclay. The uncertainty of when and how much money would arrive from Europe put constraints on their scientific work. It limited the time spent in the field and the scope of their travel.

In her work on Biró, Molnar-Bagley has given us an insight into this great scientist and humanitarian. In translating some of his letters and manuals on the artefacts as well as her dissertation on the man himself, Molnar-Bagley rightly bemoans the fact that Biró is not better known by students of New Guinea history because sources are less accessible, most being in Hungarian (Molna-Bagley, 1993: 25).

Biró left Hungary on 7 November 1895 on board the *Stettin* travelling second class. Another passenger was Albert Hahl, the newly appointed Imperial Judge at Herbertshöhe (later Rabaul). Biró saw himself as a collector for museums and did not have a particular theory he was trying to prove, although he was "aware

of the necessity of classifying the specimens he collected in New Guinea". Like Maclay, Biró made no attempt to change the beliefs of the people. "Biró's personal philosophy was egalitarian and accepting of the differences he found between his own society and that of New Guineans and he had little sympathy for those, like the Lutheran Missionaries, who did not" (ibid).

In 1896 he wrote:

We arrived just on New Year's Day at the home of the "contented people" as Maclay called them. There is a narrow, winding bay, which at its widest would be the width of the Danube at Budapest, - in stepping ashore I was met by a friend of a friend, the doctor of the settlement, Dr Otto Dempwolff (ibid: 12).

Biró was actually following in the footsteps of another Hungarian ethnographer and collector, Samuel Fenichel. Fenichel had arrived in Freidrich Wilhelmshafen on 22 December 1891 with a German private dealer, Alfred Grubauer, who financed the expedition. Grubauer wanted Fenichel to collect Bird of Paradise feathers among other things. However, they quarrelled and Grubauer returned to Hungary. Fenichel then began collecting artefacts for the Hungarian Museum at Bongu Village on the Rai Coast. Amongst his zoological specimens were 4000 butterflies, 1500 to 2000 shells and 206 birds which he described in a Hungarian journal. Before his death from Blackwater Fever in 1895, Fenichel had made a big collection for the Hungarian Museum. Kubary helped send the items back to Europe. Amongst them were fine examples of masks, rattles, amulets and some magico-religious artefacts including eight *telum*, which had previously been described by Otto Finsch.

Tibor Bodrogi, who worked on the collections in Hungary, described Fenichel as a "collector of ethnographic material" who did research work in the field of ethnography and natural sciences between 1891 and 1893 in Astrolabe Bay (Oceanic Art, 1959: 41). Apparently, as Vargyas reports, "Fenichel's diary, letters, notebooks and linguistic notes are today to be found in the Archives of the Ethnographical Museum, and they are still largely unexplored" (1992: 25). As an indication of the rapidity of the change, when Biró arrived three years after Fenichel, he could acquire only one extra *telum* (cult figure). The majority of stones axes and adzes, had disappeared almost completely by Biró's time, being replaced by iron tools (ibid).

After settling in, Biró began collecting artefacts to send back to Hungary. Like Miklouho-Maclay before him, he found that ants often ate his specimens of birds and insects so he learned to take precautions. His ability to wade in the swamps and the forests was seen as unusual by the Germans who avoided both. It also showed a fearlessness that sometimes landed him in trouble. One day in March 1896, he went to Kranket Island to shoot some birds for his collection. He took two guns with him and his word list of the local language, probably supplied by Dr Dempwolff.



By courtesy, State Library of Queensland

*Young boys on Kranket Island in the 1890s (Lajos Biro 1899).*

Since then things have been back to normal (Molnar-Bagley, 1993: 25).

This story shows the situation on Kranket Island in 1896. Firstly, the village people were still in awe of Europeans viewing them as magic men. Secondly, it was a time when recalcitrant villagers could be beaten for their misdemeanours, so they were frightened of the Germans and any other Europeans. Thirdly, communication between the villagers and the German government officials was still quite difficult. Apart from the missionaries, many of the

As he passed a village on the island, several young boys joined the group. Biró did not mind, as they were always good spotters of the birds he wanted. After some time he fed the boys a meal of rice and pigeon and went off looking for beetles, leaving two of them at the picnic spot with the spare gun. Suddenly a shot rang out and pellets sprayed the air. Biró rushed back. There was no sign of the boys who, frightened of being punished, ran back to the village saying the European <sup>6</sup> was chasing them and had already shot at them.

Unaware of the lies that had been told about him, Biró continued searching for more specimens with the other boys. Meanwhile, the villagers prepared to attack him. Arming themselves with spears and bows and arrows, they drummed the war tattoo on their loud booming drums. Suddenly Biró realised he was the object of their attack and began fumbling through his word list to say, “Don’t shoot”, but he knew they were not going to wait while he found the appropriate words. Among themselves they said the “*tivul-tamol* keeps his mind wrapped in paper”. He managed to keep cover for several hours, protecting himself from a full attack as their spears and arrows were only effective at a certain range. At last, help came when canoes of Siar people arrived with the missionary. Having heard the drumming they even knew it was a European who was being attacked. Rescued at last, Biró attended a village meeting to explain what had happened.

Biró continued:

The outcome of the talk was that I was given a handful of arrows, a spear, an old shield, which had been made with stone tools, and a basket of taro. I, in return, distributed two pounds of tobacco and was allowed to chastise the two boys.

Germans fumbled like Biró with the word lists. Nor did the village people know much German or even pidgin, which was introduced later by the Chinese workers. However, the traditional village system of communication through the drumming of the dactylic rhythm was still well in place between the Krankets and their allies, the Siars.

The above close shave did not lessen Biró’s ardour and sense of adventure. He wanted to find out everything possible about the *Meziab* Cult and the sacred musical instruments used. In his notes on bullroarers, he described the curiosity of some scientists as to what these wooden objects were used for as it was a close kept secret on the part of the local people. Some people hazarded that they were used as spatulas or weapons or as stamps to put decorations on the skin. Only later did they discover that the different sized ones had different uses.

Biró ascertained that the small bullroarers were used as love tokens between the young people. Girls would give them to boys who were handsome and some boys had many in their net bags, which they always carried on their upper arms. But when Biró offered to buy one, it was a different story, “At first the boys treasured them but everything has its price and the thought of a twig of tobacco meant these *ton* went into the second hand dealer’s bag, the ethnographer, in this case just me” (Biró, 1899: 182). Biró had 64 of these *ton* or *tod* bullroarers in his collection. Mager, in his dictionary, gives them the name *tod* or *tond* in the Bel language group and says the men carried them around in their bags as a love charm (Mager, 1952: 328).

Biró was still anxious to hear the larger bullroarers in action in the *meziab* house. One day he was walking on Kranket Island when he heard some very unusual music:

All of a sudden it went through my mind that I had discovered a hidden musical instrument, which the *tamol* kept secret from Europeans. Following the sound I came across a hut from which the sounds were coming. Carefully I looked inside and recognised that this time I had stumbled upon a *tamol* school. The German missionary with his back to the door sat on a rickety box, with the music stand in front of him, his eyes armed with glasses looking down onto the music sheet fervently singing and fiddling (Biró, 1899: 11).

Biró would have found the situation very amusing and quite ironic as the secret music of the *meziab*, was ardently condemned by the Lutheran missionaries. Biró himself thought the missionaries should leave the people to enjoy their culture, as they were happy. Still that morning he did not want to disturb the missionary in his school, so he went to the village to visit his good friend, Labuto, the headman, but his popularity was his undoing.

While doing this I had not noticed that a bunch of children had gathered around me - until the missionary hurried up with the look of despair on his face, begging me for the love of God not to take his pupils away! — I even helped him to gather the scattered herd. The little rogues knew their fathers cared very little about the school and that the missionary - if he wanted to hold school - would reward them with glass beads tomorrow as well as today. But for now they all scattered and waited for me by the sidetracks of the forest indicating the trees where the pigeons were sitting. Beads are all very nice, but a cigarette, which is the usual reward for producing a slain bird, is much sweeter (ibid).

Biró found them, “true children of nature”, and rarely disciplined. As soon as they began to walk, the whole world belonged to them. The right of the parents to punish them corporally was rarely applied and the few rules they had were mainly of a sacred nature. The games they played imitated those of their parents. They hunted with small spears and had pretend battles with each other. Biró collected some of these child-sized spears, bow and arrows.

Biró may have criticised the missionaries for changing the people’s lives, but he too was having a negative affect on this same culture by his acquisition of thousands of items of material culture, some of which were very precious to their owners. He may have thought that the people would make these same artefacts again but often this was not the case. Pech mentioned that, “Profound disillusionment set in within a few years, as the villagers realised they were not going to be paid in kind, but they had been parting with their ancestral birthright for a spiritually valueless ‘mess of pottage’”. As a survival technique the people stopped carving their special figures or made fakes, which were not imbued with the right spirit of their ancestors (1991: 71). Whether it was because of mission influence or the activities of

the artefact collectors, the old cult figures quickly disappeared. Because the mission influence was limited in those early days, it was more likely to have been caused by the collectors like Samuel Fenichel who preceded Biró as there were so few *telum* in the first place. Pam Swadling commented that, in 1897, “Lajos Biró was only able to collect everyday utensils, as cult figures no longer existed in Astrolabe Bay” (1996: 227).

But if Biró wanted an artefact, he was tenacious until he obtained it. One day he wanted to purchase a beautifully carved coconut drinking-bowl at Bogadjim. The owner did not want to part with it, as he had owned it for a long time. However Biró had fallen in love with “this dirty old coconut dish” and he finally reached a price and bought it. That evening the old owner wanted it back and “begged me to give it back. It was sentimental to watch how this man treasured this piece of the old times”. In the end Biró was a bit unscrupulous about it and just threw the man out. “That was the best I could do”, he noted in his diary (1899: 103).

From October 1896 until June 1897, Biró was stationed at Erima on the Rai Coast and made trips to nearby Bongu and Bogadjim where Michlouho-Maclay had lived twenty years earlier and he probably heard many stories of Maclay. Biró’s work at the time was published in Hungarian and German and edited by Seemayer. Called a catalogue, it was a great success, although Biró had some misgivings about its presentation. After making a collecting trip to the Sepik River, Biró returned to collecting in the Astrolabe Bay area and, by 1897, had sent 859 objects back to the Ethnographic Museum, Budapest. A century later, a fellow Hungarian wrote that Biró was most famous for his attention to detail:

There is one point in which Biró surpassed by far every collector in his time, including Fenichel, and that was in his notes accompanying the objects. In them we find detailed data in the making and use of objects: where, how, by whom they were manufactured and used, what their decorations symbolise, and so forth. Thus Biró calls attention to the fact that the place of use and acquisition and that of manufacture may be very different (Vargyas, 1992: 27).

In 1900, Biró met Robert Koch and accompanied him on a trip to New Ireland to collect *malanggan* masks. Overall, Biró spent six years collecting in New Guinea before he returned to Europe in 1901. By then he had sent six thousand items back to the Museum. Through his efforts these items of material culture have survived for over a hundred years and are still being cared for in a museum environment. We should be grateful for this. However, the negative side of his collecting was that the material culture of these villages became the poorer when they lost these items which took a long time to make and were a part of a trading system in the Astrolabe Bay. During this time, the earthenware pots were still being made in abundance and traded on the canoes for other items but, within fifty years, this had also changed.

Reading his letters and journals and even his ethnographic work as presented by Molnar-Bagley, one is struck by the vivid picture Biró creates. His dilemma on Kranket Island when he knew no words to communicate with armed villages; his heroic travels into the interior where the Germans would not go; his great fervour in collecting species; and his ability to laugh at himself. All these shine through and make wonderful reading. It sounded as if he was having real adventures in the early days of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, which had only recently been settled. Through his eyes, we have a true picture of what it was like for the local people, the German settlers and even the missionaries.

Biró's work was so well known that the German Zoologist, B. Hagen, said it was shameful that the Germans who had controlled the area for 15 years were relying on scientific information, "discovered by a Hungarian teacher - and [his work] becomes the focus of our knowledge for German New Guinea?" (Vargyas, 1992: 28). Later offered an honour as a professor at a University, Biró declined as he said he was just a collector and did not want to become an academic. Yet he is regarded as one of Hungary's famous ethnographers and collectors. Unfortunately, when he returned to Hungary, he turned his back on ethnography and became a naturalist for the rest of his life.

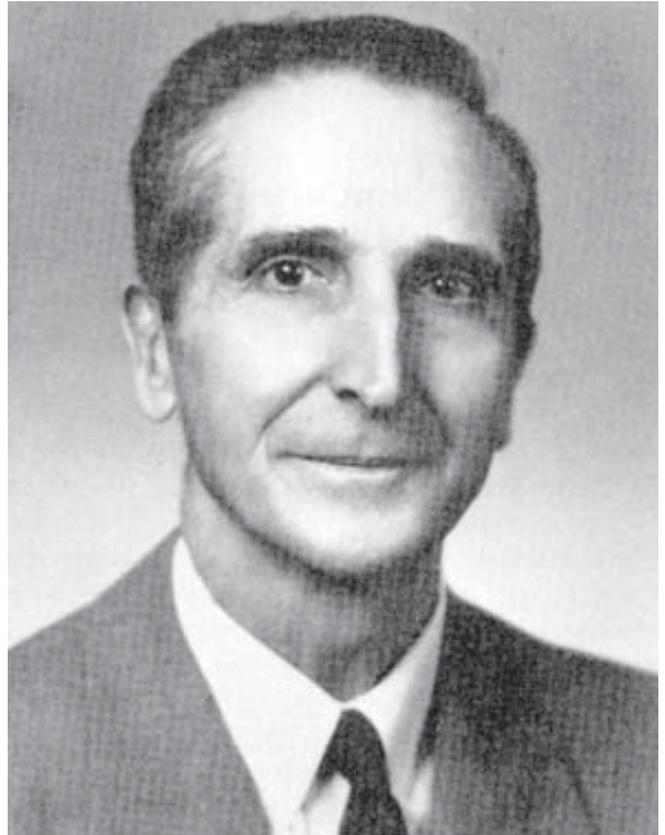
#### **E. F. Hannemann**

When the Rev E. Hannemann, of South Dakota, arrived in New Guinea in 1923, and began to work on Kranket Island, he was following a line of Lutheran Missionaries dating back to 1887. The Lutherans had begun a mission on the Rai Coast and were able to access other villages through the trading system. Knowledge of them spread along with the pots on the large trading canoes (Wagner, 1996). Four years later Bergmann tried to begin a circuit from Siar Island but it was not a success.

Bille, an old man in the 1970s, who had attended the Lutheran school on Kranket Island, learning to add and count in German, gave an account of what happened:

The German Company settled at Madang and the Rhenish Mission settled on Siar. The Siar people did not want to hear the talk of the Missionaries, so they came here to Mitibog (on Kranket). The missionary's name was Helmich. He asked the people for land on the point and my ancestors gave him the land where the church is now and he built his house here. He went to Siar and took all the things from his house and brought them to Kranket. Later, the wind destroyed the house on Siar. God punished the people and destroyed the house. God's word came to Kranket. Later from there it went to Nobonob, Siar and Karkar and the Rai Coast (Interview 7 July 1977).

Initially Hannemann studied the language and culture of the Kranket people under missionary Rev. Blum. This was fortunate because the Graged or Bel language soon became the language



*E. Hannemann, Lutheran Pastor and ethnographer.*

of the whole Lutheran mission in the Madang area. In 1927, Hannemann married Ludhilde Voss, a teacher from the Iowa Synod in America. In 1928, they moved to Kurum on Karkar Island to work with the Takia and then at the seminary at Urit among the Waskia people. They had one daughter but, sadly, his wife died in 1929 from black-water fever. Subsequently Hannemann married Sister Emilie Gruber in 1934. From 1936 to 1942, Hannemann worked at the new seminary at Amron west of Nagada Station. Initially he had 76 students from Nobonob, Kranket, Karkar, Rai Coast, and Amele and, among them, was Los of Kranket who eventually taught many of the Bilbil men their early schooling.

In the centenary book of the Lutheran Church it stated:

E. Hannemann spent much time trying to establish a new direction in schools. He disavowed strong disciplinary method executed by the European missionary and instead established a system similar to that exercised in the villages. Hannemann also expected Christian villages and congregations to discipline students who ran away from school or who misbehaved. Hannemann spent an enormous amount of effort preparing school materials for students and teachers. Continuing to encourage native arts and crafts, he revised and increased the hymns in the hymnbook, *Kanam*

*Buk*. With the participation of both students and teachers from all areas of Madang, the Bel language hymnbook eventually had a content of 75 percent indigenous melodies and hymns (Wagner, 1996: 159).

From 1934 onwards, workers involved with Lutheran Shipping and the Lutheran administration lived on Kranket Island but there was no true resident missionary. Since E. Hannemann knew the people well and spoke their language, he took on this role as well as the work at the central school at Amron. Hannemann was able to apply his ideas of responsibility at the village level. However, it was found that with the Bel people being in such proximity to the town of Madang there were many temptations. "Some parents were led to sell their daughter or to rent them to the police and other workers, Chinese as well as Europeans. And this practice greatly discouraged the young men of the village and destroyed communal solidarity" (Ibid).

Leaving on his holidays, shortly before the Japanese invaded Madang, Hannemann avoided the trauma of internment, but returned after the war to work at Nobonob, noting that many of the people were labouring under an increasing feeling of frustration which affected their social and religious as well as their industrial life.

During his time in New Guinea, Hannemann wrote extensively, leaving an important legacy to the people of New Guinea. The two most relevant works are *Village Life and Social Change* which was mimeographed in 1944 and *Papuan Dancers and Dancing* published in 1935. Through his compilation of the dances particularly of the local Madang people, we have a valuable collection preserved. Another work called *Keys to the Papuan's Soul* describes some practises and legends then current among the people of the Madang Mission field, New Guinea.

His paper, *Papuan Dances and Dancing*, incorporated some data from every circuit in Madang Lutheran Mission, including Karkar, Bunabun, Nobanob, Rargetta, Amele, Keku, and the Rai Coast. He described the village houses, which were built on piles made from hardwood trees. Roofing was made by plaiting the sago-palm fronds together. There were usually two rooms built with a platform in the front. Other houses in the village were the men's house and then the *darem* or sacred house for the *meziab* ceremonies. Other smaller houses were the yam houses built to store yams for many months both for eating and for planting the next harvest. Sometimes they would build a small shelter in the gardens if they were far from the village.

Hannemann took particular notice of the native dancing:

The *Dance of Life*, may well be written over the various activities which comprise the Papuans life. There is but little that he does not do religiously and dancing is a major part of his religious cult. By dancing, the Papuan honours the dead and stands in rapport with the spirit world. Through

the dance he fortifies himself against the onslaughts of malevolent spirits. Dancing plays a role in the initiation ceremonies of young men. By dancing the native develops courage and intimidates his enemies. Through the dance he heaps honour on himself as well as on the dance-master. Last but not least he, in the dance, plays the role of an actor par excellence before the other sex, thereby exerting a tremendous sex appeal. The *Soabul*, or *Mat-blaney* Dance, has to do with ancestor worship. A single man was not in a position to prepare for a dance on a vast scale. He needed fellow-natives and many of them to assist him in amassing the necessary food, pigs and valuables. Therefore people from different villages helped the host with bowls, dogs' teeth, shells of various kinds and netbags which he needed for remunerating the dance-masters.

Anyone who was miserly in their gifts at the *Soabul* Dance would be singled out and have a vicious dog turned on them, causing them to lose face in the village. As a result there was always an incentive to be generous with gifts. The male dancers were decorated with a pair of boar's tusks on the chest; red earth and oil rubbed on hair, face and body and with scented herbs in armbands and waistbands. Above the gable of the sacred house is the *pall*, an enchanted tuft of *benazo* leaves is suspended. The women and children were not allowed to come near. The hosts ran out to meet the dancers with dry coconuts in their hands. Running between them, they called *gauai use!* Welcome! (Hannemann, 1935: 12).

Hannemann described many of the dances, recording the rhyme and the words, which accompanied them and noting their importance to the culture and religion. Much of this knowledge would have been lost without his work. He was a man torn between the colour of the culture and the limitations the Lutheran mission put on the cultural activities for those who wanted to join the church. Hannemann found that most, if not all, the local dances had elements of magic or ancestor worship in them. The Lutheran missionaries did not want to act too hastily in banning the dancing outright because as he said, "we do not prohibit dancing but rather teach the word of God in the tangle of worldly activities and pleasures". However the local elders decided that, if they were to remain Christians, the dancing would have to be prohibited and for years before the war this rule was enforced in many Lutheran mission stations. Hannemann concluded, "dancing has been stigmatised as being sinful. — the people know that when they dance they are sinning in the eyes of the native church" (1935: 30).

Hannemann was one of several Lutheran missionaries who supported the ban on receiving the sacraments of the Church on any villagers who persisted in following their old way of life and performing old customs. Later, this stance was considered to be controversial by church members in the 1980s (Wagner, 1996: 172). In another publication Hannemann added the details of the

Elders decision on dancing in 1923, “at a general Christian Elder’s Conference, the majority of the native elders cast their vote against the dancing”. This was because they felt the dance represented so many of the old pagan rituals to the exclusion of other interests. “The dance made concession to the physical side of man not in harmony with Godly purity” (1944: 40). This decision had a wide range of effects on the culture of the people who loved to dance and celebrate life whether it was a trading trip, a wedding or other grand occasion. Now the villages were silent and even the beat of the drum could not be heard. The people had lost their old beliefs, their dances and much of their material culture. No wonder they became depressed and looked to cargo cults for an explanation of their lives.

Regardless of the outcome of the elders’ decision, we must still be grateful for Hannemann for collecting, collating, and analysing the dances as he saw them in the 1930’s. We are given an insight into their form and colour before the changes came into being. Hannemann himself saw the value of dancing and said of the local villagers in general, “If his own dance in years to come could be freed from its magic and sensualism he would have a good pastime in it. I could imagine that a dance like this would fulfil an inherent longing on the part of native youth for activity, communicativeness and joyful entertainment” (1935: 30).

He noticed that, by dancing, the villagers celebrated life, initiated the youth, buried the dead, celebrated a bartering trip, and any other big or small occasion. In his long paper entitled *Village Life and Social Order*, Hannemann gives an interesting picture of the Jam villages around the Madang Harbour up until 1942. These villages Bilia, Graged, Panutibun, and Siar now prefer to see themselves as part of the Bel group, which also includes Yabob, Bilbil and Riwo.

### John Mager

The Rev John Mager, arrived in New Guinea from South Dakota in 1927 to help the German missionaries who were under threat of expulsion. Although the Treaty of Versailles gave Australia the right to expel them, it was never carried out and the threat of expulsion was soon lifted. At a meeting of the Finisterre District in 1932, John Mager was elected President of the Lutheran Synod in Madang. Working on Karkar Island, he selected a new mission site at Narer on the northern end of the island to work among the Waskia. In a controversial move in 1932, John Mager and G. Lindner made trips to the Laden Coast which was in the Catholic Sphere of Influence. By this time, however, the League of Nations had declared freedom of religion so the different denominations were free to set up wherever they pleased. There was however a tacit agreement to stick to their own areas unless invited by the local people. Villages on the Laden Coast near Bogia had issued an invitation to the Lutheran Church to send missionaries and so teachers were placed at Malala and Rurunot and later more in the mountain areas. John Mager must have been quite adventurous, as he was one of a party of missionaries who set out in 1935 with

140 carriers into the Waghi Valley. It took two weeks for the party to climb the Bismarck Range over some terrain that had never been traversed by Europeans before as their guides took them on a circuitous route. Still the view from the top of the range over the Waghi Valley was worth it. Revs Foege, H. Hannemann,<sup>7</sup> and Radke stayed at Kerowagi and the others including John Mager returned to Madang (Wagner, 1996: 163-168).

In 1937, Rev. Mager joined the staff of the Amron School and was still there when war broke out. Along with six other Lutheran missionaries, he was interned by the Japanese at Alexishafen with 80 Catholic Missionaries. In such close proximity the hostility so often felt before the war evaporated and the two denominations found much in common. Suffering deprivations and hunger they helped each other. Later, the seven Lutheran missionaries were shifted to Kranket Island where they joined their fellow Lutherans. Some time later they were transferred to Manam Island and from there were put on the *Dorish Maru* with over a hundred missionaries of all denominations. On the way to Wewak, the allies unwittingly bombed them and many were killed. John Mager fortunately suffered only minor injuries and was able to help Dr Braun care for the surviving missionaries.

After the war, John Mager returned to New Guinea and worked until 1950. In 1952, after returning home, he produced the Gedaged-English Dictionary. Graged or Bel is the language spoken by the Austronesian village people of Riwo, Siar, Bilia, Kranket, Yabob and Bilbil Villages. It is more like a small encyclopaedia as it gives details of customs, ceremonies and different word variations used in these villages. There had previously been a Graged-German dictionary by Missionary H. George but this was of little use for the new American missionaries. Mager’s work is not just a translation of the former German dictionary but has a thousand new terms and is of great importance for students of the Madang area. The main disadvantage of this book is that it does not include an English/Graged section as well.<sup>8</sup> Mager wrote, “A work like this is never finished. There is still much spadework to be done. But it is hoped that what is offered here will be of real service to those who desire to master the Gedaged language” (Mager, 1952: vii).

Published by the Board of Foreign Missions of the American Lutheran Church Columbus Ohio in 1952, Professor A. Cappell, of Sydney University, saw the value of this dictionary in the foreword note:

I rejoice that through the collaboration of the Administration of the Territory of Papua New Guinea and with the American support on the part of the Board of Foreign Missions of the American Lutheran Church that this book has become available. One of the features of particular value in Mr Mager’s work is the full and clear explanation of details,

especially in regard to the various suffixes and particles —  
The explanation of terms of sociological and religious  
reference.

In the centenary book on the Lutheran Church it was said of him:

Mager was a gifted student of New Guinean languages and culture. He prepared two dictionaries, one for the Waskia language and another for the Bel language. He also participated in a number of exploratory mission trips among hostile tribes in the Adelbert mountains north and west of Madang. In 1940 when Hannemann left for furlough, Mager took charge of the Amron School. He continued his service after the war until 1950 (Wagner, 1996: 159).

### Albert Aufinger

Fr Albert Aufinger SVD arrived in the Madang area in 1933. He was interested in studying the songs and poems recited by the weather magicians on Yabob Island. This area was really in the Lutheran sector but, after an argument with the Lutheran pastor, Ber Nansi, a clan leader, invited Aufinger to become their pastor. Subsequently several families joined the Catholic Church and to this day there is a group of Catholics on Yabob Island.

Hearing that the Yabob weather songs and magic were banned by the Lutheran Church, Fr Aufinger remonstrated with Ber saying the songs were beautiful and belonged to their culture. Ber however told him that it was too late as the leaders in the village had decided they would not use them again. From then on at every chance he could, Fr Aufinger recorded these songs for posterity. Because they were only transmitted orally from one generation to the next, they were under threat of extinction. Without Aufinger's efforts, they would have been lost forever. On several occasions, he was present when the weather magician made his magic and he was able to describe the ceremony and the words.

There are many more descriptions of the weather magic and the beautiful verses that accompany them in Fr Aufinger's articles. He gives the reason why he collected these:

For about two or three decades the Yabob people have been in touch with European culture. The result was that the indigenous culture slowly died. Today only the elders know the old customs and ordinary ways from early times. Another decade and one will bury the last trustworthy authority. This is why it seems to be the command of this hour, in this last moment of time, to ask the elders about the lives of their people before they came into contact with European culture. It is absolutely necessary, at this last moment of time, that many things of their nationhood and pre-European native life be asked of the elders and to record it, in case any examinations by earlier research workers may have left any loopholes or obscurities. The following notes on the weather magic on the Yabob Islands is the result of this effort.

It stands to reason that island folk such as the Yabobs, who in their daily hard fight with the sea, weather and canoes for their existence, paid special meaning and attention to the weather magic, to ask for the possibility of what they wanted, rain or sun, or to have a quiet or stormy sea. Not all the elders understood the magic, as such magic was in every sense a family heirloom. One man for instance had the knowledge and power for working love magic, another possessed the magic for making rain etc. At times though one single man had the power of several magical practices and was able to perform them (1935: 277-291)

Fr Aufinger collected many of the songs and ceremonies used by various magicians for different purposes. The ceremonies of the *likon* or weather magician were the most important. He was present at some of these ceremonies and makes detailed records of what he learnt.

As the rain usually came from the direction of the Finisterre Range towards Bilbil and Yabob, the female spirits, Lelei and Inad, who lived in Bunum high on the Finisterre Range were entreated to return home climbing the ladder up to the mountain range with their skirts tightly wrapped around their legs so there would be no rain for a while.

Here is a shortened account of Aufinger's record on the magic to stop the Rain:

While a feast is prepared the *likon* comes into the village centre to make the rain magic. He carries a wooden bowl or the base of an old cooking pot, which contains many herbal plants as well as betelnut, lime and betel pepper and several pieces of dried wood from the *kallopylum* tree.

The *likon* calls out, "*Yauta tanau*" which means, "Let's have a feast". All the village men assemble with their headman who has brought a de-husked coconut and stone axe with him. They sit in a circle around the *likon*. The *likon* then burns the plants in the bowl, while the men stand and drink a small bowl of *koniac*. Then everyone sits in a circle except for the *likon* who remains standing, bending down to the earth and turning his bowl like a spinning top he says:

*Oh Sagui, Oh Bipoi, I have presents for you! Betel lime and pepper! A loincloth too, a long good one, which I tie around your loins.*

This incantation, is to get the spirits in a favourable frame of mind. Meanwhile the headman bangs the coconut with his axe. The *likon* addresses the spirit women again:

*Oh Lelei, Oh Inad, loincloths I bind around your loins, I give them to you. In your hands, I place lime, betelnut I give you. I place tortoise shell rings and rings made from pearl shell in your hands. I place red paint on your hands, as an ornament, I give them to you!*

The spirit women are then offered grass skirts made from tight strings so that they too will tie them tightly between their legs as the *likon* has done to himself. The *likon* spins his drinking top again and at the same time says:

*Oh Sagui, Oh Bipoi, ornaments I give you! Do not pour out any more liquid! Follow the rungs of the ladder, climb up!*

After the renewed spinning of the bowl, the same request is put to the spirit women, with the added injunction:

*Oh Lelei, Oh Inad, I will seat you under the verandah of your house! Eeh - hoa - ah.*

The *likon* thinks that if the spirit women are sitting under the verandah, the weather will have to be good or they themselves would get wet. Then all the male and female spirits are called by their names and to each of them ornaments and presents are offered. But again, these are only empty promises. The *likon* beckons the spirits to please climb the ladder which by now must surely lean on the Finisterre Range, that they may wander along the horizon and go back north-west to Bunu where their home is.

When the headman has completely cut open the coconut, the men all join in the last phrase with *likon*, the end of the incantation: eeh - hoa - ah! Now the feast begins as the headman gives a speech which contains the following: His people shall avoid any unnecessary fights, particularly fraternal fights; they shall not openly commit adultery; they shall now drink the rest of the *koniac* so that they can all sleep well. At the conclusion the *likon* says: "If you will not listen to me, we shall all soon die!"

(Aufinger, 1939: 290)

Fr Aufinger also collected ethnographic data around Amun but his material was lost during the war. Peter Lawrence noted that "our knowledge of the Rai Coast is thereby the poorer" (1964: 120). In 1933, Fr Aufinger began work in the Rai Coast among the Ngaing who had turned their back on the Lutheran Church over the ban on dancing enforced by the village elders. Cargo cultist, Yali, was the *luluai* of Masi and was the one who told Fr Aufinger that they would join the church if he allowed them to continue their *Kabu* Ceremony. Accordingly, the Ngaing and inland Giria now adopted Catholicism. Fr Aufinger proceeded carefully, instructing catechists not to force the pace of conversion.

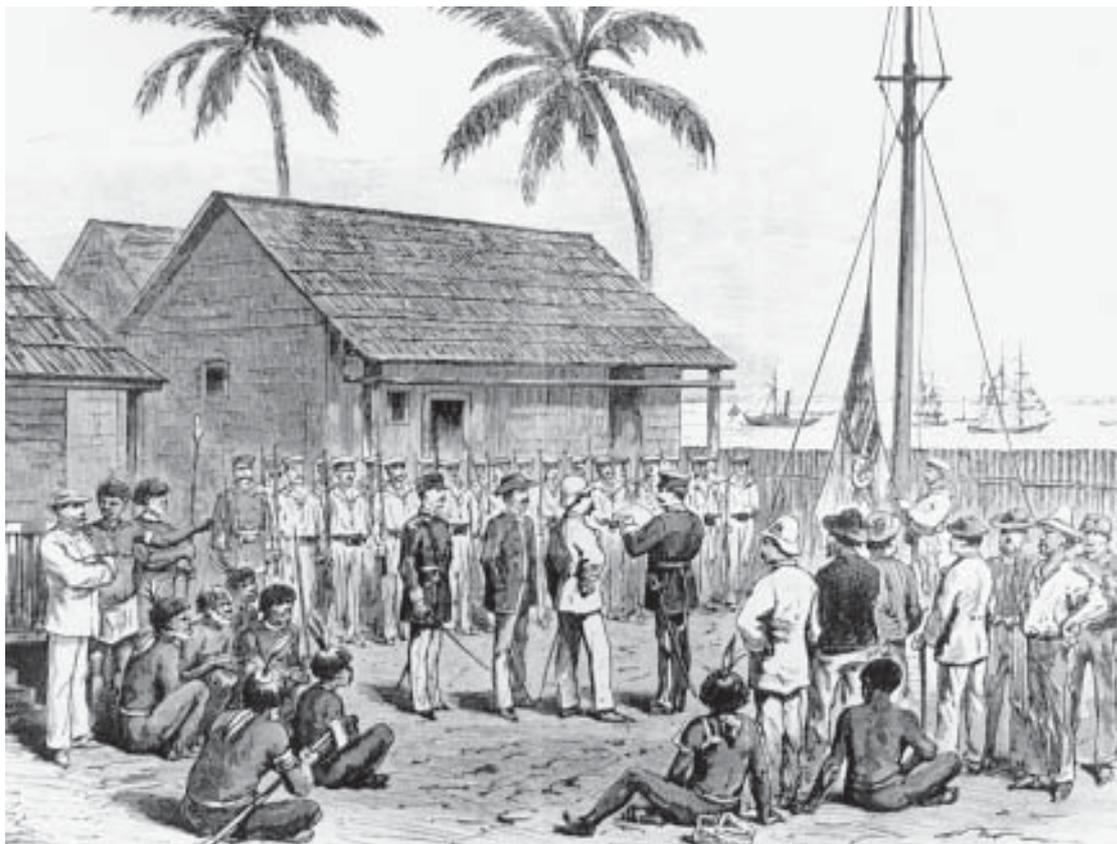
During the nine years of his incumbency (1933 to 1942), he made no attempt to baptise any of the natives. He was most circumspect in all matters concerning the traditional religion, adopting the policy of not trying to change or eliminate any of its beliefs and rituals until he had learnt as much about them as he could. The whole issue of the *Kabu* Ceremony he very prudently kept at arm's length, suggesting at most that the people should give up only those parts of which

were held secret from the women but not, apparently, being unduly disturbed if they failed to do so. However these precautions did not halt the spread of the Third Cargo Cult (Lawrence 1964: 120).



We can see that with the help of these ethnographers, linguists and other experts we have been able to learn much about the early culture of the Madang people in the pre-literate stage of their development. They themselves passed their culture on to the next generation until external pressures changed the way they perceived culture. They were a pragmatic people and if new tools, utensils and artefacts were introduced to them, they discarded the old artefacts. This happened to the stone axes which were discarded in the bush unless some ethnographer happened to buy them. There were, however, some artefacts which the people treasured for religious or sentimental reasons and these they gave up reluctantly. For example, magic flutes and other musical instruments which gave them the magical power in the *meziab* cult. These were given up eventually under pressure from the mission which regarded them as satanical, keeping the women under a yoke of pain of death if they looked on them. Once these items were seen by the women the latter were liberated. These flutes etc were not evil in themselves but some of the practices they were used in may have been. We have to thank Fr Aufinger for collecting the rites of the weather magician which would have been lost forever. He could see the beauty of the verses that cried out to the wind spirits and the sea spirits for protection for the canoes while they were at sea. Each of these men gave us knowledge of their own area of expertise of the culture for which we can only be grateful.

1. See chapter 3.
2. *Yaws* is a contagious bacterial skin-disease of tropical countries.
3. One theory is the Rai Coast is called after the grass that grows there called *Rei*. *Mihalic* suggest it is called after the south-east trade wind. Rai Coast is the coast between Madang and Finschhafen. (*Mihalic*, 1971: 163).
4. Dr Koch later received a Nobel Prize for his work on malaria.
5. See Chapter 9.
6. All Europeans at that time were known as bewitched men.
7. Brother of E. Hannemann
8. During my research, I compiled a *English/Graged Dictionary* based on this dictionary, only covering material culture items.



*German officials raising the flag at Mioko, Duke of York Islands in 1884 (Finsch, 1888).*

## Chapter 9, Political, Social and Technical Changes

### *Time Bilong Germany, 1884 to 1914*



*The crowding of the natives came to a sudden end when Captain Dallmann returned around midday from his boat excursion with the happy news that the vainly looked for harbour had been found and was excellent. Quickly the anchor was weighed and in less than half an hour the ship was lying in the magnificent basin, which we named "Friedrich Wilhelmshafen", in honour of the Crown Prince. The previous day, 19 October, was the birthday of the Crown Prince, and the anniversary of the battle of Leipzig. The memories, which we connect to this day should serve the new German harbour as a good omen and I hope it will stay that way. When Kaiser Wilhelmsland is developed which we all hope for, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen will receive the prominence, which it so richly deserves. Although the harbour is one of the best in German New Guinea, it is unfortunately more afflicted by fever than other areas. Reclamation would improve circumstances. The Samoa was the first ship to anchor in this harbour, where the heavenly quiet did us all good. It was the first harbour we had found so you can excuse our enthusiasm (Finsch, 1884).*

#### **Neu Guinea Kompagnie, 1884 to 1899**

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the island of New Guinea was one of the few undeveloped places not claimed by foreigners but things were about to change. In 1828, the Dutch claimed the western part of the island, then in November 1884, Britain annexed Papua, to protect Australia to the south. In September and November that same year the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie annexed the north east of New Guinea in several flag raising ceremonies. Thus, by the end of 1884, New Guinea was divided along latitudes and longitudes by cartographers and politicians without any consultation with the local people.

Although Britain had been colonising countries in Africa, India, America and Australia for a long time, it was a relatively new experience for Germany. Secrecy and subterfuge were necessary in the period leading up to the annexation if the Germans were to stifle the suspicions not only of the local village people, but also of the British. As we have seen, Otto Finsch was the man chosen by the Germans to lay the groundwork for the annexation. with the backing of prominent German businessmen Adolph von Hansemann and Bleichroder who formed the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie on 13 May 1884. These German bankers had persuaded Bismarck it would be best if he allowed companies to manage the new colony in New Guinea under the auspices of the German government. Thus the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie received its charter to govern from Bismarck. These bankers and traders were

"banking" on investing in a foreign land where none of them had ventured and never would venture. They relied on the descriptions of men like Otto Finsch to check whether it would be economically viable to set up plantations.

In November 1884, the German flag was officially raised in the harbour of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) claiming the area for Germany. Later, officials on several German warships raised flags along the coast claiming the northern part of New Guinea as part of Germany's colonial expansion into the Pacific. When the people there were given pieces of the German flags in the white, black and red colours they were so impressed they ceased to be antagonistic and became friendly towards the newcomers, displaying the flags in the tall palm trees (Firth, 1983: 21).



*Crown Prince  
Friedrich Wilhelm*

Although the German Chancellor, Bismarck, had initially been reluctant about the annexation of German New Guinea in 1884, he certainly wanted to protect Germany's economic interests and followed public opinion with his expansionist policy (Souter, 1963: 71). Writing to the German Ambassador in London in 1885, he said, "the smallest corner of New Guinea or West Africa, even if completely worthless in an objective sense, is at present more important for our policy than the whole of Egypt and its future" (Firth, 1983: 18). Many mistakes were made in the early days. Hansemann had false hopes for New Guinea and encouraged the

planting of the wrong crops. Although he provided financial backing, he never visited the colony and had unrealistic expectations. He wanted vast plantations of tobacco and encouraged the recruitment of labourers from Singapore and China. Even though he was later faced with the failure of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie, Hansemann always kept an interest in New Guinea. He had furniture made of New Guinea timber and smoked New Guinea tobacco. Despite the losses he incurred, Hansemann remained a successful businessman and was reputed to be one of the richest men in Germany.

The Germans first settled at Finschhafen on 5 November 1885. In these early years, many labourers were recruited from Singapore and China as artisans, cooks, fishermen, house staff, bakers and tailors (Annual Reports, Sack, 1979: 19). These new arrivals brought diseases with them that decimated the local population as well as the Europeans. Death from malaria and blackwater fever was a common occurrence in Finschhafen. Many young men, weakened from a poor diet and too much alcohol, succumbed to these fevers. Bismarck's nephew, Kotze, worked as a surveyor and left some rather laconic anecdotes of Finschhafen where the cemetery and the hotel were the most frequented places. One day the clerk, Muller, had not shown up for work and Herr Wissman, the General Manager, was angry.

"Where's Muller? At the hotel I suppose?"

"No. He's dead sir!" was the answer.

"Ah so! Then that is not so bad then". Poor Muller, being dead was a reasonable excuse for being absent from work! (Souter, 1963: 75).



*German railway with donkey-drawn cart.*

By 1891, a third of the Europeans had died including Herr Wissman. After each death, the hotel was crowded and sometimes the Germans went from the hotel to the cemetery for the next burial. After the thirteenth death on 12 March 1892, the rest of the population boarded a steamer in panic and the Finschhafen Station was closed (Firth, 1983: 31). The steamer sailed initially to Stephansort (Bogadjim) on the Rai Coast where a temporary place was found in some plantation sheds.

Because the Kompagnie were both the rulers and the entrepreneurs in the new colony, it was difficult for them to draw the line between protecting the native interests and exploiting them. If the Kompagnie took too many men away to work on plantations then there were pressures on village life. If too much land was alienated for development, this could cause resentment from the villagers and later rebellion which destabilised the colony.

The German policy had been to allow entrepreneurs and missionaries to go wherever they dared. The result was to encourage pioneering enterprise: the cost was to have all kinds of pressure brought to bear on villagers by recruiters of labour, planters looking for good land adjacent to villagers which could supply labour, traders, bird-of-paradise shooters and missionaries. Villagers' reaction to uncontrolled exploitations produced a fighting frontier out beyond the controlled area (Rowley, 1965: 92)

As already mentioned, Kubary had appeared on the scene in 1887 as an ethnographer and naturalist for the Berlin Museum. He also worked for the Neu Guinea Kompagnie at Bongu, acquiring a great deal of land from the unsuspecting villagers. The Bilbil and Yabob people "sold" land to Kuraby on the coast opposite their islands (Lawrence, 1964: 41). It was an amazing transaction because there was no common language and they had no idea of the implications when they made a cross on the purchase document, which Kubary produced. Furthermore, they had no rights over this land as it belonged to the coastal tribes. In 1895, Kubary was summarily dismissed by the company but it kept the land he had "bought". Later, when the Neu Guinea Kompagnie officials began to clear this land, the people protested through the Lutheran Mission. In Astrolabe Bay, Kubary left a "legacy that was the cause of unending trouble for the German authorities" (Sentinella, 1975: 328-329) and it was one of the causes of the revolt against the German administration in 1904.

Firth sums up the difficulties:

Hansemann was constantly misled by thinking of New Guinea as an extension of the East Indies and by assuming that the larger mainland would be a more profitable area of investment than the smaller archipelago to the north. From those two false assumptions flowed virtually every difficulty, which the NGC encountered (1983: 41).

The Neu Guinea Kompagnie was eventually described as one of the worst disasters of late nineteenth century colonialism of any European country in that era. The Berlin-Hamburg financiers who ran the company had never set foot in the South Seas and committed blunder after blunder that did untold damage to the infant colony. Between the Germans, who wanted to generate profits, and the local villagers, who were not interested in capital gain, there was a complete misunderstanding. The villagers had their gardens to be planted and harvested and were not interested in working long hours with little gain. One old man told me that when the German paid them with rice they were angry at first, "They paid us with ants' eggs and we threw the rice away in disgust".

The Germans were interested in exploring New Guinea from the first days of the colony. After Dr Schrader's initial explorations along the coast from Finschhafen, plans were made for more extensive inland explorations, but the thick jungle and steep mountain ranges were inaccessible without carriers. Problems also arose when the local village people refused to travel into enemy territory. Miklouho-Maclay had met this attitude in the 1870's when he was trying to explore further along the coast in a trading canoe. To overcome the problem, the Germans recruited Chinese from Cooktown but, when this venture was unsuccessful, explorations were kept to the coast and up the rivers, the areas around the Rai Coast, Hatzfeldthafen near present day Bogia and the Sepik and Ramu Rivers. Everywhere they explored, botanists classified plants and scientists studied the climate and soils, essential knowledge for growing suitable crops.

In June/July 1886, Vice-Admiral von Schleiniz travelled 200 miles up the Sepik River on board the *Ottolie*, continuing in a smaller boat as far as Ambunti. While returning to Finschhafen, he saw the mouth of the Ramu River. Two years later, Hugo Zoeller set out from Bongu and followed the Kabenau River upstream for six days. When he climbed a mountain for a better view he saw many high peaks ahead and called them after Bismarck's children, Mounts Wilhelm, Otto, Maria and Herbert (Souter, 1963: 76).

A botanist, Dr Carl Lauterbach, followed the Gogol and Naru Rivers in 1890 before sickness and a lack of carriers for a longer journey forced him to return. Six years later, he decided to undertake a major expedition inland. He overcame the problem of the reluctant carriers by introducing his offsider, Dr Kersting who was very large. "Look at how fat this man is? Do you think you will starve when you travel with us? Of course not!" In 1896, he headed inland from Stephansort on the Rai Coast. After many

*Von Hagen, Director General of the New Guinea Compagnie as well as the Administrator of the Colony.*

weeks travelling, he and his party came to the upper Ramu River. In 1896, he floated part of the way down it with a party of fifteen canoes but, because they were running out of supplies, they had to retrace their route and did not follow the Ramu to its mouth.

Otto von Ehlers arrived in New Guinea in 1895 with the ambition of crossing

the country from north to south. He had no idea of the terrain he faced but, although Von Hagen warned him of the dangers, he was not deterred. It was not intended to be a scientific expedition but, rather, a goal or an adventure that he had set himself. His reluctant assistant was W. Piering, a police officer from Fredrich Wilhelmshafen.

Souter gives the rest of the story:

These forebodings were entirely justified by subsequent events, for the Francisco-Lakekamu breakthrough was the most disastrous expedition ever undertaken in New Guinea, directly responsible for the deaths of Ehlers and Piering and indirectly responsible for that of Kurt Von Hagen (1963: 80).

After members of the Ehlers-Piering expedition were killed, the murderers were rounded up but managed to escape. Later that year, von Hagen, the Director General of the company and Administrator, was killed on the Rai Coast while trying to apprehend them. Since his arrival in the Colony, he had been seen as a friendly *tibud* or foreigner, particularly by the Bel group, and his death caused a worsening relationships between the blacks and the whites because there was an expectation that he would "bring the cargo", which would now not come. It was seen as a missed opportunity (Pech, 1991: 150). In addition, when von Hagen was killed, the people realized that the Germans were not *tibud*.<sup>1</sup> Even the leaders could die, and this led to a growing unrest particularly among the Bel group.

In 1892, the company shifted its headquarters to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) which became the capital of German New Guinea for two years. Hagen's house was shifted there and became the Administrative Office. A site near the Madang wharf was "purchased" from the Bilia people who accepted the payment





*The Hagen Memorial on the Rai Coast. It is missing the eagle which once crowned it and which is now in Mt Hagen.*

of some trinkets, thinking it was the rental for a small site on which the Company had a house. As a result, the Bilia became almost landless when the Germans began to clear the area for Modilon Plantation (Lawrence, 1964: 67). At this stage, the population of the town included the Administrator, the station manager and eighteen European officials of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie — four of whom were Administration staff (Sack, 1979: 76).

Part of the trouble with the company was that it was governed from Berlin and there were endless orders and counter orders. Inadequate shipping links meant that communication was slow, but it did not lessen the demanding tones of the Berlin bankers when the orders arrived. There was so much paper work that the local people called the office *haus pepa*, the house of paper. The town buildings included a Post Office, hospital and stores and the town was becoming more attractive. The landing stage at the wharf was completed in November 1894 and lights were installed at the entrance to the harbour (Sack, 1979: 108). The initial development of the town was near the present day wharf areas,

but “it is very difficult to obtain precise details about the actual growth of the Madang township during its early days” (Madang Urban Study, 1972: 2). Modilon Road today follows the old German road that connected the town with the plantations of Yomba and Modilon.

As there were rumours that the German Administration might soon take over the colony, the company concentrated on its business ventures and profits and not on developing the local areas or the people. Even in the business side, failures were the order of the day. The company blamed its failures on the long dry seasons which stunted the growth of the tobacco plants and the fact that, “the commercial activity essential for survival is still bound up with the political task of government which it is impossible for a private company to carry out” (Sack, 1979: 124). Although large areas had been cleared on the Rai Coast for tobacco plantations, the harvest grew smaller each year from 1893. Traditionally tobacco was not grown on the Rai Coast except for small areas at Bongu and Bogadjim. Most of the traditional tobacco crops were grown in Silibob, Nobonob, Kauris and Amele all areas inland from Madang and was bartered as a trade item with the Rai Coast people (Pall Tagari of Bilbil).

Speaking of this time, historian J. A. Moses said that, in those early days, the company had contributed very little to the colony and it had not even been profitable. However, it did lay the foundation upon which the Reich could build when it finally took over the administration of the colony on 1 April 1899. “From the German, if not the Australian point of view, the final take-over by the Reich was a turning point in the history of Melanesia.”

One reason Moses put forward for their failure was their mismanagement of the local people (1968: 52). As we have seen, the Germans underestimated the tribal organisation of the area, which had survived for thousands of years. The tribes had systems of communication with their drums, which warned of any government patrols. They had a trading system for hundreds of kilometres along the coast through which messages were transmitted. Trade friends also had a sense of obligation to their allies so that in time of war there were hundreds of villagers who could be called on to respond in an emergency. Attitudes to the Germans could be orchestrated generally. An attitude of slow work or no work could ruin a plantation and this is exactly what happened. Village people would front up for work but gradually disappear in the course of a day. They had their own gardens, trade links and other affairs to manage. Why should they be servile to these newcomers who took their land and scoffed at their beliefs? They had their *Meziab* society where their youth were initiated and where dances and feasts were celebrated sometimes for weeks on end. Their land, the inheritance of the tribe, should never be sold. Now it was being cleared of the forests that they needed for their houses, canoes and food. What was worse, the land was turned into plantations which they, the villagers and rightful owners, were supposed to work on.



*Old German Cemetery in Madang. Many of the graves were of young German men serving in the new colony, victims of fever.*

Traditionally, when a canoe was built, the owner would have a big feast for all the workers and there would be dancing and singing. Maybe if the company managers had rewarded their workers likewise, things may have been different. It was not until Judge Hahl arrived and had studied the psychology of the people that he realised they would work for food rations and with the promise of feasts when they had finished their piece of road or whatever other project was in mind. Prior to this the company managers failed to get the people on side and stirred up such hostility they could not draw on the local manpower to work in the plantations. Finsch had warned that the village people of Astrolabe Bay would not adapt well to working on company plantations, as they were too independent. The result was that the Company was forced to recruit Javanese, Chinese as well as Melanesians from the Bismarck Archipelago.

A discerning comment came from the Company medical officer Dr. Otto Dempwolff:

The Papuan is a born agriculturalist made for plantation work, powerful and adapted by natural selection and

inherited characteristics to the climate of New Guinea, peaceful and in a certain sense both industrious and keen. He works only for himself obeying only necessity. He does not have the idea that he could work in preparation for an uncertain future nor does he reflect that by working he could come to enjoy a comfortable life. By contact with white men he is neither spoiled nor decimated (since the sale of spirits and weapons is legally prohibited); but the gulf between the two races is so great that the Papuan would not wish to imitate the European. Neither will he do anything for the European for the purpose of assisting in his agricultural labour, nor from any rationalised idealistic or materialistic motives but only from need, from habit, or from compulsion (Moses, 1968: 51).

Most Germans did not realise that the village attitude to wealth was the opposite of the German trade practices. The villagers never tried to keep any surplus foodstuff or artefacts but traded them on. As a result, few villages were more luxurious than others although Finsch picked out Bilbil Island as being wealthier in decorations and lifestyle than their neighbours. This was probably

as a result of their monopoly over the pot trade but this was an exception to the rule. But even these islanders could not be described as merchant seaman. They looked on their trade as barter and non-profit. Suddenly, these people came face to face with the German culture with its Lutheran ideals, firstly of the value of work as a means in itself and secondly the view that man were born to work “by the sweat of his brow”. Compare this with the *laissez faire* attitude of the village people who rested when it was hot, but worked when necessary in their gardens to provide enough food for themselves or for bartering. During the festival times, they were happy to dance and sing for days with little thought of the future.

As Dr Moses wrote:

Dr. Dempwolff expressed the hope that the Papuans would develop the habit of work on plantations by recognising in time its material advantages. The humane treatment by the plantation overseers plus the good food would encourage Papuans to renew their contracts and thus they would develop a desire for comforts and even luxury, which could in turn develop into a striving for individual wealth and competition for material goods. Firstly, however, the basic **communistic** outlook of the population would have to be broken (1968, : 51-52).

As we have seen, the people had a culture rich in colourful dances, rituals and customs. They had built up a material culture with objects created from wood, shell, bone, feathers, stone, paint, fibres, and other materials collected from the forests using tools of stone, wood, shell and bone. They were entrenched in their secret cults to which only the initiated men had access. Many local skirmishes between villages and traditional enemies continued while the Germans were setting up their colony. From Karkar to Astrolabe Bay, there was a thriving trading ring, the *Dadeng*, and goods travelled along and around this area central to Yabob and Bilbil Island where the women made earthenware pots which were traded in the large trading canoes. In Astrolabe Bay, the villagers kept “uneasily aloof, ignored by the German officials and baffling the proselytising efforts of the Lutherans” (Ryan, 1972: 487).

### Imperial German Administration, 1899 to 1914

Although German Government officials made several attempts to persuade the Neu Guinea Kompagnie to hand over local sovereignty to the Reich, it was not until 1899 that they finally took over administrative power. The capital of German New Guinea was then shifted to Herbertshöhe, (Kokopo) and Friedrich Wilhelmshafen became the district capital from where the mainland, Kaiser Wilhelmsland, was controlled. Between 1901 and 1903, the German inhabitants of the town were joined by Chinese and Malay people from Finschhafen, where a small island nearby was called Madang. When they found Friedrich Wilhelmshafen too difficult to pronounce, they began to use the

name Madang instead, and this eventually took over as the name of the town.

By 1903, nearly 540 hectares of land was under cultivation for Modilon Plantation near the small town. When Von Benningsen, the District Officer in Madang, questioned the legality of the land deals, he was overruled and Governor Hahl was reluctant to take the matter to court in case it was found in the people’s favour. This could lead to “litigation all along the coast” (Lawrence, 1964: 41). Under the German administration, economic exploitation continued but the powers of the government and the Company were separated. The new German Administration allowed the Company and other businesses to continue and taxed their profits to provide funding to run the colony. This meant that the Government could devote more time to native affairs and develop their skills through education and through economic development. Many of the products needed by the German towns were produced by the natives themselves so it was in the German interests to “ensure the native development” (Lawrence, 1964: 36).

However, in some respects, the relations between the village people and the German Administration were just as bad as they had always been. The canoe builders of the Bel group found it more difficult to get the timber needed for their hulls as they had traditionally depended on the Bilia people to provide these. To see the trees cut down with such abandon would have distressed the village people. What would now happen to the *masalai* (spirits) of the bush areas that were under threat? The people held on to their old beliefs despite pressures to change. The Germans had no idea of these traditions and expected the people to become labourers in the newly cleared land now inhabited by angry dislocated bush spirits who had lost their trees. The local villagers had their own social organization. When the elders rebelled, they used the magic of the *meziab* to counter the German might.

The new German Administration might pursue a more realistic native policy, but the village people themselves were in no hurry to oblige and become labourers. Although Dempwolff had mentioned the people would make good agriculturalists, he had made this observation when seeing them work in their own village gardens. Once the Germans tried to get these same men to work for them, they would abscond into the bush and had to be continually rounded up. In January 1907, Dernburg, (soon to be the first Secretary of State), wrote, “one of the most important things that a civilised people is in a position to impart is pleasure in work and gainful activity” (Moses, 1968: 51-54). What the new German rulers failed to comprehend was that the people had been gainfully employed with their trading, pottery, gardens and canoe building in which they had always gained much pleasure and esteem. It was very difficult to interest them in contract work as they were used to a basic subsistence economy. Their surplus was traded for other goods, they did not accumulate wealth and the idea of working for a wage as in a capitalist economy was foreign to them.

A German official complained that they came to work when they felt like it and worked hard for short spurts but not steadily. They “require very skilled handling to coax them into a semblance of perseverance and regularity” (Sack, 1979: 20). Perhaps the government failed because they were trying to impose a European economic system on the local people, and when the system failed they blamed the people’s attitude to work claiming they were lazy. Cultural differences were to cause much friction between the local people and their new masters. Technological differences and knowledge were also very evident with the Germans introducing a wealth of western advancements to help colonize New Guinea. Misunderstandings grew between the two groups and led to an eventual revolt.

In the Annual Report for the German Government for 1901-2, the following attitude to the local people was noted:

The main reason, apart from the weather conditions, why the natives allow part of their coconut harvest to rot in the interior, is that except for tobacco there is no article of consumption available, capable of tempting them to work. — It is not in the nature of the native to lay up a stock of luxuries (Sack and Clark, 1979: 228)

Once the German Administration took over, the Neu Guinea Kompagnie became a purely private enterprise interested in the pursuit of agriculture and plantations as a basis for trade and commercial enterprises. With the German Administration now firmly in control, the importance of New Guinea as a colony increased. Because Germany was late in developing her empire compared to other European countries, its strategic value in this period of imperial expansion could not be under-estimated. In Germany, nationalism was developed by interesting people in the far-off colonies “which were now considered no longer a luxury plaything of a capitalist elite but a cultural, economic and hence world political necessity” (Moses, 1968: 53).

Albert Hahl was appointed Imperial Judge at Herbertshoe and left Europe in November 1895, to take up his new position. Travelling on board the *Stettin*, he had as a fellow passenger the ethnographer, Lajos Biró. The two of them enjoyed lively discussions about their future home. Hahl was a short, stout man who did more than any other German to improve relationships with the people. He increased the profitability of the German Colony and laid the foundations of a strong government, which would have continued had it not been for World War I and the Treaty of Versailles. Hahl remained Imperial Judge for three years and, in 1902, he was appointed Governor of German New Guinea and was responsible for the whole of German New Guinea and Micronesia until 1914.

Over the years, Hahl was on friendly terms with many of the Tolai leaders in the Rabaul area, and was very respected by the people and spoke their language, *kuamua*. Pacification was Hahl’s main objective (Firth, 1983: 93) and, as a result, three quarters of

the revenue was spent on protecting the colonists, on the police and the government steamer which was the main means of contact between the different settlements. Of all the administrators or government officials, Governor Hahl understood the people. When he discovered that chiefs paid their village workers with food and feasts after a house or canoe had been built, he decided to do likewise. When a village finished the road past their villages, the German officials organised a feast to celebrate and the workers were paid in food rather than money. The system worked, much to the amazement of other government officials. When the head tax system was introduced, the people were forced to become part of a moneyed economy. The Tolai people became keen businessmen, selling their dried coconuts for shell money. Previously they had been fierce warriors, now they could put this energy into building up businesses and they adapted well to the new economic circumstances. The Madang people, however, being more docile did not adapt well to the new changes. They were used to a more peaceful existence and wanted to retain it.

Hahl was instrumental in beginning a native policy protecting native land while at the same time increasing the economy and spreading pacification of the tribes. He did this in two main ways. Firstly, he tried to clear up misunderstandings between the colonists and the people over the land deals. Many tribesmen had no idea that the papers they had signed were to sell large tracts of land on a permanent basis. “Instead of dismissing their complaints he agreed that re-settlement of village people away from their native groves would not benefit the plantation owners as they would lose access to native garden produce and to the source of labour for their plantations”. He was only partially successful in this venture. Secondly, the appointment of *luluais* and *tultuls*, village officials, by Dr Hahl was a significant step in bringing order and pacification to the village people. The *luluai* wore a black cap with red band and as “a symbol of government authority they carried a black stick with a white metal top” (Firth, 1983: 68). In some cases a paramount *luluai* was appointed over several villages and they could adjudicate over minor disputes (Mair, 1970: 56). In most instances, the Germans chose the leaders wisely and their insignia became the symbol of authority both for the Germans and for the village people.

Old timers in the Madang area could recite lists of the *luluais* and *tultuls* of various villages.

Ber, of Yabob said:

Before, when Dadau was the *luluai* of Bilbil, Sangui was the *luluai* of Yabob. Sangui was a big man and Wowe was his *tultul*. Sangui, who belonged to the Kakon clan, was given a long stick with gold ball on top. He wore a hat too and Wowe had the same.

The *luluai* were expected to extend German ideas of law and order to the village level. Orders were sometimes given abruptly by government officials and those who disobeyed were punished.

As a result, some villages nominated men other than their leaders as the *luluai* because they respected their real leaders too much. They did not want them punished for the misdemeanours of the village (Mair, 1970: 54). The *luluai*, Sangui, was punished by the Germans for the misdeeds of the Yabob people at the time of the 1904 revolt and lost his position. The Madang people were becoming more and more resentful of the intrusions on their lands. The Bilia's lost their village land to the Madang town site. Bush once used for hunting was being cut back and trees needed for the large canoes were being cleared away. Many of their old customs were being ridiculed and items of their material culture sent back to Europe as artefacts. People who had once managed to be independent and live off the land were now being forced into paid labour so they could afford the money to pay the head tax (Lawrence, 1964: 43).

### The 1904 revolt

Of all people in New Guinea, the Bel people had their own traditional political order with friends and allies between various villages over a wide range. They had their clan leaders and more importantly, their weather magicians, the *likon*, who held sway over many of the activities for example, the best times to harvest, to trade and to travel. The role of the *likon* was hereditary, passed on from father to son, along with with the accompanying knowledge of the ceremony, the poems and the power. During the time of the *meziab*, the people called up large assemblies attended by villagers from a wide area. Traditional enemies travelled safely because of the general truce. At these meetings, decisions were made that could affect thousands of people through the trading system.

There had been a time in the past when the Mindiri threatened the monopoly of the Yabob/Bilbil pottery network, and there was a procedure in place to deal with such threats. The new German authorities were placed within the old order. It was seen to be threatening the power of the clan leaders and the power of the *meziab*. The local village people vastly outnumbered the German community. It was time to call up a meeting of the Bel group – the Siar, Kranket, Bilbil, Yabob and Riwo people and their allies to retaliate against the common enemy, the new German Government.

The Madang men, the *tamol*, had been forced to work so much for the Germans they had been neglecting their own gardens. Furthermore they had never been anyone's *begabeg* (servant) before. True, they had *begabeg* of their own - men whom they had beaten in battle could be forced to work for them or orphans who had no family were sometimes treated as slaves by the Bel people. They were a proud and powerful people who did not answer to anyone. The Bel people reacted to the new threats against their culture in the usual way with sorcery, subterfuge, and by summoning allies and attacking the common enemy, now the German officials. A revolt was planned for July among the Bel villagers. Various reasons were given - concern over loss of

land, fear of losing more land and anger at being forced to work on filling swamps and laying roads in Madang. But over and above all this it was the loss of power felt by the Bel group that sparked the revolt.

Sentinella mentioned the continual humiliation, which had produced a state of desperation among the people who felt that the foreigners also threatened their position in the trading network. In addition, the villagers had seen the new technology in the town; new tools, boats and materials but the paltry amount they were paid for their copra made these items unattainable. They were caught between the old ways and the new.

The missionaries wanted the people to give up all their beliefs and open the *darem* (secret men's house) to the women. The Kranket people were angry at Missionary Helmich who, although he ran a little school on Kranket Island, had a negative attitude to their traditional beliefs. Madmai Karik, of the Yanudaimon Clan, went so far as saying that the 1904 revolt happened because of the missionary's opposition to the *darem* and the *meziab*. The Laupain Clan had built a *darem* on the island and were in the middle of the secret rites of the *meziab* inside when Helmich and his wife entered. This was completely forbidden and, previously, it would have meant the destruction of the village and the deaths of all its people because women were not allowed to see the magic instruments.<sup>2</sup>

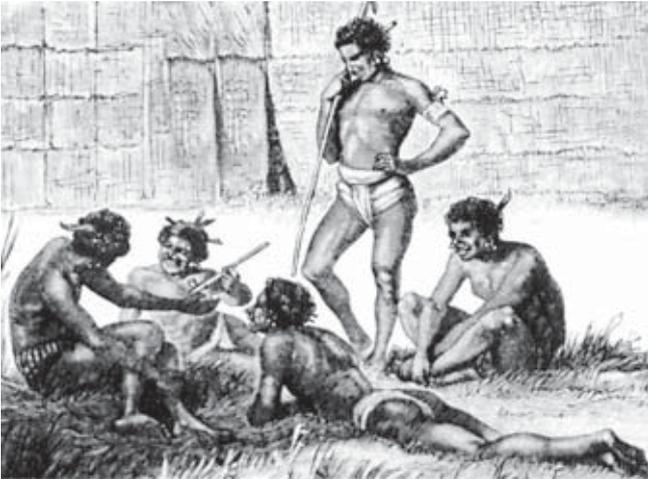
Madmai Karik:

The Laupain Clan were building a new *haus boi* and there were many *tambarans* in this new house. Helmich rang his bell [for the people to attend church] but the people took no notice. The *tambaran* cult got louder and louder and they ignored Helmich. Sabu went and fetched a Patrol Officer called Des to protect the *haus tambaran* from Helmich. Des came but he lied and told Helmich what the people had said. So Helmich and his wife entered the *Haus Tambaran* – during a big *singsing*. Everyone was cross with Helmich (Interview by Louise Morauta 28 July 1969).

Bille of Kranket had other reasons for the revolt:

The cause of this trouble was that Krankets, Siars, Biliars were working on the big Meiro road. All the men had to do this work and it was hard as they began at five o'clock in the morning and they could not eat or sleep well. The Germans were very strict and often whipped the men with the *kunda* (cane). The Krankets, Biliars etc, were tired of this work and decided to kill off the kiaps and the government officers. They reasoned that if they got rid of the government they would go back to their old way of life and be happy. They discussed this and decided to revolt against the government.

All the people who planned the attack belonged to the Bel group and felt their strong position was being threatened by the



*A typical meeting of the elders.*

government. The rituals connected with the *meziab* were used to incite the men to revolt and part of the plan was to seize the guns of the Germans so that the men would then re-gain their power.

It is interesting that the first meeting of the dissidents had been held in the *darem* (probably the one illustrated by Otto Finsch in 1884) on Bilbil Island at a *meziab* meeting attended by the paramount clan leaders from the Bel group as well as from Bongu and Bogati. The attack was timed for the day when the mail steamer departed from Madang, as it had been noticed that, on that day, the Europeans slept in as a result, no doubt, of the farewell parties. “The natives of Siar and Graged Islands were to stealthily cross to the mainland and suddenly rush the police barracks and seize the rifles. When they had succeeded killing the whites at Madang, the natives at Bogati and Bongu would do the same” (Sentinella, 1975: 333). Pech added that, “a meeting was held around New Year 1904, under cover of the initiation ceremonies being carried out there with unprecedented fervour. It involved the four inner Bel villages and Bilbil” (1991: 145-146). Lawrence speaks of a “full council of conspirators” who met on Bilbil Island, the Siars taking the lead.

Hannemann described the mood:

In “plenary council” the influential men of the four villages and representatives of the Bilbil seated themselves in a circle and in the presence of the ancestral spirits discussed their problems. Betelnuts were handed around. The loud tapping of the bone spatulas on the shell opening of the lime-calabashes expressed the determination of these men. A few were a bit hesitant. Yet they sanctioned what the rest said. The whites had come to stay and would demand things from the natives in increasing numbers. Now was the time to deal with the insistence, impatience and acquisitiveness of the whites regarding land and labour and their solicitude regarding socio-religious teachings. These whites (called

*tibud* or spirits), no doubt were reincarnated spirits who had come to enrich themselves at the expense of the natives (Hannemann, 1944: 27).

At the *meziab*, they discussed many things and decided they wanted to revert to their old way of life, which was under threat. For some reason, the Yabob and Bilbil people withdrew from further negotiations. Whether they felt they were not as affected by the German rulers as the others is not known. It was true that the Siar, Kranket, Bilia and Riwo people were losing more land and labour because of their close proximity to the township of Madang. While the Siar and Kranket men continued with the conspiracy against the Germans, the Bilbil men decided to remain neutral.

The people could see that they greatly outnumbered the German officials in Madang. They thought it would be easy to finish them off and then be free to return to their old ways. This is what they had done in traditional times when faced with the same situation. Stories abounded of payback of enemies in the past. It was customary to invite enemies to a feast of friendship and when their bellies were full they would be surrounded and killed. It had happened on the Rai Coast at Dain Village where a man from Pizen Village had been killed. His friends wanted revenge. Inviting the Dain people to go on a trading trip to the Siassi Island, they killed them at sea. Only one small boy survived to tell the tale. The Germans were treated no differently. They had taken over land that belonged to the Bel people so there had to be retribution.

An old man, Male, of Siar Village, remembered:

The Krankets (Laupain Clan) got some betel nuts and ginger and did a *singsing* so that it would stir everyone to fight (*kirapim bel*). They took the *buai* (betelnut) to the *tambaran* places in the bush on Siar Island, where no women are allowed. They did a *singsing* that gave the *buai* power. Only Krankets and Siars went to that *tambaran* place. The Bilbil, Yabob and Bilia people were not involved. When the Siars and Krankets had eaten the special *buai* it was taken and offered to other places to make them angry so they would attack the government officers (Mennis, 1981a: 31).

Kasare of Yabob said:

The Siars wanted to kill off the German government. We Bilbil did not want to kill the German kiaps. The trouble was my forefathers could not speak pidgin and could not communicate well with the Germans. Only the Siars could communicate well with them. So my father and his friends left Bilbil Island and ran away. I was a baby at this time (Mennis 1981a: 34).

Nalon, *Tutul* of Bilia, reported the impending trouble to the German doctor on Bilia who relayed the news to the German officials. He thought, quite rightly, that if his people succeeded in their revolt, then German warships would shell the villages.

Being warned that the Krankets and Siars were plotting to kill the government officers, the police were ready for the villagers when they came in their canoes towards Madang. The officers were ordered to fire over the heads of the attackers and not kill anyone. Frightened by the gunfire, the Krankets and Siars turned back home. As a punishment the Germans executed nine Siar men.

On the morning of 26 July 1904, at about nine o'clock in the morning, Rev Helmich was just returning from school when he heard shots being fired. As this happened quite often when the police were practising, he did not take much notice but then he heard shouts and saw people running and screaming. He was still talking to the Kranket people when some police arrived from Madang to see if he was still alive. At this time the Krankets were still angry with Helmich and were going to kill him but the Azaupain Clan came to his aid. As a consequence he protected the accused Kranket men and only some Siar men were tied to a plank and shot (Wagner, 1986: 115).

#### Gurnass of Siar:

All the Siar people had to watch the Siar men being tied up and shot. Our people were told that from now on they must obey the government. We only had bows and arrows and you could see them. When the government men used rifles you could not see the bullets. You fell down as if nothing had gone through the air. Once the Germans killed the Siars, the people were very afraid of the German bullets. The police rounded up all the men, women and children of Siar, killed their pigs and took the people away to Mindiri and Sidor. Some of the Krankets went to Megiar and Sarang on the North Coast. Many people died at Sarang and Mindiri because they did not have enough food (Interview, 16 September 1976).

The Revolt of 1904 was reported in the German Reports for 1904-05 – “the inhabitants of the islands of Siar, Rargetta and Bilbili attempted in July 1904 to seize Friedrich Wilhelmshafen Station and to kill all the Europeans. This attempt was foiled and the guilty parties were punished” (Sack and Clark, 1979: 251). So the Bilbil people were implicated in the revolt and their initial participation and tacit support discovered. The Report added, “The ferment of unrest in the various coastal districts of Kaiser Wilhelmsland — was due to the spread of plantations in the region of Astrolabe Plain — either because the natives, not knowing the future boundaries of the plantations, began to fear for their own livelihood, or because they were led by greed to commit outrages or launch attacks”.

After the shootings on Siar in 1904, the German Administration banished the Bel people to the Rai Coast and confiscated some of their land. The fact that two Kranket men, Kubai and Malai, protected the Lutheran Pastor Helmich from certain death meant a lighter sentence for the people there. No Kranket Islanders were

executed, although many of them were banished to the Rai Coast. The Siar Islanders stayed with the Mindiri, their old friends.

#### Male said:

I, Male, was twelve or so when I went to the Rai Coast after the Siar Revolt. I remember planting coconuts there. We stayed at Mindiri first but later we built another village in the bush behind Mindiri (Mennis, 1980b: 36).

When the people from Siar, Kranket, Yabob and Bilbil, were banished to the Rai Coast, they stayed with the villages they were friendliest with. The Siars stayed with the Mindiri; the Bilbil went to Rimba and the Yabob people went to Yeimas. It has been suggested that the Mindiri learnt the art of pot making from the Bilbil during this time but research on their oral traditions shows that this was not so. The Bilbil did not even stay with them but at Rimba or hid in the bush away from the Germans. Both Mindiri and Siar Island traditions state that it was the Siar people who stayed with the Mindiri (Mennis, 1980b: 36).

The 1904 Revolt and its repercussions were to cause more disruption to the culture of the Madang people than any other single event. Their trading system and the pottery industries were temporarily shattered as a result and no new canoes were built, few pots were made and no trade took place during this time. The Bilbil people fled to the Rai Coast to escape retribution from the Germans and lived inland from Rimba Village.

Because 15 Bel men, including some from Bilbil, were taken to Herbertshohe (Rabaul) as part of the punishment, it left the village people short of labour to build houses and make gardens in their new villages on the Rai Coast. However, these 15 had a glimpse of the outside world and this encouraged many others to work on plantations and, in later years, on the goldfields in Bulolo.

Maia Awak was born in 1904, the year his people fled Bilbil Island. His mother, Gorowag, heavily pregnant, sat in one of the large trading canoes as they fled to Rimba on the Rai Coast where his father, Awak, had trade friends. As soon as they arrived, they broke the superstructure of their canoe and hid the hull in the bush to avoid detection by German soldiers who were patrolling the area. At this time, the Bilbil did not live with the Rimba people, but hid in the deep bush where they built houses and grew gardens for themselves. They were cared for by the Rimba people and their leader, Maia, often visited them. When he heard that Gorowag was about to have a baby he said, “If it is a boy, you must call it Maia after me.” So that is how Maia came to get his name. When Maia was about two years old, the people were allowed to return to Bilbil Island.

Howewver, they stayed there only for the next few years. The German reports state that the Bilbil Islanders had been allotted land by the District Officer on the coast opposite their island. The Dugus Clan were the first to move as they were tired of building houses on the rocky side of Ngur hill on the island. They



*The Steamship, Siar, one of the vessels of the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie, off Potsdamhafen with Manam Volcano in the background.*

chose flat land on the mainland. Overall, the people were happy to shift to the mainland as they had felt isolated on their island and were tired of paddling canoes across to the mainland. The move affected their material culture because now they were no longer an island people. It also affected their trading system, as they were no longer dependent on canoes to transport their pots. Roads were being built and former enemy tribes were being pacified.

The Gapan Clan, to which Maia's family belonged, stayed for a few more years on the island and they were the last to move to the mainland. The Germans encouraged this move because they could then keep closer watch on their activities. There were many reasons why the Bilbil decided to shift. Some of them had jobs at Yomba plantation and they found it too difficult to sail the canoes over to the mainland every day. They wanted to be closer to their gardens, which they now extended onto some land belonging to neighbouring Bahor village. They were tired of trying to dig postholes for their houses on the rocky land on the island. Even though they shifted to the mainland, they did not forget their island. They always considered it their home, and Maia and the other boys often returned there to fish and hunt. Initiation ceremonies were still carried out there in the 1970s.

By 1907, the German colony was at last starting to be properly established. Roads had been laid and townships built around the

harbours at Madang, Rabaul and Wewak. Fine German houses were constructed with wide verandahs and sloping roofs and European culture and social mores were introduced where possible. The Germans Officials mainly wore white uniforms and formal dinners with servants waiting on them were the order of the day. Expeditions to the hinterland gave promise of more space for plantations. The head-tax, which started in 1907, further developed the need for a monetary economy, as the village people were now obliged to earn money through labour or by selling their coconuts to pay this tax. Part of the implementation of political and social control was the *luluai/tultul* system and their loyalty was assured as they retained one tenth of the tax collected by them.

Maia's earliest memory was when he was about four, he pestered his father for a knife like the other boys had. Awak agreed and Maia gives an interesting picture of Madang in those days, about 1908. The two of them left the island early one morning and landed on the mainland. They then walked to the Gum River, across which Awak waded with Maia on his shoulders. They came to the Yomba rubber plantation, (where the provincial headquarters now stands) and saw the Malay and Chinese workers collecting the rubber. Further on, they came to Modilon Plantation (now the industrial and suburban area of Madang). Here they were met by a herd of cattle grazing under the coconuts. Maia was terrified and climbed on his father's shoulders when the cows

gathered around and stared at him. Finally, they came to the peninsula where the tiny township of Madang was situated. They bought the knife in the German store and set off for home without incident.

### The Second Uprising, 1912

After the first uprising, the Germans were suspicious of any actions that might lead to further uprisings. As a precaution, they established relationships with trusted leaders and developed their confidence. One such was Tagari, of Bilbil Village. He had been taken overseas to Europe and Africa and was aware of the strength of the German people. He was no fool. By befriending the Germans he knew he could make his own position stronger in the village scene and that he would be listened to by both villagers and the German officials. By using this situation, Tagari was able to settle personal scores resulting from his time in Africa.

It appears from the oral testimonies that the second uprising was a non-event. It happened mainly as a result of the German policy of recruiting New Guinea men as local auxiliaries to assist in the policing of German East Africa, now Tanzania. Proof that they went is found in Dempwolff's life story. He was in Africa in July 1905, where 150 recruits from German New Guinea were working for the Germans to help quell a local revolt. Dempwolff was pleased to find some Bilbil men among them with whom he could converse. Most of the recruits were so weak and sick from the long sea trip that Dempwolff considered only half of them strong enough to fight. By May 1906, these recruits returned home to New Guinea, apart from Tagari who was taken on a visit to Europe. The men returned to village life but it was never quite the same again. They had had a taste of the outside world and observed many different people and customs.

On their return, some found that their wives had been unfaithful in their absence. Thinking they would never see their husbands again, they had remarried. If bride payments had not been finalised before the men left to go to Africa, their wives considered themselves at liberty to remarry. Among them was Minai, Tagari's first wife who had married a Siar man. Since this marriage had been organised by Minai's brother, Tagog, there was some bitterness between Tagari and Tagog.

#### Gab of Bilbil:

Some of the big men went to Africa as policemen and when they came back there was trouble over women. Minai was Tagari's first wife. He had not finished paying the bride price and her brother Tagog found her another husband. There was big trouble over this. Then Tagari told the Germans, "We have three bigheads here at Bilbil - Tagog, Nusimai and Kangu". The kiap said, "Bring them here". So Tagog, Nusimai and Kangu were rounded up. Tagog's wife went with them. There was trouble on Kranket over a woman and some of Siming's line went to Rabaul too (Mennis, 1981b: 4).

Sack stated the official German view:

At the time of the alleged uprising in Madang in 1912, Hahl was almost at the scene. *Tutul* Tagari of Bilbili informed District Commissioner Scholz of the plot on 23 August, and Scholz had just begun to arrest the ringleaders named by Tagari when Hahl passed through on the Lloyd steamer *Coblentz* on 24 the August, taking the first prisoners with him to Rabaul. On 25 August Scholz continued his investigations. When Nalon from Beliao [Bilia], who had betrayed the 1904 conspiracy, corroborated Tagari's evidence, Scholz called an emergency meeting of the District (Advisory) Council to discuss what measures should be taken (1973: 111).

This is interesting; Tagari's son was my good friend, Pall Tagari, of Bilbil Village. He was my guide and informant during most of the 1970s. Pall said his father knew Nalon, the man who had reported the 1904 revolt. Nalon was ready to report further trouble to the government in 1912 because he thought the Siars and Krankets were making trouble over women.

Pall tells the following:

When Tagari, my father, heard about the problems the second time, he was worried that the trouble might come up again [like the first revolt] so he went to the government with names of troublemakers in Bilbil Village. The government came and banished these men to the Bainings area of New Britain. The Murpat Clan had a big *darem* on the island and the government came and put all the people in this place. My father told me this. My mother was not there. She was working in Megiar in the gardens. She was expecting me then. The men and women were herded together and the pigs were all shot, then the government official called out the names of those who had to go to Rabaul: Tagog, Nusimai and Tangu, who were all Murpat Clan men and their wives.

Years later, Tagari admitted to his son, Pall, that the gist of the trouble in 1912 was over women and that he, himself, was involved. He became caught up in a domestic crisis when he returned from Africa because he had not finished paying the bride price for Minai, who had re-married. Tagari then married Sebulas, from Mis, Pall's mother. In this way he got even with the Siar men. This talk was still around when the second trouble started. Tagari went to the kiap and told him that the Murpat clan men, Tagog and the others, were *bigheads*. His accusations were taken very seriously particularly by Judge Hahl who picked Tagog and members of his clan up on his official launch and took them back to Rabaul to face court. The Germans came down heavily and banished Tagog and others of his clan to the Bainings in New Britain. There is no indication they were involved in any second uprising against the Germans. In reality, it appears that Tagari used his high standing with the Germans for his own benefit.

Kasare of Yabob mentioned another man called Nusimai of Bilbil, who was also causing trouble over a woman called Landau. Initially she was Kankan's wife and then Samlang bought her and later she was living with Bainluluai. So they took Bainluluai prisoner with Tagog to the Bainings with the Siar and Kranket men. Kasare said, "Tagari deceived the Germans with his talk". The second time it happened, it was just false rumours, but the officials banished some of the men (1980a: 50). It was called the Second Revolt against the German Government but in reality it was caused by the trouble over the women. Similar domestic problems had been noted in Kranket and Bilia and caused by the absence of the men in Africa.

Meanwhile the men banished to New Britain told the German government that they had been wrongly accused and the S.M.S. *Condor* returned them to Madang for trial. Scholz called a meeting of the District Council to which two officers of the S.M.S. *Condor* were invited. The meeting concluded "it has been proved beyond any reasonable doubt that a widespread conspiracy had existed which aimed at murdering the whole white population". At first there was a delay since it was thought that none of the relevant laws covered the situation adequately but, about July 1914, moves were made to confiscate the land of the guilty villages but World War I intervened (Sack, 1973: 111-2).

There may have been other reasons for the wide-scale arrests and banishment in 1912. According to Pech, there was growing uneasiness felt by the people in 1911 when the Germans began to make inroads into the Gum/Gogol land originally purchased illegally by Kuraby and others in the previous century.

With this new move to drive them off their ancestral lands, the mounting level of Melanesian frustration in the coastal areas of Madang again reaching boiling point. The new round of initiation ceremonies was celebrated with greater vehemence and fervour. Under cover of these the call to arms from their Bel allies, armed warriors from as far afield as Karkar and Sarang were moving down the North coast and deploying themselves in the Rempi-Seg area (1991: 151).

However, this may be based on conjecture after the event.

Further action against the Germans could have been on the minds of many of the people but this was also a time when deep personal grievances could be aired under the guise of there being a threat to the Germans. The gist of the trouble was over women and Tagari, for one, took this opportunity to accuse his opponents to the Germans saying they were plotting against the government. Kasare of Yabob, who was only young at the time, was working in town for Master Sawas as a servant. His people were not affected the second time when these false rumours (*gammon tok*) happened as they were working on a road with a surveyor, a Mr Bayer.

Kasare said:

Mr Bayer was a good German *masta* and was in charge of making roads (a surveyor) and he vouched for his men. At that time, he was making the road to Bilbil, which we travel on today. They had to cut out the stumps of the trees. In the books, it tells lies about us and says we went with the Siars and Krankets. We did not go. I am angry about this. Only the *lapun* were rounded up and sent to the Bainings. Our *luluai*, Sangui, was jailed. Three men from Yabob, Beg, Nanto, Sangui, were sent to the Bainings. The Germans said it was partly Sangui's fault and they sent him to jail. When he came back, Sangui was not *luluai* any more (Interview, 5 January, 1979).

Overall, the 1912 Revolt was really a non-event but it was mentioned in the German Government Year Report as being similar to the 1904 Revolt. On 5 September 1912, the case was re-opened and, in the end, it was concluded that a wide spread conspiracy had existed and the ringleaders were banished to the Rai Coast and the Bainings and their land confiscated for plantations. The false rumours then were taken as the true state of affairs.

#### Technical and Economic Changes

In the 1890s, the German Government encouraged the people to establish their own small plantations and sell the coconuts to help pay for the head tax. This was seen as drawing them into the moneyed economy. Some men worked on the newly established German plantations and, when they finished their time on the labour line, they returned home with money in their pockets and purchased clothing and other goods at the German stores. While the men were absent, there was a labour shortage in the villages, and this had a substantial effect on the material culture. It meant there were fewer men to build canoes or trade the pots. Furthermore, with the growing moneyed economy, the pots were no longer seen as the only form of currency or the only cooking utensil. Although they were still a favoured trade item needed for cooking in some areas and as a part of bride price, more and more people used the trade-store pots, which lasted longer. As a result, the Bel men were no longer the powerful traders they had once been. Their hitherto indispensable cooking pots, previously the only cooking container available, were now under threat.

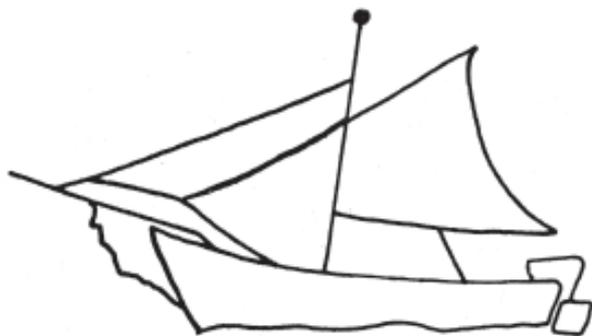
Land losses brought hardship for some people. The Bel people on Bilia had to travel a lot further to access what little forest they had left. This was time consuming for the women who were left to carry heavy loads long distances. On the positive side, the German roads helped the people to access more distant places now pacified by the mission stations. The distribution of the pots was now easier to inland areas and the coastal roads, when they were passable, lessened the need for canoes.

One group of newcomers who filled the gap between the ruling German class and the villagers were the Chinese. They were

hardworking and paid the villagers for their services in kind or with money. If the Chinese fisherman were helped with casting their nets, they paid the locals with fish. When the villagers wanted to pay for the Chinese boats, they could pay with pigs. Louis Chegg, of Alexishaven, remembered the Chinese boat builders living and working near Militat Plantation. The shipwright, Lam Lau, with a couple of workers, built schooners for the Chinese fishermen. Diving on the reefs between Madang and Wewak, they collected trochus shell, green snail shell and beche de mere which they sold to German traders and thence on to the markets in Hong Kong and Japan.

The Chinese and Malays had been recruited to work on the plantations in the Madang area, as it was believed that they would work more readily for wages on the plantations. Lawrence writes, "By 1900, 122 Chinese and 184 Javanese were employed at Madang, and 13 Chinese and 54 Javanese in the Bogia area. In the same year another 190 Chinese came to Madang and, in 1901, another 270. No more Asians were imported after 1909" (1964: 41). Bringing labourers from China was another cause for the Company's failure because the men recruited from Singapore were weak and not used to the conditions. One third of them died in 1896 from smallpox which they brought with them. Most labourers were repatriated to their home province at the end of their terms.

Very few present-day Chinese in Papua New Guinea are descended from the labourers who were brought in by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie. Those who continued to be residents of Papua New Guinea were probably descended from the artisans, cooks, fishermen and traders who came out as independent workers under the German Colonial Government. It would be fair to say that the Chinese had as much impact on the local village culture as the German officials. The officials were often distant authoritarian figures bent on governing and pacification. The main influence of the *luluai* and *tutul* systems was good but they were superimposed from above. The Chinese, on the other hand, fitted more closely into the village life and were under the control of the clan leaders from whom they leased land. Some lived near Yabob and fished there; others leased land near Siar Island where



*Chinese made sailing boats used in trading expeditions until the Second World War. (Drawing by Pall Tagari).*

they had a boat building business. As well as building schooners, they also built simple craft, which replaced the trading canoes in some cases. Several of the large trading trips took place with a combination of Chinese boats and traditional canoes. In the 1970s, many of the old village people can remember these Chinese boats used on the trading trips.

Ber Nansi of Madip Clan of Yabob gave some good reasons why they found the Chinese boats more practical and more durable:

You know these big canoes; there is a lot of work making them. The men build them and go to the Rai Coast. Then they come back and the canoe sits on the beach. Then they go and come a few more times and then they have passed their usable life. So we decided to sell pots for money and make some copra and also grow vegetables for the locals working in town. We would invite them to have a party here too and cook vegetables. The money from all of this was enough to buy a Chinese boat (Mennis, 1981a: 13).

Some of the Chinese worked in the town of Madang and carried poles with baskets on each end in which they carried their bread. They would go around calling out that they had bread for sale. Some lived at Mun, and others at Garim, near the Gogol, where they paid the villagers to build native material houses for them. Ber saw many Chinese men near Yabob and said that they wore "trousers that were wide like the wings of the flying fox", shirts and hats made of straw. Their hair was long and tied back and the women dressed the same way. One man, Ah Tam, lived down on the beach and went fishing with nets he had brought from China. When he wanted to put his nets in the sea, he would blow on his conch shell and the village people rushed to help him. They were happy to have Ah Tam living near them, as they got all the small fish, while the Chinese took the larger ones to sell in Madang.

Maia of Bilbil played tricks on Ah Tam to get some of the big fish:

We would get the fish out and put them in their large baskets. I was a young boy then and picked out some of the big fish and hid them and gave them to my mother. I filled their baskets with rubbish fish. I followed my father and mother and hid behind them. Then we would help Ah Tam take his canoe back to his place. Our men made a canoe for the Chinese. It did not have a shelter on it, just the platform and a sail made from cloth. Ah Tam would choose Bilbil men as crew and sail to Bogati to sell the fish (Mennis, 1981a: 90).

These Chinese had probably finished their contract on the plantations and had opted to settle in the Madang area rather than return home to China. The Germans had encouraged them to remain as free settlers, as they could act as go-betweens with the local people. They took local wives and introduced some basic technology, which had a great effect on the traditional styles. The exchange of knowledge was a two-way thing as the Chinese sometimes asked the Bel people to make canoes for them so they

could go fishing. At the same time, Chinese methods of fishing and boat building were appreciated by the villagers, who eagerly bought the small sailing boats for pigs and food as part of their barter system. In 1914, there were more Chinese and Malays than there were Europeans and a law was introduced forbidding them to carry arms as the Government felt threatened by their numbers.

At the time of the Australian takeover, Kaiser Wilhelmsland comprised three main areas: Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen (Madang) had the central office for the district stretching from the mouth of the Sepik to the Huon Gulf; the Morobe Station for the area from the Huon Gulf to the British border; and the Aitape Station from the mouth of the Sepik to the Dutch border. When the Australians took over, they kept these districts and names.

What were the achievements of the German Administration? As Germany's presence was mainly for economic reasons, it should possibly be judged by the economic development of the area. Overall the Germans established a stable new economy but in a limited way. Governor Hahl had earned the people's respect and, had he been allowed to continue, he would have developed a peaceful colony. The people had begun to accept the missionaries' message of peace.

Socially, there was a time of peace after the 1904 revolt had been put down. With the new road system, the people could travel further along the coast without the need for canoes for their negotiations and to visit their trade friends. With the introduction of the mission stations, the people took on a more peaceful way of life and age old enmities between some villages became a thing of the past, although tribal warfare and payback still occurred. The women were no longer so fearful of the *meziab* and considered that they had more freedom.

Politically, the system of *luluais* and *tultuls* was so successful, that it was still being used, titles and all, until the Australian Administration introduced Local Government Councils in the 1950s and 1960s.

Economically, with the introduction of the head tax, the people were forced to become part of the cash economy, thus encouraging the development of small plantations and the necessity for working for cash in the German plantations.

The German government never penetrated very far from the coast. As Firth says, "It was a maritime colony" with the administrative centres near the sea or on rivers (1983: 2). This does not preclude the possibility that German trade items, hoop iron, mirrors, beads and axes did not pass along the traditional trade routes being exchanged for earthenware pots, wooden plates or dog teeth necklaces in the Madang area.

### Changes to the belief system

The new European religions had a profound impact on the people's belief systems. Both Lutheran and Catholic Missions were established in Madang during the German era.

The Lutherans established their mission in New Guinea with the arrival of Rev. Johann Flierl in Finschhafen on 12 July 1886. Flierl was a strong leader who encouraged the villagers to harvest their own crops and develop a cash economy so they would not be exposed to the evils of the contract labour system by working on distant plantations. He also advocated the use of the local languages rather than German or Pidgin English. In 1896, a Lutheran Mission was established on Tami Island and the missionaries were able to use the traditional trade routes including travelling on the trading canoes to spread the message in the Siassi region. However, things were not easy for the missionaries, as some succumbed to the virulent fevers and diseases.

Missions came to the Madang area in 1892, when Stephansort was opened, followed by Siar in 1899 and Karkar Island in 1890. When the mission faced opposition on Siar Island, the missionary moved to Kranket Island. Missions were later established in other places including Riwo Island. Lutheran schools were set up on Kranket Island (which Biró came across in 1894) and also schools at Bogati, Bongu and Siar. Amele Station opened in 1918 and soon after a Samoan evangelist went with other evangelists to Biliau on the Rai Coast.

If the people converted, they often viewed their conversion as taking on the new culture of the German Administration as well as the beliefs of the missionaries. In part they were right. Many of the German Officials were Lutheran and adhered to the church's attitude of the value of work. But when the going got tough, the people reverted to their old beliefs and the Church had few long term adherents. When it became clear the villagers would be asked by the missionaries to give up their traditional beliefs in *Anut* and *Kilibob* and in their place accept "*Tibud* Jehovah and his son Jesus", their answer at first was a resounding "No!" (Pech, 1991: 75). They were happy to continue their old way of life and were apathetic to the new beliefs. The men in particular wanted to continue with the *meziab*, which kept the women under male domination. Both the mission and the government saw the *meziab* as subversive and disruptive to the general peace in the village; the 1904 Revolt had been planned at one of these meetings. The *meziab* was also seen as counter productive since the villagers, now, had to earn cash to pay the head tax and could not be excused from the plantation work for long periods of time to attend the ceremonies.

After the revolts of 1904 and the supposed revolt of 1912, the Church lost the few adherents they had made amongst the Bel group as they were exiled to the Rai Coast and the Bainings. The missionary at Bongu interceded for them with the German Government to return to their village and when this was finally granted, they were grateful to the Lutherans as being part of the process. After they returned to their villages, they found their houses destroyed and many items of material culture confiscated. At this stage a few turned to the missionaries for help and were more receptive of the new ideas. However, the Lutherans soon found that it was useless trying to convert individuals as they

soon forgot their faith when they returned home. Rev Keyszer changed the approach for converting the villagers but his system took a while to be accepted.

He realized that the policy of singling out individuals for conversion was useless, for the individual converts could not resist the pressures of their own communities and relapsed into paganism as soon as they left the mission stations. The wisest approach would be to move out into the villages and remould whole native societies as Christian congregations. The most energetic converts should become leaders, serving as congregational elders and evangelists or teachers in other pagan villages. This system of group approach soon proved its worth: it enabled the natives to adopt Christianity on their own terms and increased the mission's effective field staff (Lawrence, 1964: 52).

After many years, 177 Bel villagers became baptised on Kranket Island. The ceremony was attended by thousands of local people from as far afield as the hinterland of the Rai Coast (Pech, 1991: 154). There was a general peace, similar to those in the days of the traditional *meziab* Feasts, but this time the magic flutes and other musical instruments were no longer secret or sacred. As part of the Christianisation service, the *meziab* sacred flutes had been exposed to the women, their power broken and many destroyed.

Sometimes the Lutherans tried to introduce a European lifestyle with this whole village approach. For example bells were rung to begin the day and to announce times for prayers. This was entirely foreign to people whose days had previously been ruled by the sun and the weather. The Lutheran beliefs in the value of work in itself was also alien to the village people and it took time to adjust to these new notions. Of course, traditionally, garden work and house building were necessary for survival and surplus goods could be traded for other items but, if there was plenty of food, then there had been time to relax and attend long *singsings* and *meziab* celebrations.



*Buffalo pulling a cart in front of the first Catholic Church at Alexishafen in German times.*

While, in many ways, these conversions brought peace and harmony, there were also negative effects on the culture. At these baptism ceremonies when whole villages became Christian at once, fires were held to burn the old sorcery material. In their enthusiasm the people also burnt many harmless objects. A difference needs to be made between those rituals and items of material culture that were discarded on the advice of the missionaries and those which were discarded by the people themselves when they threw everything on the fires of cleansing.

Sadly, amongst the items discarded were the paraphernalia and rituals used by the *likon* to protect the traders before they left on their trading trips. After this the people were hesitant to go on trading trips because their large canoes were no longer protected from the evil spirits. Years later, in 1997, I attended a ceremony of the blessing of the boats at Yabob Island by a Catholic priest, Fr Golly. This sort of ceremony would have satisfied both the church and the people in those early days. Instead the people were left with no ceremonies of protection. Even though they had converted, the old beliefs in the power of the *likon* and the evil sea spirits remained.

Traditional dancing was also banned by the Lutheran Mission but not by the Catholics. Hannemann, a Lutheran pastor who had studied the dances in detail, came to the conclusion that none of them would pass the rules of the Church. "The people know that when they dance they are sinning in the eyes of the native church" (1935, 30).

The Catholic Mission was started in August 1896 when the first six Divine Word Missionaries arrived at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. They sailed up the coast to Aitape to Tumbleo Island. Father Limbrock, the first Prefect Apostolic of New Guinea had been seconded from China. In 1901, he bought land at Bogia for a plantation and mission centre. However, it was not until September 1906 that he was able to buy land at Alexishafen, near Madang. The squabbles that Fr Limbrock had to endure with the German government were legendary, as the Neu Guinea Kompagnie wanted the land for its plantations (Wiltgen, 1969: 330 – 332). Soon however, the Divine Word Missionaries established their headquarters at Alexishafen with a church and accommodation for the priests and brothers as well as a convent for the Sisters. A sawmill and plantation were set up to provide needed materials for the many mission stations.

Missionaries of both denominations soon found themselves with a heavy workload of learning the new languages, preparing translations of hymns and the gospels and establishing schools for the children. There were new buildings to be organised, and local builders had to be taught the skills, church services had to be prepared and catechists to be trained. Their catechists were often the backbone of the missions as they could live on distant stations and provide instruction for newly visited villagers. They held positions of authority and, if they had not been instructed properly, they preached quite unorthodox teachings. This complicated many issues.

Because they brought a message of peace, the missionaries of both denominations helped in the pacification of tribal enemies. They also set up the first schools and hospitals for the people. With their dedication and caring they helped in the adaptation to the new changes that were being introduced. However, despite their caring attitude to the people, there was not always harmony between the different denominations. To prevent friction, the German Administration, under the direction of Governor Hahl, directed that each of the major denominations have their own areas of influence. In Rabaul, it was the Catholics and the Methodists who had their own specific areas. In the Madang area, the line of demarcation between the Lutherans and the Catholics was just south of Alexishafen on the North Coast road, with the Catholics to the north and west, and the Lutherans to the south and east. The line went inland near Sek and through to Nobanob in the hills and beyond. Part of Riwo Island was divided by the two denominations and a fence installed. Although it was the local adherents and not the missionaries who built the fence, it caused havoc to the traditional social pattern and culture of these Bel people. Until the late 1920s, most missionaries kept to the areas specified by the German Government.

Generally, the missionaries had a profound affect on the people's lives. Their lack of materialism, as opposed to the goods owned by Government Officers, was seen as a common ground for the villagers who for centuries had survived in a subsistence economy. Furthermore, the missionaries were prepared to take the people's side against the government if there was a case of gross injustice, as when they lost large parts of their land to plantations as had happened in the 1880s in the coastal Madang villages. The missionaries were also interested in learning the language, culture and beliefs of the people so they could try to understand the people's spiritual position. However, this was where the problem lay. While the missionaries of both faiths tried to bring Christianity to the village people, in many cases there was mutual misunderstanding as to what was being taught and what was being heard. The people often misinterpreted the new messages.

Some of the Madang people have been displaced many times in their history: generations ago their home, Yomba Island, sank but some of them managed to escape to the islands closer to shore, Kranket, Yabob, Bilbil island; during the German colonial times they were banished to the Rai Coast; afterwards they shifted from their island to the mainland; throughout the Japanese Occupation in the 1940s, they left their village again, fleeing to the bush for a few years until the soldiers of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) gave them the all clear. During all these changes they managed to retain their identity and see themselves as a unified people.

The culture of the people had been changed by many outside agencies. Some of the changes were good and led to development, but others were harsh. The Neu Guinea Kompagnie had a big impact with the introduction of their economic system. The old trading and barter system of the Bel people based on earthenware

pottery was challenged by the greater power and technical knowledge of the German interests with the establishment of plantations for copra, rubber, timber and tobacco. It was not without reprisals from the local people, go slow work or no work attitudes could be synchronised through the highly effective communication system through the drums or through the trading network. The Germans were determined to crush the spirit of the people with their secret societies and long festivals lasting for days on end. When the people revolted, they were banished and their leaders were hanged or sent off to Rabaul. The village elders who were banished had held powerful positions in their villages and their absence was sorely felt. The Germans effectively reduced their influence in this time of banishment.

Many of the old villagers still alive in the 1970s looked back with nostalgia to the German times. Despite hardships experienced under the Germans, many of the local people liked the time of the German rule. The Germans may have been strict, but the people knew where they stood with them. A villager on Manam, interviewed by Burrige said, "The Germans told us to do things, plant coconuts for instance, so that we could get money by selling copra. When the English came, we were just rubbish, poor. We had to stay like that. We have only the things we have always had and we have lost most of those. If the Germans had stayed I think we would have everything" (Burrige, 1960: 12).

Hahl was a disciplinarian, but he was fair and listened to the people. The introduction of *luluais*, *tultuls* and paramount *luluais* as a means of control at a village level worked so well that the system survived until the 1960s and even later in some areas. In Madang, a road network had been built, plantations laid and the local villages were encouraged to grow their own crops.

The people were forced to change much of their own traditional life and adapt to the new social, political and economic pressures. Often they changed to new technical ideas voluntarily. As soon as iron tools became available they threw out their own wooden hammers, stone axes and spears without a second glance. If a steel axe could cut a large tree down in an hour or less how much better than a stone axe that would take a team of men, working in shifts, days to cut down. Who can blame them?

Although Hahl did not visit New Guinea again after 1914, he continued to be interested in the fate of the German nationals and the plantations there through his association with the Neu Guinea Kompagnie. He was part of a group of ex-colonials who supported the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft to protect the German interests and plantations in the colony.

1. *Tibud* had a dual meaning. Foreigners were white and so were spirits, so the word referred to either, depending on the context.

2. This was the *darem* that Helmich later had dismantled and shipped to Germany.



*The British Ensign raised in Madang after the 1914 takeover.*

## Chapter 10, The Australian Administration, 1914 to 1941



*We lived on the Rai Coast for several years after 1912 and then the big war began [World War I]. We had a real boat there, which the Siars had bought from the Germans. Its name was Kapok. Some Siars decided to return to Siar on board this boat. They were on their way when an English warship arrived. The big boss of the navy was on board. He saw the boat through his telescope and stopped them. The captain said to Walok, the luluai "Where are you from?"*

*Walok answered, "We are from Siar, but the Germans banished us to the Rai Coast."*

*"All right," said the captain, "I will give you this flag, if another kiap wants to exile you, you must show it to him. This flag means that you cannot be thrown out of your villages again. You must stay there and the good times will come up" (Gurnass and Sungai of Siar Village).*

### The Australian Military Administration, 1914 to 1921

At the outbreak of World War I, the first objective of the Australian forces was to destroy the German wireless stations, particularly the one at Bita Paka, near Rabaul. A telegram was received in Australia on 6 August 1914 by the Governor General from the British government. "If your ministers desire and feel themselves able to seize German wireless stations at New Guinea, — we feel that this is a great and urgent imperial service" (Rowley, 1958: 2). As a result, the first Australians to die in World War I, died at Bita Paka following the call to arms stipulated in that telegram. They had left Sydney on 18 August under the command of Colonel Holmes who had fought in South Africa. Once Rabaul was taken, Holmes and Haber signed the "Terms of Capitulation".

Then the Acting Governor Holmes, received the following message from the Naval Board:



*Catholic Mission schooner, Raphael, used to supply mission stations between Tumleo Island and Alexishafen.*

From Rabaul you are to proceed to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. *Warrego* and *Parramatta* will meet you there with orders. Cover transportation of troops to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen if the Administrator desires it. *Nusa* should accompany you. *Gabriel*, if met should be seized and taken with you. Give out falsely destination is Bougainville (Mackenzie, 1934: 164).

History was repeating itself. The Germans used subterfuge in 1884 when they were planning to take over Madang. Finsch used his vessel the *Samoa* to reconnoitre the area. This time a false destination was given out to cover the real purpose of their expedition. An innocent ship, the *Gabriel*, was to be seized by the Australian destroyers as soon as they arrived in Madang. This ship was used by the Catholic Mission at Alexishafen but it was seen as, "the link of communication between the various outstations of the Roman Catholic missions" (Mackenzie, 1934: 166). It was feared the captain might be giving information to the German officials and information about the Australian destroyers in the area. The Prefect of the mission at Alexishafen complained that the vessel was carrying out only mission work.

Madang fell to the Australians on 25 September 1914 when "500 Australian Coconut Lancers marched into Madang" (Pech, 1991: 153). The Germans surrendered peacefully on orders from the German Officials in Rabaul and met the Australians hat in hand on the wharf. On paper, this appeared to be a very significant date in the history of the town but, in many ways, life continued normally. However, one of the Australian sergeants decided to put the telephone exchange out of action to ensure there were no hidden spies. Later, when they followed the line, they found it connected Madang with various houses and the mission at Alexishafen (Townsend, 1968: 80).

One of the first acts of the Australians was to allow those villagers who had been exiled to the Rai Coast to return home, and this was always gratefully acknowledged in their oral traditions. However, when they returned, the Bel exiles found most of their land had been turned into plantations. During their time of exile, the Siar people who had been living on the Rai Coast, returned home occasionally to gather vegetables from their gardens.

Gurnass and Sungai, both of Siar, recalled the story of how some of the Siars were in a small boat in Astrolabe Bay when an Australian warship found them. The Captain also told them to tell the Bel people of Kranket, Bilia, Bilbil and Yabob to come back to their islands. The people knew from experience that flags were important symbols. With the flag raising on 12 November 1884, the Germans had declared that New Guinea was a colony. Now thirty years later, a new flag was raised on 25 September 1914. It was neither the Australian flag nor the Union Jack but the British Ensign used by the Australian Navy as is apparent in photographs taken of the event.

The Captain used the flag as a surety that the Siar people would never be banished from their island again, but the statement that he supposedly made about "good times coming up" has cargo cult overtones. But the basic story itself is not fictitious. Male saw the flag when he was little and whenever the *kiap*, Mr. Hunter, came for a visit to Siar, the *luluai* of Siar showed him the flag. Perhaps they were still worried about being banished again. Unfortunately, the flag was lost in the Second World War. The captain of the British warship could not foresee the horror which would come to the area with the Pacific War; no British flag was surety for the Siar people against the Japanese invasion.<sup>1</sup>

Male of Siar corroborated the story of Gurnass and Sungai although he said the Siars were only in canoes when they were found by the British ship. He added that after the second uprising, some of the Siar men were taken to the Bainings. He had first hand knowledge of the Bainings as he was there as a small child. Men taken to the Bainings were: three from Bilbil, Tagog, Nusimai and Kangu; two from Yabob, Sagui, Beg; one from Bilia, Nanto; from Kranket, the *luluai* Sabu and others; nine from Siar, Kiau, Manap, Kom, Meng, Kais, Filingai (*luluai*) Mongat and Malang. Later, the German *kiap* in Rabaul sent a letter to Madang with a list of the wives and children to join the men who had been sent.

Male lived in the Bainings with his exiled father, Kais:

Life in the Bainings was not like in a jail. It was a good place with white sand. The men made houses from coconut leaves and *karuka* and food was brought to us - meat, rice as well as cigarettes and matches. After a while some of us were shifted to a smaller island. We lived on the islands and made gardens on the mainland. We cut the bush and made our own gardens. At first we stole vegetables from the gardens of the Bainings people but later we became friends with them and did not steal. They gave us taro and bananas from their gardens in the bush. After two years, we got the

message that the English had come and a policeman arrived to take us to Rabaul and then a Chinese boat brought us from Rabaul to Madang. The men were sorry to leave their new homes. They cried for the Bainings but they never went back there. The man, Walok Dafig, went to court about what the German had done to us.

While World War I continued in Europe, the possibility remained that Germany might win and demand her colonies back. Emphasis was placed by the administration on making money from the existing plantations rather than on development. The military administration's main aim was to continue the production of copra. To this end, the German plantation owners and managers were allowed to continue to run their plantations provided they took an oath of neutrality. Because they no longer were allowed to keep arms or ammunition, they felt insecure and had no way of protecting themselves against aggression from the local villagers. There was also much indecision about the terms of capitulation (Rowley, 1958: 10). Under the Australian Military Administration, "the German native Development Programme was scrapped and European commerce was once more allowed to dominate policy" (Lawrence, 1964: 36).

Holmes had a tough job to do at a time when the Australians were taking over from the German Administration. There were language difficulties, not only with the Germans, but also with the village people still loyal to the Germans. Many labourers on the plantations absconded and returned to their villages. Holmes did not understand the temperament of the local villagers and thought they could be compelled to return.

Holmes wrote:

During the Military occupation I am devoting my attention principally to keeping things going and controlling Natives, who are an ever-present danger. In one or two districts, advantage was taken of the absence of Planters and Arms and Ammunition which had been collected, to cause some trouble, but expeditions of Armed Constabulary were at once sent out and quiet restored, but not without some of the offenders being shot, which has taught them a useful and much needed lesson (Rowley, 1958: 10).

When Holmes was recalled, S.A. Pethebridge succeeded him. The first District officer and Garrison Commander in Madang was Lieutenant Ogilvy who took office in 1915, with 3 officers, 21 NCO's and about 80 local police. They carried out few patrols in the district and little was known of the inland areas apart from several German scientific expeditions. When Ogilvy set off into the Hansemann Ranges, it was wrongly declared to be the first expedition into the interior and he was congratulated by Petheridge. Ogilvy was trying to extend the road system into the Ramu, but failed and the existing roads that the German had constructed fell into disrepair (Rowley, 1958: 41). H.B. Walters replaced Ogilvy the following year.

Germany suffered severely in the Treaty of Versailles, losing many of its overseas colonies to the Allied Powers. The situation for the German planters in New Guinea became desperate as they could see little hope of retaining ownership. Their worst fears were realised with the setting up of the Expropriation Board under which many German owned plantations were transferred to Australian ex-servicemen. When Griffiths became Military Administrator in 1920, he was more interested in the expropriation of German properties than maintaining roads and shipping facilities. The road from Madang to Alexishafen was impassable and the only way of contact was by small boats. In 1920, the New Guinea Act was passed by the Australian Parliament and came into force in May 1921 under which the Military Administration was replaced by a civilian government. The Territory of New Guinea was to be administered separately from Papua.



By courtesy, Jack Read

*The District Office in pre-war Madang. It was originally von Hagen's house on the Rai Coast.*

After the First World War I, Ber Nansi of Yabob returned from the banishment to the Rai Coast and worked in town for Mr Sharp who used to give the soldiers their rum quota. These soldiers lived in the old German houses as well as new temporary ones and Mr Sharp's house was near the present Commonwealth Bank and the jail was near the market where the police headquarters is now. After working for Mr Sharp for a while, Ber returned to live in Yabob where his father-in-law was the *luluai*.

The Australians had taken over a shaky administration from the Germans. Only the villages along the coastal strip and on the rivers had been pacified and many of those recruited from these villages deserted when they heard of the German defeat. The terms *luluai* and *tultul* were retained from the German times. According to the Annual Report to the League of Nations (1933-34: 25), *luluais* were supposed to be men of high character and they were "responsible for good order and control in the villages. They are encouraged to assist in the adjustment of village matters and to do everything possible for the welfare of their people". The *tultuls* were appointed as their assistants. But Mair points out that sometimes the village people made a poor choice or deliberately nominated someone who was not a recognised leader (Mair, 1948: 55). Native medical assistants (*docta bois*) were also appointed to work at village level after an initial training. Their worth differed from one place to another. On the whole, they provided a network of basic health care, which was later developed by the Health Department.

#### **Australian Mandate. 1921 to 1941**

Under the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919, Germany was forced to renounce all titles to her overseas possessions (Reed,

1943: 162). This was a devastating blow to the Germans in New Guinea as it meant the loss of their lucrative plantations of copra and tobacco. In 1920-21, the Australian Government set about expropriating the German plantations. Lists of them appeared in the Gazette and the planters had to prove that they were not Germans.

In the early 1920's, Kassa Townsend was posted to Madang as a patrol officer and found that the telephone wires, destroyed when the Australians had first taken over in 1914, had still not been reconnected. Townsend managed to rewire the connections to the District Officer's House and Office and the gaol. He also went on patrols in the neighbouring area to the nearby islands, Karkar, Bagabag, and Long Islands to collect head taxes among other things. All able-bodied men had to pay 10 shillings a year head tax. He comments on the difficulties of travel in Madang when he tells of one of the Administration boats, the *Digger* whose master was Jimmy Hodgekiss, the Police Magistrate. Townsend described the boat:

The *Digger* was a ketch of about 14 tons, having - I won't say powered with - a hot-bulb, semi-diesel engine which in calm water, often pushed the ship at four knots. With winds and tide against her, she went backwards; with either one against her, she was a bobber, seemingly happy to remain in the same place for hours making curtsy after curtsy (1968: 79).

Kasa Townsend was a patrol officer who appreciated the local people and the local way of life:

You see they truly believe in their way of life — and they have centuries of tradition behind them to support their

views. I think we sometimes fail to give them the credit which is their due for their ready recognition of the fact that there are other people, ourselves for instance, who have different views. The freedom to live as one wishes that they claim for themselves, they freely accord to others. And when you consider that this is their country and that we are the interlopers, what greater tolerance could we be offered (1968: 77).

In Townsend's day, Government officials obtained food from many sources, but the main ones were the local gardens established by either the Chinese or the local villagers. Milk from Modilon Plantation was drunk at a meeting of the townsfolk at 11 am each morning at the Neu Guinea Kompagnie Store.

There at a special counter, stood two cans of fresh milk from Modilon, surrounded by an array of tin cups, which had originally been imported to hold the milk of the rubber trees which the Germans had tried to establish in the District. On the shelf at the back of the counter stood bottles of Queensland rum, of which there is no finer, and we who gathered took it in turns to purchase a bottle, the smallest quantity that could legally be sold. The milk was free and so were the cups. The mixture was excellent (1968: 79).

The most interesting house at this time was von Hagen's, now occupied by Don Waugh, the District Officer. It had been built in Hamburg in the 1890's and shipped out to Finschhafen. It was then shifted to Stephansort and later to Madang after von Hagen's death.

In 1929, Alf Hunter was the District Officer in Madang. J.K. McCarthy described him as "a fierce-looking man with white hair and sharp teeth. Whether his sharp teeth had anything to do with his reputation for being a biter I don't know, but his greeting to me was merely perfunctory. Within five minutes he had put me to work". Nurton was the patrol officer, "He was a wiry man of tremendous energy who made a fetish of physical fitness. He was a good boxer, who moved like lightning and could hit like a kicking mule" (McCarthy, 1963: 41). Harold Hoodman, the second-in-command, "was a burly brash man who exuded self-confidence. He had won the DSO in World War I and was a teetotaler and non-smoker — and lived on village chickens, jelly and ice-cream and was the first man I met in New Guinea who owned a refrigerator" (ibid). It was Hoodman who went to Bilbil Village to ask for recruits to go to the Bulolo goldfields with Ludwig Schmidt (no relation to Karkar Schmidt).<sup>2</sup>

The District Office, overlooking the water had wide verandahs in the old German style and was divided into rooms by thin



By courtesy, Noel Gash

*Albert Nurton, patrol officer, with friends at Siar Village.*

partitions. When Hunter refused to greet Nurton one morning the latter belted the thin partition with a heavy walking stick and then insisted he had been after a rat. However, memories of Nurton were not all bad. The Lutheran Church pastors were pleased with a letter he sent them praising their work.

Dated 23 December 1929, and posted from Madang to the Lutheran Missionaries, Nurton wrote:

Dear Sirs,

Upon the eve of my departure for long leave it gives me great pleasure to express my appreciation of the help and friendliness I have received from you, during the last two years of my duty as a Patrol Officer in this district. During that time, I suppose, I have met some hundreds of your native teachers, who are scattered about in all the corners of this district. I am pleased to say that every single one of those teachers has given me the utmost assistance in my work, and has shown personal hospitality and also interest in government work. Thereby they displayed intelligence that some white men lack, realising that government and mission endeavour should search hand in hand for the betterment of the natives under our trust.

I have just concluded a long patrol of the Upper Ramu River Valley, and in several localities crossed into uncontrolled territory where I found your mission boys (from the Lutheran Mission, Finschhafen). It was only through the trust of the inhabitants in them and of the latter's splendid friendliness to me that I was able to get into immediate personal contact with these natives.

I hope that some of the several hundred mission boys I have met feel some of the regard I feel for them. My mission is not that of concrete religion – for which I have no belief – but religion being a medium teaching moral and social improvement, I must feel respect for it and you who teach it. This being Christmastide it is seasonable to wish you all (of course including the ladies) all happiness and health and success. And again trying to thank you for two years of kindness, I have the pleasure to be. Yours very sincerely, A. Nurton.

In 1936, Albert Nurton nearly met his end during a punitive expedition to the hinterland of the Rai Coast where the inland people had murdered some coastal people as a payback. Keith McCarthy had previously led a similar expedition to that area but had failed. Nurton devised tin armour for himself, which he wore rather like Ned Kelly. It served the same purpose to deflect arrows but he concealed it under his shirt so it was of thinner material. He established a Patrol Station near Aiyawang Village, which he kept heavily guarded. No one was allowed inside the perimeter of the camp which he shared with George Greathead, a young Patrol Officer. Nurton was trying to establish some authority in the area but the mountain people resisted (McCarthy,

1963: 130 -131). Cunningly they waited until Greathead was out working on the new road. Aware that the inside of the perimeter was out of bounds, they sent an old man and three young women to the gate with vegetables for sale in heavy bilums in which bush knives were concealed. When Nurton allowed them in, the women suddenly hacked at his legs and arms with the knives and cut his nose half off. Hearing the noise, his cook shot the intruders. Nurton's wounds were plugged with clay and his workers carried him over the mountains to the coast. "Nurton was possessed of a spirit and strength that is given few men and by some miracle he lived to reach Madang where his leg was amputated and his wounds attended. He survived to farm his land on Australia's Phillip Island, and to write more poetry, but his boxing days were over forever" (McCarthy, 1963: 131).

According to Peter Lawrence this attack had cargo cult overtones. It was caused by the sacrilegious behaviour of Nurton's native police, who had purloined gourd trumpets and shown them to some of the local women. "This had infuriated the deity *Yabuling*, who had invented the *Kabu* Ceremony, and the spirits of the dead, in whose honour they were held. They had jointly brought about Nurton's downfall." Because Yali had witnessed the attack, he could claim personal knowledge of what had happened (Lawrence, 1964: 186).

Land disputes in the Gum-Gogol area went back as far as the German times when large amounts of land had been purchased by Kubary from the Bilbil people in 1887 and 1888. When the Germans initially put markers in this area, they told the local people it was for the construction of the road but it remained in government hands. After the Australian Administration was established, the local land claims could no longer be ignored and J.K. McCarthy's first job in 1930 was to prepare the material for a Supreme Court hearing in Rabaul.

Judge Beaumont Phillips came in person to Madang to investigate the land claims and he counted the coconut trees and interviewed the original owners. J.K. McCarthy met him and said, "the sturdy figure of the judge in shorts and large pith helmet was seen tramping the country for months, long after I left there, until his knowledge of the place was better than that of the native owners". The result was that the "Gum-Gogol land was declared a native reserve for their occupation and use" (McCarthy, 1963: 44). The only trouble was some of the locals were shy of the law after their treatment by the Germans in 1904 and the Bilbil and Yabob people did not put their point across very well. The Yabobs could have argued that they lacked good land on their islands and had once had extensive gardens on the mainland. As a result of their reticence, they became land bound. Judge Phillips did not realise that many of the Austronesian groups, that is the Bel people, needed help with their land claims, but were reluctant to pursue them (Mennis, 1981: 101). However this reticence sometimes worked in their favour as the village Od people living near the Bilbil were also afraid of the *kiap's* guns and they did not want to make a fuss when Judge Phillip asked them about the land which



By courtesy, Jack Read

*Pre-war Madang looking across to the District Officers's house.*

had been given to the Bilbil Village on the mainland by the Germans.

Gurnass of Siar Village said:

The Bilbil talked to the Od people and said, "We want to come and live on the mainland with you". So the Od people gave them land. The *masta mak* (surveyor) heard each side of the story. The Bilbil said, "It is our ground". The Od people said, "No, it is our land." But they were too afraid of the government with their guns to insist on their rights (interview, 16 September 1976).

The Australian Administration tried to protect the native rights and redress past wrongs. As far as the land acquired in Madang for the township, Judge Phillips wrote, "By 1892, the Neu Guinea Kompagnie had moved its headquarters from Finschhafen to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. A start was made where Madang Township now stands. Local witnesses of Bilia, Panutibun and Geraget (Kranket) have testified that the first Germans who came to live at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen wanted to settle at the spot called Kaisilan. (Near the present wharf)" (1932: 22). As a result of Judge Phillip's findings the successor of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie had to give back 4,400 hectares of virgin land to the village people and to pay compensation of £99 for the land then under cultivation on the plantations of Wagol and Yomba.

One result of the German presence in New Guinea was the large number of mixed race people. These became caught between the local villagers and the Australian Administration. Caroline Schmitt's story exemplifies the life of the mixed race families at the time.

Caroline's mother was a Tolai woman and her father was Max Stein,<sup>3</sup> a German and the Manager of Hensheim and Co on Matupit Island, just outside Rabaul. Born in 1881, Caroline had been educated in the Caroline Islands and Singapore until grade six. Returning to Kokopo, she grew up in the home of Mr and Mrs Parkinson learning how to manage plantations and the labour force. Mrs Parkinson was Queen Emma's sister and she looked after many of the mixed race children. As a young woman, Caroline was matched by Queen Emma with Schmitt, an old planter. She wasn't the first girl to be matched in this way. For a long time Queen Emma had encouraged matches between mixed race girls or Samoan girls and various Germans who were her employees. After the wedding, the Schmitts were sent on a trading mission to Manus Island, then rather a wild place, to buy copra, beche de mer and trochus shell. When the venture failed, they shifted to Morobe where Schmitt traded with the villagers as far as Salamaua, buying copra, trading goods and bartering. Caroline had two children from Schmitt, Max and Loretta. Around 1910, Schmitt left Caroline taking the two children with him.

Caroline traded on her own for a while and then went to Madang to look for a job. With her knowledge of copra and coconut plantations, she found work at Sarang Plantation. The Sarang Planters Association had a store and an office in Madang so Caroline commuted back and forth from this office to Sarang until 1912, when she met Karl Moeder a cadet with the German Government. Caroline was enthralled. He was young and handsome, unlike the elderly Schmitt. The Sarang Manager opposed the match saying Karl was too young and had no future, but Caroline stayed with him and in March 1914, they had a son Franz Moeder. Caroline happiness was short lived as Karl Moeder died shortly afterwards of Blackwater Fever. A saddened Caroline returned to work for the Sarang firm.

Meanwhile Karkar Island, a large volcanic Island near Madang, started to be opened up to planters. In 1912, Paul Schmidt, known as Karkar Schmidt, began a plantation near Marangis (McSwain, 1977: 54). As life was lonely he went in search of partners. When he met Bruno Schwartz and his brother Oscar, who had been prospecting for gold, he suggested they form a partnership. Bruno agreed to Schmidt's proposal and later a man called Eidelbach joined the partnership. So Bruno and Eidelbach began Kukul Plantation and Schmidt continued with Marangis. Understandably, the Karkar people were angry at the intrusion and there were many misunderstandings. The Karkar people speared Schmidt, so he left the plantation for a short time. The Administration suggested that no further labour would be employed from Karkar, so they engaged men from New Britain, Talasea, Buka and the Bainingis to clear the jungle. Schmidt had a head start with establishing his plantation so Bruno Schwartz was anxious to develop Kukul.

Caroline's son, Franz Moeder, takes up the story:

On one of his visits to Madang, Bruno Schwartz met my mother, Caroline, in the town and later suggested that she come over to Kukul. As Caroline had good experience in planting coconuts and running a labour line, she thought the matter over. She said, "all right if you look after my kid I'll come over." So she was taken by Bruno Schwartz to Kukul and started planting Kukul Plantation. From time to time, Caroline and Schwartz went across to Sarang Plantation to collect coconuts. While they were planting, World War 1 broke out. The Australian troops landed in Madang and went along the north coast to Sarang. When they went across to Karkar, none of the Germans could speak English so Caroline did the interpreting.

Bruno at one stage acquired another piece of land on the eastern side of the island called Kavailo, which he began to plant. Caroline was left to continue work at Kukul. Before he left, Bruno said to her, "If you are any good on horseback ride over and visit me and you can help plant Kavailo". Caroline did that and helped with the measuring and planting Kavailo, which is today owned by Coconut Products Limited. (C.P.L.). Sometime in 1917, Schmidt

began Kulili thinking it would be exempt from expropriation. The Germans on Karkar and several others from the mainland were interviewed about their businesses in Madang and many were able to continue until 1921. Caroline had three children with Bruno and because she was a non-German citizen, Bruno thought he was safe. At first, he was employed by the Australian Services to run Kukul plantation.

When the Expropriation Board became more active, the German planters grew uneasy. Would they be paid for their plantations? Eventually, they received a pittance from their government and their plantations were confiscated as war reparations. A couple of officials of the Board approached Caroline with the idea that if Schwartz signed over the plantations to her, she could keep one of them, but Schwartz refused. Caroline could see all her work being wasted, all those years of planting and managing the labour lines. She was close to despair. She could see the children and herself being destitute. On and on they argued but nothing would move Bruno. He continued to be employed by the Expropriation Board until 1921. That year he went to Sydney to see his solicitors, but it was a costly, fruitless exercise. He returned to Madang only to find his services were no longer required. He had no job, no plantations, no partners and soon was to lose his family as well.

Where would they go? At that time, the Catholic Mission at Alexishafen had established a small school for mixed race children. Schwartz heard about it and approached the Mission. They agreed to take Caroline and the four boys (including Franz). So they left Karkar in 1921 and settled in Alexishafen. Schwartz left New Guinea at the same time but returned later to the gold mines at Bulolo. Eidelbach, who had been a partner of Schwartz, broke up the partnership and was given permission to stay. He was married to a girl from the Caroline Islands and had children, and having a bit of money, he stayed in Madang looking for a job. He was an architect and maintained his family with odd drafting work.

At Alexishafen, the community welcomed Caroline. She was given a house near the school where her boys were enrolled and she had more time to devote to them. She found a small job teaching the school girls sewing and cooking and fished with dynamite in Sek Harbour. At one stage Schwartz tried to take the children off her, but the Administration supported her. Caroline's story illustrates what life was like between the turn of the century until the German plantations were expropriated as part of the War Damages Act. It was a sad time for the German planters, many suffered the same fate as Caroline, going from being successful plantation owners to a life of relative poverty.

Another plantation of interest was Mililat Plantation. Originally owned by a Mr Penn, it was not part of the expropriation scheme as he was Dutch. When he acquired the land, Penn named it with a syllable from each of his children's names the first being Emil. He planted a large portion of the land and while the coconuts

were growing, he took a position as a Shipping Clerk in Madang. He used to travel by canoe with six rowers and change boats at Riwo. He built the plantation house about 1916 with 14 feet (4.25metres) high walls of plaited bamboo, with the furniture coming from Holland including a Black Jacobean china cabinet. Mr O'Brien who had come to the Territory in 1915 as a R.A.N. Wireless officer bought the plantation in 1921 and settled there with his wife and family. Towards the close of 1923, his wife made a trip in the Catholic mission steamer, *Gabriel*, from Madang to the Dutch border. On the return voyage, they travelled to the upper reaches of the Sepik River which is navigable for small vessels for over 1000 kilometres. She was a member of a party of priests, nuns and brothers of the Society of the Divine Word who visited villages rarely seen by Europeans. The local Sepik people were probably just as amazed at seeing all the whites faces and the nuns in their white habits on board the *Gabriel*. This vessel has its own place in the history of Madang. It was the same vessel the Australians were told to seize in 1914 when they first took over the town.

As we have seen, many outside influences brought changes to the village scene and the power of the leaders was eroded when so many of the young men left their villages to work on plantations or work for the gold prospectors.

As an example of someone who left the village, we have the continuing story of Maia of Bilbil. As a result of his early schooling, he was considered quite well educated compared to most of his age group. Following the old rituals, he was initiated on Bilbil Island while he was still at school. The old men took the young boys into the *haus tambaran* and taught them many skills. Maia lived with his cousin, Derr, who was not very adventurous and was content to spend his life in the village, whereas Maia wanted to get out and see the world before he got married. Maia was able to date events in his life. In 1929, he was in Rabaul during the Rabaul Strike when the local men revolted against their low wages. Between 1931 and 1934, he spent three years with goldminer Schmidt and was one of the main witnesses in Schmidt's trial held in Salamaua in 1935 which resulted in Schmidt's conviction for atrocities against the Highland tribes. Schmidt was subsequently hanged in Rabaul in 1936.

Maia's first opportunity came in 1926, when Mr. Hoodman, a patrol officer, brought a recruiter to Bilbil asking for men interested in working in Rabaul. Maia and some of his friends stepped forward. This was part of the continuing push to develop the moneyed economy in the villages as these labourers brought back money which could be used to pay off the head-tax each year. In Rabaul, Maia worked for the government in the bulk store near the main wharf. It was his job to watch the stores and issue the food to the government workers who each received a food ration as part of their pay per week. Maia always felt the food ration was good. Each man was issued with, 4 cups of rice, tea, 3 tins of meat, 10 large biscuits, 3 tins of fish, 5 sticks of tobacco and a small bag of sugar.

As well as the ration, Maia's pay was £1 a month and he thought this was only small. Still, he was young and this was his first steady money, so he did not join in the strike. He must have heard the discussion that was going on, but on the night of the strike, he went to sleep as usual and did not hear anything out of the ordinary. The next morning, he realised there were very few New Guineans around and then he heard what had happened. The Annual Report, 1928-29: 107-109 Territory of New Guinea says, "I think it may be assumed that the police boys went on their way to the Mission stations, they 'rounded up' any labour boys who had remained at their jobs" (Whittaker et al, 1975: 250) This certainly didn't happen in Maia's case.

Nor were the other Bilbil men involved in the strike. Perhaps they knew from experience what happened to their people when they revolted against the government. Better to put up with conditions than face dire punishment. Maia's cousin, Gabong, was a police boy and he did not join the strike because his knowledge of the Siar Revolt and the subsequent punishment was still strong.

An interesting aftermath of the Rabaul strike was an exodus of some Sepik and Aitape families from Rabaul. They left in canoes and went to the southeast coast of New Britain to the Bainings. From here they made their way down the coast and then across to Salamaua by easy stages. At some stops, the local villages helped them, but sometimes they were forced to steal food. They were quite well received at the Rai Coast and Maia remembers hearing how they landed at Bilbil one afternoon. There were about twenty women with their children and too many men to count as he puts it. The men had apparently broken their contracts and decided that, since the strike in Rabaul had not worked and their pay had not been increased, they might as well go home. As they could not use the coastal shipping without being caught, they had left in canoes. Maia did not know what happened to them after they left Bilbil. Perhaps they became part of the statistic for the number of deserters for the year which numbered 1007 in 1928 (Ibid, 1985: 241).

After returning from Rabaul, Maia blended back into village life until Mr Hoodman approached him again to work with a goldminer. By this time, there were 2,000 labourers working on the goldfields in the Wau/Bulolo area which had developed with the advent of the airfreight services. One of the first was the Parer Airline Transport begun by Ray Parer to airfreight supplies from Salamaua to Wau and Bulolo.

The goldminer looking for labourers was Ludwig Schmidt who lived in Madang Chinatown with his wife and son, Wiggy. Maia agreed to work for Schmidt and joined a large group of workers from Madang. They walked to Bogati where they turned inland to Unapinka near Kainantu and camped and rested for a while. Schmidt bought food with small cowrie shells, (*giregire*), tomahawks and knives. From here they went on to Tairoro where they prospected for gold. They used shovels to clear the ground

and crowbars to remove the big rocks. They did not find much gold there and they soon went on to Bena Bena, where they camped near a river where Schmidt intended to prospect. This time, they established quite a good camp with tents and bush houses.

After the area had been cleared with shovels and crowbars, they took the soil in wheelbarrows to the sluice box and ran water over it. At the end of the day, it was Maia's job to gather the gold that had been collected. Sometimes, if there was a good piece he kept it for himself. All the labourers did this though they kept it very quiet. Maia was also Schmidt's cook and, when he had finished his "household" duties, he would help with the goldmining. Schmidt seems to have regarded Maia quite highly, as he took him with him on a plane trip to Wau, where they saw the goldmining at Edie Creek. Overall they spent about a year in the Bena Bena area and there were many fights with the local people. If Schmidt wanted to take a new track, he would often find the way blocked by hostile natives. Instead of trying to make contact with the people, Schmidt just shot some of them down to clear the way, according to Maia. Maia said, "*Ol laik banisim mipela long ples. Masta Schmidt strong tumas. I killem ol, nau pait i pinis*". (If they would not let us through, Mr Schmidt was very strong. He killed some and the fight finished.) It was a very bad example to set the labour line because they began to accept it as the standard and later, they did the same thing.

Schmidt's approach worked. The local villagers brought food and pigs down to him to show their submission and he would give them tomahawks, knives and mirrors in exchange. One afternoon, after they had gathered around and eaten a big pig, they threw the bones away and the local people fought over them. Later on they went to the Hagen area at a time when Maia notes there was no government station or companies or even mission. However Schmidt did not give enough details to establish a claim as being the first into the area. This must have been early in 1934 before Mick and Danny Leahy and Father Ross arrived. They found quite a lot of gold there, but one wonders how much saw its way to Schmidt's hoard and how much was pocketed by the labourers. Maia argues that the pay was so small that they had to recompense for that! He was very careful of his private hoard and kept it under his shirt. As he says "*Mi no putim long ples klia mi haitim gut*". (I did not put it where it could be seen, but hid it well.) As far as food supplies went, Schmidt was always careful that his labourers had enough to eat. Maia says he was a good man in this way.

Maia tells one story which shows Schmidt's attitude to the local people. One of the local chiefs asked Schmidt to help them fight their enemies and Schmidt seems to have regarded this as great sport.

We went with our rifles. Schmidt went, the *bossboi* went and I went to help these people. It wasn't rain it was spears that came down on us when we approached the enemy. The

chief said, "You are strong. You must shoot them". We had three muskets and 2 pigeon guns. The leader of the enemy jumped up and Schmidt shot him dead. Bang! The next one stood up and he also was shot. That was the end of the fight.

The enemy brought three pigs down and they shook hands with Mr. Schmidt and said, "You are our friend now". Schmidt spent a year in the Hagen area and went to many areas where white men had never been before. From Hagen they pushed on towards the Sepik. Another night, there was an attack on the camp and Maia was wounded. The invaders surrounded the tents and began to throw spears through the openings. Some spears stuck in the canvas and Maia himself was speared in the shoulder. The shooting this time was in self-defence and Schmidt and the *bosboi* soon had the attackers scattering. At last Schmidt called out, "the attack is over". When Schmidt came to Maia's tent, Maia said "*Mi bagarap pinis*" (I am dying), but Schmidt told the *bosboi* to extract the spear which was removed easily as it was not pronged or poisoned.

When the contracts of his labour line ran out, Schmidt had no intention of seeing his workers safely to the coast. Twenty of them were left in the lurch in the swamps of the Sepik River, left to their own ingenuity to find food and a means of getting back to the coast. It was only when Maia and the others asked him, "What are we going to buy food with?" that he gave them tomahawks and knives. So they began the homeward journey with Maia holding on to the *bosboi's* shoulder because his wound still hurt. They came to lagoons and met some Sepiks who took them back to their village where they were able to stay in the *haus kiap*. They made rafts and floated and paddled their way to the Catholic Station at Marienberg. The patrol officer questioned them about Schmidt and asked them if they had finished their time. He felt sorry for them and gave them bags of rice, meat and a case of tobacco. Then a Chinese trader, Chu Leong, agreed to take them back to Madang.

The men were very angry at the small amount they were paid for three years work: just one stick of tobacco and five pounds was the pay for each of them. But the crafty Maia was not so badly off. When he took the gold nuggets to the Chinese in town, they didn't ask any questions and gave him a large sum of money for the two largest nuggets he had stolen from Schmidt. Maia settled back into life in the village regaling all his friends with stories of the wild bushmen and the strange places he had been.

### **The last major trading voyage, 1935**

It was Christmas 1934 and Maia's people were preparing for another big trading trip to the Rai Coast. The scene he painted shows to what extent the people had retained their old culture in the 1930's even with all the upheavals they had been through. They still saw themselves as the Bel people and took up their old way of life of building canoes and trading the pots. Some of the leaders who had lived in the Bainings had died but they had passed



*A lalong arriving on the Madang coast.*

their knowledge on to another generation of canoe builders. Maia sailed on this trading trip to Sio on one of the *palangut*.

There were some changes in 1935. *Tutul* Tagari decided to buy a boat from the Chinese boat-builders rather than build a canoe. He went to the Chinese near Siar and picked out a boat. The men were friendly but they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" Tagari had no money but he had a number of pigs. For a long time, the Chinese had joined in the barter system and were quite happy to haggle about the number of pigs to pay for the boat. Tagari was pleased with his purchase. When the men sailed in the Chinese boats, they followed the same rules they had in the canoes. The captain was in charge and the crew had to obey. Pots were stored but not as well as in the *lalong* and *palangut*. Maia took his place along with the other canoe builders as if he had

never left. But there were many men absent now, either working on plantations or away on the goldfields.

Damun remembers the time of the 1935 trading trip well. It was also the time that Maia, Sui, Dolua and Bulus were called to the court case at Salamaua. He said:

In 1935, the Bilbil men made many *lalong* like the one we made (in 1978). They also got boats like the white men have from Kranket, Riwo and Yabob. Some of us had just been with Mr Schmidt to Goroka and Hagen. Beg from Yabob was the captain of his two-mast *palangut*. Nomu made a new *palangut* with a hull he got from Riwo.

The plantations had not cleared our bush then so he got his materials for the superstructure from there. He had 20 to 30 men from all the different Bilbil clans helping him. He had a crew of five with him. I went on the plank boat from Riwo built by the Chinese. These boats had sails like the European boats. If there were a big wind they would go faster than the *palangut* or *lalong*. There were four Chinese made boats on the 1935 trading trip. The one at Bilbil was called *Margui*; the *Arbus* was from Yabob, *Garten* was the one from Kranket Island and Riwo's was called *Gabriel*. The Bilbil men were the bosses of these boats but they did not have captains. There was no shelter on these boats so you had to sit in the sun and you could not cook on them because, if you did, they would catch fire. You had to go ashore to cook the food. We all sailed together. If one of the canoes got ahead we would slow down and wait for the others. It was not a race because we all wanted to go ashore together. On the 1935, trip there were four *lalong* and two *palangut*.

Because we were not yet Christians, we had the *likon* (weatherman), Sangal of the Gapan Clan. He was like the harbour master. He marked the day for the canoes to leave. At each place they called into on the Rai Coast, feasts were held. Word had gone ahead and they knew we were coming so we had an *opim dua* (open the door of the canoe). They would shoot a pig to celebrate the arrival of the cargo, and for each canoe. Even the Chinese boats had pigs killed to welcome them (Interview, March 1974).

There were six men on each Chinese boat and six on each canoe so there would have been sixty men all up travelling together and requiring to be fed at each port of call. There were other changes as well. Previously the traders were expected at the same time each year but trading trips were now so infrequent there was a problem to send messages ahead. That was until Ben Hall settled on his plantation down at the Rai Coast. He wanted to have a good relationship with the neighbouring villages so he would kindly give the coast people lifts in his boat or drop off a *tanget* (an invitation) from the Rai Coast people to say they wanted to buy pots from the Yabob/Bilbil people. In a way, Ben Hall became a new part of the trade network communication system. The Bilbil people would reply via Ben Hall with a date and time or perhaps with a leaf calendar with the number of days marked on it. The Rai Coast people would then prepare for the day and gather trade items to exchange for pots.

In the 1930s, the people still built *lalong* and *palangut* although the Chinese boats were becoming more popular and eventually replaced them. By 1935, Bilbil and Yabob had a few boats and they could also hire others. Karkar had five boats at this time and sometimes hired one but at the same time they continued to build the canoes right up to the war. Other places like Kranket, Siar, Yabob and Sarang stopped building them as soon as they got the boats. About five or six years before the war there were hardly any canoes.

Other changes to the trading system occurred when most of the Bilbil people converted to the Lutheran Church, after they returned from the 1935 trading trip. Many of the old ceremonies including the *likon* were now banned. Nomu, the great canoe builder and sailor, became a staunch Christian and wanted Sangal, the *likon*, "to get rid of all these slates and stones and give them to the mission" to be destroyed.

Nomu's son Damun said:

When we came back from the 1935 trip we built a church and all the men who wanted to be baptised came. The mission said if you want to hold the word of God, you must discard those things [the old sorcery etc]. You must lose all these things and come up Christian now. Some of the headmen became Christians too. The Bilbil were the last of the Bel group to become Christians. We did not have a pastor. We had teachers. Los was a Christian and showed us Christian ways. My father, Nomu, helped Los with the work and afterwards all of the Bilbil villagers became Christians. The talk of God was strong (Mennis, 1981b: 13).

Following the system introduced by Rev. Keyszer, a majority of the village had to be prepared to become Lutherans. The mission appointed leaders from their most ardent converts. Sangal, the *likon*, did not want to become a Christian and lose all his powers over the weather. He still used his magic sometimes but he became a sad figure not valued for his leadership qualities. He had many arguments with Nomu who said he should give all his *likon* artefacts to the mission to be destroyed. Before he died during the war years, Sangal taught his son, Sui, the secrets of his art but Sui died young and was unable to hand them on to his son, Lulu.

Lulu, who was the hereditary descendant of the *likon*, saw the *likon*'s powers as God-given:

Previously the power was God's. It was good power, but when the mission came the men were frightened of the missionaries who thought these old customs were bad. The men did not call out to the *masalai* of the sea or the mountains any more. God created these little *likon* and told them to boss the sea and rain and gave them power. He told Sangal to look after these things. These little *likon* men were good. They did not make trouble. No, they stayed quietly in the house. Because Sangal did not tell us the names of these *likon* we cannot use this magic.

We called Sangal *likon* because he was a big man in these matters. He was a good man. He was not a sorcerer who worked *poison*, nor did he spread gossip, he had a good disposition and even tempered. He sat down in his house quietly. If he had been a bad sorcerer, then he would not have been able to boss these little *likon* men. He was a good man. He did not go and shout out in the middle of the village and begin fights with other people (Mennis, 1981b: 8).

Kasare was also sure that Sangal was ahead of his time because he would talk to *Anut* who was their god.<sup>4</sup> “Sangal was like a Christian because he understood about the one true God. Plenty of men did not understand this, but the *likon* did” (Mennis, 1981a: 71). So Sangal became a sad figure in Bilbil and, by the time of his death in the 1940s, the trading trips had ended, his magic was banned and he, himself, was bewildered by the new Christianity. The beautiful old rituals and customs which may have been once incorporated into the new beliefs have been discarded. Fortunately, Fr Aufinger had recognised the beauty of the songs used in Yabob and had collected many of them before they were lost forever.

### The Trial of Ludwig Schmidt at Salamaua.

Maia was on the 1935 trading trip, when, on the return voyage, they called into Galek, where he, Bulus and Sui were summonsed to attend court in Salamaua for Schmidt’s trial for murder:

We made canoes. We got boats from Siar and Kranket. When all the canoes and boats had arrived we left for the Rai Coast. While we were away the *kiap* came to Bilbil asking for us. The *tultul* said, “They’ve all gone to the Rai Coast.” So they sent a boat down to Galek to get us. In Madang the *kiap* told us we had to go to court and we were frightened. “You go home and get ready”, the *kiap* said, “Next week we will go down to Salamaua. The *kiap* there has sent word you must go”. So three of us went.

Bulus, who was Schmidt’s *bossboi*, was also called up to go court in Salamaua to give evidence against Schmidt. Bulus had a similar story to that of Maia. It must have been a traumatic time for Bulus because, when I interviewed him forty years later in 1974 about this occasion, he was very nervous and was worried he could be in court again. But I assured him there was nothing to worry about. After Bulus had finished working for Schmidt, he had returned to Kranket but he was worried and waited for the hand of the law to fall on him. He knew and Maia knew too that Schmidt had given them muskets to shoot people in the Highlands. Bulus and Maia could easily have been found guilty along with Schmidt and have been hanged as well. However, Maia’s cunning way of instructing his friends to give the same evidence and not saying anything else swayed the court. The attitude of the officials was that because their stories matched so well, they must be telling the truth!

At Salamaua, they were all housed together and there seemed little effort to separate them. After a week, it was their turn in the witness box. Maia was the first up and he swore on the Bible. A *kiap* told him he had to tell the truth and not tell lies. The next one to give evidence was Sui and last was Bulus. At lunchtime, the three of them discussed the situation. They could see which way the wind was blowing and did not want to be charged themselves in a subsequent trial. They were afraid of being executed like the Siars in the German times. Their first concern was to clear themselves of blame. Maia told the others to sit under

the courthouse and hear what he said. “I’ll be talking first and you will be next. Listen carefully to what I say and then go up and say the same. You must say this and nothing else, *harim maus bilong mi*.” He was shrewd enough to know they could be in a real trouble. “If you say too much we’ll be charged as well”, he told them. There seems to have been no effort on the part of the court to keep the witnesses from hearing each other.

After lunch, Maia went up and was sworn in again. Then it was Sui’s turn and then Bulus. At three o’clock, court was over for the day. This was the pattern for four weeks before they had finished. A patrol officer finally told Maia, “you have won the trial, *kot bilong you i dai*. I think Mr Schmidt will be found guilty because of your evidence. You can go home now”. He added that they were not to worry about Schmidt because he had wronged the natives and could hang for it. To this Maia replied, “Yes, Masta Schmidt told me to shoot those bushmen. I told him I couldn’t shoot without a reason, but he said, ‘you can shoot them’”. After this, Maia was told to write his name on the court papers and the others made their marks (Mennis, 1979).

Schmidt pleaded not guilty due to insanity. He stated he went mad after he saw his son, Wiggy speared while crossing the Jimi River. This plea of insanity may have been true to a certain extent. What is true is that Wiggy tried for years to clear his father’s name saying prejudice against a German settler was one of the aspects of the trial. Sometime after Wiggy had been speared, Schmidt had joined up with Schultze, Groos and King and the four men indulged in, “a nightmare of shooting and rape” (Townsend, 1968: 223). Found guilty of killing some Mt Hagen men, Ludwig Schmidt was hanged in March 1936, the only European to have been officially hanged in New Guinea’s history.

Maia was unconcerned with Schmidt’s fate. Relieved that he, himself was not found guilty of the offences, he took a ship back to Madang with the other witnesses and settled into life in Bilbil. Towards the end of 1936, he married Kobar. It was difficult to agree on a bride-price, as pots could not be included since Kobar came from Bilbil. The agreed price in the end was three pigs. Before war came to Bilbil, Kobar had had four children, two of whom died in childbirth. Maia says that he did not attribute this to sorcery as by this time he had joined “Luther’s line” and believed in God.

### The Missions

With the Australian Military Administration, missionary activity continued unchecked with little or no restriction on the activities of the German missionaries. Before the war even ended, Father Limbrock had travelled to China in 1917 to gather volunteers for the New Guinea Mission. Augustine Chegg was one of the thirty-two men who volunteered. He worked as an engineer on the mission boat, the *Gabriel*.

In the 1920s, the Treaty of Versailles, gave the Australian Administration, legal rights over existing German mission



By courtesy, Catholic Mission, Alexishafen

*Fr William Ross SVD with school children at the Mission Station at Rempi near Alexishafen.*

activities, and allowed them to “take over” the existing German mission economic organizations.

Paragraph 438 read in part:

The Allied and Associated Powers agree that where Christian religious missions were being maintained by German societies or persons in territory belonging to them, or of which the government is entrusted to them in accordance with the present Treaty, the property which these missions or mission societies possessed, including that of trading societies whose profits were devoted to the support of missions, shall continue to be devoted to missionary purposes. In order to ensure the due execution of this undertaking, the Allied and Associated Governments will hand over such property to boards of trustees, appointed by or approved by the Governments and composed of persons holding the faith of the Mission whose property is involved. Germany, taking note of the above undertaking, agrees to accept all arrangements made or to be made by the Allied or Associated Government concerned for carrying on the work of the said missions or trading societies and waives all claims on their behalf.

German-born Missionaries, both Catholic and Lutherans alike, were expecting to be expelled and the call went out both to America and Australia for missionaries to take their places. Eventually, the Australian government realised the worth of the German missionaries and, after four years, the ban was lifted but many Americans and Australians had already responded to the call.

In 1922, Bishop Wolf, a German, had been appointed to New Guinea and took up residence in Alexishafen, which became the Vicariate Apostolic of East New Guinea. It was not long before he saw the necessity of having an English-speaking priest as his secretary to act as liaison officer between the mission and the Australian officials. He wrote to the American branch of the Divine Word Mission and Fr William Ross of Techny was sent out to New Guinea in 1926. With him were three sisters of the Holy Spirit – Sister Alexis, Sister Antonia and Sister Ehrintrudis. They were welcomed at Alexishafen by Bishop Wolf and mission staff. The brothers at the mission had all been trained as carpenters, cobblers, farmers, mechanics or cooks while the priests were often anthropologists, philosophers and linguists. By 1930, the figures for the Catholic mission were 18,000 Catholics, 29 Priests, 29 Brothers and 53 Sisters. The mission complex at Alexishafen was much larger than Madang Township, with its workshops, sawmill, schools and hospital. In the 1930’s, a new Cathedral was also being planned. Pidgin English became the language of the Catholic Mission because it was so extensive. Because the mission was so influential, it did not endear itself to officialdom.

Fr Ross tried to counter the anti-German and anti-mission feeling permeating the Australian government office. It was part of his job to deal with the labour inspector and other government officials in Madang. There were various rules about returns from the plantations being sent in and the missionaries were summoned if they were late with their reports. His sense of humour won him friends amongst the Australians in town. One of the patrol officers was Jock McKay who remembered seeing Fr Ross approach the office counter. “He was so short all you would see of him was his



By courtesy, Catholic Mission, Alexishafen

*The beautiful Cathedral at Alexishafen, which was destroyed during the war.*

mouth. His head was covered with his helmet and his beard would be down below the counter". If it were near closing time, Jock would invite him home for a few beers, something he would not have done with the German missionaries.

Father Ross was to do much work opening up stations inland from Alexishafen which is backed by range after range of hills. Halopa had been previously opened in 1917, Utu in 1918 and Saruga about the same time. However there was the whole area to the north-west of Rempi which had hardly been explored. It was uncontrolled territory and the only outside contact was the occasional government patrol. When Fr Ross heard that Jock Mackay was making a patrol he asked if he could go along. After permission was granted by the District Officer, they both set off with an armed escort. The purpose of the patrol was to round up some murderers. The people they met were in a pitiful state suffering from sores and diseases. Following this patrol, Fr Ross was anxious to continue contact with these people and took along Brother Gerhoch who was knowledgeable on tropical diseases. After this a mission station was opened at Sigu and then Badimhok. And within a few years there were many converts in both places and great festivities were held on the church feasts.

Alexishafen had continued to grow over the years with all the missionary activity. There were several schools, a hospital and workshops where everything from boats to gutters could be manufactured. There were large buildings for the brothers and the priests and towering over it all was the beautiful large Cathedral that had taken years to complete. In 1938, Lord Gowrie, Governor of Australia came on an official visit to Madang with the Administrator Mr McNicoll. They were welcomed at Alexishafen with beautiful flowery arches and a brass band played. Lord Gowrie appreciated the beauty of the new cathedral with its large organ and pipes, which stretched to the ceiling. He was shown around the desiccated coconut factory and the workshops where local lads were trained in sawing timber, welding, mechanical work, and carpentry, boat building and shoemaking. Lord Gowrie thanked the missionaries for their work and commented that he was sure that the Administrator, Mr McNicoll, also appreciated them.

The Mandate recognized religious freedom of the people and the Australian officials had to honour this. This meant that the old demarcation between Lutheran and Catholic areas was defunct and this allowed them to set up missions wherever they were invited by the people. After this the Catholics set up a mission station on hitherto Lutheran-only Karkar Island and also in Yabob when the village people invited them. In the same way, the Lutherans set up a station at Bunabun in the Catholic area. Looking back on this time from the ecumenical atmosphere of the 1970s, one missionary wrote that each side saw New Guinea as a religious prey which they might capture whole and entire were it not for the interference of other denominations. Along the coast difficulties arose where the two missions were in close proximity. The rivalry continued until World War II when missionaries on both sides were made to share prison camps because the Japanese did not ask them their religious preferences. As we shall see these shared experiences, sufferings and deprivation led to a great ecumenical movement in New Guinea.

Despite the general animosity in the early days, individual friendships occurred between Catholics and Lutherans. In 1930, Dr Braun of the Lutheran mission arrived in Madang to take over Amele Hospital. Bishop Wolf was one of Dr Braun's patients and the two enjoyed many convivial evenings together. Dr Braun was friendly to all missionaries and treated them at the Amele hospital.

Dr Braun recalled trouble occurring in places like Halopa and Nobonob where both denominations had influence. One set of mission adherents might taunt the other about having to blaze a horse trail through the bush. "See how your mission makes you work. If you belonged to our mission you wouldn't have to do this." This happened on both sides of the religious fence. Still some mission stations worked together on business issues. If there was an order for cattle they might combine forces of Catholic and Lutheran interests to save money on common indentments.

In 1932, Lutheran Missionary activity was taken over by the American Lutheran Church. By 1934, there were 19 ordained missionaries, 10 laymen and doctors working for the mission.

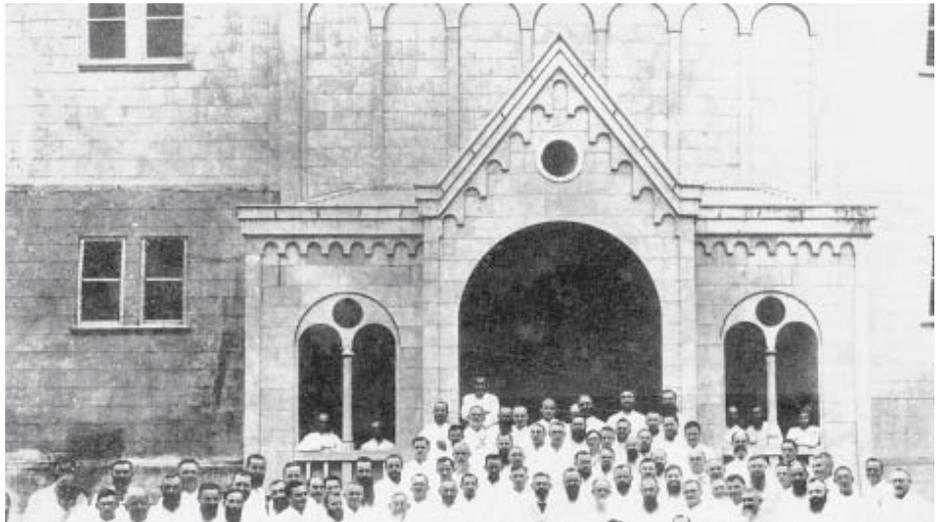
In the early 1930s there were rumours of an inland Valley beyond the Bismarck's ranges. Europeans had first sighted the mountain ranges as early as 1896 when German Carl Lauterbach climbed a mountain in the Sepik area and saw the ranges edging the Wahgi Valley. He wrote in his diary, "To the south lies a striking mountain." He named it Mount Hagen after Captain Kurt von Hagen the then Acting Administrator of German New Guinea. Years later, Father Kirschbaum sighted what he thought was a great inland plateau while he was exploring the Sepik River. Subsequently, the Bundi people on the slopes of the Bismarck ranges invited the catholic mission to their mountain village by sending a *tanget* parcel including an arrow and leaves. So in 1932, Father Schaefer and Brother Anton Baas walked inland from Alexishafen to Sepu. After crossing the Ramu River, they climbed the Bismarck Ranges and establish Guyebi Mission. Later in February/March 1933, Father Schaefer opened the Bundi Mission, at 4,600 feet, on the Bismarck Range. It was there that he met the chief, Kavagl, who had come from over the range on a trading trip and to buy wives for his people. When Kavagl spoke of a great inland valley called Arawa, Fr Schaefer was probably the first European to hear of the Wahgi Valley.

But it was the brothers, Mick and Danny Leahy who discovered the Highlands Valley in March 1933.

Mick Leahy described their discovery:

We flew over the new valley and laid to rest for all time the story that the centre of New Guinea is a mass of uninhabitable mountains. What we saw was a great, flat valley, possibly twenty miles wide and no telling how many miles long, between two high mountain ranges with a very crooked river meandering through (Mennis, 1982: 41).

They wrote to Fr Ross about their discovery and invited him to accompany them on their next trip there. Mick wrote to him "This is fabulous country, a vast population, a beautiful climate and this is the real New Guinea. Come in here by all means". This was exciting news which Fr Ross soon shared with Bishop Wolf. Of course Fr Ross was the favourite choice to go into Hagen and he and his party set off on 15 February 1934. After sailing in the *Stella Maris* to Bogadjim on the Rai Coast, they trekked inland for forty days. When they set up the Hagen Mission station in 28 March 1934, it was the first mission of any denomination in the Western Highlands (Mennis, 1982). Nor were these early days



By courtesy, Catholic Mission, Alexishafen

*Missionaries gather in front of the Cathedral at Alexishafen.*

without tragedy. In 1934, Father Karl Morschheuser was killed by two arrows near the foot of Mt Wilhelm and a year later, Brother Eugene Frank was mortally wounded by eight arrows in the same Chimbu Valley. In 1939, the first mission plane accident happened. Fathers Otto Bader, Franz Kirschbaum, James Weyer and pilot Willy Schaffhausen were killed at Alexishafen when their plane crashed on takeoff.

The new mission stations in the Highlands became part of the Madang Vicariate. In 1935, MIVA of Germany, "donated a two-seater monoplane called *Paulus*, and one year later a larger plane called *Petrus*. They reduced 14 day treks between Alexishafen and the Bismarck Mountains to 80-minute rides" (Bus, 1971: 9).

The Western Highlands Valley soon became the tramping ground of prospectors, explorers, government officials, anthropologists and missionaries. The Lutherans followed the Catholic missionaries to this new valley where there was no line of demarcation or areas of influence laid down. While these new mission stations were being opened in the Highlands, matters came to a head in the Lutheran mission stations in the Madang area. Many new converts were hoping to be given the secrets of the cargo by the missionaries and were disappointed when this was not forthcoming. It caused friction between the missionaries and the people and eventually led to more cargo cults.

Lawrence saw the people's interpretation of Christianity as the beginning of a cargo cult based on misinterpretation of the Bible. The people listened to the stories of Adam and Eve and then Noah and his sons Shem, Japheth and Ham who survived the floods. The people decided they must be descended from Ham, who was sent into exile as a punishment and was only given inferior items on which to exist. The good sons, Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, were the ancestors of the white men and through them they



By courtesy, Catholic Mission, Alexishafen

*The Petrus at Alexishafen airstrip in the 1930s. This plane provided quick and easy communication between Alexishafen and Mt Hagen.*

received the cargo. The missionaries had come to New Guinea to help the people redeem themselves and get the good cargo of the Europeans.

The 1934 Lutheran Conference held at Bom had an interesting submission presented by the people:

Why are we not getting the source of the cargo? You conceal the white man's power from us. Our possessions are just rubbish, the white man's are the real thing. It is true, the mission has given us the Word of God, but they are not helping us Blacks to meet our bodily needs. The Whites conceal the concept of the source of cargo from us. We are doomed to perish as utter paupers (Pech, 1991:167).

It seemed that there was a complete misunderstanding between the missionaries and the local adherents. Furthermore in an act of defiance, the people once more performed their dances which had hitherto been banned by the Church. As Pech said, "Interest in things Christian were at an alltime low; interest in dancing at an alltime high." To dramatise the rift between them, the missionaries laid a vine the length of the conference building and sat on one side while the indigenous people sat on the other. The people countered this at the next conference when they laid length a steel wire down the middle, "so separating themselves from the white missionaries. The accusation was openly brought that the missionaries were culpable in deliberately withholding the secrets of free access to manufactured goods from their indigenous Christian brothers." (ibid).

It was time to look further afield to open more stations amongst people who might be more receptive. The challenge in the Highlands was taken up with great gusto. Dr Braun was part of a Lutheran expedition in June 1934 with W. Bergmann and other Lutheran missionaries from Finschhafen. They travelled to Mt Hagen to set up a new station at Ogelbeng. In September 1934, John Mager, the dictionary expert, was part of the second group of Lutherans setting out from Amele to set up a new station at Kerowagi in the Highlands where thousands of people were ready to accept the new beliefs and furthermore were not hindered by cargo cult thinking.

Overall, the missionaries did much good for the people, establishing friendly, peaceful relationships between former enemies. They began educating the people and established hospitals and health clinics.

In retrospect, the German Government had built roads and towns and local governments with the *luluai* and *tultul* systems. Many of their innovations still remain in New Guinea. After the Germans left, the Australians took over the Mandate after 1921 and, for the next twenty years, introduced more businesses and developed plantations. The voice of the people was at last heard when Judge Phillips delivered his findings over the land that had been taken from the local villages and some land was returned to them. Then, 1941 brought the Japanese invasion and many devastating changes to the villages and town in the Madang area.

### Agents of change

It may be seen that there were many agents of change that had an affect on the culture of the people for better or for worse. Economically, technically, spiritually and politically the people's lives were changing and continued to change. Although the missions may have contributed to the demise of certain elements of the culture, these changes may have happened anyway as the people accepted technical innovations. The missions may have been unjustly blamed for things the cargo cultists did in their endeavour to receive the cargo of the Europeans. There were many other factors involved like the steel axe and the Chinese-made boats that brought basic changes to the culture. These innovations were accepted by the people who happily discarded their stone axes for steel and even their large canoes for the boats which could be purchased ready-made and last longer. They were pragmatic and wanted to use the best methods if they could afford them. Economic changes to the labour force in the villages which were required elsewhere on plantations and goldfields as exemplified in the story of Maia meant that young men who would have built the canoes and traded on them were out seeking

adventures and work in other parts of the country. They were becoming aware of a far wider world and in trying to make sense of it cargo cult beliefs sprang up. If only they had the key to the cargo then they would have the European goods. To do this they thought to discard the old culture. This had a devastating effect on the material culture, as the owners or builders of the culture were themselves rejecting it.

The fact that the culture was changing was part of the development of the people. Sooner or later, they would have become aware of the outside world. It was up to them how they met the challenge. For, as one Papua New Guinean writer said, "it was ten thousand years in a lifetime" (Kiki, 1968).

*1. Years later, during the Second World War, Male said that the people ran away from the bombing and the flag was burnt in the house.*

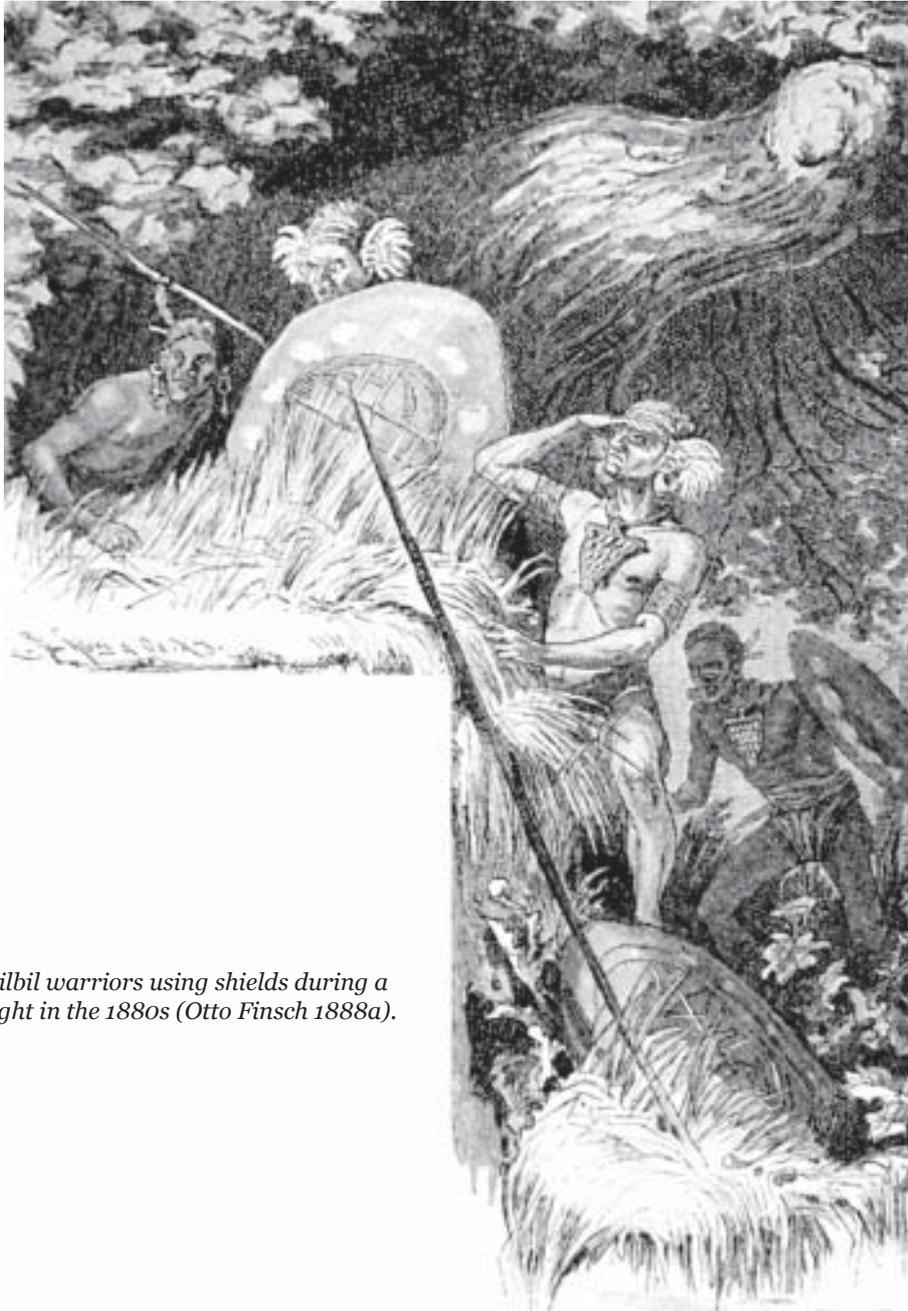
*2. See later this chapter.*

*3. This contrasts with Robson's statement that his name was Mr Thiel of the same company*

*4. The people believed in Anut as a superior creator being and the Lutherans used this name when referring to God,*



*Group at the DSistrict Office at Mt Hagen showing that, whatever their backgrounds, the pioneers did meet occasionally. Left to right: Danny Leahy, goldminer; Rev Kuder, Lutheran pator; L. Chambers, Government Officer; Fr Bernarding, Catholic priest.*



*Bilbil warriors using shields during a fight in the 1880s (Otto Finsch 1888a).*

## Chapter 11, World War II

### *Time Bilong Japan*



*If people of another clan appropriate a piece of land, the men of the robbed clan will gather and decide: "We will take the thieves' land, sago palms" etc. The attackers will paint their faces black while their opponents will paint their's white. The attackers wear red flowers in their hair. First of all they send a red cordyline leaf with a loose knot in it to their allies. These will draw the knot tight (as a sign of agreement). Taking the knotted leaf's end in their mouth they will help their friends in the battle. An important man will cast a spell over the leaves of a lemon tree and blow on them. To each warrior he gives one of those leaves. They all chew the leaves and keep them in their mouths. When they come near their enemies, they blow and spit this juice towards them. This causes the spears of their enemies to become ineffective. If the air (spiritual power) of our ancestors is strong, we shall win the battle. But if the air of their ancestors is powerful, they will win. In the middle of the fight, a very skilful and courageous man would catch a flying spear with his mouth. A man with a wooden war shield goes in front, carrying a spear in his hand. Under the cover of this shield a second man approaches the line of the enemies. When they have gone near enough, the shield bearer suddenly turns his shield to the side. Then his companion jumps out and throws a spear with his spear thrower. Sometimes two or three shield bearers abreast would move towards the front of the adversaries. The spears flew to and fro (Aufenanger, 1972: 202).*

This is a description of a traditional fight in Papua New Guinea. Preparations for war, protection of combatants, subterfuge and strategic plans were all used in pre-contact days.

World War II was a time of turmoil for Papua and New Guinea. Initially, several young men, both from the Administration and private enterprise went to fight in Europe. The other noticeable effect was the internment of a number of German nationals, mainly missionaries, who were sent to internment camps in Australia. Others, whose views were not so pro-Nazi, were permitted to remain. One missionary, a well liked Catholic priest in New Britain, was one of those allowed to remain. Wryly, he commented that, "if he had known the hardships he, and others, would suffer under the Japanese, he would have gone around Heiling Hitler and got himself sent to a nice comfortable internment camp in Australia". Although a German, he was instrumental in helping many Australian servicemen after the fall of Rabaul at substantial risk to himself.

The Australian Administration had been in New Guinea for less than thirty years, from 1914 to 1941. The previous German Government had built a network of roads and established plantations in many centres. Politically they had kept control through the establishment of village chiefs the *luluai* and their deputies the *tultul*. When Australia took control the old system of *luluai* and *tultul* was retained and worked well. However because the Australian patrol officers visited the coastal and inland areas infrequently, the influence of the Australian government was not very widespread before the arrival of the Japanese in 1942.

In anticipation of the war that seemed certain to come to New Guinea, The Royal Australian Navy had set up a system of Coastwatchers who had been trained for surveillance along the coast. Some of them had set up lookouts deep in the jungle where they could watch the coastline and report enemy movements. Commander Eric Feldt was responsible for the establishment and control of the network. He had been trained as a naval officer at the Royal Australian College and then went on to the Grand Fleet in 1917 as midshipman. Resigning in 1922, he had gone to New Guinea and went up the ranks to become a District Officer and Warden of the Wau goldfields. When war broke out, he rejoined the Navy. He was directed to report to the Director of Naval Intelligence, Commander Long, who envisaged a coast-watching service which would provide information of any enemy activity (Feldt, 1967: 14). Eric Feldt was appointed staff officer at Port Moresby in charge of the intelligence organization in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands under Long's directions from Melbourne. Messages would be sent via the teleradio system to A.W.A (Amalgamated Wireless of Australia) based in Port Moresby and then onto Melbourne. For communication purposes it was decided to use a low-grade cypher. Later on Feldt devised the "Playfair Feldt cypher" and visited all the Coastwatchers to teach this new system. By December 1939, all operators who had teleradios had been enrolled as civilian Coastwatchers and about a hundred others were trained in reporting, including men in positions in Madang and along the Rai Coast.

The Coastwatchers came from diverse backgrounds but all played a vital role in the hard days of the war. After Pearl Harbour,

Coastwatchers, operating behind the enemy lines, played a very important part notifying the allies of enemy troop movements.

Civilian life continued as normal until Pearl Harbour in December 1941, when expatriate women and children were evacuated from all over Papua and New Guinea to Australia. In November 1941, Therese O'Brien, a public servant returning to Madang from leave on board the *Macdui*, told of feverish preparations for war at every port into which the ship called. Before leaving Australia, Therese had been told the situation in the East had become serious and that no accommodation was available on the ship as it had been commandeered by the Military Authorities for troops going to New Guinea. To her astonishment, she was also advised that women were not being allowed to go back to the Territory. Then she received a phone call from the shipping agents to say that a berth was available on the *Macdhui* leaving in two days' time. Quickly she packed and left Brisbane a fortnight earlier than anticipated!

Therese O'Brien wrote:

Eventually the *Macdui* wound her way down the Brisbane River bound for Port Moresby, our first port of call. At night, the compulsory blackout on the ship was observed - so different from the brightly lit decks of peacetime. The usual topic on board was the increasing likelihood of war with Japan and the presence of German raiders in the Pacific, which brought to our minds the possibility of being attacked by a submarine. We were all pleased to see Moresby looming up on the horizon. My, what a scene of activity greeted us on our arrival. From the peaceful little township, it had become a miniature fortress. After spending a couple of days here, feverishly unloading war materials, we proceeded on our way to Samarai where, prior to our arrival, disturbing news of the impending war with Japan was flashed over the air. The captain remarked that it was just about at this spot that the *Matunga* was sunk by a German Raider during the last war. Our feeling of uneasiness increased.

A few days later found us in Rabaul. There was much unloading of Military supplies and other cargo, also loading of household effects for many of the Government officials who had been transferred to Lae, the new capital of New Guinea. All this movement of cargo necessitated our spending a few days in Rabaul now a township full of soldiers. Whilst on our way to Madang, the startling news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbour was broadcast on board. This had the effect of the ship having to alter its course as a safety measure (Personal communication).

When Therese reached Madang on 7 December, she wondered what the effect of Pearl Harbour would be but continued her preparations for Christmas with the other European women. On Christmas Day, they sat down as usual to Christmas dinner but few managed to finish their meal. An urgent message was relayed

throughout the town that all women and children were to be evacuated within the hour by aircraft. Meals were left forgotten, treasured possessions were abandoned as everyone scrambled to pack one small case of 30 pounds (13 kg) and rush to the airstrip. Nip Blood, one of the Coastwatchers, remembers walking through Madang sometime after everyone had been evacuated and he found the place very eerie. Homes had all been vacated in a great hurry and some of the tables were still set up for Christmas dinner, complete with decorations, Christmas trees and plum puddings. The town was like a ghost town waiting for its doom.

When Fr Bernarding, an American priest who had recently arrived at Alexishafen, heard the news of Pearl Harbour on his radio, he reported it to Bishop Wolf. Little realising the damage that had been done to the U.S. navy, he assured the Bishop that there was no need to worry. Now that the U.S. was involved, the war would be over in a few short weeks. Bishop Wolf was not so sure and told the assembled missionaries that any of them who wished to be evacuated were free to go. However they decided to stay on their stations arguing that they would never be able to face their people again if they deserted them now. The bishop instructed Fr Bernarding to fly to Mt Hagen to continue his mission work with Fr Ross at Rebiambul.

When the Japanese bombed Madang on 21 January 1942, Dan Leahy up at Kuta near Mt Hagen heard the news on his radio. He immediately relayed the news to Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding. Fr Ross sent a letter to Ed O'Brien, his old friend, inviting him and other evacuees from Madang to Mt Hagen. "There is plenty of food for everyone", he wrote. Ed O'Brien had seen the bombed ruins of Madang: Carpenter's copra store had been set on fire by an incendiary bomb; Chinatown had been demolished and many houses flattened. The jail had received a direct hit and many of the prisoners were killed. After the bombing, Ed had gone to Nobonob behind Madang with Coastwatchers, Ron Chegg, Bill Cahill and Max Middleton of Karkar. From this vantage point, they could keep a watch for any Japanese ships. But, on 30 January, they received an urgent message to withdraw to Kainantu, where they joined other evacuees.

Among the evacuees was Taffy Jones, the matron of Madang Hospital. She was the only woman amongst them and often wished she had been evacuated earlier. Taffy had vivid memories of her trek from Madang to Hagen and of Fr Ross's generosity at the end of it. After she left Madang, she stayed a week with Dr and Mrs Braun at the Lutheran Hospital on Amele Hill and the Brauns described the bombing of Madang to her from their hill top vantagepoint. They had seen Stan Johnson, the mission pilot, approach Madang on a routine flight unaware that Japanese bombers were circling the town. When he realised what was happening, he suddenly did a one hundred and eighty degrees turn and escaped over the hills.

After staying at Amele, Taffy Jones trekked over the hills with Dr McQueen of Madang and Mr Sanders, the Customs Officer.

They brought up the rear of the party of evacuees, so if anyone ahead became sick they only had to wait for them. Mr Sanders became “Sanders of the River” and Taffy was “Mrs Livingstone I presume”. When they came to the Ramu River, evacuees from Manus joined them. Among them was Norm Whitely, a diabetic, who was running out of supplies of insulin. Unfortunately, Dr McQueen had brought only a limited supply from Madang. Despite this, they were a cheerful party as they made their way to Kainantu and Norm was always finding beautiful orchids or scenery for them to appreciate. They stayed six weeks at Kainantu, near the Seventh Day Adventist Mission. As the house in which they were staying was very exposed, they had to hide in the scrub from Japanese planes that flew over. Taffy spent the time playing bridge and looking after Jimmie Dixon who had contracted scrub typhus. While they were waiting, Fr Glover flew in from Wau from where he had evacuated many people in his single-engined plane. It was decided that as Taffy Jones was the only woman in the party, she should fly with Fr Glover to Hagen to stay and wait for the rest of them at Fr Ross’s mission.

Climbing aboard, Taffy sat in front of the pilot and nervously viewed the canvas covered fuselage and the open cockpits. The plane took off and she found it was as cold as charity as they rose over the mountains. After a while Taffy noticed they were coming down, and thought, “that’s funny, Mt Hagen is just like Kainantu” - and it was. They were back in Kainantu because the plane could not get over the Bena Bena Range of 7,000 ft. because of cloud and they had turned back. After they left, the others had put wires across the strip to stop the Japanese landing. Fr Glover did not know this and the plane tripped and overturned. They were not hurt except for a few bits of skin off, but the plane was a wreck. When they climbed out, they had to wait as the others had to run about half a kilometre to the strip. When one of the group, Carl Nagy, who had joined the group got there, he started swearing his head off.

Then he suddenly remembered Fr Glover and said, “Oh, I’m sorry”

Taffy replied, “That’s okay”.

“Not you, I meant Father”.

“Blow Father”, Taffy retorted, “he’s just done a lot better himself, thank you very much”

With the plane a write-off, it was decided that Fr Glover and Carl Nagy, an aircraft engineer from Guinea Airways, should walk down to Alexishafen to try and get another plane, while the rest of the party walked on to Mt Hagen where there was a larger airstrip. Mick Leahy arrived to guide them and all along the route the people greeted him. “Kundi Mick, Kundi Mick”, they repeated over and over. Along the way, the evacuees called into mission stations for a meal and slept each night at a village. One Seventh Day Adventist missionary walked down a mountain with two large biscuit tins of warm rissoles made from bully beef and

shallots. Nothing had ever tasted better to the evacuees. Another mission that they had fond memories of was one run by a husband and wife team, both dressed just like the people that come out of some cuckoo clocks, according to Taffy. The evacuees were grateful for the large hunks of black bread this couple provided - it was like manna from heaven. They stayed for lunch one day at a Catholic Mission where there was an abundance of passionfruit vines, the fruit of which was used to make altar wine. Taffy was too sick to have any, but men drank to their heart’s content and were pretty tipsy for the rest of the day. At Mt Hagen, Fr Ross made them welcome and eventually they were flown out to Australia (Mennis, 1982: 95-97).



The local people were badly affected by the war. They could hide in the bush areas but could not leave their country and were defenceless. Village people close to the Japanese encampments were forced to work for the Japanese soldiers; there was no option.

In the early 1940s, there was a strong cargo cult on Karkar Island where the Takia people identified Kilibob with Noah. They were easily led when Yas of the Bagabag Lutheran congregation began the Kakuai Movement. Initially, he had wanted his people to break with the cargo cult by making general confessions of their wrongdoing but by 1941 the movement had a momentum all of its own. What started out as religious revival became the basis for a cargo cult. There were rumours of the coming war, particularly when some of the Lutheran missionaries were interned in Australia. Members of the cult believed that great signs would appear before the coming of the cargo: there would be bright sunsets; a flu epidemic; meteors and comets; and then all the Europeans would be killed by some disaster. A severe drought brought bushfires, which swept the island as never before causing fireballs and nightly static effects. All these events fanned the beliefs of the cargo cultists with predictions that 1 January 1942 would see the end of the world. “On the lower slopes of Mount Kanagioi, people claimed to hear the sounds of cargo being manufactured coming from the bowels of the earth” (Pech, 1991:178).

It was shortly after this that Pastor Mileng and two others were arrested on Karkar Island and accused of leading the cargo cult. Lutheran Pastor F. Henkelmann was distressed to be told that the ringleaders were elders in his church.<sup>1</sup> Since the late 1930s, Mileng had been one of the Lutheran congregational leaders among the Takians, his own tribe, as well as the Waskia people, on the northern half of the island.

Mileng’s counsel was sought by many about the cargo cult but to him the emotionalism that swept like a bush fire through the masses was confusing. Was this movement of

God or of man? In seeking an answer, he remembered the advice Gamaliel gave about a new movement, that if only men were at the back of it, it would fail, but if it was God's doing, it could not be stopped (Acts 5: 38-39). Since leadership of the movement [on Karkar] had been taken over by spectacular prophets who prophesied immediate events, Mileng stayed in his home village and waited for the outcome. When mass absenteeism of plantation labour occurred just preceding the date set by the new prophets for the end of the world, a planter sent an urgent radio message to Madang. Police were rushed to the island. Arrests were quickly made, and Mileng was blamed as having started the cult. He was resting quietly at home when the police arrived to arrest him (Steinbauer, 1974: 178).

Altogether three elders were taken to Madang from Karkar to face the courts. During preliminary hearings, Mileng was sentenced to banishment on Gasmata Island near New Britain for four years.<sup>2</sup> Awaiting a further hearing on 21 January 1942, the three elders were kept in the Madang lock-up. Just as the magistrate arrived to resume the case, 23 Japanese planes bombed and machine-gunned Madang. It was as if all the predictions of the cargo cultists were being realised: it seemed like the end of the world. The three elders in their prison cells heard the tumult of the first Japanese attack. Then a policeboy freed them telling them to run for their lives and hide. They crouched in a deep ditch behind the jail amidst the whirring of aeroplane motors, the rattling of the machine guns and the explosions of the bombs. Suddenly they were stunned by a deafening explosion – a bomb landed just nearby, killing seven men and covering them all with debris. The three Karkar men received only minor injuries. The next day, the three prisoners helped evacuate the possessions of the Europeans. Mileng, although suffering from a pain in his side, also helped. When he broke down, the policeboys threatened to beat him but he told them they could kill his body but not his soul. As soon as he had a chance he escaped into the bush. The attitude of one of the Elders was, "Surely God has answered my prayers and saved me most wonderfully and provided this way of escape for me. Even as Elijah hid before unjust wrath of Ahab and Jezebel, I too, may hide". The three of them eventually made their way back to Karkar Island where the Rev Henkelmann recorded their story (Walck, 1972). The bombing must have had a profound effect on village people everywhere but particularly on these three men who found themselves in the middle of the attack. Were they more entrenched than ever in their cargo cult thinking which had predicted catastrophe?

With the bombing of Madang, the colonial administration in Madang collapsed and all government officers were ordered to evacuate to the mountains behind the town. On 21 January 1942, Lae was also bombed and Sir Walter McNicoll, Administrator of New Guinea, handed authority over to the army (Griffin et al, 1979: 87. The Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit, ANGAU, was formed in April 1942 to replace the Australian

Administration in all areas of Papua and New Guinea which had not been taken over by the Japanese Military Forces. European males, previously in government employment, were given rank in administrative units in ANGAU. Before the Japanese landed in Madang, ANGAU had a small force there as well as a force of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, the NGVR. They were forced back by the Japanese landing on 18 December 1942.

Peter Lawrence wrote that some of the inland natives felt the war was a punishment on the Europeans for misleading the people (1964: 105). After the bombing and the ending of civil authority, the local villagers were confused. District Officer Penglase, who arrived on 24 May 1942 to take charge of the district, wrote:

Natives found themselves in circumstances to which they were not accustomed. Overnight, the Government, with its benevolent policy in which they had the greatest confidence and respect, no longer functioned. The officials evacuated and moved to safer locations in the bush. Vast numbers [of natives] were passing through the district from Morobe and other places of employment, whilst others, were travelling [in the other direction to] to the Markham, Finschhafen, and Waria, spreading the most impossible rumours. Japanese bombs had struck fear into their very hearts and they were bewildered and apprehensive about their future. In addition the town [Madang] had been looted, plantations were deserted and practically every unprotected house had been ransacked (Dudley McCarthy, 1959: 49).

The village people tried to continue their old way of life but many things had changed forever. Although the women still made their pots and exchanged them for food, the Bel men stopped building their large trading canoes and no longer went on trading trips. That part of their culture was gone forever. It was not until late in 1942 that the Japanese actually landed in Madang and, when they did, they came in stealthily in landing barges by their thousands.

Ber of Yabob said:

When the Japanese arrived, we were still living on Yabob Island. We were very frightened of them because there were many of them. About 9 o'clock at night we saw the Japanese arrive in Madang. There were plenty of boats stretching as far as Saidor. It was a full moon and we could see them in the sea (interview, January 1979).

Further along the coast, some village men had been out fishing on the moonlit night. As they walked back along the beach with their catch, they noticed a peculiar phenomenon. The bushes at the edge of the beach were moving in funny little flutters. There was no breeze. Perhaps it was an animal they could add to their catch. Curious to know what was causing the movement they crept closer. Suddenly Japanese soldiers wearing camouflaged hats emerged from the bushes and pounced on the hapless fishermen. Thinking they were being attacked by *tambarans* or

*masalai* they screamed in sheer fright. Amazingly, the Japanese did not harm them but forced them to help unload the barges.

Maia Awak heard about the landing of the Japanese from his friends who saw them landing along the Gum River at night. Some of the soldiers walked towards Madang and others towards Saidor and the Rai Coast. Maia had to help them carry cargo. He had a big high house in the village and the Japanese enclosed the bottom and put some of their stores there. He was paid in food and money. It was strange occupation money which the Madang people were suspicious of until they saw the picture on it of coconut trees hanging over water. The scene looked very similar to Budup point from where Kilibob, the cultural hero, was supposed to have left New Guinea promising to return with the cargo. The money became known as *moni bilong Kilibob* and, as a result, the Bilbil people felt quite friendly towards the invaders. The Japanese were fortunate in their choice of a picture! <sup>3</sup>

When the Allied bombing intensified, Maia and his family went to live on Bilbil Island where they had once lived before being banished by the Germans. Now at a time of a new invasion, they hid there with some Japanese soldiers from the allied bombing. Every time a bomber flew over, they fled to the caves and hid among the rocks or under the large *ficus* trees on the Island. At last, the Japanese felt the bombing was too severe and told the people to leave the island. One dark night they took to their large trading canoes and sailed across to the mainland. Maia helped pull them up on the beach little realising it was for the last time. As soon as they landed, they took to the bush and travelled as far as possible before daylight brought the bombers back. A bombing raid soon after destroyed these beautiful canoes and never again did they sail them. Some of the Bilbil went to Banup, some to Hudini and others to Yagaum. Maia, Kobor and their two little girls went inland to Warog, where they built a house. When the bombers flew over they hid in a hole in the bush. Later they went further into the bush to Bulagud, where they stayed a long time. This is where they were when the Australians returned and told them, "Friend, *war pinis nau*. (The war is over now).

Male, of Siar Island, interviewed in 1976 said:

We Siars were living here on the island when the war started. The Japanese bombed Madang and some people died. When the bombs fell straight on us it was no good - we hid in caves or under rocks. We did not go on trading trips to the Rai Coast nor did we go visiting other places. It was too dangerous. We stayed at Siar. The Riwoos too stayed in their place and so did the Krankets. When the allied bombers came, there were two women on the beach. The bombs hit them and they died. When the bombers left we buried them. Later the planes came and dropped messages in Pidgin English warning us to go to the bush. So we all left the island and fled to the bush. The Americans bombed the island. Some of them were shot down and died. The Japanese killed some. They dug the holes for their graves and cut

their necks with a sword. Later, the Japanese fled to Wewak and left their stores behind. Many died but others were rounded up in the bush by the Allies. After the war we showed the Americans the graves of their airmen.

When the Japanese landed on the coast further north, in the Madang Harbour, on 18 December 1942, the Riwo people were amazed at their power and the size of their cargo. A whole convoy of ships, submarines, minesweepers and troop carriers suddenly appeared. The locals tried to interpret all of this in their own belief system. When they were paid in occupation money for services, they studied it in detail. It was the first tangible evidence the Riwo people had of the Japanese that they could take away and think about. The strange money was handed around a group of elders. They noted that in one corner was a group of coconut palms depicted on a point of land similar to the point at Budup just near Riwo Village. "Maybe it is Kilibob and his men returning!" These same villagers later decided that the Japanese were not Kilibob returned at all because they did not give any cargo to the people and secondly the Japanese punished any disobedience severely. After the war, these Riwo men were described as cargo cultists and were punished for fraternising with the Japanese and for their disloyalty. But as we have seen maybe they were being loyal to a far older set of beliefs that had been passed on through the generations. Furthermore, they had little choice but to co-operate when faced with the might of the invasion force. Dr Lucy Mair, writing of both territories in 1948 said, "in the absence of the conception of a regime to which loyalty was due, there could be no question of disloyalty, or of co-operation with one side or the other" (Mair, 1970: 199).

One Riwo man, who was a child at the time, said that the first English words he'd ever heard was when an American soldier was about to be beheaded. He turned and said to the Japanese soldier standing there with the sword, "Can I say some prayers?" His wish was granted as Dr Braun and the other missionaries imprisoned nearby were asked for a Bible for the American soldier. The young boy, Angmai Bilas, must have been traumatised by the occasion and by the Japanese soldiers who swarmed everywhere speaking another language he could not understand. This American airman had been handed over to the Japanese by Kamot, then *luliai* of Riwo village.

In the 1970s, when Dau of Riwo Village described what it was like in the war, he began with the story of Kilibob and Manup the two brothers and culture heroes who are the basis of the local cargo cult. As already mentioned, Manup made a canoe after their quarrel and Kilibob made a ship and created the islands in the passage.

Dau:

Kilibob left for the whiteman's land. My ancestors used to talk about this. They said "Later on Kilibob will come back and bring a good time for us". My ancestors heard this from



*Kilibob's money, Japanese occupation currency. The coconuts on the point of land depicted were seen as being connected to mythical figures Kilibob and Manup.*

their ancestors. When the whitemen came they thought they were Kilibob and Manup and that they would bring the good times. When the Japanese came they thought again about Kilibob. The story was that when Kilibob came back there would be fighting and men with the *mal* would appear. When the Japanese arrived, our people remembered what their ancestors had said and saw they were wearing *mal*. They said to each other, "True, now the good times will come". The Japanese were not angry with us but they made us carry their cargo, which they hid in caves at Amron, and we made gardens of sago, cucumber, beans and corn to feed the soldiers. The Japanese had rice, salt, fish and meat from their country.

They paid us in money; it was another kind of money. We thought it was Kilibob's money because it had a picture on it like the point at Budup near Alexishafen. There were several coconuts at this point. We looked at the picture and we thought this is the point where Kilibob had his boat and we thought now Kilibob is bringing back his money. We could buy food and things from the Japanese only with their money. If we tried to use the Australian money we were told it was no good. Later when the Australians and Americans came they told us to collect the Japanese money and give it to them because it was rubbish<sup>4</sup> (Interview, 1976).

When asked if they continued to think that the Japanese were Kilibob's men, Dau said, "later we thought this wasn't right. They were not good men". The occupation money proved worthless after the war which annoyed the villagers who had worked hard to earn it. During the first part of the war, Dau and the other villagers stayed on Riwo Island and made trenches where they hid during the bombing, but later, before the bombing increased, the allies came and dropped leaflets which fell all around in the bush and the villagers picked them up. The leaflets said that the

bombing was going to get much worse and they should go to the bush.

The people on the Rai Coast had their own stories of the Japanese landing. Joel and Simbal of Bogadjim Village said:

When the Japanese landed here we saw them. They had plants in their hats so the planes would not see them. They arrived in their motorboats and came ashore while we were

asleep and went to the mission house. The motor revved up in the morning while they were leaving with the missionaries. Then I woke up and heard the noise. The Japanese killed our pigs and ate them without asking. It was their meat. They were fighting men and we were afraid. We couldn't stop them. We ran away to the bush with our families. We were hungry in the bush. We got pawpaws and took them to the Japanese house and they gave us rice in exchange which we cooked. Later we stayed with the Australians on the Upper Ramu. We helped them and cooked for them. After the war, our *luluai* was Lele and our *tutul* was Wagen. The kiap was Hoodman from Madang (Interview, 20 September 1994).

The inland people were also subjected to the horrors of war. In Nobonob, two faithful elders, modern martyrs Yod and Mateo, faced the soldiers who marched into their village. They remained loyal to the Allies, "and then firmly confessed their faith in their heavenly Friend their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The Japanese decided to make an example of them and summoned all the village people forbidding them to pray as they feared that they might be praying for the Americans to win the war. "Then, as a gruesome warning to the community, the two elders were seized and beheaded before the congregation". Many died in those villages and others died from the bombing "others were lost as casualties of malnutrition, disease, and lack of medical supplies. The Japanese looted their villages, robbed their gardens, stole, their pigs and chickens. Forced to labour, the native men and boys were paid in Japanese paper shillings with which they were able to purchase nothing after the war" (Fricke, 1946: 43).

J. K. McCarthy made one of the best judgements of the affect of war on the village people in his book *Patrol into Yesterday*:

Whatever the tide of war in New Guinea, whichever way it went at any particular time – it seemed to go many different ways – it was in the end the native people who were most affected. They were affected for good as well as evil, because

the New Guinea war was not only the destroyer but a great teacher. The natives had seen their invincible white masters in defeat – driven from the country by the brown men of Japan – the fact that they were beginning to return, victorious, did not alter the knowledge that they could be overthrown (McCarthy, 1963: 214).



One evening in January 1942, Caroline Schmitt sat puffing on her pipe as she held the tiller on the *Saemat*. She and some other evacuees had come a long way from the Western Isles of the Ninigo Group, steering all day through the waves and heavy rain. Now it was dark and another storm was approaching. Lightning flashed and thunder roared above them. As the waves turned into mountains and valleys, the little *Saemat* sank deep down before rising on the next huge wave. There were ten people on the boat and some of them were so terrified they hid below decks but not Mama Caroline. She had lived all her life in the Islands and had known rougher seas than this. She was an old woman now, but was still strong and courageous and did not flinch from helping Mo at the tiller. He was a coastwatcher and the boat was full of Europeans from the Western Islands. They kept their course for Aitape while the rain blew in under the canvas plastering their hair to their faces and soaking their clothes. Hour after hour they sat there being tossed in the terrible waves. Every now and then Mama Caroline relit her pipe from a smoking coal she kept in a tin and, replacing the top on her pipe, she puffed away.

Suddenly, there was a great flash of lightning, which hung in the air in bright jagged forks. In this instant Caroline cried, “Look Mo, look at the ship”. There, looming above them, hardly 30 metres away was a huge Japanese aircraft carrier. Before the crash of the thunder descended on them they saw many more dark shapes beyond. Warships, cruisers and more aircraft carriers were all in formation. This was a task force of the Japanese Navy. And there was the little *Saemat* facing these ghostly monsters with more engines throbbing behind them. They were surrounded.

Mo Johnson shivered. “This could be serious,” he said as the turned off the engine. The only light now was the flicker from Mama Caroline’s pipe. For nearly an hour they crouched in the launch as one after another of these dark shapes ploughed past. Each flash of lightning lit up the ship funnels and the machine guns against the sky and the *Saemat* continued to bob around, a little dot surrounded by the Japanese Navy. Would they be crushed to death by the next warship? Would they be discovered and fired upon? In the end, it was the bad weather that saved them for the *Saemat* was so swallowed by the darkness and the heavy rain, that the enemy did not see her. So bad was the weather that the watchmen stayed inside.

At last all was silent. They had past the last of the ships. Mama Caroline heaved a sigh of relief. “Gott si dank,” she said in German. “Thank God for that,” and she went on puffing her pipe.

Unwittingly, they had just passed through the middle of the Japanese Pacific Fleet on its way to take over Rabaul. Johnson and McColl on board the *Saemat* were the first Coastwatchers to see the fleet and as soon as they landed in Aitape, McColl tried to raise the alarm via his teleradio. But as Eric Feldt said, “The distance and the intervening high mountain ranges were too much, so they remained at their lonely post and waited for something to happen” (Feldt, 1946: 35).

Much had happened in the lead up to this situation. Mo Johnson was a Coastwatcher on Moron Plantation, strategically placed in the Ninigo Group of Islands. Including Wuvulu and the Anchorite Islands, these were the furthest western plantations in the Territory of Papua New Guinea and within the first degree of the Equator. In January 1942, word came through on the Coastwatchers’s radio net that there would be an invasion very shortly and the Coastwatchers had to evacuate all Europeans from the Western Isles within their own means. Previously the Burns Philp and Carpenter’s ships used to come out to the Western Islands. Mo only had a refurbished boat, the *Saemat*, a 10 metre motor launch, originally a cutter with a small auxiliary engine. Mo was well acquainted with the people he was rescuing. There was Mama Caroline, previously Caroline Schmitt but married now to Coastwatcher, Bill Tupling, a plantation manager on Karkar Island. There was also Tex Bateman whom Mo described as “an English pukka sahib gentlemen” and Murray Cook, Cook by name and Cook by nature they called him.

Mo picked up Mama Caroline and Tex Bateman on Longon and then collected Murray Cook from Mau. They left the Ninigo Group and went across to Aura Island where Letty Fuchs, a medical assistant, was stationed. Mo thought he was “around the bend” when he refused to leave. They couldn’t wait for him to change his mind. Mo said, “I was pushing against time and went across to Wuvulu where I anchored in one of the few anchorages, went ashore and picked up Ken McColl who had a teleradio set and was also a Coastwatcher”. It was the time of the northwest monsoon and the weather was terrible, rainy, windy and squally. However they couldn’t wait for the storm to subside. They all piled on board the small boat, upped anchor, and headed for Aitape. It was after this they ploughed through the might of the Japanese Naval Fleet and miraculously survived.

Mo commented:

We regretted that sight of the aircraft carriers and worked our way through to Aitape, our first port of call. From there we worked our way down to Wewak, which had only a few Chinese shops and little stores. We tried to get food from the government stores there, but they had all gone bush. I went down as far as Boram Plantation and anchored there.

We were still very short of food. Through Mama Caroline, we heard that there was a big government depot up in the hills and that a labour officer was there. Mama Caroline and I walked up to the depot through swamps and mud to beg a bit of food and get the gist of what was happening. However on arrival there, we were told we could not have any food. We only wanted a bit to get us to Madang.

We took it in easy stages as the gearbox in the *Saemat* was heating up. Although the oil was all right, it must have got out of alignment. We got as far as Jimmy Reed's Plantation where he was growing cocoa and coconuts. We spent two days in the little anchorage there getting all we could scrounge. We decided to make our way to Madang to civilisation. We went down the coast as far as Mugil and visited the Catholic mission there. Mama Caroline knew them as they were her relatives. We had a royal feast and stayed there a couple of days well hidden.

Then Mama Caroline and the others decided to walk into Alexishafen, the headquarters of the big Catholic mission. We wanted the *Saemat* to be towed there for repairs. In the meantime, I had radioed Eric Feldt about our predicament and asked if they could drop a gearbox for the type of engine I had. He replied that he would look around and tell me on the four o'clock sked. In the meantime the pinnacle towed us into Sek Harbour and we were moored alongside the old wharf. Then a flying boat came over and dropped a parachute with the gearbox for us. It was smartly seized and put in position and we had the boat running again. In the meantime, we met W.G. Hall who was a planter from the Rai Coast near Saidor and also a Coast Watcher and had a place in Sek.

I stopped at his place and Mama Caroline stopped at Sip in the Sek Harbour. She settled back in her own little home with the rest of her family. We waited there until we got word back from Headquarters. In the meantime I sneaked down and had a look at the devastation in Madang. It was well done over; there were no natives, nothing. No Chinese walking in the streets. There was nothing in the whole of Madang, no dog or cats no nothing. To survive, we relied on native food and without Mama Caroline we would have died.

Bob Emery, who was working at the airstrip, had witnessed the bombing of Madang in January 1942. When he heard the reverberating noise of the aircraft coming, he hid in a gun pit, over two metres deep, which held an old ack ack gun from World War 1. With him was his cook-boy, Apin. They could see the planes coming in sets of three "beautiful shiny looking aluminium planes". He checked his list of Japanese bombers but could not find anything to compare with these shiny aluminium planes.

The first bomb created a hole about "half a cricket pitch in width" quite near where Emery and Apin were crouching and some clods of earth fell on top of them. Then bombs came booming and raining down on the town. As soon as the planes had gone, Emery pulled the gun off its mounting and dragged it out with some ideas of using it against a landing. By this time, the planes were back and Emery lay on the ground, head down, with bombs falling around him. In the next lull, he sheltered near a large log. He could see the town of Madang was burning, the beautiful old town with the German houses all gone and great clouds of black smoke were curling up into the air.

When the raid was over, Emery went looking for his large black dog in the camp which had also been heavily bombed. As he was looking at the damage to the store shed, his dog came out of a drain, badly shaken but alive. Emery managed to get a utility truck going and collected a few of the stores including rice and tinned meat and drove off to Wagol Plantation, expecting Japanese soldiers to land at any minute. There he met Bill Cahill and many other Madang men all sitting round drinking scotch as if there were no tomorrow. Later, the men drove back to Madang and saw the copra storage shed on fire, with the flames roaring. It was a week before the flames died down. Emery explored the wharf and found that the new customs shed had been damaged, but the bond store still contained many caddies of stick tobacco, ideal to pay for local labour in the bush.

In the event of a Japanese raid, Emery had been advised that Gordon Russell, Manager of Burns Philp, was to be the commander of the Madang section of New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR) and he, Emery, was to be his deputy. Sergeant Russell assumed full control of the town and, with Emery, organised to shift these caddies of tobacco and for months, the soldiers had a supply of tobacco to pay the line of carriers in the hills behind Madang (Emery: 24-30).

After the bombing of Madang, the Coastwatchers made a station at Nobonob where they had good views out to sea. But, on 30 January 1942, they received an urgent message to withdraw to Kainantu, as it was expected that the Japanese would occupy Madang at any time. When this did not eventuate, they were located back to coastal lookouts. In November 1942, Feldt recorded there were sixteen Coastwatchers on the Rai Coast and between them they had six teleradios, five launches and ample supplies and were anxious for action.

The team included a Czech lay brother from the Catholic Mission who wanted to fight the Japanese. He was appointed a petty officer while McNicol was ranked ordinary seaman, RANVR (Royal Australian Navy Volunteer reserve) This raised the total number to sixteen. Fortunately, a large quantity of supplies was available from Madang. Even more were required to equip the parties fully and these were dropped by the willing Catalinas (Feldt, 1946: 136).

One of them, Lt L.J. Bell R.A.N.V.R. had been keeping a watch at Sio on the Rai Coast but, with the poor visibility there, he and Lt B.W.G Hall decided to move to Rooke Island. With Bell and Hall in position, ships could not pass through the Vitiaz Straits without being spotted and they also reported on any aircraft flying to Rabaul or Lae.

When Bell reported five Japanese destroyers steaming southward through the Vitiaz Strait, the information was passed immediately to the Air Force and aircraft were despatched at once. At least two of the destroyers were sunk and the remainder were driven back. These measures prevented a larger Japanese attack on Lae. The Australians lost a Flying Fortress in the encounter, but two sergeants survived making their way to Sattelberg where a Lutheran Coast Watcher, Rev. Freund, helped them. Because of the vigilance of the Coastwatchers and the strength of the allied forces in the Solomons, the Japanese Command lost Buin and they then concentrated on Madang, Wewak and Finschhafen moving convoys to these places from the Carolines (Feldt, 1946: 153).

Meanwhile, Blue Harris, Mo Johnson, McNicol and two native policemen set off for Volupai, opposite Talasea and overlooking it. They kept a small launch with them should they need to escape (Feldt, 1946: 151). Later, they moved to Witu. While in New Britain, Mo Johnson managed a reconnaissance trip to Rabaul travelling by native canoes and walking:

Spotting down on Simpson harbour, I saw plenty of troop and cargo ships. It was a hive of activity. There was a big movement from there to Buna and Gasmata. The main distribution centre was Rabaul Harbour. It was at the end of 1942 and beginning of 1943 when I was there. I couldn't write anything down as we weren't allowed to commit pen to paper. I was only there two days and returned to Witu, where I was picked up by the Catalina flying boat. Walked most of the time on the return trip. For food, I lived off the land and arranged parachute drops of iron rations, tinned meat. Mostly K rations with a little bit of tea coffee and self-opening tins, cigarettes otherwise everything was off the land (Mo Johnson, interviews, 1970s).

Mo Johnson then returned to Harris and McNicol in Witu but the Japanese strafed their position with ten aircraft, fortunately without damage to them or their radio. When they tried to escape by the launch, the engine would not start so they sent a SOS to Headquarters. Eric Feldt answered their plea and turned to his friends, the pilots of the Catalinas. Feldt continued:

On the night of 18 January 1943, Flight Lieutenant White put the Catalina down on the entrance to Johan Albrecht Harbour and taxied to the to the eastern shore of the basin. A canoe came towards the aircraft in the shadow, anxiously watched by those on the aircraft.

“Is that you, Blue?” called McCarthy, who was on board.

“Yes. Who's that?” came the reply in the lisping voice of Harris.

“McCarthy.”

“Will you have room for my dog as well as everything else?” asked Harris.

Harris, Johnson, McNicol, the two police, the telradio, and the dog were taken on board. They waited for hours in the shadow of the Vitu volcano so that when they flew into Moresby the landing would be in daylight (Feldt, 1946: 155). In his memoirs, McCarthy mentions this incident and the satisfaction he felt, “of pulling Blue Harris into the blister compartment of a Catalina sent to rescue him from the Witu groups where he had been trapped with the Japs breathing down his neck” (McCarthy, 1963: 214).

From 2 to 14 March 1943, the crucial battle of the Bismarck Sea occurred. It was a great defeat for the Japanese. Coastwatchers, Captain Pursehouse and Lieutenant McColl witnessed the battle from the hills behind Finschhafen. A few weeks later, McColl was cornered by Japanese soldiers who fired at him. Before he could answer their fire, he slipped over in the mud. When the enemy tried to finish him off he rolled over and escaped into the jungle, keeping a rendezvous with Pursehouse. Realising that the local villagers had betrayed their position, they withdrew to Bena Bena (Dexter, 1968: 257).

Bell and Hall had kept a lookout on Rooke Island notifying Feldt of enemy movements until the situation proved too dangerous. Later, from their post on the Rai Coast, they reported enemy movements until betrayed by the Sibog villagers who led the Japanese to their hideout. Bell and Hall were killed and the rest withdrew to Bena Bena. Hall had been the plantation manager on the Rai Coast who had helped the Bel group in their trade negotiations prewar by delivering messages and goods on his trading boat between the various groups. Maybe the people did not realise that he was one of the Coastwatchers camped in the back of the Rai Coast. If they did, then this was a double betrayal. Because of their actions, these Sibog people were severely punished in the post-war trials.

Peter Lawrence has recorded the reasons for their betrayal. The Sengam and the Gira people had been contacted by the Letub cultists in Madang, many of whom belonged to the Bel Group who believed that, in collaborating with the Japanese, they would ensure the coming of the cargo. These Bel people were the traditional trade friends of the Sengam and the Gira people in the hinterland of the Rai Coast and easily persuaded them:

As a result, during 1943, the Sengam and the Gira were responsible for three acts of hostility against the Allies. A party of Sengam natives led a Japanese patrol to Maibang, the Coastwatchers escaping only by a hair's breadth. A Gira



By courtesy, Australian War Memorial, 075699

*Corporal Merire receiving the British Empire Medal.*

native led the Japanese in an abortive raid on the Coastwatchers on the inland east bank of the Nankina. Finally, and most important, a Sengam native, a Lutheran helper who had assumed leadership under the Japanese – persuaded the Sibog natives to kill three Coastwatchers. — They made plans to kill Lieut. Bell and his party, who were encamped near their village. Bell apparently heard about the conspiracy and shot one of the natives involved, but thereafter he and the others were murdered (Lawrence, 1964: 108).

In June 1943, a message from the Australian commander-in-chief, General Blamey, stated, “It is extremely important that we should get further information concerning enemy activities in this area [Sepik] and do everything possible to enlist the natives on our side, or at least draw them away from the Japanese” (Dexter, 1968: 260). This was easier said than done because the local villagers thought the Japanese were winning with their superior numbers. Often there would be thousands of Japanese against a few hundred Australian troops and it was a further two years before it became obvious who the winner might be.

Kenelm Burrige interviewed a man on Manam Island who said:

You see, we do not understand. We are just in the middle. First the Germans came, and the Australians pushed them out. Then the Japanese pushed out the Australians. Later, the Australians and the Americans forced the Japanese to go. It is beyond us. We can do nothing. When a *kiap* tells us to carry his baggage, we have to do it. When a German told us to carry his baggage, we had to do it. If we did not we might be killed. All right, there it is. Take it or leave it. *Nogat tok*, I didn’t say anything, that’s just how it is. That’s life (Burrige, 1960: 12).

On 8 August 1943, Lieutenant Hawker arrived at Wesa to reconnoitre the Bogadjim Road. With him were Corporal Merire, a local constable, Lieutenant Beveridge and Lance corporals Monk and Marshall. It was known that the Japanese were nearby so they were very cautious. During their watch, Monk and Marshall shot at two ghostly figures crawling up the hill. The next morning, the party discovered the bodies of two Japanese. It was a case of kill or be killed. The next day, the Australians were gathering near the Wesa River for a cup of tea with Lieutenant Foster’s men. When someone called, “Come and get it”, there was a volley from about 30 metres away. In diving for cover some of the troops fell over a steep slope behind the huts and were not able to take part in the fighting. Foster’s section had eight men, four of whom had fallen over the slope. Private Palm rushed to get a Bren gun and charged at the Japanese soldiers who had appeared, however the gun was not cocked and he too fell over the cliff.

Meanwhile, Foster was in position to make a lone stand. The Japanese justifiably thought that they had surprised the Australians, but erroneously thought also that they had captured their objective. As they gathered near the cookhouse, Foster from a distance of about 15 yards fired a full magazine from the hip into their midst and saw at least five fall. The survivors made off into the undergrowth (Dexter, 1968: 249).

Further inland, Greathead’s party arrived at Bena Bena on their way to Madang, but hearing it was crowded with Japanese, they stopped at the Ramu River. Here, native informants told Greathead the Japanese were patrolling on the other side of the river. Greathead then tried to establish himself on the northwest side of Madang but, to get there, he had to cross hazardous mountainous country. He noted that, near here, Dr Braun had helped many of the Coastwatchers in his hospital at Amele, before he was arrested by the Japanese (Dexter, 1968: 257-8).

On 12 July 1943, Corporal Merire, a local Constable, “arrived exhausted at Bundi — from a memorable patrol into the heart of enemy territory near Madang. — Merire made a full and convincing report of having seen a motor road from Bogadjim to Mabelebu”. Thousands of local “coolies” were employed by the Japanese constructing the track and another thousand were

carrying supplies and there were also sixty motor vehicles. He reported that the Japanese were treating the natives very liberally and with good effect. For this investigative work, Corporal Merire received a British Empire Medal on 7 September 1944. The citation read, "Sergeant Merire's courage, determination and resource enabled him to carry out valuable reconnaissance work in Japanese held Madang during January 1943. Sergeant Merire had been a member of the Territory of Papua New Guinea and the Royal Papuan Constabulary for the past nine years".

Lieutenant MacAdie was able to write a report to General Herring based on the findings of Merire. The better economic position of Japanese at this stage enabled them to pay the local workers well whereas, "our stocks of trade [mainly shells and salt] are at present nil and we are compelled to beg reluctant natives for credit for food supplies and labour. We are essentially dependent on the generosity of a population which owed the Allies little or no allegiance" (Dexter, 1968: 244).

During 1943, Don Power was the OIC of a small unit in the bush behind Bogia. They were understaffed, having only three signallers and two other soldiers, and relying on 10 local soldiers. They set up bush camps in the Schraeder Mountains with wireless sets and signallers to keep headquarters informed of the movement of Japanese troops. The three camps at Apanam, Karment and Kummera each had about five men and were well supplied, with most of their supplies being kept at the Karment Camp. There were rumours everywhere that the Japanese were advancing and it was unnerving in the bush at night not knowing if they would be attacked or not.

One morning, the mountain people came running along the track near the Karment Camp yelling that the Japanese had attacked the camp at Apanam and killed Power. The signaller and some others panicked and, grabbing their rifles, took to the bush, leaving the camp unguarded. Meanwhile, three of the local soldiers went down the track to check the story out and seeing no Japanese and no evidence of an attack returned to inform the signaller hiding in the bush. They all returned to the Karment Camp only to find it looted. This was bad news as they could not rely on the local people in time of attack. There were now only the camps at Apanam and Kummera. One day the Japanese sent notes through the village people to the soldiers informing them to surrender or they would be shot as spies. They refused, but they realised that the Japanese were heading towards them from Madang. On 6 August 1943, Power was at Apanam with about eight men when Japanese soldiers surrounded the camp.

He recounted what happened then in an article in the December 1947 issue of *Pacific Islands Monthly*:

We were fortunate that the camp was on the bank of the Asai River and that was our means of escape. The three whites and natives Sioni and Ramiki managed to escape quick and lively. I was delayed in escaping and lost a lot of

skin and my glasses in doing so. My rifle and revolver also got lost in the river. After being washed down river I landed on the opposite bank and wandered around in the bush dodging Japs for the remainder of the day. I slept in the bush that night, near to Apanam camp, and it certainly did rain a great deal. I was really in a bad way, very sick and sore and nearly blind, had no firearms and no communication with the outside world.

Over the following days, Power made his way to the deserted Kummera camp. Later he was relieved to see five of his local soldiers (Nassawan, Biaka, Matiti, Ramiki and Gallimu). They said that, after the Apanam attack, four European soldiers in the Kummera camp had disarmed them and headed off to Chimbu.<sup>5</sup> Being unarmed and surrounded by hostile mountain people, and with the Japanese advancing, these local soldiers were in a bad way.

Power continued:

I knew there was a place called Chimbu somewhere in the highlands, about a fortnight's walk away. I had no idea where it was, but I was in the hope of eventually finding it. We were not very well equipped for the journey. The natives had one or two spare laplaps; about two had a shirt each; all I had on was an old pre-war shirt, a pair of shorts, a pair of pre-war shoes and cap that belonged to a police boy. We had no blankets or anything in that line. Everything like that was among the loot that disappeared at Kummera. For the next eight days we just kept on and on, up and down mountains - plenty of rain and leeches, and as cold as charity (ibid).

Eventually, Power and his men were flown out to Port Moresby where they had trouble with the ANGAU authorities, trying to get an issue of clothing, blankets, mosquito nets or anything:

It was not believed that I had been with ANGAU for eighteen months and had received no issue of clothing. I was laughed at when I applied for sustenance for the year. My natives whom I left in Bena Bena did not do much better. Instead of their receiving recognition for their hard work and faithful service, they were forced to sign on with ANGAU, and were sent to work immediately and were given no chance to recuperate (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, December 1947).

On the Japanese side, General Nakai's 78th Regiment had been formed to advance on Lae from Madang through the Markham Valley. By this time it had a strength of 12,000 men with the headquarters at Kwato. "The 239th Regiment of about 2,300 men were stationed in the Madang-Erima-Rai Coast area" (Dexter, 1968: 600). General Adachi's supply lines were becoming pressed by the increasing Allied sea and air offensives and it was likely that Nakai would soon be pressured to send some of his present force to bolster up portions of the sagging XVIII division of the Japanese army.



By courtesy, Tim Owen.

*Fr English conducts a graveside service for a dead soldier in Papua New Guinea. (Damien Parer).*

By 1944, the tide of the war turned in favour of the Allies. American troops landed at Saidor in January 1944, and General Adachi ordered his troops to withdraw to Madang. Following this, the Allies fought their way to Bogati and Bongu on the Rai Coast and Madang was recaptured on 24 April 1944. The Japanese troops withdrew towards Hollandia with the Allies mopping up along the coast (Dexter, 1961:732).

After four months leave, Mo Johnson went to Hollandia in 1944 with other soldiers to reconnoitre the area for the forthcoming American landings:

I wasn't too happy about the show but the army was the army. We were sent to pinpoint the Japanese areas there. That's where many troops were killed. In my little unit there was seven of us, Harris and Mass and Webb and another were killed and only three got out - myself, McNicol, of New Britain, and a troppo New Zealander. He lost both his hands when trying to tear a sword off a Jap, and then Yali joined us. I did not contact the missionaries in Hollandia, but my boys did. That is when I found out my wife was killed and my children were in with the half-caste kids. I didn't see them. We couldn't get into the compounds. The natives, yes they could grease their hair and go in because the Japanese didn't know any different (Mo Johnson, interviews, 1970s).

Mo survived the terrible conditions in Hollandia and walked out with McNicol, and two New Guineans, Buka and Yali, who was later to become a well known cargo cultist in the Madang area. Mo had to be assisted because he was sick and fainting from his wounds. They walked back as far as Aitape, where Mo was repatriated to Finschhafen and then had eight months in Brisbane which was the end of the war for him.

Max Sadler was a radar mechanic in the Radar Installation and Maintenance Service of the RAAF. Initially stationed at Nadzab in the Markham Valley, where there was heavy fighting as the Australians took on the Japanese forces, Max often heard the gun salute at three in the afternoon which signalled another burial service for those

killed the previous day. Max's unit was posted to Madang within two days of the Australians landing there and he looked forward to meeting up with his brother, Roy, who was an army captain.

Max Sadler:

Going up in the barge, I was not well. When we landed in Madang we set up a radar station then I was really taken ill and was sent to the army hospital with yellow jaundice where I stayed for ten days. While there, I got to know some of the troops who had walked through the jungle from Finschhafen. I was twenty-three years old and had to fare for myself as the nurses were flat out with badly injured troops who were arriving all the time. My condition was only yellow jaundice and was not a physical condition like the many soldiers who had been injured. By the time I got well, the operational section of the radar of the airforce had taken over and we were transferred back to Nadzab. Later I returned to Madang, and I was stationed on Kranket Island, which was a staging camp for personnel like me. The island was in safe hands and even the Madang harbour was safe at this time because merchant navy supply ships were arriving all the time. It was part of my work to assemble the equipment as it was brought off the boats.

Then I was transferred to a camp on the outskirts of the Madang airstrip which had been restored to normal use. I met some local people near the airstrip. ANGAU employed them to help us with the heavy lifting work and they came

out on a daily basis. While at the airstrip one of our tasks was to set up lights with 24-volt batteries. These were recharged at the edge of the airstrip in the daytime and put out while planes were arriving at night and only turned on while they were landing. We were establishing a radar station to detect any enemy planes coming in low over the water. We had information on and communication with all allied aircraft approaching the airstrip and, if an unidentified aircraft was flying low, the airport was notified and these planes were dealt with as Japanese planes were still quite active in the area. The radar station was set in a rubber plantation near the airstrip and our first job was to run wires through the jungle 50 metres from the operational tower and 50 metres to 100 metres in another direction to save the operational centre from being bombed.

One day we went to work at daybreak as normal to put the wires on one station and returned at half-past eight to change, as our clothes were wringing wet, and then ate our breakfast. When we returned we found Japanese soldiers had cut the wires. They must have been watching us do the work and then they undid the work for us. My brother was a captain in the army in Madang at the time and this was reported to his unit. As radar personnel were unarmed we did not return to the area until it had been cleared (Max Sadler, interview, April 2004).

Another time Max and his unit were near Alexishafen returning along the road to their camp when they saw three Japanese soldiers who disappeared into the jungle. Being unarmed, they held their breath until they got to camp. As soon as this assignment was finished, they went to Biak Island in Dutch New Guinea where the Japanese were still very active. Here they did not to set up radar stations but were to salvage what electronic gear the Japanese had left behind. It was here that Max was injured by a booby trap placed on some of the electronic gear and he spent four months in the American hospital in Biak.

On 15 August, Japan surrendered and on 13 September, Lieut-General Adachi officially surrendered at Wewak (Long, 1963: 381).

As each area was cleared of the Japanese, ANGAU took control providing food for the local villagers who had been displaced and were starving. ANGAU also organised the removal of some of the supplies left behind by the allies. After the war those who had collaborated with the Japanese were arrested and punished. While it was recognised that some had been forced into working for them there were others who actively helped them, betraying the Coastwatchers and surrendering downed pilots to the Japanese as had happened in Riwo Village.



### **Trials of the missionaries**

Dr Braun was a medical doctor as well as a missionary with the Lutheran Church. During the war, he was unceasing in his care of the Coastwatchers, local people, missionaries, as well as all the prisoners. He had been a long-time friend of Bishop Wolf at a time when relationships between the Lutherans and Catholics were anything but cordial.

This is his story of the war as he saw it when I interviewed him in the 1970s:

The war in Europe had been going on quite a while before Pearl Harbour. Very little seemed to have changed in Madang, some of the German nationals had been interned and sent to Australia, so this left the mission short handed. Suddenly one morning we heard many planes and we went to the highest hill and saw planes circling and dropping bombs on the Madang. One solitary plane piloted by Johnson flew towards Madang, and, when he saw what was happening, did 180-degree turn and got out. It took a couple of hours to hear the first reports of damage. The jail was hit and 8 New Guineans were killed. We took care of the sick. The Administration had left and NG Rifles who later became ANGAU were the only groups left except for Catholic and Lutheran Missionaries. Most of missionaries stayed on their stations. We didn't expect the Japanese to land in Madang and some ANGAU officials did not expect it either.

The Coral Sea Battle was fought and lost by the Japanese who landed in Madang soon afterwards. We heard from the local people that the Lutheran missionaries from Nobonob had been interned on Kranket Island with two Catholic missionaries and that our missionaries in Bogadjim had been taken and executed. Reverend J. Welsch, who was with us at Amele, thought that since he was a German, he would go down and see what was happening.<sup>6</sup> At the Gum River he was tied to a tree for three days as a spy. The Japanese told him if he were a good German he wouldn't be in New Guinea, but would be fighting for his country back home.

When the Japanese were coming up to our Amele Station, we had little warning. They suddenly appeared on New Years Day 1942. We heard sirens in the bush and when the locals told us the Japanese were coming, we went out to meet them. Rev. Welsch was with them but was not allowed to talk much. King and I were told to sit on a bench in the dispensary and we stayed there for five days. My wife, Sister Kroeger and an Australian nurse, Sr Klotzbuecher were told they could go back to their house which they did. The man in charge was a full colonel and I figured there were 400 to 500 Japanese in the group. The Japanese ruined our car by driving it over ditches to see how strong it was. All this while we were sitting on the bench. If we tried to stand up they were told, "Stand up. No good". We were allowed to go to the toilet, but learnt to ask two hours beforehand. Mr Welsch

was allowed to visit us occasionally. They told the women to report it immediately if they were molested. When a Japanese soldier tried to steal a blanket from a native house near the hospital, interpreters thought he had molested the women but Mrs Braun said "No".

Later when Captain Marua took over at Amele with a smaller group, things loosened up. Marua told us to hide the foodstuffs under the eaves of the main hospital because the Colonel was coming. He was right as Colonel Yamamoto asked me to give him presents of watches and a camera. At this stage, Wewak and Madang were under General Adachi and it was he who surrendered after the war.

After a short time we were told we would be transferred to Kranket Island. On the way, we had to walk to the mouth of the Gum River where landing craft took us to the island. The Japanese were perturbed to see hundreds of New Guineans lined up along the road crying as Rev. Welsch and my wife and I passed along the road. They asked to carry our loads but were not allowed. The only thing the Japanese carried was the dental equipment, as they had no dentist in the New Guinea outfit. I had done dental work for them and they asked if I wasn't going to bring the equipment along too. I replied that I wasn't much interested. While they loaded it onto the landing craft, one Japanese soldier threw away a shotgun which they had taken from Amele. When we came to Kranket Island, we found 19 other missionaries there.

At that time Allied bombing raids were becoming more common, so we built a bomb shelter for our protection. As it was usually very full of Japanese troops, we had to build another one. Usually, when the air raids came the Japanese tried to take a hold of us. There could be 6 soldiers holding each of the 19 of us as we had learnt about God and were under God's protection.

One Japanese soldier had known a Methodist family when he was a small boy and was quite attracted to the missionaries. He gave us advice suggesting that we always show our displeasure if we didn't like anything, but not drive it too far, as it could lead to executions. If we were too supine they would despise us. If too stubborn, we could be shot as not worth keeping. He advised us, if we wanted anything, to always go to the man one rank above the man who was in charge. We tried this soon after on Kranket Island. The Captain forced us to make a barbed wire fence around our encampment, thus cutting us off from the beach with no opportunity to bathe. I told the Captain in charge that I wanted to see the Major who was stationed in Madang. He said he was the boss, but I said it was beyond his jurisdiction. There was a lot of opportunity to talk to the Japanese because at night no lights were allowed. So we discussed the problems of war and peace, and the emperor etc.

On Kranket Island, we were ordered to grow sweet potatoes in large gardens. One Japanese man who was friendly towards us brought us a barrel of desiccated taro and said he would create a commotion at the gate and chase some cows around to us and, if we could kill a calf without it mooing, we'd have some meat. After a bombing raid on Madang, the explosions killed hundreds of fish and the soldiers were out collecting them. The Japanese told us to do the same, as it was a present from Mr Roosevelt.

When the sweet potatoes on Kranket Island were getting ready to harvest, we missionaries were moved to Siar Island where we were under the Kempf Tai, the Japanese Military Police. We lived inside a stone fence that had been erected many years before by German missionaries. At night, the New Guineans would throw pawpaws, taro and yams over the fence. This was strictly forbidden, but we were pleased to see that the New Guinea people tried to help us in every way possible. While we were there on Siar, there were many raids by the Allies and, the villagers told us that an American plane, which had been shot down, had some people in it who knew some of our missionaries. They said that one of the men had asked for a Bible.<sup>7</sup> These pilots were all executed while we were there.

One of the missionaries was taken away from the camp and never returned. We imagined he got ill and became a nuisance to them and was killed. Finally, the Japanese came and told us that we Lutherans, the Catholic Missionaries at Alexishafen, the half-castes and Filipinos would all be transferred to Manam Island off the North Coast. In the prison Camp on Manam, my wife and I got very ill from malnutrition. One day I refused to change seats with a Japanese soldier who was sitting on an ants' nest. One of the Japanese tortures was to tie people to a tree with an ant nest under it. No one thought the Japanese would be as vicious and barbaric as they were or that they would have such an anti-white feeling. The German Nationals were treated worse than the Americans as the Japanese felt that after the war, there would be another war with the Americans as their Allies.

I think there were about 122<sup>8</sup> of us on Manam Island and we only got an occasional air raid. However, when Bogia and the shore were bombed, we could feel the effects of raids on the coast. We stayed quite a while there and I was able to take care of the Catholics and made a common hospital. Some of the Catholic sisters helped Mrs Braun and Sister Klotzbuecher in the hospital. At that time we didn't get much food, it was mainly tapioca and we tried to make it in all ways possible to make it different. We were living in huts we made ourselves and when we heard the village dogs barking, we tried to make them come close so we could kill them and eat them. The Japanese were brutal to each other. We noticed that a Major would not hit anyone except

Captains who hit the Lieutenants who only hit the non commissioned officers and the latter beat up the common soldiers. One time one of our guards was tied up. He was lying in the sun and his wrists and legs were tied behind his back. I felt sorry for him because I knew he hadn't had any water all day so I filled a bottle with water and went up to him and he called out to me, "doctor, doctor don't come near me I'm being watched. I won't get that water to drink anyway and the only thing that will happen is that you'll be tied up the same as me". So I took his word for it and went back again.

In many ways, they had a different attitude from the Europeans. I remember when the Japanese were up in Amele when we were first captured; there was a bottle of Scotch whisky in the house which the colonel took. In the evening, the colonel called the troops together and each soldier got a little more than a thimble full of whisky and that is the amount the colonel got too. Rev Welsch was there and watched this, said "Heavens. No German Colonel would do that", and I said, "Don't worry, no American Colonel would do that either".

While we were on Manam Island, we had less contact with the New Guineans than we had on the other islands although we did get to talk to some of the people. Occasionally, the Japanese allowed us get out to take care of New Guineans wounded in strafing raids by our planes. They were rather strict with the German missionaries. I got to know one of the Japanese officers quite well and one day I asked why they had this attitude. He said "Those German they aren't fooling us at all. In his first book, Hitler calls us yellow monkeys and now we are honorary Aryans. Who do they think they are kidding?"

On Manam, the Japanese had us make more gardens. They had a whole line of us working, including some Indian troops from Burma, to make a big field. One time, we had a kind of a slow down while were working there. There was only one Japanese Agriculture Officer who had a line of 300 or so hoeing away including some New Guineans planting silver beet. A big Sepik native was hoeing very slowly. The Japanese Officer came up and more or less asked him to step forward if he wanted to fight. The Sepik stepped forward and raised his hoe at the Japanese. The Japanese grabbed the Sepik and threw him. The Sepik went one way and his hoe the other. As soon as it happened, everyone hoed furiously. I thought we could stage the slow down again but the Japanese Officer looked at me and I thought that prudence was the better part of valour.

Finally, when the vegetables we had planted were ready for harvest, the Japanese decided that Manam was no good for us and they took us to the mainland near Aiwia Plantation. While we were there we were heavily bombed and strafed but no one was killed. Finally we were put on a ship, the

*Dorish Maru*, to go to Hollandia. A Catalina spotted us and fired on us. The anti-aircraft batteries on the ship hit the Catalina plane and it went down with a terrific crash and explosion. Early next morning, eight planes came and attacked us with bombs and machine gun fire. The helmsman was very clever at avoiding the bombs. The seawater that was washed up over the deck was quite hot.

We were on deck and a lot of our people were killed and so were a lot of Japanese. One colonel was killed and the forward anti aircraft battery replaced its entire staff 3 times before the gun was hit. All in all, we lost about 1/3 of 122 missionaries and half-castes on the ship. Everything was full of blood and it was horrible to see people die when they had been hit with phosphorous shells and see people who were still living having smoke coming out of their muscles. Practically everyone had wounds of some type of another.

(Dr Braun was shot but was saved by a cigarette lighter in his pocket. He worked day and night to help the wounded. Dr Braun was the spokesman for the group as the Japanese regarded him as the leader.)

He continues:

Of our own personnel, my brother in law, Ted Radke, Rev Welsch, Alvin Kuehn and Sister Klotzbuecher were killed on the ship. Bishop Wolf had a hole in his chest and you could see his collapsed lung and the clavicle and the top of his arm were gone. It was a horrible mess. The ship was aflame and we did our best in fire fighting. After we landed in Wewak, we took out our dead and our wounded and put them ashore. The Japanese fixed up their soldiers. The Japanese anti-aircraft man who was an officer was also a Baptist and he said he would see to it that our dead would get a Christian burial. They were undoubtedly put in a mass grave somewhere on Wewak Beach. The Japanese soldier made fun of some of the antics of the wounded. When my wife saw this, she was so sickened she vomited. Later the Japanese told us to go back to the same ship. We didn't feel much like doing this, but they said could machine-gun us down there and then. That convinced us and we all went back on the ship again.

Then we were landed at Hollandia at Hortikon Beach and were shown an old wooden shed and told it was our new home. We had to carry our own sick and wounded and we put them in rows just as they were, Lutherans and Catholics, men and women just as we dropped them down in the stretchers. The Japanese made a platform at one end and 24 hours a day we had the Japanese watching us. They were quite disgusted with us as there were only six or seven people who could work out of the group who had come from Manam. While we were there, they sent some more Catholic missionaries from Wewak, so we had practically our old numbers back again. We were quite miserable and useless.

The nursing staff took care of the people and most of the severely wounded, Bishop Wolf, Sister Kroeger and some Catholic sisters died one by one and we buried them. Finally, they decided to put us miles further inland and that is where we stayed. They didn't get much gardening out of us any more, though occasionally they had us out to unload the ships. We did not unload war material, but bully beef etc. I got out of that, as there were so many sick people to look after. But they still hoped to get some work out of us.

In the evening, they would have us all lined up and they would give us lectures on what was wrong with the white man and how we had abused the coloured people in the past. We were lined up with the Germans, being the "Allies", in the front row. Next were the Filipinos being fellow Asians then the mixed race. Then came the Australians because they weren't as big an enemy as the Americans. Finally the Americans, the advantage for us was that we could slump at the back. The people in the front row had to stand at perfect attention otherwise the Japanese would kick them. They told us all about shooting Tasmanian aborigines and broken Indian Treaties and Germans getting locals drunk and getting their cattle and land in South-west Africa and of Spanish atrocities in Mexico. It was surprising what they knew. They read entire Indian Treaties to us and said, "This was the calling on the Great Spirit in heaven that as long as the sun sets in the west and rises in the East that the land of the Sioux should be from here to here". It was dated 1868 and then a new treaty was made about two years later.

Every day the Japanese had a new set of white man's atrocities that we had to listen to. Finally, they said that, if we would give them some information on a tape-recording which they could use for broadcasting, then they would give us better food but, by that time, we were so sick and tired that they didn't get any takers. As a result they told us we wouldn't get any salt. That came to bother us later when we were in the bush. The unsalted rice went down and came right up again. We got one tin of bully beef to mix with the rice and divide amongst 120 people.

Suddenly, the American bombings became more severe and we had about given up all hope of surviving. One day there was a severe bombardment by the Americans before they landed at Hollandia. The rocket fire was so severe that the forest looked as if a tornado had gone through it. Defeated at last, the Japanese soldiers retreated, leaving their severely wounded behind. They took some of us along the coast to a River where they decided we had better go back and gave us a letter dismissing us. We went back to the camp where we had been before. One New Guinea boy Naki<sup>9</sup> was taken on with them to the other side of the river. We imagined that he was killed by bullets or a strafing raid on the following day. After we returned we could hear American patrols throwing hand grenades around in the bush.

Fathers Hagen and Kroeken and Brother Januarius, succeeded in contacting an American patrol and American troops and scouts came to the camp and rescued us. That was almost the end of the war for us. However while we were in Hollandia waiting to be evacuated to Finschhafen we heard some planes and we told the soldiers they were Japanese planes. In the wardroom, my wife and some of the sisters heard the planes too. The reason we were so sure was that it was the only sound we hadn't heard before. We hadn't been scared of it before but we figured we better be scared of it now and sure enough it didn't take long and the bombs dropped and the ammunition dump was hit and we saw the biggest fire I had ever seen. One of the American doctors had his heels shot off by a bomb fragment. Not a shot was fired at those three Japanese planes.

I would say that the Japanese in general were quite impressed with us. We didn't have people who went psychotic and they could see we were not filled with hate and that was one thing they found hard to understand.

Whenever a missionary died, the Japanese paid their respects. A High Japanese Commander was very outspoken, "The Americans call themselves Christians," he said, "We are a pagan nation so let the hatred towards the Americans burn in your hearts" [for strafing the ship].

The ordeal of the Catholic Missionaries was very similar to the Lutherans.

On 19 December 1942, the Japanese came to Alexishafen. In the previous days, Brother Gerhoch asked Bishop Wolf what they should do with the Church records. In the end it was decided that they should be burnt. The missionaries made a large fire of their precious diaries, documents and photographs. The Japanese came to Alexishafen in the middle of the night banging on doors and ordering everyone out with their hands in the air. They were made to register by the Japanese and told to stay there, if any tried to escape they were warned they would be forced to dig their own graves.

Then Bishop Wolf was summoned to the presence of the Japanese Commander.

The interpreter asked, "Are you the Captain of the mission?"

"No", replied Bishop Wolf, "I am a Catholic Bishop".

Again the interpreter said, "Are you the Captain?"

Bishop Wolf laughed a little, "Captain eh! Well yes if you wish I am the captain".

But the Commander angrily whipped out his pistol, "You laugh eh? Do that again and I'll shoot".

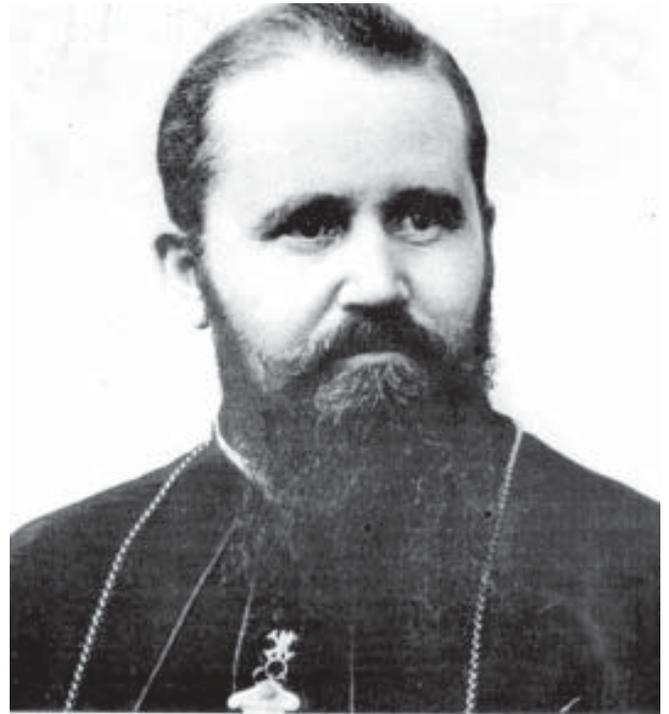
The Bishop turned pale. He had a weak heart and from then on he didn't want to have anything to do with the Japanese. Brother Gerhoch and Father Jischke took over the running of the mission and the interviews with the Japanese. Brother Gerhoch got on quite well with the Japanese Captain and when some Lutheran missionaries were interned at Alexishafen, he requested that they be given the same treatment and food as the Catholics. The Captain agreed and the Lutherans were no longer restricted to house arrest. Thus began a mixing of the Lutheran missionaries with the Catholics, something that was rare before the war. The Japanese did not ask whether the missionaries were Catholic or Lutheran, but put them all together in the same prison camps.

When the Second World War broke out in Europe, all German missionaries, Catholic and Lutheran, were under suspicion and some were interned in Australia for their political leanings. Relations with the Australians in Madang became even more strained. Because of the war, Madang Harbour was blacked out each night. Unaware of these restrictions, Brother Birchmans, the captain of the *Stella Maris*, caused quite a stir one night when he put his lights on as he was coming into the harbour. The District Officer, Ward Oakley, rode post haste down to the wharf on his bicycle to investigate. Since he had no lights on, he fell off into the mud, which did not improve his temper. He was furious when he saw it was the mission boat and the brother was subsequently fined \$100 dollars.

Bishop Wolf kept a fatherly eye on the many Priests, Brothers and Sisters under his care. Alexishafen was the hub of other mission stations in the Highlands, the Sepik, Wewak and the Madang District. Then came the war and the Japanese bombed Madang in January 1941, but did not invade it until the following year. Once the Allied bombing began, the missionaries were shifted into the bush behind Alexishafen at Gayaba. One terrible day Bishop Wolf and the other missionaries peered down on the mission station from the hills and saw Alexishafen being strafed and bombed. The beautiful cathedral was no more, and most of the buildings were flattened.

Sister Kasbauer captured the atmosphere in her book about those who suffered from the "big catastrophe":

In March 1943, the first [Allied] bomb fell in Mugil. It was like a signal. Some Japanese soldiers came to Mugil, looked around and left again. In April, the Japanese occupied the station, shooting and shouting everywhere. The Japanese soldiers are not good gunmen. Wounded cows and pigs flee into the bush where they perish. The smell in the air gives this fact away. A couple of soldiers make firewood of school and church furniture. As if there aren't enough trees. Coconut trees are cut just for the sake of one *kulau*. And still they have discipline. The interpreter was sent to ask if the soldiers were allowed to enter the church in their muddy boots. Japanese custom, they would never enter any house in Japan with street shoes, how much less a sacred building. Father Kemmerling gave the permission.



By courtesy, Catholic Mission, Alexishafen

*Bishop Wolf SVD, the Bishop at Alexishafen when war broke out.*

Every morning the Japanese have a special church service with prayers and songs. And during this service they present a fourfold pledge: 1, obedience to the superiors; 2, contentment with the existing situation of war; 3, abstinence; and 4, faithfulness to King Nippon, the son of heaven (Kasbauer, 1953: 15-21)

One of the priests tried to hide the mission horses but they kept coming back to the mission for a feed. The Japanese found out what the priest was doing and it took them three hours with all the Japanese officers present to decide what to do with him. The priest was pardoned and restricted to house arrest. The Sisters were determined to let the invaders see God's love and kindness. They mended and darned torn garments and cared for the sick if needed. One young man, named Michael, seemed different and the Sisters found out he was a Christian when he asked for rosary beads and medals. Father was suspicious as many Japanese soldiers asked him for medals and used them as talisman against gunshots. But Michael proved that he was a Christian. He knew the Hail Mary and all the Latin Mass Prayers. He had studied for four years in a Jesuit college.

From now on Michael comes to Mass every day. More Catholics are found among the soldiers, but they were not supposed to show their faith. The Japanese soldiers were very kind to the children. They respected women. No crime in this line was ever committed. The native women were at



By courtesy, Catholic Mission, Alexishafen

*Some of the missionaries in the prison camp at Hollandia when they were rescued by American soldiers.*

first worried, but soon they realised they had nothing to fear. It was said that severe penalties were on such crimes even death penalties. Sister Siglinde tried to keep the school in Liksal going since the classrooms in Mugil were occupied, but it was a difficult task. The younger children were afraid of the bombers. The older boys had to help the Japanese to build houses. On Sundays, many natives came to Holy Mass. The natives showed considerable courage and conviction. The soldiers would tease them as “Amen-boys” and “Christ-slaves”. The Japanese couldn’t stand the good relationship between the native people and the missionaries.

One day, the convent was raided by Japanese looking for radios. And what did they find? An old battery, which ceased to work in 1938, as the date on it showed and an old apparatus used to cure rheumatism. The Japanese last hope of finding the hidden radio was the tabernacle. The Sisters and Brother didn’t know where the key was (Kasbauer 1953).

From now on, Mass was forbidden and the Sisters, no longer able to teach, were limited to their convent. Then the Japanese decided the missionaries should leave Mugil and go to Gayaba where the missionaries from Alexishafen had been for a couple of months. On the 13 August, the Japanese forced them to leave. The 5 sisters and the two priests were put on a truck and the brothers walked. The native people cried all along the road to see them go. They came to a bridge only to find it had been washed away. Back to Matukar was the order of the second captain. When the sisters suggested to overnight in Banali, Father Kemmerling got the first captain’s permission to do so. However the second captain, furious that his order had been disobeyed, hit Father Kemmerling with a big stick so hard that he fell to the ground and the stick was broken. Getting up again, the captain grabbed

his walking stick and started hitting him again. One of the Sisters got between the officer and the priest to protect him and she succeeded. Next morning, they left Matukar again. When the truck broke down, everybody had to walk. In the evening, local people came to help carry the sisters’ bundles till they were chased away by the soldiers. Next day, passing through Alexishafen to Gayaba they joined up with the other missionaries. It was a sad but also joyful occasion as they had been greatly concerned about each other wondering if they had survived the bombing and the invasion? (ibid)

Not long after this, the missionaries were shifted from one camp to another and then, in November 1943, they were shifted to Manam where many Lutheran missionaries joined them.

The old rivalries and antagonisms between the Catholic and Lutheran missionaries were broken down through suffering and sharing. Dr Braun, from the Lutheran hospital tended to everyone aided by Brother Gerhoch from Alexishafen and some of the Sisters. In February 1944, the Japanese decided to shift the missionaries from Manam to the mainland where they were put on board the *Dorish Maru*. Among the mixed race people on board were Maria Kramer and her children and sister.

They were all headed for Hollandia. While at sea a Catalina spotted the ship and fired on it and was then shot down. Early next morning, 6 February 1944, eight planes came and attacked the *Dorish Maru* with bombs and machine gun fire. The missionaries were on deck and were told to take everything white off and lie face down. Was this a deliberate act so that they would not be identified as missionaries? As they lay on the deck one beside each other they prayed earnestly knowing it could be their last hour. The American planes strafed them again and again. 27 sisters died right away and 7 died later on. Sister Elreda was shot through the foot. In the end, so the pilots reported later, they saw a white veil waving in the wind and realising there were missionaries on board they stopped the bombing. Sister Elreda<sup>10</sup> had bleeding legs and one of the officers gave her a bandage to stop the bleeding.

Following this episode, the Catholic missionaries were interned alongside their Lutheran colleagues at Hollandia as described by Dr Braun.

The Americans landed at Hortigan Harbour cutting the Japanese off from their supplies and they had very little food. Some of the missionaries went off to contact the Americans and, being successful, came back from the bush. Sister Elreda was in bed and Dr Braun was acting like a little boy throwing his hat in the air. Sister thought he had gone off his head until she heard that the Americans were coming. They were rescued from Hollandia and taken to Finschhafen nearly dying of hunger and wounds.

On 13 May 1944, the missionaries arrived in Brisbane. Army trucks were there and reporters to take pictures. They were taken three hours drive away to an American hospital at Camp Cable, near Mt. Tamborine. American doctors cared for them until 1944. In Australia, the German missionaries were classed as enemy aliens, but since most of them were very ill they spent the first months at Camp Cable. When the Catholic missionaries recovered from their war wounds and became healthier, they were taken to Marburg where they were free to move around.

While the missionaries were at Camp Cable, Archbishop Pimico looked after them. Stationed at North Sydney, he was a diplomat for the Vatican and, as such, he was exempt from being interned. He was able to travel and do a lot of work, particularly for the Italian prisoners. Sister Arsenia Wild valued her special keepsake after her internment in Australia which was a "Certificate of Alien" identity card given to the rescued missionaries from New Guinea. Born in Germany in 1896, she had set out for New Guinea in 1928 and worked in Bogia. She survived the strafing on the *Dorish Maru*.

Sister Elfreda remembered Bishop Wolf saying he should have sent all the missionaries out of New Guinea before the war. She also said:

Catholics and Lutherans had no contact between each other before the war. There was rivalry between them especially over areas of the mission influence. If a Lutheran came into a Catholic area or vice versa they would be confronted and told to get out, but in these days this is not so. There is much more understanding and friendship now than previously. During the war the fact that Lutherans and Catholics were in the same prison camps and suffered hardships together helped to break this feeling down. Dr Braun had always been open minded, he was a good friend of Bishop Wolf at Alexishafen and during the war he and his wife were tireless in looking after all the missionaries. He helped Bishop Wolf right up to his death in the prison camp in Hollandia (Interview, 1978).

### The Chinese and the Mixed-race People

Charlie Kramer was educated at the mission school at Alexishafen before the war. The German planters in the early days did not have a school for their mixed race children so they sent them to the mission schools at Alexishafen for an education and to train them in a trade. The boys trained on the mission stations as plumbers and carpenters. The girls did domestic work in the convent, the cooking and washing etc to prepare them for marriage. During the war, when the Chinese and Mixed-race people left Madang, half went to Amele where the Brauns took care of them and the other half to Badibak where they took refuge living on stores that they took with them.

Charlie Kramer remembered that his family was separated at this stage; his parents and sisters and the convent girls from



By courtesy, Charles Kramer

*Maria Kramer at Camp Cable talking to the Papal Nuncio. She is carrying the baby who survived after being wounded on the Dorish Maru.*

Alexishafen went to a station in the hills behind Sek. They stayed there and then walked to Vidar. After some time, they were taken by boat to Bogia and later to Manam Island. After a few months, Charlie and his brothers went to Wewak in another group and were also put on *Dorish Maru*. Maria and her eight months old daughter were shot, her daughter through to the back. The Japanese threw the baby out with the dead, but Maria said, "Never mind, she is not dead" and got her back. She is still alive now in Hawaii.

We were lucky to have Dr and Mrs Braun, the whole family call them Papa and Mama. Lots of us would have died if it hadn't been for him. Dr Braun cut off Father Maia's leg without any anaesthetic and afterwards they attached a wooden leg. Mrs Braun used to say to us, "If you find a rat give it to me, I will cook it", but we said, "not a rat, bandicoot yes, but not rat". My brothers would go hunting and kill pigs. The Japanese would take the best parts and we would cook it and give the Brauns some. On Manam, Mrs Braun lived with us, the women stayed together. At one time, they killed and ate a horse.

When our group got to Bogia, we were all in together and we built a little roof, it was very difficult. If there's another war I think I'll go somewhere else as I don't think I would survive another one. At Danup, we built huts from local material, the local people had to sneak in to help us. On Manam, it was very hard, if the natives brought us food they must go to the Japanese first and get permission, but sometimes they would sneak it. The Japanese fed us rice, but dry rice is not good. You had to make soup to put with the rice to fill your belly up (Interview, 1994).



By courtesy, Australian War Memorial, 074105

*A Chinese family from Madang being rescued by Australian soldiers at Hansa Bay, 1944. They were members of a party of some 90 Chinese who had been forced to cultivate large vegetable gardens for Japanese soldiers.*

When they arrived at Camp Cable after the war, they were pleased to meet Archbishop Pimico and the Kramer family posed in a photograph with him. They were just so happy to be safe after their hardship during the war.

The Chegg family had connections with New Guinea going back to 1917 when Augustine Chegg came out from China to Alexishafen as a volunteer with Father Limbrock. He was one of a group of 32 Chinese volunteer workers from the mission in the province of Shantung (now called Shandong) on the Chinese mainland. Travelling by train to Shanghai, they boarded a steamboat to Hong Kong where they caught the *Bremerhafen* to New Guinea. The volunteers were mechanics, builders and carpenters and gave ten years of their lives to help establish the mission.

Augustine Chegg worked as a blacksmith at Alexishafen for ten years and during this time, he married Theresia, daughter of Mr and Mrs Chow in an arranged marriage. Mr Chow (Chow Chi Toi) had been a plantation manager on Murnass plantation as well as at Mililat and Bogia for the Expropriation Board. Their first son Louis (Alois), was born in 1925, then Augustine junior. Sometime around 1927, Augustine became the ship's engineer on board the *Gabriel*, the mission boat, which travelled to stations as far as Kariru. The family lived in Madang and often had visits from the missionaries of Alexishafen. A new American priest, Father William Ross, befriended them and when he was on mission business in town he would call in for their Chinese hospitality.

As there was no provision for schooling for the Chinese children, the Chegg family returned to China early in the 1930's where the boys attended the cathedral school at Yenchoufu (Yanzhou). The

countryside around the town was mainly an agricultural area growing wheat and soya beans in small market gardens. In 1938, the Cheggs returned to Madang to visit Theresia's parents, the Chows. While there, Theresia gave birth to Scholastica and had to remain in Papua New Guinea until the baby was old enough to travel. Augustine returned to China with two of the children, leaving Louis to look after his mother. Before Theresia could return to China, the Japanese invaded that country on 7 July 1937. Two years later, World War II broke out. The Chegg family were now divided with half in China and half in New Guinea. Undaunted, Theresia began a small tradestore in Madang and made and sold dresses. Louis attended a small school run by Mrs Radke of the Lutheran Mission. One of the other pupils was Margaret Chan. This was how Louis and Margaret met. They were childhood playmates and grew fond of each other over the years.

In 1941, when the District Officer, Mr Oakley, heard that the Japanese might invade Madang, he wanted to evacuate the Chinese women and children along with the Europeans, but the Chinese were adamant that they wanted their families to stay together. The Chan family including Margaret went to Amron and Louis Chegg went to Alexishafen with his mother where Father Hirsch looked after them. Louis clearly remembers the night the Japanese came to Alexishafen, the banging on the doors in the middle of the night and the way they were ordered out with their hands in the air and made to register by the Japanese. They were told they had to stay there, if any tried to escape they would be forced to dig their own graves. In return for their lives they were ordered to provide 7 lbs of vegetable each to the Japanese each week. Their own gardens on Sek island were used but often they had to steal to make up the quota. The local Sek people helped the Chegg family as much as possible as they were not happy with the Japanese. The Cheggs remember this even today and often take the Sek Villagers bags of rice and cartons of tinned fish.

When the bombing of Alexishafen and nearby Sek Island intensified, Louis and his mother Theresia were invited by the paramount *luluai* of Karkar Island to go and live there in comparative safety. They applied to the Japanese and were given permission provided they signed all their property over to the Japanese. At first, they lived in a house on Karkar but when the Americans began bombing there, they fled to the bush near the volcano. Here they lived for 18 months hunting for possums and growing a few vegetables. Theresia, always a dressmaker, made small bags out of old cloth, which she traded for meat from the local villagers. The people used these bags to keep their betel nut and lime in. Cooking was done in a converted engine tank and salt-water was carried from the beach in long bamboos with the centre cut out.

The first the Karkar people knew that the war was over was when leaflets were dropped from the Allied planes. Sergeant Major Dennis sent a message to the people to come down from the bush. Louis was wearing a ragged *laplap* and had no shoes or shirt.

They were shifted from Karkar to the camp near Madang. Here Louis worked as a male orderly helping with the scrub typhus cases in the makeshift hospital called the Madang CCS, the Infantry Force Casualty Clearing Station. Louis often wondered about Margaret Chan and whether she had survived the war. To take his mind off his worries he used to play his harmonica to cheer up the sick and wounded. "Go and play to those three women over there", the commander ordered one day. Louis began to play, and when he looked up at the women he saw one of them was Margaret, his sweetheart from school. Both rejoiced as each thought the other had died. Margaret was in a sorry state with filaria of the legs. She had been forced to walk for three weeks with the Japanese while they were retreating towards Hollandia. The harmonica was forgotten as Margaret and Louis hugged each other.

For the Chegg family there was still the worry about Louis' father, Augustine, who had been in China since 1937. In 1945, Theresia Chegg sent letters to China to try and contact him, but no mail got through for six months. Neither side knew if the others were dead or alive. Augustine had had a terrible time in China. He and the children managed to survive the years of the Japanese occupation and recovered their property. Soon after came the Communist take over and all landowners were rounded up. Dressed as poor peasants, Louis and his children managed to escape to the refugee camp at Canton and from there to Hong Kong where they re-applied for admission into New Guinea. Theresia and the others were overjoyed to hear the news and a big welcome was arranged when they arrived aboard the *Neptuna*. Their story, unlike many war stories, ended happily.

Inglis noted that, in many areas, it was difficult for the local people to decide whether to back the Allies or the Japanese, and which to believe in, particularly in contested areas, "never before had there been at the same time two sets of foreign masters, contradicting each other". Coastwatchers were unusually well placed to observe native responses to the Japanese, living as they did in Japanese held territory and depending for survival on the support or at least toleration of native people (Inglis, 1968: 516).

Dexter wrote that, in the Ramu Valley, many of the local people were opposed to any intruders whether Japanese or allies (Dexter, 1968: 427). But natives in this area who had been fighting for the Japanese changed sides cheerfully when the Australians returned, partly because they were horrified at the atrocities committed against their own people by the Japanese when the tide of the war was running against them. They noticed the contrast between, "Australian and Japanese treatment. In one of the huts at Kapai were three dead natives who had had their hands and feet tied and had been bayoneted by the Japanese. Such treatment did not endear the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere to the natives" (Dexter, 1968: 427).

Peter Ryan, patrolling behind Lae at the time of the Japanese occupation, had many conversations with natives who were

anxious to be on the side of the winner. He tells in his book, *Fear Drive My Feet*, how he tried to persuade people that he represented the winners:

Circumstances had made shrewd politicians of these natives, for they were caught between two opposing forces and were determined to side with the ultimate winners. They sometimes argued with me that the Japanese were so numerous that they must win. "Look", they would say, "you know for yourself there are now more Japanese in Lae alone than there were white men in the whole of New Guinea before. The Japanese must be stronger". I would point to our air raids. If the Japanese are so strong, why don't they stop those aeroplanes from bombing them? Every day more and more of our planes come over; we are getting stronger and stronger, and will soon finish the Japanese off. Yes, "perhaps", they would say with a shrug, and go off puzzled, trying to decide whether to back the side that had many men or the side that had many aeroplanes, a small-scale edition of the problem that armchair strategists were arguing about all over the world (Ryan, 1960: 95).

On the Papuan side of New Guinea, the local people had been under the British/Australian control from the time of first contact. They did not have a conflict of loyalties and were a wonderful support as carriers for the sick and wounded on the Kokoda Trail, carrying stretchers over impossible terrain and caring for the wounded and that is where they were dubbed the "fuzzy wuzzy angels" in 1942.

The carriers on the Kokoda trail were needed as natives had never been needed before by white men in New Guinea. The dependence was illustrated beautifully in films taken by Damien Parer, who was Osmar White's companion on the trail. Parer's films gave a great many Australians their first close look at New Guinea and showed in particular the competence and tenderness of the carriers. — For once, in the relationship between European and native people, there was partnership of a kind. It was not the partnership of equals. But white men would starve to death or be killed for lack of weapons or die of wounds, if the carriers did not get through. There were not enough white men to do the work of carrying; and they could not do it as well as the natives (Inglis, 1968: 505).

Inglis goes on to lament the paucity of oral evidence of the local people themselves. At that stage he concluded that the published evidence showed that the Japanese were far harsher on the local villagers than the Australians ever were. Then again he brings up the point that it may have just been a case of distinguishing between those who treated them well and those who did not. Sir Hubert Murray himself was frank about how little the war was understood. In November 1939, he wrote, "These natives have of course only the vaguest notion of whom we are fighting against, and none at all of what we are fighting for (Papua, Annual Reports,

1939-40).

In January 1946, a Provisional Civil Administration in the Madang District took over from ANGAU. After sixteen months of war, the Japanese had gone from being the victors to suffering a grim defeat. It must be remembered the Australian Administration had only spanned 27 years, so it is amazing that so many of the police boys and village people remained loyal to them under pressure. There were few rewards for their loyalty and bravery. But then again, punishments for those who worked for the Japanese were not severe either. It was recognised that they had been coerced into complying with the new regime, be it ever so short.

The war was over for those who were carriers for the Allies or for the Japanese. Some remained loyal particularly the trained soldiers and policemen who stayed with the Australian soldiers under pressure. A great rapport developed between the Australian and New Guinea men. T. Hungerford wrote that, "they were incapable of understanding that their blood-brotherhood with the white soldiers, who had shared the hospitality of their hidden villages and the common danger of ambush and attack, would be broken in a day" (Inglis, 1968: 523).

Colonel J.K. Murray, the first Administrator of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, did not share the view that the new attitudes towards the local population born out of their close relationship with Australian and American soldiers would be stifled. He hoped that their new employers would not stifle it. Speaking to an Australian audience in 1946, Murray said of the war:

The native population suffered appallingly, caught up in a war not of their making in which they were helpless and bewildered. Security, the priceless good which we had once brought to the natives, had been replaced by the memory of fear and a new knowledge of the impermanence of the seeming-solid institutions of European order. Everywhere there was uncertainty, restlessness, hardship and the desolation. With a handful of experienced officers we set about rebuilding the Territory (Inglis, 1968: 523).

In isolated villages in the Madang Province, the stigma attached for working for the Japanese lasted a lifetime. In a visit to Utu Village in 1994, fifty years after the war, I noticed a crippled man, old and thin. In discussing their past history and what it was like in the war years, this man was pointed out by his fellow villagers with disdain because he had worked for the Japanese during the war and was subsequently jailed. In villages closer to Madang town where everyone was coerced into helping the Japanese, no such stigma eventuated.

The casualty record for the whole of Papua New Guinea given in the *Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea*, notes the following:

It is believed that about 300,000 Japanese served in the area, and fewer than half of them survived. About 60,000 were

killed in battle and 110,000 died of wounds or missing. The Australian Army lost about 14,500 men killed in battle, died of wounds or missing. The suffering of the native people has never been fully recorded and now will never be known in all its detail.

It is the considered view of Gavin Long, the General Editor of the Australian Official War History, that Australian policy made the war a heavier burden, man for man, to Papua New Guineans than to Australian citizens. Some villages were totally bereft of fit men, and women, children and old people had to fend for themselves in hunger and privation, even though far from the actual fighting. When military action swept their settlements, thousands of them lost houses, gardens and all their possession and were reduced to utter desolation (Ryan, 1972: 1223)

The *Encyclopaedia* goes on to state:

The horizons of the indigenous people were immeasurably widened. The autocratic pre-war relationship between white ‘master’ and black ‘servant’ was shaken (ibid).

1. *There is some controversy about whether Mileng was involved or not.*
2. *This punishment was similar to the Colonial German practice of banishing people.*
3. *This story has been verified in interviews on Riwo and in Bilbil.*
4. *No doubt it became a collector’s item.*
5. *These four soldiers were later charged with desertion*
6. *Since the Germans were supposedly allies of the Japanese*
7. *This confirms the story from Riwo Village when one of these pilots wanted time to pray.*
8. *The actual figure was 15 Lutheran and 140 Catholic missionaries (Frerichs, 1969: 25)*
9. *Naki was the Brauns’ adopted son.*
10. *There were two sisters with similar names – Sr Elfreda and Sr Elreda.*



By courtesy, Peter Edwards

*A Japanese wreck, a common sight after the war.*



By courtesy, Australian War Memorial, 073038

*Mop up in Madang after the war. A group of soldiers in front of the ruins of the Madang Hotel.*

## Chapter 12, Post War Madang

### *Taim Bilong Australia.*



*Madang! Poor, poor Madang! — Our hearts sank at the sight of this harbour town, once a quiet little community of approximately 100 Australians and Americans, merchants, traders, government officials, and missionaries—the centre of our missionary administration. It must have been heart-rending for Superintendent Kuder to miss the greetings of his former associates and to move through the ruins of our mission buildings, which took decades of hard work to construct. His heart, however, was soon cheered by the sight of natives coming to our quarters as soon as they heard of our arrival. He did not know what to expect, realising what war might have done to these people. We found them strong in the faith and enthusiastic in their welcome. They were as eager to tell us their story as we were to listen to it. All the mission buildings here in the town of Madang have been destroyed to the very foundation. Only the Lutmis supply house stands in skeletal form, with its heavy concrete walls perforated with shell holes. Nearby is a partially filled trench, which may have been the place of temporary refuge for Brother Wenz, who survived the initial bombing only to be cruelly executed later by the enemy in the Ramu Valley. A few hundred yards down the road we pushed through waist-high weeds to the spot where the mission chapel once stood. On the concrete floor of this building, whose superstructure had vanished into the air, a solitary bullet was lying, later identified as a Japanese armour-piercing bullet, a needless reminder that this house of God had become a casualty of the “God of War” (Fricke, 1946: 48-50).<sup>1</sup>*

The village people in the Madang area, who had hidden in the bush, eating what they could gather, were now able to return to their places on the coast. But they too found utter destruction, particularly villages near Madang town. Maia Awak of Bilbil, now 42 years old, said that his people came down to the patrol officer at Wagol to get supplies. When he heard how hungry they were, he gave them three drums of rice, a bag of sugar, a case of tobacco and matches as well as biscuits and tea. They carried these things back to Brahaim near Silibob because Bilbil village had been completely destroyed by the bombs. Maia stayed with his family for a month in Silibob and then they shifted to a village closer to Bilbil so they could build another village. When Maia first returned to the village site, there were bomb craters and jungle growth everywhere and he had difficulty finding the position of his former house. Some Australian soldiers, camped on the beach nearby, told Maia they had used the timber in the old houses for firewood. All that remained were house posts and Maia used a few of these as a basis for a temporary house. He took the initiative of shifting part of the Gapan clan to the other end of the village site as he felt they needed more room for the growing numbers of children. While he and his friends were re-building the village the women and children stayed on at Gusap near the Gum River. Later they joined the men and took up the strands of village life again.

Maia still had some Japanese money but when he tried to purchase goods at the store with it, he found that it was worthless. He and

his friends were very angry about this and threw the money away. Later they began to make pots again to exchange for food and men from the Rai Coast, hearing this, made several buying trips. But some of the old customs died out as a result of the war and other technical changes. The canoes were no longer built, but pots could sometimes be transported to the Rai Coast on the new coastal vessels, which were so much faster and more efficient.

Many of the villagers in the Bel group were philosophical about the changes that had occurred. The expulsion from their land in 1904 taught them that it was best to obey whoever was in power whether they be Germans, Australians or Japanese. After the war, the Riwo people continued to hide in the bush and some American soldiers occupied Riwo, Sek and Budup. One day, Dau was walking down the road with his friends, when two American sentries grabbed them. Although they were frightened they soon made friends and the soldiers fed them and gave them extra food for the people hiding in the bush.

Dau of Riwo Village:

We returned many times to get food, but then ANGAU ordered us to go to Wagol. So we went to Mis and built a small village and ANGAU helped us with food. When ANGAU told us to return to our old village, we explained that Riwo Island had been taken over so we found a bush place, built our houses and grew some gardens. When all



*Maia Awak, leader of the Gapan clan in Bilbil Village.*

the soldiers had left we went about trying to find a permanent site for a village. We came here to this place and we are still here (Mennis, 1980b: 4).

After the war, there were some recriminations over villagers who had fraternised with the Japanese and handed over downed American pilots to the enemy. But the villagers were under duress. If they had not co-operated with the Japanese, they would have been killed themselves. Riwo Village is very close to Madang and any movement of crashing American planes would have been clearly visible to the Japanese who would have checked to see if there were any survivors.

Dau continued:

Kamot was the *luluai* during the war and I was the *tultul*. The Japanese made Kamot the big boss of the area. An American pilot came down on the island and we wanted to hide him, but the Japanese heard about him and came over

and took him away. Then Kamot took another American to the Japanese and he was executed. After the war, Kamot was taken to court for this by the Australians. Mr Powell decided the case and Kamot went to prison. I too was taken to court where I said that I wasn't strong enough to talk out against the Japanese. I saw these things happen but I had to keep quiet or else I too would die. They decided I was just doing what I was told. After the war, the Americans came and asked me where the bones were buried. I took them up to where the graves were (ibid: 5).

The new Administration took many of these circumstances into account. Inglis wrote, "the Australian authorities after the war did not hold it against a man merely that he carried baggage for the Japanese. — It was recognised that European notions about the obligation of citizens to show allegiance to their government were not applicable here" (Inglis, 1968: 520). Mr Justice Phillips, Chief Justice of New Guinea, noted, "that the people of the Mandated Territory, had seen a number of changes in administration, from German to Australian, to Japanese, to Australian, and that they lacked the experience which enabled them to judge when a de facto government should be recognised as a de jure one" (Legge, 1956: 202). One bewildered villager in Madang in the

1970's said that when the Japanese arrived in 1942, some village people regarded them as just one more lot of bosses who had taken over. "The Germans came and then they went, the Australians came and then they left and then the Japanese arrived and then the Australians came back." He shrugged his shoulders as he remembered the way it had been. It was the same attitude that Burr ridge had encountered in the 1950s on Manam Island.

Des Clifton-Bassett first came to Madang in June 1944, as the Japanese were fleeing to the Sepik:

There was some evidence of previous Japanese occupation. Modilon Plantation went right up to the wharf. Modilon road today was as near as possible to the track that we used to follow through the plantation. The Government Stores were once up near the Wagol Plantation but now only the ficus trees remained and the remnants of a Japanese camp there - obvious signs that tents had been there and bush structures. There was rubbish lying around. The Allied bombers were on missions to Hollandia. I was a young soldier and I did not get out of Madang. My sphere of

operation was from our camp somewhere off Modilon Road near where the government stores are now and down to the wharf and that was it. We expected to see some stray Japs around, but didn't see any. The troops had arrived in May and I arrived in June. There was nothing much left at all of Madang and the bush had taken over in a lot of areas. When you got off Modilon track there was a good chance of getting bogged. There was no real lighthouse only a wooden structure about 7 or 8 feet tall and inside they put a hurricane lamp. The airstrip was in the same place as it is now. It was a typical small airstrip, with the bomb holes initially filled up over the top of many Japanese planes. There were wrecks in the harbour of some typical landing barges. I came up as a young bloke in the transport unit and it was very difficult to get promotion.

In early 1944, I applied to ANGAU to be a patrol officer and I was told I could get a job in stores type of work and very soon there will be an advertisement put out for the gazette calling for patrol officers to go down to the staff college. I applied and was accepted. Then, in January 1945 I went down to train for this (Interview in 1973 as he was leaving Madang).

The beautiful town of Madang had been destroyed. The hospital and one or two other buildings were all that were left standing. Jungle covered the ruins of the houses, the stores and the government buildings and only the outline of the streets was left to show where the town had once stood. Everywhere there were wrecks from the war. Near the present hospital there were old bomb dumps and the harbour was full of rusting ships. On Kerosene Island and Mililat Plantations, army camps had been established when Madang had first been captured and an army hospital was located in the centre of the town. On 1 January 1946, ANGAU was taken over by the Provisional Civil Administration. (Later, Papua and New Guinea were joined together as a Trust Territory of the United Nations and was administered from Port Moresby).

In their first reconnoitre, Pastor Fricke and Superintendent Kuder saw the ruins of buildings everywhere. In the harbour a rusting Japanese landing barge beside the wharf told the "sad tale of ruthless invasion, the cause of all this devastation". Fricke went on to describe the hive of activity as 2,000 Australian soldiers, waiting to return home by ship, pulled their barracks apart. As well there was the noise of exploding bombs as the demolition squad exploded ammunition piles. Madang and the surrounding areas were still full of mines, and the bush was dangerous with its unexploded aerial bombs and hand grenades.

The two missionaries wrote:

A few weeks ago three children found a bomb, sat astride it while a fourth poked the fuse cap. Their bodies have not been found. Some days ago, a lad picked up a hand grenade

as he crossed a field, pulled the pin as he held the weapon to his little body, and was blown to pieces. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"- but the horrible consequences of war continue even after the evil day of hostilities has ceased (Fricke, 1946: 49).

The two pastors found Kranket Island deserted. The people had taken to the bush hiding from the Allied bombing and were yet to return. Wild bush covered the island, denuded of its coconut palms. A bomb crater marked the spot where Radke's house once stood. Fliehler's old residence was now a ruin, blasted by bombs and covered with flowering vines. Nearby was the small mission cemetery with the recent grave of the young Pastor Dott, killed by the enemy in the Ramu Valley. A few days later, they travelled to Nobonob by jeep. Again utter devastation! With its commanding views, Nobanob had been used as a lookout by the Japanese for more than a year. Finally fierce allied bombing which blew the top off the hill drove them out. The church was now completely overgrown with bush and vines but the two pastors saw evidence that the people had been at work clearing the area to build their village, church, and gardens.

Another day, the two pastors travelled to the Amele hospital, once the domain of Dr Braun and now totally destroyed! It was heartbreaking to see years of effort ruined but now was the time to shift the hospital closer to a river with a better source of fresh water and more accessible to Madang. Looking for a possible site, they crossed the Gum River in an out-rigger canoe and followed the old mission road, now in disrepair. Gradually word spread that they had arrived and crowds of village people gathered with brightening eyes, flicking their hands and making the "tsk tsk" sound to express their joy. Many villagers were carrying sago thatching and poles to rebuild their villages from where they had fled during the Japanese invasion. The pastors were pleased that so many had survived the carnage, the sick and wounded being brought into the military hospital in Madang (ibid: 50).

Two immediate tasks faced the Lutheran Church. Firstly the whole Mission had to be rebuilt as most buildings had been destroyed. Secondly the missionaries were confronted by a, "tremendous receptivity for the gospel. Within twenty years a giant mission organisation was built up; 27 stations were newly erected in the highlands, and at times a staff of over 500 men and women were performing various tasks" (Fricke, 1946: 50).

However there were problems as Fugmann noted in his 1972 article about the Evangelistic Work of the Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea:

Ultimately the whole Mission organisation was geared to set up new congregations in the heathen areas. Newly baptised were encouraged to spread the gospel to the neighbouring tribes. This approach resulted in enormous numerical growth. From 1947 to 1971 the baptised members of the Lutheran Church grew from approximately 93,000 to



*The Lutheran Memorial Church built after the war in memory of those who lost their lives.*

400,000. However this growth was impeded by several factors. By 1967 there were 18 bigger denominations in Papua New Guinea and a multitude of smaller sects. During the fifties and up to the middle of the sixties there were numerous and serious clashes with other denominations in nearly all of our areas. Many tribes, villages and families split. After the first big movements many of the remaining non-Christians felt quite satisfied to remain heathens, because it had become an accepted fact that Christians and heathens can live together without destroying the tribal solidarity. The established congregations felt no real necessity to evangelise their fellow tribesmen. The indigenous church was and is not independent of Western theology and church organisation. Therefore no indigenous theology was able to develop. This has prevented the Lutheran Church and its leaders from finding functional substitutes for cultural customs such as ritual healings, and to re-think their attitude towards polygamy. This has prevented growth and furthered reversion into so called heathen practices (Orientation Course, 1972).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea, ELCONG, was established in 1956 on the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Flierl's landing at Finschhafen. Since then, the church organisation was slowly being indigenised. Six church districts were established and indigenous leaders took on leadership roles with the development of the district and circuit councils. Organisationally and financially the church was still heavily dependant on expatriates and European churches. In 1973, major changes were introduced within ELCONG and within a year a leading indigenous Pastor was elected Bishop. The first was Bishop Stahl Mileng, appointed in 1974.

Bishop Mileng's father, Mileng, was one of the Lutheran church leaders on Karkar Island who had been charged before the war for being a cargo cultist. He had been sentenced to four years banishment in Gasmata, but the bombing began just as the magistrate arrived to hear his appeal. When the Australian authorities returned, former court cases were resumed. It was as if the war had just been a hiccup in the proceedings! The Lutheran Mission prepared an appeal for Mileng and a Assistant District Officer, concluded that Mileng was the kind of leader New Guinea needed. The case was dismissed. In subsequent years, Mileng represented the Lutheran Church of New Guinea at the first All-Asian Lutheran Conference

held in Madras, India in 1956. When he died of an acute case of diabetes, thousands mourned him (Steinbauer, 1974: 177-179).

His son, Stahl Mileng was a quick learner at school and mastered five languages including his own Karkar language of the Takia people, the language of the Bel group as well as Pidgin English. The Madang District of the Lutheran Church chose him as the District Secretary in 1963. Later he became the first District President of the Madang District of the Lutheran Church. He was a gifted leader and could give eloquent speeches in any of the five languages he had mastered. To supplement his low wage, his family ran a coconut plantation on Karkar Island.

Stahl recognises the great changes that have come to Papua New Guinea already during the time of his father, and especially now in his own lifetime. He welcomes most of these changes, but feels that there are many good customs of the past, which should be kept. While some look upon the *wantok* system as detrimental to progress, Stahl believes the *wantok* system to be one of the strengths of Melanesian society (ibid).

After completing his training at Heldsbach, Stahl worked as a primary school teacher at Baitabag-Amron from 1955 to 1957. Following this, he attended an English course at Bumayong High School, Lae. He then assisted in teacher training at Amron in 1960 and 1961. The Madang District of the Lutheran Church chose Stahl as District Secretary in 1963 and assigned him to be in charge of the pastoral work in Madang at Emmanuel Congregation. There he served during 1964 and 1965 until he was elected as the first District President of the Madang District of the Lutheran Church. Stahl developed the gift of leadership during his school days and with his knowledge of five languages he was able to make effective addresses to people over a wide area. He was an honoured leader of his people and was deeply mourned at his death in 1979 (ibid).

Many Lutheran missionaries gave their lives to serving the people of Papua New Guinea. One of these was Mrs Welsch who first came to Madang in 1922 and worked in Amele and Bagasin areas teaching the women how to be good Christian wives. During the war she was evacuated to Australia but her husband and adopted son both died. Returning she began a girls' school at Amele. Her assistant was Ahigol, a prewar student of hers, who came to be known as the first Bible woman in the New Guinea Lutheran Church. Mrs Welsch began the women's Movement in the Madang District called Dinepain.

It took nearly three years to build the American Lutheran hospital at Yagaum. Materials had to be ferried across the Gum River by raft and on to the station up a tortuous road by lorries. It was finally opened and dedicated in August 1950, with a gathering of about 80 Europeans and 6,000 villagers. It was staffed by Dr Braun, heading a team of nurses and doctors and it was a tribute to his work and that of his wife who had done so much to help people during the war. In 1948, Edwin Tscharke established Gaubin hospital on Karkar Island which was later enlarged and trained medical orderlies. In 1956, the hospital cared for 1200 in-patients and 6000 out-patients. Tscharke also published a medical manual in Pidgin English.

After the Japanese surrender, the Catholic missionaries who were sent to Australia to recuperate and, once recovered, were anxious to return to their mission stations. Because so many SVD missionaries had died during the war, it was impossible to re-staff all the stations. It was imperative to find help from other sources. To complicate the issue, a ban, which was fortunately soon lifted, had been placed on German missionaries returning to their old mission stations.

Even before the surrender, it had become obvious that there would be a shortage of missionaries. To address this problem, some young American SVD priests volunteered for the missions. The group left San Francisco in September 1944 on board the *Monterey* which was transporting troops to New Guinea. Because the New Guinea was still a dangerous war zone, the missionaries were not allowed to disembark in New Guinea but continued on to Brisbane where Monsignor William van Baar met them. Later when they received the necessary permission, they sailed for Alexishafen but because the mission quarters were occupied by an Australian Navy Unit they had to travel on to Remp. The Catholic Mission was never quite the same again with the advent of these young American missionaries. The old German missionaries had to get used to the accent, the baseball caps, and the more casual way of dressing. Gone were the long white robes the pre-war German missionaries wore on their stations. But the Americans brought many talents with them. Among the greatest was their gift of being ecumenical with the Lutheran Missionaries. It was through their efforts and with those of Fr Hermann Janssen from the German Sacred Heart Mission mission that the Melanesian Institute was started in Goroka. This institute is run with members of different missions and faiths to help understand the spiritual needs of the people.

In the early years after the war, Monsignor van Baar and his missionaries had great hurdles to overcome. Many faces were missing now and one of their first tasks was to retrieve the bodies of the victims of the *Dorish Maru* from the beaches at Wewak and Hollandia, where Bishop Wolf had been buried, and re-bury them in the cemetery at Alexishafen.

The station at Alexishafen itself was a scene of utter devastation:

The former main station of Alexishafen was a bombed out wartime dump cluttered with ramshackle sheds and shacks. The premises were littered with rusting army surplus machinery and even an occasional live bomb. Only one sizeable prewar building was left standing, the two storey Brother's house. As soon as the Australian demolition team vacated it, the missionaries patched up the shrapnel-riddled roof, hung up burlap or hessian to partition off private rooms, and moved in (Mihalic, 1999: 13).

The beautiful cathedral, once the largest in the Pacific, was now only a heap of rubble and was never rebuilt. On part of its foundations, a warehouse built of galvanised iron was constructed and stocked with food and supplies for the missions, under the care of Brother Chrysostomus. The *Gabriel*<sup>2</sup> and the *Maria*, two of the seven coastal boats, plied along the coast returning missionaries to their stations and taking supplies. Br Gregory Zimmet kept the small fleet ship-shape, Br Venantius resurrected his shoe shop while the plumber, Br Emil, began turning out galvanised water tanks to provide much needed supplies to damaged mission stock. Br Sylvester set about training more horses for the outlying stations; Bundi was one of the mountain stations that relied on these horses from Alexishafen. With their many skills, these brothers kept the wheels of the missionary endeavours running (Ibid:15).

In 1946, the Franciscans of the Australian Province received a letter from Valentine Schaf, Minister General of their Order, proposing that the friars take over part of the Vicariate of Central New Guinea. "For the arrangement of this affair it will be necessary that you put yourself in communication with Rev. Monsignor Van Baar S.V.D., Apostolic Administrator of that Vicariate." Monsignor William Van Baar, offered the northwestern section of the Central New Guinea Mission, based at Aitape, to the friars. Fr Doggett O.F.M. was given a free hand in choosing the men from the list of volunteers who were to go with him. One of them was Fr Ferdinand Parer who was the brother of Damien Parer, the famous wartime photographer. On 5 December 1946, the friars arrived in Madang with its waterways and lagoons. The once beautiful town was no more. All had been bombed. From there, the friars caught a boat to Alexishafen. Everywhere there was evidence of the war - wrecks of planes and boats were stark reminders of the destruction and bombing that had occurred. They were welcomed by a group of S.V.D. missionaries at Alexishafen, with the singing of the Te Deum. Although Monsignor Van Baar was a Dutch national he experienced a strong anti-German feeling

amongst the Australian soldiers in ANGAU so Fr Doggett acted as his temporary secretary (Doggett, 1997: 52).

Monsignor van Baar did his best to make the Franciscans welcome. He invited Fr Doggett to accompany him to visit all the S.V.D. mission stations on the coast on the way to Aitape. Leaving on 11 February 1947, they sailed on board the *Maria* towards the Sepik River. The journey was certainly an eye-opener to the hazards ahead. The boat only had two 5-hp. engines and almost immediately they ran into bad weather. The north west monsoon was blowing strongly and instead of going to Bogia, they landed at Banara then to Manam Island where the volcano was erupting. They set off the next day for the Sepik River but again the weather impeded them and they were driven back towards Bogia. With both engines having failed, they drifted two days and nights. On the third day they were again opposite Manam Island and still drifting. Fr Doggett must have wondered if his last hour had come as the angry seas buffeted the boat. They managed to paddle ashore at Manam, then, after repairing the engines, they returned to Bogia and up the Sepik River (ibid :63)

On the return trip down the river, the *Maria* was found to have two broken shafts and so they headed back to Madang where they arrived on 12 March, one month after setting out and still not having reached their destination. It must have been extremely frustrating for Fr Doggett, who had set out to see his new mission area of Aitape. Here he was back where he started with his fellow friars scattered around various mission stations in the Madang area, receiving training on how to run a station. The ferocity of the weather was not a good omen but then they had chosen the wet season. In the end, Fr Doggett went to the airstrip at Madang in search of a plane to take him to Aitape. By this means, he finally arrived there on 22 March 1947, “four and a half months from Sydney to Aitape” he remarked in his dry fashion.

It was this same weather that the traders in traditional times had had to deal with if they were caught in a sudden storm. In times of trouble they had appealed to their spirits for help and had carried out rituals to calm the winds and save them from drowning. In the above scene, the missionaries would have been appealing to God to save them in their distress. It shows that even modern coastal vessels had trouble in combating the sometimes fierce weather.

The first Bishop appointed to Alexishafen after the war was Bishop Applehans. Born in Kansas, USA he was ordained in 1932 and on 8 July 1948, was appointed Bishop of Madang. He died three years later in a plane crash off Lae on 16 July 1951. In 1953, Bishop Noser was appointed Bishop of Madang. He had previously been a missionary in Ghana. Under his jurisdiction great strides were made in mission education under the direction of Cornelius van Baar. The foundation of a whole new education system for Madang and Wewak was laid and planning started for 42 primary schools, 12 area schools and 5 technical or vocational schools with an estimated student intake of 5,500 children. During

his years at Alexishafen, Bishop Noser began a new order of local Sisters called the Sisters of St Therese. The first novice mistress and superior of the new order of local sisters was Sr Arsenia Wild who received the first ten postulants that same year. In 1982, she received the Cross of the Order of Merit in Germany for her work in the missions. In 1966, Bishop Noser became the first Archbishop of Madang and served until 1975 when he retired. His successor as Archbishop was Bishop Arkfeld.

Leo Arkfeld became Bishop of Central New Guinea in 1948. Based at Wewak, he soon became known as the flying bishop! Before his consecration on 27 August 1948, he made his famous flight on board his Tiger Moth, VH-BXA. No account should omit this flight into Madang airstrip in the dark at a time when there was no nighttime illumination. Fr Leo had not long had his pilot's licence and only had 45 hours flying time. He had left Wewak in plenty of time to make Madang flying via Awar but, unfortunately, the winds were against him and it was dark when he flew over Madang. Around and around he flew until the town's people heard the plane engine and drove out to the airstrip. Lining the cars up on either side with their headlights facing to the centre of the strip, it allowed Fr Leo to land in the dark after doing a few more circuits.

As its idling engine purred gently, the Moth descended out of the night sky and settled back to earth, much to the relief of everyone! Here and there it was brightly illumined in the beams of the headlights as it bumped gently down the airstrip. When Fr Leo climbed out of the cockpit, he received well-deserved congratulations all around (Fincutter, 1999: 25).

After Archbishop Noser retired in 1975, the Pope appointed Bishop Arkfeld to the post of Archbishop of Madang on 16 December that same year. His installation took place in the Madang Cathedral on 24 March the following year. He was now in charge of both Wewak and Madang dioceses. On 4 February 1987, Archbishop Leo retired at 75 and the Pope appointed Archbishop Benedict To Varpin as his successor. He took over his new post in December 1987 and was the first national Archbishop in Madang.

In the post war years, Europeans gradually returned to Madang and some newcomers arrived with a sense of adventure to set up businesses or work for the government. There were plenty of opportunities. Those who had lived in the Territory before the war were known as the “befores” or B4's. Initially they lived on Kerosene Island in an old army camp. Coconut Products Limited established a desiccated coconut factory there and provided employment for many people. At first, the only way of getting across to the island was in canoes and many are the stories told about amateur canoe paddlers. Lottie tried to keep her cigarettes and bread dry by holding them on her head while gripping the sinking canoe with her other hand. “Help! Help!” she cried only to be told to shut up by her male companions. Later, the canoes

were replaced by rowboats and motor boats. There was even a telephone connecting Kerosene Island with Madang and the cable went via Cahill's Island near the airstrip. Here Bill and Cath Cahill built a beautiful home garden complete with fountains and strutting peacocks. Unfortunately, the house had to be destroyed some years later when the airport was being extended and the island was joined on to the mainland.

Elizabeth Sowerby (nee Keenan) was the first matron of the Madang Hospital after the war, Taffy Jones having been transferred to Rabaul. Born in Maclean in N.S.W., Elizabeth trained at a Newcastle Hospital and nursed in many places in Australia where her main interest was in theatre work. During the war, she had been posted to Darwin and held the rank of Captain in the Australian Nursing Service. She witnessed the bombing of Darwin so closely she could see the pilots' goggles. In 1948, she joined the Department of Health in Papua New Guinea where she worked first in Port Moresby and then in Madang. The hospital was near the main wharf and had originally been the doctor's residence. It had been badly strafed during the war, the floors being peppered with bullet holes. After the war, the new bamboo walls were covered in tarpaper in a temporary fashion. The roof, made of *pungal*, was a refuge for rats, which ran riot at night. Elizabeth employed a ratcatcher and she could hear the rattaps banging one after the other in the evenings after he had set them out.

Elizabeth faced a formidable task in her job. She was a stickler for discipline and set a high standard for her nurses. Uniforms and veils had to be clean and smart and there was no smoking during working hours. There were some characters in those days. Two male patients supposedly drying out from alcohol asked if they could bring their rum with them. Elizabeth was horrified and refused. So they both hung their bottles out the window on a string and imbibed freely whenever her back was turned.

As expatriate women returned, more homes were built. At first these were of bush materials with *pungal* walls and corrugated iron roofs so that rainwater could be collected in water tanks. Inside the house old parachutes were suspended from the ceiling for a more comfortable look. The women had to be as self sufficient as possible. Pillows were made from local kapok and local vegetables were eaten. Material for clothes was in short supply and sometimes there would only be a choice of three different patterns. Elizabeth was invited out to morning tea and decided to have a dress made by a Chinese dressmaker. When she arrived, she was motioned to a settee covered in the same material as her dress and everyone burst out laughing including Elizabeth! She had a soft spot for the Chinese who had not established a place for themselves socially and tended to be



By courtesy, Elizabeth Sowerby

*Wedding of Elizabeth and Roy Sowerby in Madang in 1953.*

ostracised. They had no hospital to go to until Elizabeth converted her dispensary into a ward for them.

Elizabeth had been an active member of the Country Woman's Association, the CWA, in Queensland and wanted to begin a branch in Madang, which was eventually established in 1952. She was the first President and in her 1959 report noted that there were 85 members, many of them on the outstations. They organised a fancy dress ball for the children and listened to talks given by different members. Elizabeth gave details of the nearly completed CWA cottage, which has since graced a central location in Madang overlooking the water. The cottage provided accommodation for women from outstations to stay in when they came to town. She was a gracious lady and gave credit to all those who helped her in those days, Bell Meek, Roma Bates, Mrs Cahill, Mrs King and Mrs Bird. Elizabeth married Roy Sowerby in 1953 in the Catholic Church and the reception was held at the residency where Charlie Bates was then the District Commissioner. The orchid park in Madang is named the "Elizabeth Sowerby Orchid Park" and many wedding photographs are taken here amongst the orchids, her favourite flower.

After the war, "a single administration was set up to govern both the Australian territory of Papua and the United Nations Trust Territory of New Guinea" (Dorney, 1990: 42). The budget in the first five years totalled sixteen million pounds - forty times that spent on a similar time before the war. Australia was at last taking on the responsibility of governing the country. On 13 December 1946, Australia entered into a Trusteeship Agreement for administration of the former Mandated Territory of New Guinea, as approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Article 8 (2) contained the following points for the administering authority: 1, That the customs of the people be considered and that respect be given to their rights particularly over land matters; 2, That their educational and cultural advancement be promoted;



By courtesy, Elizabeth Sowerby

*Elizabeth Sowerby, right, with Lady Rachel Cleland at the opening of the CWA cottage in Madang.*

3, That the people would be trained in administering their own affairs and be guaranteed freedom of speech and of petition (Pech, 1991: 186).

Harold Woodman was the first District Officer and had been awarded a DSO for bravery in the First World War. In the 1920s he worked in the Madang District Office under Alf Hunter, the District Officer. It was during this time that he planted the large trees on either side of the road near where the Sowerby Orchard Park is now. Many people think these large trees date back to the German times but Therese O'Brien saw Woodman planting them in the 1920s. After the Japanese War, Woodman held the post of District Officer until 1947.

Margaret Chegg, Harold Woodman's reluctant secretary, remembered there was plenty of machinery and surplus material from the Australian army which people would have liked to use, but Woodman issued a warning that anyone taking it would be prosecuted. Meanwhile, a large quantity of this equipment was being sent back to Australia. There was a note in *Pacific Islands Monthly* towards the end of 1946 that the last of the vehicles from Madang "car park" war-disposal trucks, etc were removed by MV *Baluchistan* during a busy shipping week. No less than six ships were in port on one occasion, one of them being the *Teviot Bank*, which was also loading copra. Margaret Chegg remembered that Woodman's reluctance to give the locals rations after the war almost caused a revolt. When she heard that the people had congregated on Kerosene Island ready to show their resentment she fled by canoe. This protest may have led to the early transfer of Woodman and his replacement by J.K. McCarthy whom Margaret found a much easier boss.

McCarthy faced many problems re-building the town. There was plenty of land, but a shortage of building materials. He took a

trip to the American Base on Manus Island where there were piles of war surplus being dismantled including Quonset huts, warehouses, wharves, trucks and aircraft engines (McCarthy, 1963: 227). McCarthy managed to transfer a number of the Quonset huts to Madang and they can still be seen today. Not very edifying buildings, but they served many purposes including the Tropical Theatre and storage sheds near Steamships Hardware.

Apart from the reconstruction of the town, one of McCarthy's main tasks was to deal with an upsurge in cargo cultism. The farewell speeches of the Commanding Officers after the war had drawn a very rosy picture of what conditions would be like under the new Civil Administration. J.K. McCarthy wrote, "they made promises so lavish as to be impossible of redemption. The rosy future would provide schools for all, hospitals near every village and food in abundance" (McCarthy, 1963: 225). The result of these expectations not being redeemed led to great unrest and led to the rise of Yali. Lawrence particularly remarked on promises to get local men to join up before the Japanese Invasion. One such read as follows:

In the past, you natives have been kept backward. But now, if you help us win the war and get rid of the Japanese from New Guinea, we Europeans will help you. We will help you get houses with galvanized iron roofs, plank walls and floors, electric light, and motor vehicles, boats, good clothes and good food. Life will be very different for you after the war (1964: 124).

McCarthy thought the War Damage payments were rather generous in Madang's case. They did not lead to new houses for everyone as Yali was hoping, but helped in small ways. As District Officer McCarthy was quick to take advantage of, "an Administration rehabilitation scheme when £17,000 worth of tools was issued to the villages". Although many developments did take place as part of honouring unofficial promises but it did little to cure "the bitter disappointment of the earlier years when irresponsible promises were naturally unredeemed" (Lawrence, 1964: vii)<sup>3</sup>. One old timer said that the locals were completely out of hand and they didn't want to work with all the war damage money about.

There were also critics of the Quonset huts that McCarthy had procured from Manus Island. A disgruntled correspondent to PIM didn't like the Quonset huts:

Madang seems lacking in civic pride. The only apparent attempt to brighten the place up is that of the Commonwealth Bank, which has laid out floral gardens outside its office. Even then, the immediate vicinity is marred by scrap wartime rubbish lying about in confusion. As one leaves the ship's gangway, one treads precariously over a dilapidated wharf, for fear of spraining one's ankle or breaking one's neck. Right opposite are the unsightly, black-iron Quonset copra sheds; and, as one makes one's way in puddles to the centre

of activities, one is confronted with huge stacks of 44-gallon drums - some day, the township will blow up. Alas! Here is the steel skeleton of the wartime Port Maintenance Section - a shock to the aesthetic! But, what is ahead? It is the ghastly quarters of the staff of Messrs. Burns, Philp (New Guinea) Ltd., perched high on the pyramidal concrete blocks of the German regime.

The arboreal splendour of Madang's main avenues bears testimony to the old German's civic pride, industry and foresight. Very few of these monarchs were damaged during the war, and to wander along these beautiful thoroughfares is delightful when the moon is full and the Chinese shantytown, and the natives' hovels, and the 44-gallon drums, and the uncut kunai are out of sight. A steel bridge now crosses the Meiro, and the 16-miles or so of coranus road to Sek may be travelled with ease. Beer? Yes, there's plenty - at £2 per dozen 20-ounce bottles - a Chinese brew. Prices are extortionate, but you must pay or starve - there's no redress and no price control. You have to be in the upper strata to afford bread.

The best tribute I can pay Madang is that it is the prettiest spot on the coast - but it needs a fortnight and 100 "boys" to clean it up, and dump the wartime rubbish in the sea, and centralise those dangerous oil drums. And I do say that the Madang native wharf-labourers are the most cheerful and efficient toilers in New Guinea. I'd back them against Port Moresby, Rabaul or Lae, any time. Peaceful, magnificent Madang - with your harbour, coastal beauty, enchanting islets, your emerald greenness and shady avenues; you deserve a better fate (Pacific Islands Monthly, August 1949).

One of the concerns of the returning or newly arrived Europeans was their children's education, particularly those who needed secondary education. A Parents' and Citizens' Association was formed in 1948, a constitution drafted and it was agreed that, if the Secretary to the Department of External Territories or the Minister of that Department visit Madang in the near future, they should be approached regarding a bursary scheme for children proceeding to Australia for secondary education. One hundred



*The Coastwatchers Lighthouse erected in memory of the Coastwatchers in the Pacific War.*

pounds per annum for each child was considered a suitable amount for such bursaries. The cost of living in the Territories then was such that few people could afford to send their children to Australia for post-primary education. It was considered cheaper for the Administration to make some contribution to their education rather than establish secondary schools in New Guinea. The president of the P and C Association was the local District Officer, Mr J. K. McCarthy. Mr L. Fisher was secretary-treasurer (ibid).

Charley Bates, who followed McCarthy as District Officer, came from England to Australia in the 1920's on the big brother scheme, which was under the auspices of the YMCA. Under this scheme, young English men were encouraged to settle in Australia. He joined the Police Force in Sydney and became a detective. Later

he saw an advertisement for young men to join the Police Force in New Guinea and went there in 1930. Two years later he transferred to the Department of Native Affairs and met and married Roma Bates. When he replaced McCarthy as District Officer of Madang in 1949, Charles was keen to get the town up and running again after the devastation of the war. Modilon Plantation had been so badly destroyed it was decided to turn some of it into a golf course. People scoffed at his idea of turning the swamps into a fine golf course, but Charles kept going with his vision. Day after day he turned up and helped the men with the heavy machinery from public works to shift the fill into the swamp. The fact that Madang has such a fine golf course today could be attributed to the efforts of Charles Bates. Roma recalls that Charles was mad keen on sport "as soon as he took up a sport, he was instantly good at it. He was a cricket crank, a football crank and played tennis. However his first concern was the golf course".

Roma found that obtaining European foodstuffs was a problem. The Burns Philip boats came in about every 5 to 6 weeks and it was a long time between the availability of such things as cheese, bacon and eggs, which are the basis for entertainment when you are making savouries. There was plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables but getting fish was a problem, as the men would take their fresh fish to the tradestore where they received barter goods. Each Saturday there was a little market to cater for the small expatriate population. Once the European population increased and the local women planted more vegetables there was a bigger market.

Roma remembers:

One of the biggest problems I had was to make my own bread. Any entertainment we did was really from the ground up. The livestock had to be sifted out of the flour, the yeast added and then the mixture set on top of the refrigerator. Sometimes it set all right and sometimes it was dreadful. Some years later, a bakery was started up in Lae and we had our bread flown in. We put on a cocktail party once a year for the managers of the stores and the planters, bank managers, heads of departments and occasionally the leaders of the mission stations.

In those days, the residence was out on a point at the entrance to Madang Harbour. The house had masonite walls and had a plaited *pungal* around the verandah with push-out windows. It was very cool and caught many of the breezes from the sea. It had two big bedrooms at one end and a kitchen at the other and another little room, which was used as an office. Right across the front, a very wide veranda used as the reception area with a billiard table in the centre and dining area at the other end (Interview).

Charley Bates is remembered by the Bates Memorial Park where many people have enjoyed the recreational facility on Bates Oval.

The old town was centred around this oval, with the Police Station, the Lutheran Church, the Post Office, and the CWA hostel having views out towards Madang Harbour and it is a very picturesque part of town. In this area also, were the District Office and other Administrative offices - Lands, Treasury, Education, Welfare etc. The old District Office remained in use until the new office complex was opened at Yomba.

In 1962, the United Nations Visiting Mission under the Chairmanship of Sir Hugh Foot recommended to the Australian Government that it make rapid constitutional changes in Papua New Guinea (Post Courier Souvenir Independence Issue, September 1975: 31). The Local Government Ordinance of 1963 cancelled the power of the former *tultuls* and *luluais* in the villages and passed it on to the councils. The councils were to be elected and not imposed as the *luluai* system had been. Mair lists four aims of a council: 1, to introduce grassroots democracy and to teach democratic procedures; 2, co-ordinate services at village level; 3, Teach the local people that progress is inseparable from good order and industrious habits; 4, to prepare the way for fitting the native population into the Territory's political system. But Mair commented that the list of their functions was more in accordance with a modern local authority (Mair, 1970: 87- 88).

The new councils were expected to manage roads, bridges, aid posts, and markets and could make rules about public health etc. They were also expected to levy taxes to pay for these facilities. A flat tax rate only was to be imposed and not one based on wealth of individuals. To become a councillor, individuals had to stand for election and a growing number of young educated men were being elected. They were often inexperienced in village affairs and isolated from the people. There was some opposition at village level when Councils were first set up because traditional leaders found their authority undermined with people being expected to listen to the councillors rather than their former leaders. Each clan had traditional leaders and if they lost their former position, then the structure of the family groups within the clan was threatened. Maybe it was lack of foresight to ignore the traditional leaders. If they could have held on to their position, villages may have been more regulated. As it was, former *tultuls* and *luluais* were remembered for their former roles in village life until they had all died out.

Fr Nilles discussed some of the frustration:

Back in 1938 the system of government was the *kiap-luluai-tultul* one. It worked well whenever the government chose natural leaders, since these already had authority in the clan. But gradually we became saddled with local government councillors who were young and inexperienced appointees lacking leadership qualities and status in the community. Because of this, in my opinion, the whole socio/political order lacked a head; and also limped on one leg. It was this weakness that paved the way for our present day unrest and warfare. A Simbu respects power. If he resorts to his bow

and arrows today to settle differences, he is trying to tell us that he believes the police and legal system of the country are now too lax, easy-going and tolerant of trouble makers and outlaws (Mihalic, 1999: 184).

Oscar Tammur, wrote that the traditional hierarchical system has slowly been, “eroded away and many of the cultural restraints on society have been broken down with the result that lawlessness has emerged and materialism has become the dominant aim in life”:

Before Independence we strove to achieve what we now have, mastery over our own destiny. However now we have that, we are unfortunately being challenged by increasing lawlessness. We have used nearly all means available to us to minimise these social ills using Western solutions. However, we have one other tool that we have made very little use of. This exists in our very own social system. Our present political and social problems could be greatly reduced by adhering more strictly to our own culture and our traditions beliefs. The unwritten laws of our forefathers were very effective in controlling society before baton-wielding police with tracker dogs, police helicopters and road blocs were introduced. We have built cities and towns and these have created vacuums within which no positive replacement of our value systems has been made. Take a look at the old village structure and ask yourself why total harmony always existed there (Post Courier Souvenir Independence Issue, September 1975: 46).

In Bilbil Village, Maia, leader of the Gapan clan, now an old man, continued to look after his people. At times of marriage, feasts, planting and harvesting, he was consulted and decided the time for each. When there were arguments of a small domestic nature, he tried to settle them. If he was unable to, then the case was referred to the council or the court. The birth of the Council system in the 1960s meant that many of the powers of the leaders were taken over by the Council. As Maia said, the big men *malolo* (rest) now, they are no longer important not like in the old days when they would have been the *luluai* and *tutul*. In some ways, they looked back to the German times as the good days when there was discipline and they knew where they stood. Now they held little position of authority unless they were elected to the Council. At first the councils represented groups of villages quite well. Then economic expediency led to different procedures and Councils were combined in order to pool resources. This, “took precedence over the aim of keeping the councillors close to the constituents” (Mair, 1948: 92).

Those areas, which were against the council system initially, were persuaded of its viability by various means. Sometimes leaders of these areas were invited to attend council meetings in adjoining places and were usually impressed at the prestige that accompanied the position (ibid). When decisions were being made

over changes to the council boundaries, some villagers complained that this would put them in the same councils as rival villages who were their antagonists in land disputes or other matters. Giving the Amenob Council as an example, Morauta said that the geographic origin of councillors had other implications as well:

It appears that councillors from the Amele (between the Gum and Gogol), Nobanob and Bel (Austronesian-speaking) areas dominate the proceedings at the expense of those further inland. The first President was the old paramount *luluai* of Amele Village itself, followed by a Lutheran pastor from nearby Hilu. The Vice-Presidents have come from Riwo (Bel), Panim (Nobonob), Kranket (Bel), Riwo (Bel) and Bilbil (Bel) (1974: 86).

It can be seen that members of the Bel group were over represented as the Vice-Presidents and members of the councils. The inland villages asserted it was too difficult to get to meetings because of the distances and poor road links. The dominance of the Ambenob Council by councillors from certain areas was seen as a result of their training in the early council history and so these members were the most experienced. Most councillors had trouble seeing the need to work for the good of all and not put their own or their village’s interests first. This lack of a nationalistic feeling has troubled Papua New Guinea for a long time. The inland villages felt sidelined, particularly when they had been advocating for access roads for themselves quite unsuccessfully. There was a bit of jealousy between the bush people who felt they had nothing compared with the coastal people near the towns who had everything. One of the men from Kamba made the following tirade at a tax payers’ meeting in January 1969:

*I am a Kamba. I am a man from the bush.*

*I sleep in a hole in the rocks.*

*We don’t have a road.*

*I’m like a woman. I wear a grass skirt.*

*I hear the fame of the coastal people.*

*But you have struck me down.*

*I have nothing to say.*

(Morauta, 1974: 84).

Each of the councils had representation at the District Conference but, in 1969, the Ambenob representatives did not speak up and so were often overlooked. They felt inferior to their better-educated neighbours on the coast. In 1969, according to Morauta, the only item on the agenda from Ambenob was for pensions for retired councillors. “Ambenob Council does not appear to have created a feeling of unity among the people in its area. This is partly a result of the generally poor public image of the council and partly as a result of the fact that the council is not perceived as a pressure group in a more inclusive political arena” (ibid: 87). The reticence of the Bel Group may be attributed to their general attitude to those in authority, dating back to German times.

Despite these reservations, the councils provided government at the grassroots level and the people no longer felt they were governed from above by government officials who once carried out patrols to count numbers and collect the head taxes. Now this was seen as Council business. It was felt that the councillor should be like the old *luluai* and *tutul*, able to keep order and make wise decisions in village disputes. Now because many councillors were young and inexperienced this was unlikely to continue. Perhaps it would have been better if the traditional clan leaders had been seen as councillor assistants and retained their prestige. As it was, councillors often employed their friends as assistants rather than those who would be best at the job. They also had considerable power over who must pay taxes and who could be exempt. In the village situation councillors were addressed by their name and title. For example in Bilbil Village, Hon Pipoi was known as the councilman and this gave him considerable prestige.

Before the war, education was mainly the domain of the missions which opened schools as one of their first priorities. In the 1880s, the Hungarian ethnographer Biro interrupted a class being taught by Pastor Helmich, on Kranket Island. Schools like this were opened from the first days of the Lutheran Missions. Soon enough, catechists had been trained to staff schools of their own. Similarly, the Catholic Mission had schools in every station in the Madang area. In 1921, it was reported in the Annual Report to the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission that the expenditure on native education was very little. In 1934, it had even been suggested to the Commission that, "it should abandon native education altogether and hand it over completely to the missions. The suggestion was rejected" (Dorney: 1990: 41). But the Administration did not give education priority. In 1936, the education budget was still only one percent of the Territory's budget and less was spent on education than in the 1920s.

Fugmann mentioned that the Lutheran Church used the vernacular languages including the Bel language in the Madang area:

After the Second World War until the mid-fifties these schools were mainly vernacular. Due to this policy the Kate language spread throughout the Morobe District and into the Highlands so that an estimated 100,000 are able to converse in this language. The Yabim and the Bel languages were not quite as successful and are dying out now. One of the main reasons for this policy was the necessity to develop literature for the church and to be able to educate the future church leaders. Since 1945 Pidgin has developed into a fully accepted Melanesian language. Most church institutions are therefore teaching in Pidgin. — It is a feature of the Lutheran Church that it has always placed great emphasis on vernacular education. Therefore a whole Pidgin Education system has been developed over the last twenty years. There are six primary school years and four high school years leading to the two Pastors Seminaries, the Teachers College and various other technical and medical schools (Orientation Course, 1972).

There were arguments for and against universal education. The pragmatists advocated teaching an elite who could in turn teach the next generation. By the 1966 census, only 0.2% had reached an acceptable level of education to go on to Form IV. Distribution of the funding was just as unequal with the children at government schools getting free accommodation and books. The amount given to support the Mission Schools was one tenth of this. The rest of their funding had to come from their own resources (Pech, 1991: 197).

But education had some adverse affects on the local culture. The stories of the ancestors around the fires at night were no longer seen as an important link with the past. The semi-educated youth wanted to wander off to the towns to get jobs, disdaining to work on the family garden plot. For centuries, Papua New Guinea's economy was based on subsistence agriculture with trading in food and artefacts as a supplement. The people were self-sufficient, growing enough vegetables for their own subsistence. But the youth had become aware of a great outside world and were not interested in being trained by their parents in agricultural methods. Some teachers encouraged this attitude in their students, telling them if they did not study hard they would just sit in the village all their lives and never get a real job.<sup>5</sup>

Fr Nilles, of the Chimbu area, writing in 1980, said that education has turned some of the clan values upside down. "To be sure, it did raise the standard of living. But it also brought about the estrangement of children from their families and village life. Today teenagers roam the towns, looking for food and employment. Finding neither, they turn to theft and crime. Girls run off to be prostitutes" (Mihalic, 1999: 184). Despite the above negative points, education was imperative for the advancement of the people of Papua New Guinea if the country was to achieve Independence and take its place in the world scene. Until the early 1960s, the most highly educated local people were possibly those at the Vunapope Seminary in Rabaul where they were taught Philosophy, Theology, Latin and English by highly qualified teachers. Some of the students were ordained priests and others left and to take up government positions. Originally, Pidgin English was used in the Catholic schools but the Lutheran centres taught in the vernacular. However, after the war, it was accepted that English should be the main tool of education in the Administration school programme. While on campus at the boarding schools or day schools, the children were supposed to speak only English.

In 1961, a Girl's Boarding School was opened in Madang. The buildings were directly opposite the new hospital on Modilon Road. Girls who attended had completed Grade 4 in the Madang District, the Eastern Highlands and the Sepik came as well as the local girls from Manam, Karkar, Bogia, and Saidor. Patricia Reardon, a qualified home economics teacher, was in charge and Margaret Grey and Chris Downie were teachers. There were around 70 girls in the school. Many parents did not want their daughters to leave home let alone their district and move to another

cultural area where they would lose control of them so the teachers had to ensure their safety.

Chris said that it was a very onerous job that they had to fulfil. The girls arrived with very limited clothing and the teachers had to make uniforms from what they could find at the government stores. They designed and made school blouses of different colours for different days from unbleached calico, without buttons, ties or strings or zips. On Sundays, most of the girls went to church as they belonged to one or the other of the missions and they wore new clean clothes and were well presented. Food had to be organised from the government supplies, and gardens were planted to provide green tips and pumpkin vines. Some vegetables were bought at the local markets as well. There was always meat and, overall, it was a nutritious. Many and varied were the ways of cooking it.

Pat Reardon remembered:

At night we'd cook porridge until it was piping hot and nearly cooked and pop it into the grass nest in the hot box and put more grass on top and weigh it down with a hefty can. It still had steam coming out of it in the morning. That was how we managed to feed everyone in the morning by the time for 8.30 start at school. It was a two-way effort. The girls taught their teachers many of their own customs and ways of cooking. Pat Reardon taught them many interesting and varied ways of cooking food. This was to stand them in good stead for later on as many of these girls married politicians. Karina from the Chimbu area later married Iambakey Okuk, a well-known politician. The curriculum was a full Territories curriculum for Grades 4, 5 and 6 and from there the girls walked to Kusbau High School with one of the teachers. Overall, it was a very onerous job as we were on duty 24 hours a days 7 days a week.

Various schools were set up around the country specialising in different disciplines. At the Survey and Valuation Schools in Rabaul, young students were being primed to take over the top positions in a few years from the Australian incumbents. Gradually, the University of Papua New Guinea and the Lae Institute of Technology were established, the latter taking over the Survey and Valuation Schools. Madang had its own High Schools, Technical Schools and then the Divine Word University by the 1990s. Some were run by the missions and others by the Government.

According to the census of 1966, the population of the Madang District was 152,000 of whom 2,061 were expatriates. The local population was increasing at about 3 per cent per annum. "Migration for labour has had some influence on the population structure. There were approximately 7,200 indigenes (5 per cent of the indigenous population) who were born elsewhere. Nearly one-half of them came from the adjacent coastal Districts, Morobe and East Sepik, and about one-seventh from the neighbouring Highland Districts. — Ninety four percent of the indigenous

population was classified as 'rural'. This excludes areas with populations of 500 or more, of which there are only two - Madang (7,398) and Bogia (605) - and fails to distinguish the increasingly important centres developing around patrol posts, religious missions, hospitals, schools and plantations" (Ryan, 1972: 671). Since German times, the indigenous people had been encouraged to grow their own coconut groves for copra production, on an informal basis. Villagers profited from selling copra to the Copra Marketing Board. One of the first indigenous economic ventures was the Amele Rural Progress Society established in 1950 (Lawrence, 1964: 51).

Post-war economic development in Madang was centred on its strategic position as an intermediary airport with connections to the Highlands and the port facilities. Goroka was only 30 minutes flying distance away. This continued until the mid-60s, when the opening of the Highlands Highway to Lae diverted this traffic away from Madang and Lae became the more important port and terminal. The amount of cargo which was handled at Madang decreased dramatically within a year from 31,000 tons in 1965-66 to 13,000 tons in 1967-68. However, Madang continued to be the centre for any economic activity within the province, particularly with the cocoa and copra industries. Other industries were the soft drink and tobacco factories. In the 1960s, Yomba Plantation was taken over by the government for development and the administrative centre was shifted there. 45 acres of this land was also made available for more industrial development. In 1962, W.D. and H. O. Wills built a tobacco plant, exporting to Rabaul and the Highlands as well as selling locally. This had an



*Sima, Maia's granddaughter, selling a pot in the 1970s to Lanu in the Madang market.*

impact on the local market, as the villagers were encouraged to sell their tobacco to the factory.

Several factors hampered the development of Madang town in the 1960s. The lack of a reticulated water supply was high on the list. This is an interesting observation because twenty years later when Madang had reticulated water, the supply was continually being cut off and houses were given only two hour's supply a day. The sad thing was that the water tanks, which the townspeople had survived on for years, had now been holed as useless and the guttering pulled off. This was a backward step as Madang's rainfall ensured that the tanks were full for most of the year.

In 1971, the Madang Town Interim Commission (formerly known as the Madang Town Council) was established under an Act of Parliament. In that time, it covered 10 Wards with two councillors representing each ward, making a total of twenty councillors. The Commission's main functions and responsibilities were to provide essential services such as sanitation and sewerage and garbage disposal, health services, maintenance of parks and reserves and the cemetery. The Commission's Budget for the Town of Madang in 1971 was 1.2 million kina.

The Madang town market has always been an important meeting place for the people from all over the Province if they happen to be in town. There one can find bows and arrows from the Ramu and colourful grass skirts and *bilums* made locally. The Sepik carvers lay their shell necklaces, carvings, pottery and wooden bowls in rows on the ground. Locally grown vegetables are sold to the town dwellers who have no land to grow their own. Some goods are exchanged. For example, pots for food would sometimes be a direct barter or sold for money. Tourists looking for locally made products also frequent the market. Public Motor Vehicles, PMVs, became a familiar sight parked alongside the market compound and provide the only form of transport for many of the village people.

The road system had gradually been extended. In 1968, Madang had only 40 kilometres of sealed road in the town and 404 miles of vehicular roads in the District. PMVs could access Bogia in dry weather when the rivers were down, but the last stretch was very poor. To the south, roads finished at Erima, although Saidor had its own road system around the town. Over the following years bridges were built opening up the an all weather road to Bogia and by the 1990s the Rai Coast was accessible by 4 wheel vehicles in good weather.

The chip mill of Japan and New Guinea Timbers, JANT, a subsidiary of Honsu Paper started its operations in the Trans-Gogol area, inland from Madang, in 1973. With the cooperation of the Japanese and the Australian governments, the industry was the first of its kind in Papua New Guinea, and was also the first in the world to use tropical hardwood chips to make pulp for packing. The industry was the subject of an extensive impact assessment on the lives of the people carried out by Dr Colin

De'ath (1980) who noted that the Gogol people were not really aware of the negotiations, which had been taking place for some time between C.E. Barnes Minister for Territories in the Australian Government and Mr Okumara of Honsu Paper, on the feasibility of opening up a timber industry in New Guinea. The Papua New Guinea Department of Forests also carried out its own feasibility studies and negotiations continued until 1971. There were many arguments about the effect of the proposed land clearing on the forest and its animals and plants, which the people depended on for their everyday livelihood. Although many jobs would become available for the workers, drivers for the jinkers and foresters, very few of the local Gogol men were employed by the company.

Bruce Jephcott, Madang District Member of the House Of Assembly was also Minister for Natural Resources in the National Government and was hopeful that the Gogol people would develop many agricultural ventures with the help of JANT. Jephcott had a cattle property at Dumpu in the Madang Province and knew that cattle properties could be established in cleared areas of bush. Wild cattle had once roamed the Madang District in the early days when part of the herd of the early settlers wandered off into the bush. If they could survive so could herds in the Gogol Valley with its lush growth and plentiful rivers. For smaller holdings he advocated cacao crops, and rice planting. He wanted JANT to provide the infrastructure to help the people set these up. Unfortunately, Jephcott fell grievously ill and was unable to continue as Minister for Natural Resources and, over the years, very little was done and the people fell back on their money from leasing the land to the Company. In many instances the amounts were paltry.

The Jobto people unwillingly joined the Ambenob Council in 1967 with its headquarters at Daben near Madang. They paid their annual taxes but saw no benefits in their area. Like other inland people, they felt the coastal people had the unfair advantage. By 1977, they decided not to pay their taxes and defected from the Council so now they were out of favour not only with JANT but also with the Ambenob Council.

Earlier in the 1950s, the Jobto people had had their fingers burnt when they joined a Rice Project.

In 1956, they produced 40 tons of rice and had to carry it many miles to reach a road. Even then the rice had to be transported a long way by truck to where it could be milled by the Bel Society. The Bel group had tried to get a rural progress group going but it later collapsed from lack of financial support and lack of transport for producers. Once the rice had been hulled, it was not practical, to carry it back for the villagers' own use (De' Ath, 1978: 22).

Dr Colin De' Ath wrote how the cargo cult thinking affected the Gogol people in the 1970s. By this time, well known cultists were finding it difficult to get work, "there is still a great deal of suspicion, by JANT, the Lutherans, the Catholics and the

government of cultists who seek employment, political positions or wish to get economically involved” (ibid). As a result they became isolated and economically disadvantaged. The cultists in the Gogol viewed Yali as their king and believed that he had predicted self-government and independence which was later gained by Papua New Guinea. But there were other considerations that upset the people. Part of the problem was the felling of trees near the clay deposits, which the men needed to make their pots. Wezip Aloloum of Jobto Village owned part of the forest where the clearing was being done and was at the centre of some of the disputes, not only resisting this kind of development but objecting to the amount of compensation his people were getting.

Colin De’Ath explained the situation:

Here is a story of continuing conflict about destruction of people’s resources: clay for pottery, forests and the land itself. Parties to the dispute include villagers of the Trans-Gogol area in Madang Province, local, provincial and national governments and big businesses from overseas. Central to the contentions are clay pots traditionally made by the people for both ceremonial and practical purposes. This pottery is exhibited in the Papua New Guinea National Museum. It is keenly sought by foreign collectors but now it can no longer be made. Accordingly this case has aroused national and international attention.

Yet JANT and Honshu claim they are losing money on their Madang operation. What concerns the people and their leaders most, however, is that the company has destroyed their pottery clay, reduced most of their forest to unproductive re-growth bush and greatly damaged the power of the land to support human life (De’Ath, 1978: 21-22).

On the other hand there were some Papua New Guinean people who favoured logging. A letter in the Post-Courier many years later extolled the virtues of logging and attacked the critics.

The writer said:

Where I come from I view logging as stepping-stone to development and prosperity for our country. — Critics of logging for environmental purposes have not thought of the following points: We the owners have been living miserable lives and have been under privileged, under developed and uncivilised for too long. We cannot watch this opportunity to improve our lives slide past. Will we remain uncivilised for more decades in the name of environment? What about the other developments like mining and oil they cause pollution whereas the forests are a renewable resource? The role of the Forestry Authority should be changed so that it becomes more responsive in supervisory and research roles to counter degeneration. It should be a matter between government and its agency, and us the resource owners and registered industry participants to discuss and set an agenda. Signed Arup Mangi, Kandrian, West New Britain.

Although there are many arguments for and against logging, it would be a pity if Papua New Guinea were to lose its beautiful forests and with them its bird and animal life unique to that part of the world. Once the virgin forest is removed it will never return to its former state as creepers and weeds proliferate. The local owners of the land are the caretakers to pass it on to their descendants. But, then again, as the writer said, forests can be regrown, or, if selective cutting is controlled, it can be acceptable.

Tourism has also contributed to the Madang economy, based on the ideal conditions and scenery and also facilities and activities. Tours out to the villages are one of the main features of this economy and also provide the villages with part of proceeds. In the *Madang Urban Study*, it was noted that apart for the tourist side, the village people take little part in the urban economy:

Few villagers worked in town, few purchases were made to the town and few attended the town market. Generally, any visits to the market were made by the women and then only when artefacts or excess crops were available for sale; they are producers rather than consumers in this respect. However, whilst villagers rarely go to town, organised tours from town are visiting the villages in increasing numbers with the result that the maintenance of traditions, values and norms, and a subsistence economy has been markedly altered by involvement with urban people (1972: 2).

Little mention was made of the pottery industry, which was at that time flourishing in both Yabob and Bilbil Villages. Pottery centres were operating in both villages and tourists came out to visit and buy pots and other artefacts. In the 1970s, the Bilbil had PMVs and coastal boats and they could trade pots for meat as far as Yeimas or Galek. Village houses were purposefully built in the native style, to be attractive to visitors even when the owners could afford to build a more permanent structure.

During the war, the people of New Guinea were very conscious of the Royal Family. When Malcolm Wright landed from a submarine in New Britain in July 1942, he was met by an old *luluai* who had a gift for the King:

“We would like to send this to the King. Tell him that we are still his people and we look forward to the day when the Australians return to New Guinea”

Later, Wright was recognised by a *tutul* who had known him before the war. He held our hands in a mixture of joy and disbelief; then suddenly he asked,

“How’s the King?”

Assured that His Majesty was in good health, he began to ask questions about the war.

But it would be difficult to argue that such declarations of loyalty to the monarch, made by people knowing no society

larger or less personal than a tribal community, expressed a meaningful allegiance to the constitutional structure of which King George VI was the ceremonial head (Inglis, 1968: 520).

Even earlier in 1914 when an Australian naval boat flying a British Ensign flag came into Madang Harbour and took over from the Germans, old men in the 1970's had a clear memory of this historic occasion. One even exaggerated the account and said the king looked through his telescope from the bridge and saw the Siar canoes. On this occasion, the captain of the naval boat presented *luluai*, Walok Dafig, with a British Ensign flag as a surety against ever being banished again. When the Japanese invasion caused them to leave their island once again in 1942, this flag was lost in the ensuing turmoil.

Many years later, in the late 1960s, a teacher at Sagalau, hearing the story of the lost flag, wrote to the English officials and a replacement flag was sent to the Australian Government. As the Duke of Edinburgh was scheduled to make an official visit to Madang in 1971, the presentation of the flag to the Siars was fitted into the Official Programme.

This was of tremendous importance to the people:

When the Duke came in 1971, we went to see him in his boat and told him the story. Then the Duke brought another flag and said it was for us. When I saw it, it was just the same as the flag we had had before. The men and women cried over it. The Duke gave the District Commissioner the flag and it was put in a glass case. The Duke brought it to Siar and there was a big feast. Many pigs were killed and food cooked. Many men came to see the flag (Gurnass, interview, September 1986).

Judy Booth (later Forsyth) remembered the day the Duke of Edinburgh came to Madang. She was standing at the bottom of the gangplank of the *Britannia* with her scouts and cubs and when the Duke came off the ship he shook hands with many of the boys. He was amazed that they wore their toggles against their bare skin above their *laplaps*.<sup>6</sup> Then the Duke was whisked off to a traditional feast and dancing on Siar Island where he presented the people with their flag. It was a great moment to have the husband of the Queen come to their village.<sup>7</sup> Later that day, District Commissioner, Des Clifton-Basset, and his wife hosted a special dinner for the Duke, followed by fireworks. Another night, the Duke entertained guests for dinner on the *Britannia*. It was one of Elizabeth Sowerby's fondest memories to sit at dinner with the Duke with all the pomp and ceremony on the *Britannia*.

Peter Lawrence even managed to cite the Queen as being part of a cargo cult. After she was crowned Queen as a young woman in 1953, some Madang people were delighted as a woman would be, "less hard-hearted than a man and would perhaps reveal the cargo secret" (1964: 270).

## Independence

Although a Legislative Council had been set up in 1951, only three of its twenty-nine members were nationals and it was not until 1964 that Papua New Guineans were able to vote. This was after the House of Assembly was established with pressure from the UN delegation in 1962. Although there had been council elections in the provinces, this was the first time the idea of a democracy was felt nationwide. The Second House of Assembly in 1968 saw the Pangu Pati take its place as the Opposition.

Mr Barnes, Minister for the Territories did not want to move quickly towards Independence. The Highland people were also against early independence, fearing that the coastal people who had had access to education and western ideas for much longer, would take all the positions of leadership. For example, the Western Highlands had only been in touch with the outside world since 1933, when the Leahy Brothers and Fr William Ross first contacted them. Because the war had intervened, there was not much progress there until the 1950s, and even in the 1970s, there were still some areas not under administrative control. However they were eager to catch up with the coastal people and were happy to be employed as plantation contract workers. From the 1950s, coffee became a viable crop in the Highlands and the village people were encouraged to develop their own plantations as well as work on the large company owned plantations. Their wealth was growing with the new industries but even so they thought they needed more time to prepare for Independence. Because of their support, the national political party that wanted to delay Independence in the 1972 elections very nearly won with the Highland support.

Sean Dorney gave the numbers, "There were 102 seats of which the conservative, anti-early Independence United party won 42 seats Somare's Pangu Pati won 24" (1990: 49). Somehow Somare managed to get enough independents and regional groups to join him in a coalition. Highlander, Iambakey Okuk, supported Somare in his bid to become Prime Minister as did Julius Chan's People's Progress Party and the Mataungans from New Britain. When Somare emerged victorious, the Australian minister he had most to deal with was Andrew Peacock, the Australian Minister for External Affairs. Although comparatively new to the job, he was young and able to connect with the newly elected members of the Pangu Party and the new Papua New Guinea government. Even now, Peacock is still credited with doing more than Bill Morrison, who succeeded him under Whitlam (ibid : 48).

In 1970, Gough Whitlam as leader of the opposition in the Australian Parliament visited Papua New Guinea and made a point of going to Rabaul where several Mataungans had been jailed for riotous behaviour. Whitlam visited Matupit Island, a stronghold of the Mataungans who were advocating more localisation of the Rabaul Town Council. I was on Matupit Island at this time, standing with some Tolai friends who spoke English and could hear the speech in both Kuanua and English. Whitlam



*Raising the Papua New Guinea Flag on Independence Day 1975 in Madang.*

talked for a bit and the translator interpreted for the Tolai people. The people I was with suddenly showed concern. The translator was putting words in Whitlam's mouth that he certainly had not

said. It began to get worse and then downright untruthful about significant statements. Whitlam told the crowd, "Tomorrow I will visit your Mataungan members in the Keravat jail", but the translator said, "Tomorrow I will go to visit the Mataungans and let them all out of the Kerevat jail". At this, a howl of joy went up in the crowd. They cheered and cheered and Whitlam thought he had really made his mark with these people. My Tolai friends said they thought there would be trouble the next day and true enough, when the jailed Mataungan members were not freed, there was.

Whitlam had already established an agenda for self-government and independence and this was being followed, albeit reluctantly, on the part of some of the Australian government workers who thought the process was going too fast. He declared that if he were elected, self-government would be proclaimed within three years and Independence by 1976. Whitlam was elected at the end of 1972 and the timetable was set in motion. Independence Day was celebrated around the nation in September 1975. Sean Dorney commented that "Australia could not have delayed giving Papua New Guinea its Independence for many more years without there having been far more strife and consequently far greater post-Independence problems. The debate is not 'did Papua New Guinea get Independence too early?' But 'Did the preparations start too late?'" (1990: 48).

In September 1975, the ceremony of the lowering of the Australian flag and the raising of the new Papua New Guinea flag in Madang commenced on 15 September, with a parade by Police, Defence Force and Corrective Services at the District Headquarters. A special guest was Mr Clifton-Bassett, the former District Commissioner of Madang who gave a speech to a large assembled crowd of Madang people. While he gave his speech, the Australian flag fluttered above Madang for the last time. A school choir then sang the Australian National Anthem and the flag was lowered slowly. Many of the older men wept to see the ties being cut with the Australian administration. That evening, there were fireworks at Yabob Hill and bonfires on the hills around Madang while the church bells rang.

The following day, Independence Day, 16 September, was the official raising of the Papua New Guinea flag. Marching groups advanced from the Laiwaden Reserve to the Area Authority Building for the official flag-raising ceremony at 9.30 at the Area Authority Building. This was the new Papua New Guinea flag with its large golden bird of Paradise and group of stars on a red and black background. This was followed a volley fired by the Defence Force and the school choirs singing the National Anthem. The Prime Minister's Speech to the Nation was broadcast and this was followed by an address by Mr Benson



By courtesy, Benson Gegeyo

*Benson and Gladys Gegeyo with guests. Benson Gegeyo was the first National District Commissioner in Madang.*

Gegeyo, the District Commissioner. That afternoon, the President of the Madang Town Council, Mr Kaukesa Kamo, opened Independence Park. Representatives of Papua New Guinea as well as Germany, America, Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Japan. This was followed by a colourful parade involving the Police, Defence Force and schools, followed by many floats. The Australian, Chinese and Filipino communities were also present although in small numbers. Many Chinese who were still living in Madang stayed home but some had boarded up their shops and had already left to live in Australia while they had a chance of taking up citizenship.

The colour and pomp of the ceremonies entertained the crowds who were intrigued by the greasy pole game when contestants tried to climb the greasy pole and pick off the prizes at the top – ones like bicycles, radios and watches. Everywhere there were dance groups in traditional dress. The President of Nauru arrived Wednesday 17 September and gave an address from the dais. That evening there was a reception for him at the District Commissioner's residence to celebrate the newly independent nation.

District Commissioner Benson Gegeyo wrote, "In a comparatively short period of time our country has undergone rapid development and change bringing us to the stage where we are proud to enter into participation in world affairs as one united and progressive nation".<sup>8</sup>

One notable feature of most of the major urban centres in Papua New Guinea after the war was the large migrant populations. Previously, after they had finished a labour contract, the people from other Districts would return to their villages, but from the 1950s onwards many stayed in the squatter settlements in the

nearby towns. Madang was no exception with its squatter camps at Sisiak and Biliau. Frerichs points out that these people were "usually illiterate, unskilled workers, some of whom find jobs and many who don't" (1969: 141). There were many people from the Sepik River. They were the makers of bead necklaces and carvings, which abound in the markets and at the hotels. They would wander around the town with their carvings looking for potential buyers. They had more luck with the tourists than with residents of the town. I felt sorry for one of them and used to buy occasional shell ornaments from him. This led to complications because he found out where we lived and used to

come to the door. One night when I returned home with the children, I parked the car as usual and walked along the path in the dark to the front door with the baby in one arm and pushing the stroller with the other. There sitting patiently on the bottom step was the Sepik carver waiting for us. He was very drunk and very determined to make a sale. Brian was away and I was quite frightened because he was blocking the access to the house. The poor man had laid all his wares on the path and the grass beyond in an orderly manner as if he was at the market. There was a row of shells and then a row of ornaments with small carvings and trinkets beyond. He was in no mood to let me pass to get to the front door, not even to turn the light on. "Missus you buy carving?" In the end I had to send for one of the neighbours, Peter Edwards, who came on the double to help me. Even then, the man was insisting I drive him home to the settlement near the airport.

But it was through this Sepik settlement near the airport that we were able to meet Dimi, a carver who was always busy whittling away at his carvings. He introduced us to the old carvings he had brought with him from his village at Amboin. They all leaned against the wall of his hut with pricetags on them. There was Mungal, a tall skinny figure who had played an important role back in the Amboin Village and there was Boils, a figure of a large spirit woman holding her arms over her head, strange arms with large daggers hanging from them. Boils was the figure that the head-hunters appealed to after a raid on an enemy village. Then there were the wooden figures of the bush-devils with the big ears that picked up the gossip around the village and relayed it to the sorcerer. Finally there was Cadibokis, the Chairman, the figure that no meeting in Papua New Guinea should be without. Cadibokis was shaped like a seat on one side and on the reverse side was the figure of an imposing man. In the *haus tambaran* in Amboin, Cadibokis was the dominant figure. Whenever a man addressed a gathering, he would stand next to the chairman or even sit on the seat as he talked.

About this time, Brian returned from a trip up the Fly River, with a severe case of quinine resistant malaria and suffered continual fevers and nightmares for days. While caring for him, I wrote *Kami's Dream* about a boy who visited Dimi, and was introduced to his carvings. In a dream or nightmare, he re-visits his home in Amboin on the Sepik and meets Mungal and Boils and all the characters from the carver's hut. While Brian suffered nightmares, I had nightmares too of the Sepik River in the time of the headhunters and sorcerers. *Kami's Dream* was also written as a Radio Play and twelve years later when I visited New Guinea, I turned on the radio to hear the words, "And next week we will hear the next episode of Kami and his friend Mungal".

When our family moved to Port Moresby, I saw the real carvings of Mungal and his friends being carried into the National Museum. People looked askance at me when I cried, "There's Mungal!" He had been rescued from art dealers trying to fly him out of the country. Previously, on 10 June 1972, there had been headlines in the National newspapers of stolen collections, art dealers taking very old treasures from Papua New Guinea's past:

A large collection was confiscated at Madang airport. It had been consigned as air cargo to be flown out of the country. There was a total of 17 cases. Each case contained works of art, some outstanding pieces. These are now on display in the National Museum and Art Gallery at Waigani under the heading "The Seized Collection". In these cases we were lucky, but reports are still received of large numbers of rare and sacred objects being removed without our knowledge from Papua New Guinea. – People who destroy old places or export items without permission face a fine of K500 or a six month jail sentence (Soroi Marepo, Assistant Research Officer Ethnology Department, National Museum, 1979)<sup>9</sup>

Mr Benson Gegeyo, from Popondetta, was the first local District Commissioner, appointed in 1973, and was there in 1975 when Papua New Guinea became Independent. Benson and his wife Gladys were a colourful couple in the Madang social scene. There were many diplomats visiting Madang at the time and quite often Gladys wore dresses with a distinct Papua New Guinea design. There was one evening that was particularly memorable: A Russian diplomat and his wife were visiting and one of the guests, an Australian, got rather inebriated and asked the diplomat how often he invited the Petrovs<sup>10</sup> to dinner.

Benson also wrote the Foreword Note in June 1975 for Rosalie Christensen's *Traditional Art and Craft of Madang and Siassi* showing that he had considerable interest in the culture of Papua New Guinea:

It is emphasised that it's the strong desire of the Government to preserve the culture of Papua New Guinea whether it be in a central place or a local centre or a village. The government does not merely wish to collect all the property and put it in one place. If the people want to keep their property locally, the government would respect this wish

and would do what it could to assist. This booklet prepared by Mrs Christensen is a most useful work on a vital subject, and she is to be congratulated and thanked for her dedicated efforts in this field. It is hoped that all those who have the future of the country's culture at heart will read this book and learn from it (Christensen, 1975).

Madang is one of the major tourist areas in Papua New Guinea. The town itself has lagoons which overflow into the harbour with its many tropical islands. This lovely location makes it a tourists' paradise. Along the North Coast Road going out of town stands the JANT Chip Mill and Madang Timbers Sawmill near the airport. Further out on the left is Madang Teacher's College. The road then cuts through cocoa and coconut plantations, beyond this is Siar Village which is built partly on the mainland and partly on the island of the same name accessed by canoes. Further along the road at Nagada, a sign showed the way to Kristen Pres, a Lutheran publishing house. On the other left side of the road is the track to Nobonob where there is a lookout and a mission station. The Catholic Mission Headquarters at Alexishafen is about twenty kilometres from Madang and past it is found Malolo Plantation Hotel on the road to Bogia, 150 kilometres away.

South of Madang is the road to the Highlands and Lae which was opened in the late 1970s. Just after leaving town, one comes to the turn off to Bilbil village with its pottery. Near the Gogol Bridge, at Asuar was the Balek Wildlife Sanctuary with beautiful walks and fine caves with stalactites and, from the top of the cliff, panoramic views of the area. After crossing the Gogol Bridge, the road winds steeply up the range before entering the Ramu Valley. It follows the Ramu Valley upstream passing Shaggy Ridge on the left and then through Dumpu before joining the Highlands Highway at the foot of the Kassam Pass.

Hotels in Madang include Smugglers Inn, Madang Resort Hotel, Coastwatchers Motel, all in the town area and Jais Aben out of town. For low-cost accommodation, there is the CWA Cottage or Lutheran Guest House and the Siar Island Lodge, The *Melanesian Discoverer* operates cruises along the North Coast of Papua New Guinea out of Madang. In Madang, they operate the Niugini Diving Adventures with excursions to Bagabag; war relics within the harbour include a B52 Bomber, the *Coral Queen*, and Japanese barges; outside the harbour is the US Boston Bomber and many others. Other sights worth seeing are the Coastwatchers Light, a war memorial was erected by Australia; the old German cemetery; the market where everything from birds to baskets, artefact shops where Sepik carvings can be obtained; the tobacco factory; the main wharf with canoes, small boats and ships loading and unloading cargo. Three buildings of note in town are the Lutheran Church, the Catholic Cathedral and the Madang Provincial Government offices. There is a monument of white crosses to mark Independence Day.

Every now and then unexploded shells are found even forty years after the war. During 1970-71, a medium frequency and high

frequency transmitting station was installed in Madang near Tusbab High School on Modilon Rd. There had to be two transmitting stations because the New Guinea news was transmitted from Port Moresby in pidgin and then translated into the local languages. In the early earthworks, one of the engineering staff, Neil Howard, was misled by a warning sign and inadvertently picked up what was apparently an unexploded shell. Understandably, this caused considerable consternation and the item was very carefully replaced where it was found. It is understood that the army disposed of it soon afterwards.

In 1971, when our family arrived in Madang, the centenary celebrations for Miklouho-Maclay were being held. He was a Russian scientist who lived on the Rai Coast in 1871. He is still greatly acclaimed in Russia where two large Institutes in Moscow and St Petersburg are called after him and also still acclaimed in the villages on the Rai Coast where he lived. To celebrate the occasion many Russian scientists converged on Bogadjim, Bongu and Madang. When we arrived we were still rather shaken after the two strength eight earthquakes we had experience in the month before we left Rabaul. People we met in Madang were still describing the 1970 earthquake that had shattered that town in the previous year. It occurred on the 1 of November 1970 and measured 7.1 on the Richter Scale. It occurred about four o'clock in the morning. The epicentre was 25 kilometres NNE of the town in the Isumrud Strait between Karkar and the mainland.



By courtesy, District Commissioner, Madang

*The Lightfoot Arcade after the Madang earthquake in 1970.*

In town, the worst hit building was the Lightfoot Arcade. One of the walls just collapsed sideways and a pregnant woman, who had been sleeping upstairs, slid down the wall on her bed as if she were on a slippery slide. Her bed ended up in the middle of the road with her still in it - fortunately uninjured. The quake was so strong that it was a subject of conversation for a long time afterwards. Everyone could remember where they were the night it happened. There was damage to buildings, roads, and bridges over a wide area. Maria Kramer and family were living in their old army house at Alexishafen and the house was slipped off its posts with the force of the earthquake. Fortunately the family had managed to leave the house before this happened. Luckily there were no buildings in Madang higher than two stories and most of the structural steel and timber sustained the impact quite well. "Buildings that collapsed included the Manager's residence of PNG Motors whose house fell on top of the car, Beon Corrective Institution, Bau Primary School, and of course the Lightfoot Arcade and the cement wharf, where the *Rudolph Wahlen* was docked. It generated a four foot tidal wave which wiped out at least one coastal village, caused an estimated \$1 million worth of damage to property and indirectly caused about a hundred deaths due mainly to landslides and collapsing huts." Out in the villages the earthquake caused devastation to many village houses. At Utu Village, many houses collapsed (Beca, Carter Hollings and Ferrier, 1971).

Madang was a picturesque place with lots of coconuts growing everywhere. It was a place where people had to make their own entertainment. There was no TV so we relied on the radio for news broadcast at seven o'clock each evening. It was pleasant to go for afternoon walks to the park or the lagoon, and the

Lighthouse was not far away. Children wandered off to fish from the local bridge or wharf or went sailing in their own small boats from the yacht club where races were held every Saturday afternoon. Our son, John, often participated so many an afternoon was spent there watching him sail. Then came the day he wanted to sail to Siar Island and organised for us to meet him there for a picnic. The day began well enough and I even managed to talk to some of my Siar friends on the Island while the children had a swim on the white sandy beach. After lunch the wind began to strengthen but John was quite determined that he would make it back to town on his small sailing boat. We left on the canoe for the a short trip to the mainland and even then it was rough. By the time I had driven to Madang to pick John up at the yacht club the sea was full of white caps and the wind was really blowing. For a long time I sat and dreaded what had happened to him and then I saw him sailing off shore. Never had I felt such relief. Suddenly a gust blew his boat over. Fortunately, another sailor came to his aid and he scrambled ashore. That was one close experience we had with the sudden roughness of the weather even in the harbour.

Our family had many contacts with the local villagers who became our friends. In the end, we knew more of the local villagers than Europeans and we found them endlessly interesting and accepting. We became caught up in their lives, studied their culture and enjoyed many feasts and *singsings* and had many adventures. In return, I recorded village life and history in taped interviews and my husband, Brian, captured it in photographs. Gradually the beauty of Madang grew on us. Our house was not sumptuous by any stretch of the imagination, but then most government employees were in similar accommodation, so there was no trouble about keeping up with the Jones's. The bedrooms were off a central lounge room, which had push-out shutters along its length. There was no flywire in the lounge and all these shutters had to be closed before we retired for the night. Security was not a big problem, for the eight and a half years we were in Madang, we only had two break-ins.

The backyard to our house had a lovely green lawn rolling down to the coconuts, which edged the marshy lagoon. The middle of the lagoon had clear water, but around the edges the reeds were thick. Along the side, a channel had been dug in which the Sepik women used to come and catch fish. Our four children loved the lagoon. They played near the edge, but did not swim in it for fear of the crocodiles. Sani and Larnu, our house staff, lived in a small house in the backyard and their children and ours played happily together. Our son, John, and Mako, Sani's nephew, became good friends.

Madang, in those days, was still quite a small tropical town. The golf course which Charley Bates had created out of the swamps was a popular place with the Europeans some of whom spent their evenings at the Golf Club. There were very few wartime wrecks left, apart from a few planes out near Alexishafen. The gardens and surrounding area were lush and tropical. Lagoons

meandered through the town and coconuts hung over the still water. Hibiscus and frangipani abounded and large old rubber trees from earlier days lined some of the streets. The houses in the town were mostly occupied by Europeans who congregated at the clubs and sports venues on the weekends. Sailing and picnicing on the various islands in the harbour was a favourite pastime, Kranket lagoons and Siar Island were favourite places as well as Pig Island. Some of the residents worked for private enterprise, shopkeepers, businessmen and bankers. Many worked for the government in positions of authority, but were training local people to take over their jobs.

The social life of European women in the towns of Papua New Guinea was rather limited; you met at the shops or at each other's houses, the CWA cottage had monthly meetings, which were social gatherings. Topics were children, school, other people and discussion of social outings. Maureen Hill was a great organiser of the CWA and one year I was elected Vice-President of the Madang group and even represented Papua new Guinea at a International Conference in Hamburg in Germany in 1980. It was exciting to be part of a much larger women's organisation and to meet people from Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Australia.

Homesickness was a problem with some expatriates. One woman was so homesick she kept ringing her mother and received an enormous phone bill. It was important to have each other's support, but the social life could become a bit stultifying. The Madang Hotel had a good pool attached to it, which was frequented by most of the population at one time or another. It was a great place to meet up with friends. One advantage of living in the tropics was that you could swim the whole year around. There were also some nice little beaches where we could take the children after school. Madang had everything needed for our younger children until the end of Primary School. The School, known as the International School, followed the NSW syllabus, and the teachers were all well qualified. Expatriate children of High School age went off to boarding school in Australia.

Madang seems to be the home of flying foxes, they squawk most of the day and then in the evenings they take off and the sky is blackened with the dark shadows. We would lie on the grass and watch them, most going in one direct towards Karkar but every now and then, one would head the other way. The police used to shoot them and, as they were considered a delicacy people, would run out a pick up the victims. People seized the opportunity to collect a few for the cooking pots. Delicious they were said to be, but so strong, the smell exuded from the limbs of those who ate them. Sani would shoot *black bokis* as he called them with his bow and arrows.

The 1974 eruptions of the volcano on KarKar Island occurred between February and August with two major periods in the middle of June and late July when new vents were formed on the Bagiai cone which lies on the base of the caldera of Karkar volcano. Bright red flashes of flames in the night sky were

followed by plumes of smoke in the daytime. The eruption began with an explosion of the upper eastern flank of the cone and with “effusive activity at a source near the eastern base of the cone” (Johnson, 1981:53).

My husband, Brian, being the Civil Defence Signals Officer, had a daily radio schedule with Rob Cooke at the Rabaul Observatory where he was the Senior Vulcanologist in Papua New Guinea, Brian was also be in contact with the volcanologists on the caldera rim observation post on Karkar Island. This became important during the eruptions in 1974-75 because, while both centres could hear Brian clearly from Madang, they could not hear each other. Radio schedules were held many evenings with traffic reports on the nature of the eruptions. We often heard Robin Cooke’s voice on these skeds and if he were in town, he would call in to see us. He was interested in the stories I was collecting about Yomba Island and the possibility that it may have been at Hankow Reef. He put a lot of credence into these stories and any reference I found to volcanic activity in historical accounts, myths or oral histories were of immediate interest. He would have liked to have done much more in that area as he felt the more we knew about the past, the better prepared we would be for the future.

Brian and our son, John, then aged 10, climbed the caldera on Karkar Island in 1974 and camped over-night at the observation post where the vulcanologist kept a watch on the volcanic activity on the floor beneath them. The caldera was part of an old volcano which had erupted many years before leaving a crater about 5 kilometres across and about 300 metres deep. Almost in the centre of this old crater a new cone, Bagiai, had been erupting on and off for the past two years. Brian was able to get outstanding photographs of this erupting cone in the middle of the night. His main worry was the ash might get into his camera!

Here is John’s account of the event, written soon after the climb in July 1974:

We left Madang at 9 o’clock in the morning to go to Karkar Island on a 185 Cessna with a single engine. It rained on the way but we had an experienced pilot so I did not worry. When we arrived at Karkar, the weather was fine. We went to the District Office and got transport so dad could do some work and that night we slept in the guesthouse. On Saturday, we had to wait until 11.30 for Mr Chris McKee to contact us on the walkie-talkie set. Then we went in the Toyota truck as far as Mom Village. We had to wait for carriers to come and then we started to climb. It took me three hours, but my dad took six hours to get to the camp. To begin with the track was quite flat and went through a cocoa plantation and some gardens. Then the track began to get steep through the bush. I had two boys from Mom Village with me and we went ahead. We came to a creek on the way and stopped and had a drink. A group of village girls caught up with us by the creek bed. We kept walking with them until we came to an old lava flow, which we followed for a short while.

This lava flow was full of grey lava boulders, which became slippery when wet. Unfortunately, it drizzled when we were there and I slipped once and hurt my knee. We rested for ten minutes and the girls went ahead of us. We sang out to them to carry us as we were tired of walking, but they laughed and went ahead.

From the lava, we went up the steepest part of the climb to the caldera of the volcano. Halfway up, we found that a large tree had fallen across the track and so we sat on it to have a rest. From then on most of the trees were covered in green moss. Next we came to the lip of the caldera. From here, we could see the cone of the volcano, which was erupting, and I could hear loud bangs, which gave me a big fright. Rocks being shot out of the volcano by explosions of gas caused these bangs. We could see the red rocks shooting up almost 700 feet. From the look out, we had to follow the caldera around for half an hour. There were vines on the track and I tripped over twice. At last we came to the camp. Here we met Alan who was helping Mr McKee study the volcano. It was starting to get dark then and we looked at the small cone erupting. The stones were fiery red and crimson in the dark, but I was not frightened because I had Alan to talk to. The carriers and the boys I came with had gone back down the mountain just after we got there. Alan pointed out the lava flow to me, the fresh lava was dark red and glowing. Sometimes the rocks from the cone fell back on to the lava flow and other times rolled down the side of the cone with a hissing sound. Again and again, the explosions roared as the rocks shot up. The noise couldn’t stop me going to sleep and I slept soundly all night.

Before our family left Madang, Brian organised a Cessna for a fly-over of the erupting crater on Karkar Island. It was the beginning of 1979 and we flew through the clouds and smoke and peer into the crater where flames and rock spouted out beneath us. It was like looking into the depths of hell. Because I was in the other side of the plane the pilot kindly (!!) offered to turn it around and fly in the other direction so I could peer down at an angle. I was very pleased when we finally came back safely to earth.

Several months later, on 8 March 1979 while we were in Port Moresby, we heard the terrible news that Rob Cooke and his assistant, Elias Ravian, had been killed by a cloud of super-heated gas while they were camped at the same caldera rim observation post described above. Rob and Elias had camped there for different amounts of time since October the previous year and were almost ready to return to Rabaul when the tragedy occurred. The sense of loss was great in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea and fellow volcanologists and a personal loss to their many friends. Observers in the vicinity noted details of the eruption. First a strong earthquake was felt on the coasts of Karkar and then a rumbling sound like a jet plane followed by a dense black cloud from which red flares shot out above the crater in the sky above the volcano.

A crescent-shaped zone of devastation extended from a short distance west of the volcanological campsite to almost the middle of the eastern rim of the caldera. Formerly dense forest on the southern and southeastern parts of the rim had been destroyed for distances up to 900 metres. There were only a few remains of trees for about 600m away (Johnson, 1981: 67-69).

By June 1979, the Government pledged K128,000 to make Karkar island more accessible to the nation's emergency services. Now at last, the vulcanologists would be able to access Rabaul directly without having to go through an intermediary radio station in Madang. K35,000 was set aside for aerial surveillance of the volcano. The wharf was to be improved to make it suitable for emergency evacuation if needed. There would also be a four-stage plan for the evacuation. Going from Stage 1, low to moderate; stage 2, would be declared with a marked increase in seismic activity; and stage 3 would be in two sections, 3A if an explosion took place when 6000 people would be evacuated to two safety zones, and then stage 3B when another 3000 people would be shifted to safety zones, Stage 4 was evacuation to the mainland if necessary.<sup>11</sup>

But the people of Karkar had their own beliefs about the spirits in the Bagaiai's crater. The volcano was viewed as the original home of Kilibob to which he may have even secretly returned to live alongside Jesus who has risen from the dead, "while God is enthroned in nearby lofty Kanagioi" (Pech, 1991: 218). About the time of the deaths of the two vulcanologists, the Lutheran leader, Bishop Stahl Mileng died and was buried not far from the two mountains. Their spirits are still said to inhabit the area.

In the 1970s, Madang both Town and Province was catapulted into the national and international scene. In 1975 it became part of an Independent country with its own colourful flag, laws, government and Prime Minister. In 1978, Madang became a Province with its own Provincial Government. The Madang people were seen as the most peaceful in the country surrounded by beautiful scenery and waterways. Being the least volatile also meant they were less forceful on the national scene and open to being taken advantage of particularly in the push from the Highlands. But then Madang was taking its place on the international tourist market.

1. *Pastor Fricke and Superintendent Kuder were able to land in Madang on board an army plane not long after the end of the war and gave this vivid description of the destruction from the bombing in Madang, September 30 1945*
2. *This was probably a new boat carrying the name of its predecessor.*
3. *Keith McCarthy wrote the Foreword Note for Peter Lawrence's Road Belong Cargo.*
4. *This point is similar to what the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie was trying to achieve in the 1880s.*
5. *I heard this many times while teaching in a village school in 1962.*
6. *In his earlier visit in 1956 the Duke was said to be appalled at seeing so many locals without European clothes (Lawrence, 1964: 270)*
7. *Judy's husband, Robin, had to tow a special toilet out to Siar Island for the occasion.*
8. *Programme for the Madang Independence Celebrations.*
9. *Special Issue Post Courier: The Arts of the People September 1979: 74.*
10. *The Petrovs were Russian diplomat/spies who defected to the Australians in Canberra in the 1950s.*
11. *Post-Courier 20 June 1979:1*



*Karkar erupting in 1974.*



*Maclay's house at Garagassi. The people had their first glimpse of "foreign cargo" in this abode (Greenop, 1944: 144).*

## Chapter 13, Cargo Cults



*There were two brothers, Kilibob and Manup who lived on the North Coast of Papua New Guinea (in the bush near Budup). They were always quarrelling because they each thought they were the best at everything. One day Manup decided to go fishing while Kilibob went off hunting. Kilibob wandered up near the village gardens and shot an arrow at a bird. The arrow missed the bird and fell into a garden where Manup's wife found it and decided to keep it because of the beautiful design on it. [A typical individual decoration is depicted above.] She would only return the arrow to Kilibob if he tattooed the design on her skin. Kilibob did this and she stemmed the blood with a leaf, which she threw in the water. The leaf floated down to where Manup was fishing and he saw the blood. Later he saw the design on his wife's skin and recognised it as Kilibob's mark. This began another big fight between the brothers. Kilibob went to the bush behind Budup and built a boat. Manup built a trading canoe like the ones the Yabobs built to trade pots in. He took his men on board and sailed towards the Sepik. Kilibob sailed in the other direction towards Madang and as he went he pared off parts of the mainland and created the islands off the coast. In this way Sek, Malamal, Siar and Kranket Islands were created. He then carved out Dallman Passage (Lawrence, 1964: 24).*

Because Kilibob promised to return bringing the cargo, Lawrence viewed this myth as the basis for the first of the cargo cults in the Madang area. However, as has been shown, he was limited in his analysis of the myth as it is also the myth of the first trading voyage and had historical connotations as well.

There are many definitions of cargo cults. Lawrence said, "Cargo cults are made up of a belief and a set of rituals associated with that belief designed to bring the cargo. Neither of these remain constant, but together form a Cargo cult - a complex of ritual activity associated with a particular cargo myth" (1964: 5). Fr Hermann Janssen wrote, "Cargo cultism is the ritualist attempt of highly excited and disillusioned Melanesians to overcome their socio-psychological frustrations and to adjust themselves to economic, political, religious changes caused by contacts with Western and Asian cultures. The ritualistic means are very often a blending of traditional and Christian concepts" (Janssen, 1972). In other words, the people, in trying to adjust to the Western way of life and the gaps in their socio-economic levels, have developed rituals blending in the old beliefs with the new ones in the hope that the cargo will come.

Cargo Cults can be seen loosely as ways of getting material goods easily and quickly without any effort. Some see a cargo mentality in the modern world where advertisements encourage us to accumulate material goods so that the good times will come. I say this because many Europeans laugh at the concept of cargo cults in third world countries and often describe the people taking part in them as dreamers. However, in our own culture, we can find people immersed in activities and ritual to realise their dreams about having lots of material goods; for example, poker machines, lotteries and other forms of gambling.

The people in Papua New Guinea were probably predisposed to cargo thinking in their traditional culture long before contact with contact with Western and Asian cultures. Kenelm Burrige wrote: "One should not be too hasty in assuming that Cargo cults are wholly derived from the colonial situation. They may be a cultural inheritance. Cargo cults may be a particular kind of expression of a similar type of cult with which the people concerned were already well acquainted" (1960: 25). Burrige further suggested that if we believed cargo cults as happening only after the arrival of Europeans, we would have, "a completely static historical situation", viewing history as only beginning with the advent of written records. This is the line Peter Lawrence used in his book *Road Belong Cargo* when he dated the first cargo Cult as beginning in 1871, the time Miklouho-Maclay arrived and began his written records of events. Lawrence hints at past visits from sailors but had no proof of their existence, so did not take them into account. My research shows up relics left by sailors at least 50 years prior to Maclay's arrival. These relics support the oral traditions of the sailing ship.

At this time, Peter Lawrence was exclusively interested in cargo cult beliefs. When I introduced him to the headmen in Bilbil Village in 1978, he questioned them at length and very narrowly on this subject and it was amazing the material he evinced with this approach. Because of the fund of knowledge he had about cargo cults, he was able to draw out this information. On the other hand, I had previously confined my questioning to material culture and the oral history of the people and had not bothered with cargo cult thinking. Dr Lawrence opened my eyes to undercurrents of which I had previously been unaware. Maybe both of us had missed out on vital information from the nature of our investigations. Through the oral history approach of looking at

possible facts in their myths, I had discovered the story of the sailing ship at Budup and its connections to the Kilibob/Manup myth and thence to the first cargo cult. Peter Lawrence had missed out on this with his approach. The question then arises should researchers widen their questions to material that might impinge on their particular field of expertise? To what extent does any specialist superimpose his own bias when questioning people on their areas of interest thereby missing other interesting details?

This is not to refute Lawrence's excellent work; I merely would like to add a dimension to his work as taken by the Oral Historian. Lawrence did not check to see if there was any truth of the Kilibob and Manup myth, which he would have done had he taken the oral history approach. The legend in the local Budup area tells of the fight the two brothers have and the outcome was Kilibob built a large sailing ship never seen before.<sup>1</sup> He sails off promising to return with cargo for the people. The Legend of Kilibob predisposes people to read Cargo into later events, because, in the myth, when Kilibob [the sailors in the ship?] sails off in his ship, he promises to return with cargo. The people were still awaiting his return. Every time a foreigner arrived, they wondered if it was Kilibob returning with the goods. This happened when Maclay arrived and later the Germans and the Australians. When the Japanese landed in December 1942, with endless ships and cargo they thought maybe this was Kilibob bringing the cargo. The Japanese introduced their own occupation money, depicting a point of land with coconut palm trees overhanging the water. The villagers identified this point as being at Budup where their creator beings, Kilibob and Manup, once lived and it was a clear indication that the Japanese were really Kilibob and Manup returning with the cargo. After the war, some of the cargo cultists at Riwo who had sympathised with the Japanese and handed allied soldiers over to them were punished for their disloyalty. Perhaps they were being loyal to a much older tradition, that of their mythical heroes, Kilibob and Manup? Rev Dick Hueter agreed that cargo cults often occur where there is an unfinished myth. If any myth is incomplete, it is the Kilibob and Manup one.

The culture of the people and the rituals they used to ensure a good outcome could predispose the cargo thinking and this would pre-date the first official cargo cult by hundreds of years. Garden magic was a series of rituals which had to be performed so that the bountiful harvest would appear in due time. There were also the ritual the *likon* made over the fleet before they departed on their trading trips to ensure the plentiful goods were brought back from the Rai Coast or Karkar or wherever they were travelling.

As well as unfinished myths, Hueter also stressed the use of garden magic in the original culture of the cargo cultists:

Where people had uncompleted legends, and where people had ritual garden magic, there one can expect to find universal Cargo thinking and a high proportion of Cargo Cults. The most important point — is not the legend, but the garden magic. And it is garden magic as opposed to

hunting magic or other types of sorcery. Garden magic is usually an attempt to manipulate the powers that be, hunting magic can often be merely appeasing the spirits which might keep the desired results from taking place (Hueter, 1972).

Garden magic was a very important part of the coastal people's traditional way of life and was strong among the Bel people. As the people were animists they believed spirits inhabited trees and bushes. All these needed to be appeased with the right ritual or petitions. If a tree was being cut down, the spirit of the tree must first be appeased. The ancestor spirits were also invoked to ward off illness or to protect crops from marauding pigs. The ancestors were purported to visit relatives in dreams with messages about the future and gifts of valuables. The idea of providing a rosy future through the powers of the ancestors was inherent in the old ritual and belief system. This easily led to cargo cult thinking once outsiders came bringing their own cargo and trappings of a more luxurious type of living. Nearly everything that could not be explained was attributed to the ancestral spirits who were thought to be white. Because of this, when the white men arrived, they were called *tamol tivul* (spirits). The people also believed in *Anut*, an important ancestral spirit or *tibud*, and he was appealed to in magic. When Miklouho-Maclay arrived in 1871, his boat was called *Anut wag* or god's canoe.

Once a cargo cult movement began there was pressure in the village to join in the activities. Secret meetings were held, incantations were used and people were brought together through *singsings*. The ancestor spirits took on a new role in the cargo cult. Mager said, "their ancestor spirits watched over the customs of the people so that their offspring would not depart from them" (1952: 322). When there was an earthquake, flood or drought it was thought that someone had angered the *tibud* and they had to make retribution to them before everything was right again. In trying to understand the whiteman's world the ancestors were invoked to bring the cargo. But if the local villagers had missed out on the cargo because of the sin of their distant ancestors, then they had to make restitution before the cargo would come.

The Manam Islanders have a two brother myth similar to that found in the Madang area. The older brother is Momboa and Liboaboa is younger and not as adept at making canoes. Momboa made a strong base for his canoe but hid this lashing with inferior vines which Liboaboa copied. When they sailed in the big sea Liboaboa's canoe sank. Momboa returned to his mother with the news. However Liboaboa survived by some miracle and the brothers were re-united and reconciled (Lutkehaus, 1995: 31-32). There are many other episodes in the lives of these two brothers, but the fact that they vied with one another and that each made a canoe may have been the original version along the North Coast as well. However, here the arrival of a foreign sailing ship changed the myth into a canoe versus a sailing boat.

Fr Hilarion Morin SVD was the first priest on the Manam Mission after the war. The people greeted him warmly enough but the

welcome was short lived. As there had been no mission activity between 1943 and 1946, the people were turning away from the Church. Church buildings had been wrecked and plundered by the Japanese and also by the village people who had decided that the missionaries were not returning. However, Fr Hilarion persevered and soon the church stations were rebuilt and the people began to return to church services. While he was on the island, the volcano erupted twice, in August 1946 and September 1947. All went well until the rise of the Yali cargo cult whose ideas spread all along the Madang coast and Manam Island.

When Kenelm Burrridge visited Manam in the 1950s, there was a flourishing cargo cult and anti-mission feeling. At night, he heard the villagers throwing rocks on the missionary's house to keep him awake. However; these same people treated Burrridge with deference hoping that he would reveal the secrets of the cargo to them (1960: 11-12). The cargo cult leader on Manam Island was Irakau who was quite a businessman. Having few overheads, he could put his copra on the market at a competitive price. As a result the administrative officials saw him as a hard worker and better than Yali (ibid 231). However Irakau, while still opposing the mission, had to use the mission boats to sell his copra. Furthermore Irakau was reluctant to pay for the transport services and when it was found that he was covering the mission copra bags with his own mark, it was the last straw. As in many places the missionaries found themselves the meat in the sandwich between the village people and the administration. They dared not complain to the officials of the situation, as then the people would treat them worse than ever. For this reason, the officials probably did not realise the difficulties endured by the missionaries. It was a matter of enduring the bad times. After many years the cargo cult activities subsided and things returned to normal.

The object of Kenelm Burrridge's research, published in 1960, was cargo cultist, Mambu, a village man in the Bogia region who led a cargo movement in the 1930s. He had been a misfit in his own village and had wandered around other villages unlawfully collecting a tax. In doing this, he had been imitating the Europeans in the hope of gaining the cargo:

In going around the villages collecting the "head tax" Mambu was entering the role of an administrative officer. In his preaching, his use of the crucifix, and in inaugurating a form of "baptism" he was assuming the role of a missionary. He said that some of the ancestors were "disguised" as white men, making cargo; he wanted his followers to abjure traditional dress and don European clothes; he used his cross and a flag as symbols; he built "churches"; he said that the cargo, European manufactured goods, would come in ships. And by remaining celibate in spite of temptations it would seem that for Mambu the role of the missionary slightly outweighed that of an administrative officer (1960: 203).

Burrridge concluded that Mambu rose to his position of power because he was able to articulate the myth-dream. Even if he could not understand his powerful position, he meant much more to the people than he was. Other movements were bound to be started by people looking to a leader. In Madang, this probably led to the rise of Yali.



One of the main facets of the local culture before the Europeans arrived was an equal sharing of one's wealth whether through formal or informal trade. No group or person was very much wealthier than any other. When the Europeans arrived and did not share their wealth or want to trade it for local goods then a reason had to be sought for the lack of reciprocity. Were these goods addressed to the village people and taken by the foreigners? Where did they come from and why were not the people as wealthy as the foreigners? In trying to establish some equality, the people resorted to cargo cult activity to find the secret of the cargo. They developed rituals they saw the foreigners use including the rituals in Church. When they were eventually converted they were disappointed not to be told the secret of the cargo.

In *Readings in PNG Mission History*, Mihalic had another definition of a cargo cult: "Basically a cargo cult is a belief in a period of heaven on earth. People expect their ancestors to shower them with all kinds of goodies sent from the heaven that the ancestors now occupy. The term, cargo, implies all the foods, tools, luxuries, equipment, furniture and means of transport which Europeans have. These will all come for free – though only to members of the cargo cult" (1999: 19). There were many cult leaders in different areas: Mambu held sway in the Bogia area; Kamdong was a cargo cult between the Sepik and Ramu Rivers; on the Rai Coast, Yali held sway in the 1960s.

The authority [of these cargo cult leaders] was unquestionable. Most people, Catholics included, flocked after these prophets and followed them blindly. Cemeteries were kept spotlessly clean and decorated, for that was where the ancestors had left this earth, and where they would presumably return with the cargo. Sometimes followers were asked to renounce their Catholicism and get back to ancestral ways. Sometimes schools were outlawed – or again encouraged. People would stop planting gardens or harvesting sago and starve while waiting for their ship, or plane, to come in. Piers were built as well as airstrips. But nothing ever came. The fact that prominent catechists succumbed to cargo cult charms crippled the growth of the Church for half a dozen years in large coastal areas and on the offshore islands. With the demise or the jailing of the

cult leaders, the movements slowly subsided and went underground, where it still smoulders (Mihalic, 1999: 20).

On the Ramu River, Kamdong was the cargo cult leader in Kayan and Bosmun. Not long after the war, in 1948, and following his posting at Manam, Fr Morin was the Parish Priest in this area. He built a large church from local materials: mangrove logs were bolted together for the frame; the floor was made of *limbum* from the outer rim of a palm tree; the roof was made from *morata* leaves. When completed the Church was 21 metres long and 4.8 metres high. He also built himself a house. In those days, the Bosmun Villages had been following a cargo cultist called Kamdong who was opposed to the Church and tried to stop the people going to Church or even working in their gardens. Some children died from starvation during this time. Fr Moirin went to confront Kamdong and was threatened by his henchmen.

Fr Morin tells his story:

Still standing close to Kamdong, I turned to the people around us saying that Kamdong was a fake and had no special powers. I bade them to abandon him and warned them of the evil and harm he was leading them into, ruining their former prosperity, bringing disease and fostering trouble but, especially, he was pulling them to hell. I then turned to Kamdong and repeated the same message to him. Then with Kamdong's men holding clubs, some boys flexed their fists in fighting postures and surrounded me waiting to charge. Though they made as if to kill me, I made no resistance. — Instinctively I stood in the sign of a cross awaiting the telling blow. — Just then a tall, aged chief of the Bosmun groups appeared at my side, putting an arm around me in a protective, fatherly gesture. That was the end. No stick actually touched me, but as I later learned Kamdong was coming up behind me with a piece of iron to split my head open, when he was stopped (Fisher, 1992: 44).

Sometime after this, Kamdong's private army was broken up with government intervention and peace once more reigned. The Bosmun people plied the missionary with loads of yams and taro to make amends.

A cargo cult in another part of Papua New Guinea was the Johnson Cargo cult which started in July 1962 on New Hanover in the New Ireland area. It happened during a working visit of some Americans Airforce personnel, who jokingly advised the people to vote for President Johnson during an upcoming election in Papua New Guinea. The people took the joke seriously and put Mr Johnson's name on the voting papers, hoping that the cargo would then arrive. Soon after the 1964 elections, the cultists collected nearly \$1000 to send to Johnson to pay for his ticket to come and meet them. They also refused to pay their council taxes and some were jailed as defaulters. The Americans were part of a unit of the United States Airforce doing long-range radar ranging as part of a major geodetic survey between Guam and Australia. The team was in New Hanover in August 1962, and used

Matarankan Village as a base. The main instigator was probably a local man called Pilikos who went up to Pitibum Mountain to help the team clear the bush for the station and set four brass survey markers in cement. While the American team were working there a spokesman for the villagers (perhaps Pilikos) stated quite emphatically that they would build a house for the American Servicemen who would occupy the site for several weeks in about October 1962. They were more than happy to have the Americans there. Sometime later, a US Navy ship, *Cayuga County*, radioed to request permission to call into Kavieng on a particular day. By pure coincidence, this same day had been nominated by the Johnson Cargo Cultists as being the day that the cargo would arrive. Needless to say, a radio message was sent to the ship telling them not to come.

Another cargo cult was that on Mount Turu in the Sepik District. Again the United State Airforce was involved, placing survey marks on the top of the mountain. When they went to the top, they found a cement survey mark already in place, probably dating back to the 1930's when there were a lot of surveys for oil exploration in the Maprik plains area. The Americans adopted this mark and placed three additional brass markers. In 1971, these markers on Mount Turu became part of the Yaliwan Cargo Cult. Yaliwan eventually claimed that the reason that the cargo was not coming was that the American survey markers were stopping the magic from working. The cultists said that they were going to remove these marks on a particular day. Needless to say the Surveyor General, Graham Matheson, was not very happy about losing these marks, which had become a fairly important part of the Papua New Guinea Geodetic network. He sent two surveyors, John Macartney and Brian Mennis to Yangaru, a small town at the base of Mount Turu to see if there was any way that they could preserve the value of the points while at the same time allowing their removal. All discussions with the cultists were to no avail and the three marks were duly removed with much ceremony and carried down the mountain in a procession of crowds of people. The markers were presented to the surveyors, cement block and all, at the bottom of the mountain. There was, however, no cargo forthcoming.

Even quite educated people still believed in cargo cults. There is a story, unverified but believed true, of a Catholic seminarian, in his last couple years of the seminary, asking his tutors when they would be giving him the secrets. Meaning the secrets of the obtaining the cargo.

Peter Lawrence said, "the history of the Cargo Movement represented a succession of different mythological explanations and ritual experiments. Each of these was a cargo cult – a complex of ritual activity associated with a particular cargo myth and more or less distinct from the other complexes of the same general kind but associated with other myths" (1964: 5). It is myths that give them knowledge of their past, knowledge that has been handed down the generations through clan leaders during special rituals, *singsings* and in special places. Though they are based on

traditional myths, it was only after 1871 that they were activated to help obtain the goods of the foreigners.

Lawrence's book, *Road Belong Cargo*, is essential reading for any understanding of the cargo movements, which have been going in the Madang area since 1871. He lists five cargo cults as happening during this time. Of course, these numbers were arbitrary and used for his convenience. But as Burrige says anyone who views cargo cults as not being part of the traditional culture is giving history as static time and seeing no relevant history before the advent of the written word. So, in his record, the first one is dated 1871. But looking back on the people's pre-history there may have also been the same longings for instant wealth. Oral history of the people's past reveals many rituals that were followed to produce the right outcomes for the village. Sorcery was performed before a battle so the men would win and make the good times come up. The myth-dream was important in the culture. But the myth-dream continues even if the cargo fails to arrive (Burrige, 1960: 32). So it was with the Kilibob and Manup myth-dream. There was the traditional stories of the two brothers but, over the years, different pattern of the story are interwoven to bring in new history and so pass it on to the next generation.

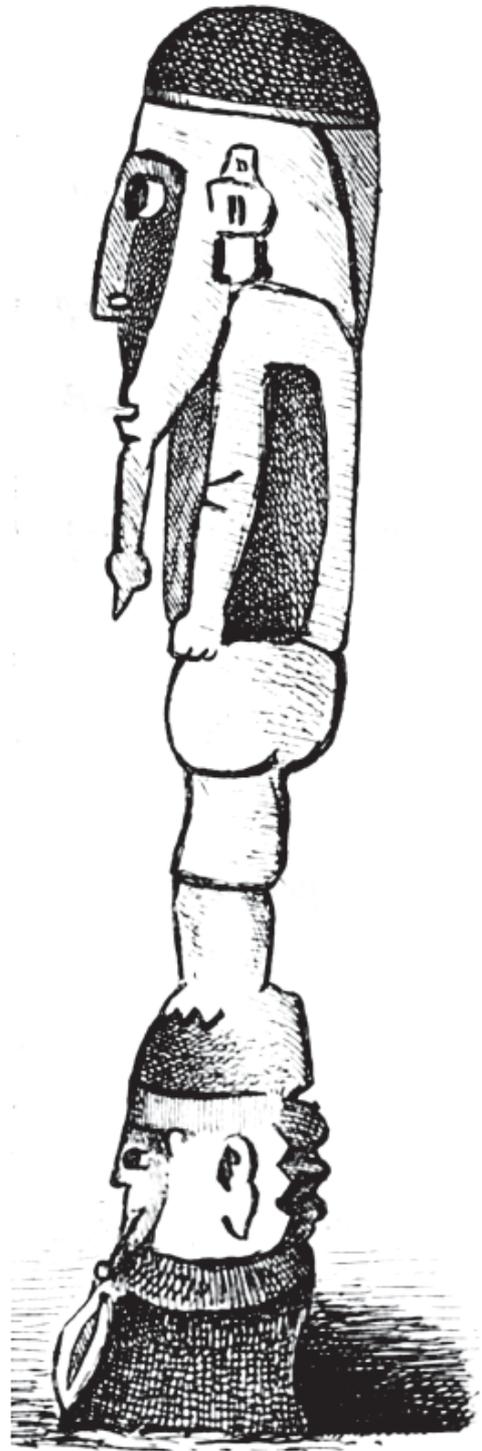
According to Lawrence the five cargo cults were as follows:

The First Cargo Belief, c1871 to 1900: This began when Maclay arrived on the scene, and lasted until 1900, but Lawrence hints that, "Its origins, which appears to be earlier than 1871, are obscure" (1964: 63).

The Second Cargo Belief, c1900 to 1914: In this belief, the brother, Manup, was the hero and the people still expected the return of the brothers bringing the cargo. It was during this time that the people refused to co-operate with local officials and this culminated in the 1904 Revolt against the German Government (1964: 68-72).

The Third Cargo Belief, c1914 to 1933: The people decided to co-operate with the government and converted to Christianity but with their own interpretation of the Bible stories linked with the Kilibob/Manup story. An example of what happened can be found in the Ngaing area on the Rai Coast. Aware of the cargo cult mentality of the people, Fr Aufinger made no attempt to baptise any of the people until he was familiar with their traditional beliefs and ceremonies. Lawrence praised Aufinger's attitude but his precautions did not halt the spread of the Third Cargo Cult (1964: 120).

The Fourth Cargo Belief, c1933 to 1947: This began after 1933 in the Sek area (near Budup) and was known at the Letub. During this time, the people were still fretting at their loss of land to plantations particularly on the coast. This gave them a united front. "The spread of administrative control, Christianity, and the Third Cargo Cult Belief had already given the natives a sense of common identity wider than they had ever known." (1964: 87).



*The Aimaka figure of the Darem house on Bilbil Island. Statues like this were supplicated for good harvest. (Otto Finsch, 1888a).*

The Fifth Cargo Belief, c1948 to 1950: Yali was the leader of the fifth cargo belief. During the war, he had visited the Queensland Museum and discovered that some of the New Guinea deities were stored there. Yali was in touch with the people of Sek who had misgivings that “The Catholics had built up at Alexishafen (Sek) an ethnographic museum containing dance-masks, hand drums, decorated skulls, and wooden statues (*telum*) of gods and ancestors. In 1925 and 1932, many of these specimens were sent to the Lateran Museum in Rome” (1964: 191).

As we have seen, there is now evidence in the oral traditions, which supports a much earlier arrival of Europeans on the scene. Their arrival by boat at Budup and so amazed the local people they blended it into their story of Kilibob and Manup. When the Europeans left, promising to return, this was absorbed into the myth with Kilibob leaving and promising to return with the cargo. So, in effect, the first cargo belief should be dated from early 1800s at least.

The Second Cargo Cult was organised by the Bel group who were also high-sea traders and had more knowledge of their surrounding area than their land bound neighbours. They were the dominant force and took on the might of the Germans in their planned revolt in 1904. They were also pre-disposed to cargo cult ritual through their *likon* men who made magic over the canoes to ensure a good return of the local cargo in the trading trips. They viewed the Germans as interlopers in an area they had formally dominated with their trading systems and pottery currency. Angry at their lost power, they organised secret meetings and prepared to take over the town with all its guns and cargo.

It was during the third cargo cult that the people identified with Ham, son of Noah, who had been turned out of his home and sent abroad. He had become the ancestor of the people in New Guinea and the missionaries had come out to help redeem the people and show them the cargo. Further, some cultists now believed that all the previous rituals and sacred customs were created by God. Thus the old gods continued to have their power and, when the Catholic missionaries blessed the statues of the old gods, it was, ‘tantamount to recognition of their power’ (Lawrence 1964: 79). The missionaries were in a very difficult position and many found their work highly frustrating and exhausting with the village people thinking that they were withholding the secrets of the cargo from them.

By the time of the Japanese invasion, many of the villagers in the Madang area believed in the coming of the cargo. With the rumours of war these beliefs were strengthened as the worldwide events began to affect the coastal regions including Karkar and other offshore islands. Peter Lawrence thought correctly that the Letub Cargo Cult was begun in Sek Village. Of all the cults this was most closely connected with nearby Budup where the ship had once come and left such an impression on the people’s minds. Old Larnau of Budup said that the Bishop of Alexishafen was so concerned about the centre of the cult at Doylan near Budup

Village that he came out and blessed the hole where the sailors had once repaired their ship. After blessing the hole, the missionaries removed the ebony statues of soldiers and the Kris swords and the chains found there. Blessing the area was supposed to stop the cargo but it gave the area more importance than ever as it was felt that the missionaries were hiding the cargo from the people. This was not at all unusual. If bad spirits upset the people, the Bishop would quite often bless the area with Holy Water. Lawrence comments, “the Catholic practice of claiming to neutralize dangerous gods with holy water was tantamount to recognition of their power” (1964: 79). Letub is also the name of a local dance called Lidup, which became part of the cargo cult. Lapsed Lutheran adherents took up this dance with zest as a rebellion against the mission and as it was part of the ritual said to bring the cargo. It was sold along the coast as part of the Letub movement (Pech, 1991: 171-2).

During the Fourth Cargo Cult, The Letub doctrine taught that, “God-Dodo brought two deity sons into being at Sek – Kilibob and Manup. They quarrelled, — and God-Dodo ordered them to leave. Kilibob made a native canoe and sailed to the north. But God-Dodo showed Manup how to build a proper ship with engines and a steel hull, and to make the rest of the cargo as well” (Lawrence, 1964: 93). This is the version of the myth related by the Riwo informants although they had Kilibob as the dominant brother who built the ship.

We have already seen that there was evidence at Budup of a ship’s visit; artefacts found near Budup were parcelled up and sent to Rome. Klaus Neumann would argue that researchers should not dissect legends and see if they can fit into an historic pattern without the aid of scientific backing from other fields (Neumann, 1988). Perhaps one day archaeologists will investigate the area around Budup but they must bear in mind that the cargo cult thinking is still quite strong in that area and the site may be regarded as sacred.

In the 1950s, the British Royal Family became part of the myth dream of the cultists during two cargo cults on the Rai Coast in a village near Bongu. It was just after King George VI died. A villager named Kariku, said he had died and gone to Heaven and saw the King who was coming back as a black Jesus to, “intercede with God on the natives’ behalf”. It was strengthened at the time of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 at a time when Yali was in prison. The dead king was supposed to come back bringing the cargo to the local people. This cult lasted for six months and was eventually, “stopped by the District Office” (Lawrence, 1964: 266). In another cargo event, Lagit, and ex-catechist of the Catholic Mission, killed a man with a bush knife in front of a crowd of villagers. His reason was that it was necessary for a native to make the same sacrifice as Jesus Christ had made for the Europeans before the native standard of living could be raised (Lawrence, 1964: 267).

Yali was born in the Ngaing bush area of Sor on the Rai Coast about 1912. As a boy, he was initiated in the *Kabu* Ceremony but not trained in garden magic or sorcery. While serving as a village *tutul* in 1931, he was instrumental in introducing the Catholic mission to the Rai Coast because the Catholics did not ban dancing unlike the Lutherans (Lawrence, 1964: 119). In 1936, he was on patrol with Patrol Officer, Nurton, when the latter was attacked by villagers and almost hacked to death. This had a profound affect on Yali and it showed that even the most senior government officers were vulnerable to attack. He was to witness much more of this during the Pacific War in which he took active part when he joined the Australian Army in 1943. During his war service, he met Mo Johnson and they walked back as far as Aitape in company with another soldier, Buka:

Mo Johnson said:

Yali was with me throughout the whole of the combat (in Hollandia), he was very courageous and never afraid. He was trustworthy and did not know what fear was. He was straight laced and proper and I can't think too highly of him and his service. If anyone got a big decoration, it should have been him. He did more than many Europeans did. He was a good man. The missions ruined him, they said he tried to start his own private religion, but he had nothing to do with it whatsoever. He wanted self-government down where he was. Yali said, "Why not have our own place with our own people where we have our own ground". But the mission thought otherwise. It was more like a village constable's business, but the missions said he was trying to work against the religions (start up a cargo cult) which was not so (Taped interview).

Many people refused to believe that Yali was a cargo cultist, as he appeared to be working with the government. However he was secretly displeased that he had not been rewarded for his war service by the coming of European goods (cargo). Pretending to help the government get the village people back working after the war, in reality he undermined it. In secret meetings, he told crowds of his visit to Brisbane when he had heard a speaker tell of the roads and schools that would be built in Papua New Guinea for those who fought beside the allies. Yali, excited by the promise, passed it on to his people and demanded to know why every village didn't have a school, good roads and transport like the Europeans. The people thought he would bring them the cargo and dubbed him "the Black King" (Pech, 1991: 190). He encouraged cargo cult activities so these things would happen, organising village men as he had once done in the army. At the same time he kept up the pretence of working for the Madang Administration which now dignified his program with the grand title of the Rai Coast Rehabilitation Scheme. The District Officers in Madang, including Woodman and McCarthy, gave him their support although McCarthy expressed reservations to Yali: "Men will tempt you, they will offer you presents, but don't take them. They will say you are a maker of magic and a prophet or a spirit" (McCarthy,

1963: 225). At this stage, Yali kept in touch with the Catholic missionaries just in case they were right and he was wrong. When Father Morin went to bless his new church, Yali had called it *Haus Tambaran belong yupela* (your Spirit House). Yali dressed up with a white shirt and tie and called the people to gather for the celebrations. In those early years, Yali tried to help both the missions and the government and he thought he had done a good job. However, McCarthy was angry that he tried to work for the missionaries and told him off. Yali was very depressed about this, particularly as he thought he had done no wrong.



Yali, Cargo Cult leader, 1956.

Later in his anti-mission phase, Yali proved a real threat to the missionaries. He wanted to expel them and return the people to the old ways of life. Yali addressed a large gathering of people at Sidor promising that, now the war was over, there would be a great increase in their standard of living once they shared the wealth with the Europeans. Later, he organised villages with houses in straight rows and beds of flowers as he had seen in Australia. By 1948, he had begun a pagan revival, which was opposed to Christianity (Lawrence, 1964: 215). The District Officer decided to take action and Yali was forbidden to recruit labour or hold court as he had been doing. Meanwhile the Lutheran Mission began to accumulate a dossier on him and an article was published in the local mission newspaper accusing him of promoting cargo cult, destroying all mission work and education, and having people pray to him instead of to God. Yali, encouraged by the District Office in Madang, brought libel charges against the mission. Although the matter went to court the libel actions were dropped. In the meantime, the Lutheran Church was able to prove substantial charges against Yali and he was jailed from 1950 to 1955.

In the May 1950 issue of *Pacific Islands Monthly*, an article appeared by a European who scoffed at "some inexperienced patrol-officer or other official who helped the Yali legend get really going by using him to direct the natives in planting their gardens, cleaning their villages and generally beginning again on a peace-time footing. The inevitable happened, and Yali got too big for his boots." Plantation owners and missionaries believed he was behind the disruption of labour that occurred at that time and that it was he who, for some whim of his own, recalled their plantation boys to their villages. The article concluded, "such

men as Yali, could be a great potential danger in a country like New Guinea". Yali liked his big-man image from the start and allowed himself to be declared a Messiah. Yali was imprisoned for six years but as McCarthy said, "what was worse, his prosecution took no pains to understand how the innate beliefs of the people had played their part" (Lawrence, 1964: vii).

After his prison term, Yali lived quietly on the Rai Coast. He could be observed occasionally at the gate of the Madang market with a bucket beside him collecting 'tax' from his faithful followers. When he was aged about 60 he met scientist, Jared Diamond, who found Yali had retained his charisma and talked confidently about helping his people prepare for self-government. Diamond recounts this meeting in the prologue to his book, *Guns, Germs and Steel. A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years*, in which he began with a quick look at development of New Guinea from their Stone Age culture and changes since the arrival of Europeans:

Whites had arrived, imposed centralized government, and brought material goods whose value New Guineans instantly recognised, ranging from steel axes, matches, and medicines to clothing, soft drinks and umbrellas. In New Guinea, all these were referred to collectively as "cargo" — Yali asked me, "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own? — I have studied and written about other aspects of human evolution, history, and language. This book, written twenty-five years later, attempts to answer Yali (1997: 14).

Yali had a charismatic affect on people. He could be completely charming, as Jared Diamond, Peter Lawrence and Mo Johnson found. There are not too many people who could inspire a major international best selling book as Jared Diamond claimed Yali did with his probing questions asking why Europeans had so much cargo and the New Guinea natives had so little. Diamond's arguments, developed in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, attempt to answer these questions.

Fr Golly knew Yali in 1962 when he had lost a lot of prestige from being in jail. When Yali visited the missionaries at Gum plantation, Fr Otenheim tried to convert him or at least get him to decrease his opposition to Christianity. Yali, at this stage, had returned to paganism but denied that he had supported the cargo cult movement, saying that he had just been trying to pacify the people. At this stage some cargo cultists near Beon had a revival of paganism and invited Yali to be their leader. They wanted him to bring his power to these magic ceremonies to ensure fertile crops as well as the arrival of the cargo, a mixture of garden magic and cargo. Even when Yali refused, they persisted in annoying him.

Yali liked the big man image and being independent of the Church. Although he remained friends with Father Golly and kept talking

about Christianity with the priests and missionaries he did not change his ways. When Father Golly was the Parish Priest at Utu, Yali staged his own baptism services - the baptism by Yali. His followers flocked to be baptised because, "Yali is our God". The people were even bringing him women; everyone wanted to have children by him. However, there was a query as to whether Yali could father children as his first wife was childless and his second only produced children while he was in jail. Yali's "son" from Rebecca was a catechist.

In the end, Yali had ten wives and was deeply worried. He was no longer young at this stage and wasn't able to keep up the pressure from them. It was through this that the cargo was supposed to come. Yali's deputy collected money for him through taxing the people. People had to pay taxes to Yali - if they cut a tree or if they went to the market etc. Yali became very rich and the money was stacked in boxes in his house. His family got sick of people coming with money and began to chase them away. But Yali was happy to be the Big Man even when he was old.

At last Yali named his successor as Biu. Crowds came for the handing over ceremony. Fr Golly did not know about the meeting but something urged him to go to Yali's place. He was on his way to the Rai Coast so he diverted to Yali's Village. As he arrived, he saw people from all over the place - from Manam, Karkar everywhere. "Yali is God", they said, "If he wants the sea to come in, it will. If he wants a big earthquake to come, it will". Father Golly stood on the side and laughed and laughed. The people looked at him and he thought he might be killed but he did not care, he laughed loudly waiting for more people to notice. The people were sure something important was going to happen that day, like an earthquake as this was the official handing over to his successor, Biu. Yali, frail from many strokes, looked at Father Golly and said, "Does Father Golly have anything to say?"

Father Golly said, "Yes indeed I have something to say. OK, you are God, Yali, make the earthquake happen." Then he shouted, "OK, Yali, you want the sea to come right up here on the hills. OK, let the sea come up, go on we are waiting". The people were expecting it to happen but it did not. Later, Father Golly got Peter Lawrence's book and threw it on the ground near Yali. "Here you are, Yali, this book by Peter Lawrence is laughing at you. You have been rubbished and people from all around the world are laughing at you!"

Upset at Fr Golly's pronouncement, Yali wrote to Peter Lawrence, who was now Professor of Anthropology at Sydney University, and described what had happened. Lawrence immediately wrote to Father Golly and the tone of his letter seemed to be, "Let Yali stay the leader of the cargo cult". He was afraid Yali might become a Christian. Peter Lawrence returned on a visit to New Guinea and set up a meeting with Fr Golly and Yali. They sat in Father Golly's house and the atmosphere was very strained. Lawrence asked Yali how much he wanted, how many bags of rice and how much money. "Leave Yali alone", he said to Father Golly, "Let

him stay a cargo cult leader". Father Golly was angry and sent them packing. It was as if the two men, the one an anthropologist and the other a missionary, were fighting over Yali's soul.

On Independence Day, 16 September 1975, Yali thought his followers would kill him. They were waiting for the cargo and it was supposed to come on the day. Not long afterwards, Father Golly was intending to visit Yali on a Sunday but he died on the Friday before. Fr Golly had been trying to persuade Yali to send nine of his wives away and only keep one so he could be baptised but Yali refused. He liked his Big Man image until the day he died. It was his weak point. His health had been failing. He had had several strokes and was passing blood and had to be carried around. Usually someone stayed with him but on this particular day his family all went off to the gardens and he died then. His catechist son, Gabriel, baptised him.

As Father Golly had often called in to see Yali and remained a close friend, the people saw him as Yali's successor. Wasn't he a man of God? Wouldn't he know when the cargo would arrive? When a helicopter dropped cargo at the mission station for the health post, the people declared that this was the cargo arriving and they approached Fr Golly with a collection of money. Unaware of the circumstances, he sent the money off to the Papal Nuncio in Port Moresby. Later when he realised he was supposed to reveal the secrets of the cargo, he refused to take any more money.

The fact that the people saw Fr Golly as a potential leader and heir to Yali is interesting in the light of Burrige's conclusion in 1960, when he stated that :

The crucial question which remains is whether an anti-European charismatic figure is necessary or not; whether the emergence of men like Mambu and Yali is related only to an amoral leadership at the top. The implication of this analysis is that moral European and charismatic figure can be one: that if missions and administration could follow out the proposals of the myth-dream they would themselves fulfil the role of the charismatic figure. (1960:265)

Even though Fr Golly was a charismatic priest, he refused to take up the challenge. It was against every belief he held. Yali had set himself up as a god and a creator. In the people's imagination, Yali created the mountains, the rivers and the people. It would have been an impossible role for any missionary to take on. It is interesting that Burrige should conclude that a missionary could take on this role but, by the 1970s, cult leaders represented far more than what Mambu stood for in the late 1930s.

Missionaries of all denominations met at an Orientation Course at Alexishafen in 1972 and one of the main topics to discuss were the cargo cults in the Madang area. The Conference began with pastors and priests of different churches giving a brief outline of their mission history. It was an eye-opener to visitors, because

these previous religious rivals were now discussing religious problems in a friendly atmosphere. Rev Fugmann of the Lutheran Church, Rev Threlfall of the Uniting Church, Rev Stuart of the Anglican Church and Fr Tschauer of the Catholic Church gave lectures on the history of their missions. Fr Knoebel S.V.D and Fr Hermann Janssen were the prime movers of the conference which was organised by the Melanesian Institute in Goroka. In this Institute, members of different denominations work harmoniously together.

Rev Dick Hueter, Lutheran Minister in Madang, gave a talk on cargo cults which he named, "The Battle for the Abundant Life" and noted some of the challenges he faced in his work as a Lutheran pastor. He found that while most Europeans only worry about the last two or three generations they are aware of a much longer history stretching back to antiquity. However, a villager living in his traditional surroundings did not have this concept. He thinks that the world is four or five generations old, and this is in absolute terms.

Hueter goes on to pose a question:

All right, now you try it. Fit all the facts you know and try to show and teach them into five generations: 150 years since the beginning of time. Would you be able to put the facts into a coherent picture? Or would you, too, be forced into believing in magic; would you, too, be steeped in the false view of the world, which we have termed "Cargo thinking". This lack of a correct concept of time is so basic an issue that one could say that the misunderstanding precludes progress and comprehension in every field. For the New Guinean to try to grasp some of the facts which we present (while he is still holding this old concept of the age of the world) is simply a leap of faith (Hueter, 1972).

In his talk at this same Orientation Course, Hermann Janssen stated, "I believe there is no instant method to avoid or to eradicate cargo cultism in Melanesia", but he advised missionaries to be patient and keep in touch with the people. He cautioned about praying for the dead in cemeteries as this may be viewed as a way of bringing the cargo through the ancestors. Furthermore he listed the danger signs for cargo activity: the people become disinterested in their work; Church attendance may decrease; there may be more secret meetings at night; the people are less likely to speak to government officials or missionaries. Another problem faced by the church is that the government officials often blamed the missionaries for the cargo cults because of the quasi-religious overtones of the movement.

Since late in the nineteenth century, both Catholic and Lutheran Missions have been established in the Madang area bringing a message of peace and helped in the pacification of tribal enemies. They also brought education and progress but, unbeknown to them, they helped spread Cargo Cult thinking. The Bel villages thought that, by rejecting the old beliefs in the *meziab*<sup>2</sup> and by

accepting Christianity, the missionaries would automatically explain the secret of the cargo. “In other words, Christianity was attributed the same relationship to the new material culture as the pagan religion was thought to have to the old” (Lawrence, 1964: 74).

*1. See Chapter 3 for fuller account of this.*

*2. A distinction needs to be made between those rituals which were discarded on the advice of the missionaries and those which were discarded by the cargo cultists hoping to gain European goods by turning to new rituals.*



*Local dance group in Madang.*

## Chapter 14, Bel Villages in the 1970s



*I have repeatedly cried out for a Melanesian identity to be manifested in all our activities. This identity is based on my deep conviction that this country has a culture and civilisation that have stood unshaken from times unknown. Whilst our political entity is a colonial accident, our cultural heritage is our birthright, given to us by our spirit ancestors. There was a time when we could and did blame foreign exploiters of our cultural heritage. Today, we should look into the future. What others destroyed, we must rebuild and recreate not necessarily into a past that has lost its living vitality, but into a new future, with a new hope — In Papua New Guinea our diverse forms of artistic expressions are the external manifestations of our deeply held values.*

*The many weekend parties now held in cities and villages where the fulfilment is drunkenness and the expression of that fulfilment is a brawl, a swollen face, a missing tooth, a hungry mother and children is the height of the death of a soul with its cultural values. Today's drinking parties are an overt sign of our dying race. Civilisations have been killed off by rum and whisky.*

*Papua New Guinea enjoys a cultural renaissance today, through which, with the foundations of our past and the hindsight of other civilisations, we can look into future green pastures. We can plan for a better future where cultural creativity is a desirable value to promote. We can build political, economic, legal, social and other institutions based on values we cherish. We should make use of this renaissance to remould our society. We have the clay from our mother earth. We have the leaves from our spirit pandanus and sago. Let us mould and weave. If we have to use a steel wheel or a steel needle, let us not be afraid to do so. But let us shape our pot and weave our basket. Let us not accept the steel pot made for us in Germany or an aluminium pot made for us in Japan (Bernard Narokobi, 1977: 14).*

In the early 1970s, there was a growing interest in preserving the culture of Madang. To this end, the Madang Cultural Council was formed with Kaki Angi as president and Mrs Christine Holmes as secretary. The functions of the Council were to formulate and implement a program for the preservation and development of all aspects of culture and the arts of the Madang Province, its adjoining provinces and Papua New Guinea as a whole and to formulate and implement provincial cultural plans. A need was expressed to establish small cultural centres in various districts so that the local culture was preserved and appreciated. Furthermore, the people should be encouraged to practise their arts and promote knowledge of Madang culture not only for the local population but also for visitors from other countries. Part of the process should be to provide incentives for, and recognition of, achievement in the culture and in the practice of the arts.

The Council discussed the construction of a building for a Cultural Centre to house artefacts and treasures from all the sub-districts of the Province. Following their ideas, architects Murray Clayton and John Proctor drew up a design, which was to include a “rare exhibits room, a library and office, a main display area and an audiovisual room”. However, the plans were shelved because of lack of funds and few meetings of the Cultural Council were held over the next four years.

Traditionally, the people's own history was passed on from father to son but with the advent of public education, the younger generation was no longer inclined to learn the history of their own clan. As the old men died off, it was as if a whole book of knowledge died with each of them. There was a movement at the University in Port Moresby, to collect and write the history of the people. Rod Lacey and Don Denoon were active in the field of oral history, and were very active in encouraging the local historians, such as Bernard Narokobi, to do the same. Pam Swadling, of the National Museum, encouraged people by publishing their work in *Oral History*, the decennial journal of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.

How much knowledge of the material culture was left in the 1970s?

The Ramu Valley is the home of many skilled carvers who still plied their trade at this time. Their beautiful wooden bowls, carved headrests, clubs, masks and canoe prows put them on a par with the Sepik River carvers. Why is it that the river people of Papua New Guinea are the most proficient and prolific carvers? Wooden bowls were carved on the Rai Coast as well and were used as trade items up and down the coast and to inland villages, but these were rarely seen in the Madang market. Mindiri pots had almost ceased to be made and the few old women who made

them were not passing the skills on to the next generation. The once thriving pottery centre at Yabob, near Madang, is now in a state of disrepair and the younger women were not interested in “dirtying their hands in clay” while learning this traditional skill. Fortunately this attitude is not found in Yabob’s sister village, Bilbil, where many of the younger girls were eagerly learning to make the pots as they can see the tourist potential in the industry. A new pottery centre was at that stage being built in the village with the help of a donation from the CWA. Madang was once famous for the large two-masted *palangut*, which were built by many of the coastal villagers and used for trade. Although *haus tambarans*, carved house posts, *telums* and sacred flutes are still found on Manam Island, they have been rare in villages near Madang for many decades.

Some people blamed the missions for the destruction of these items of material culture in the fires that were held before baptism in the Lutheran Church, particularly in villages south of Madang. It is true that these fires were held and many artefacts were destroyed. But while the missionaries were opposed to the secret *Meziab* cult, sorcery practices and rituals, which were held in the *darem* houses, they left it to the villagers themselves to decide what was thrown into these fires. At this time, many of the village leaders were steeped in cargo cult practice and felt that the cargo would come only when all the culture was destroyed. Thus, much of the destruction was not caused by the missions, but by the village cargo cultists. When these same cultists realised that the cargo was not forthcoming, they changed their tactics in a complete about face and they then believed the cargo would come only when the culture of the people had been restored.

In 1975, Terry Hubbard, a patrol officer, gave a rather depressing view of the Madang people. He wrote that anyone who had lived for some time in this area of New Guinea would come to the conclusion that, “the Madang people generally are placid, passive, likeable, but sadly lacking in motivation and initiative”. He put this down to the enervative climate and fevers as well as the people being subjected to expatriate influences for almost 100 years. Initially, the people resisted changes imposed by the German Government but they were punished, “on a scale sufficient to teach the people that passive acceptance was the easiest course”. Mr Hubbard pointed to the 173 distinct language groups in the District, “none of which is more dominant than the others”. He also pointed to the practice of giving services free to the people which, “has removed the need or incentive to work to achieve an aim or objective”.

Hubbard went on to say:

Just how far genuine tradition and culture have been eroded and broken down is not easy to determine, but what has been lost to date has been lost forever. Recent recognition of this fact by the Education Department has come too late because the group from whom the government seeks assistance in emphasis on traditional culture is the group

who were never taught by the truly skilled persons because those persons died without passing on the skills, victims of the influence exerted by expatriates. The generation called upon now to revive culture is unable to distinguish between what was truly traditional and what has now become accepted as traditional (cargo cult practices) purely because they were never shown. The placid nature of the Madang people is matched by an indifferent attitude toward productive hard work and industry as we know it in the western concepts and ideals - it is worth noting that almost all successful indigenous entrepreneurs in Madang town are from areas outside this District. Whether Madang people are prepared to continue to accept external domination as they have for almost 100 years or whether they resent this situation is not readily apparent - resentment of this state of affairs to date is seldom expressed (Christensen, 1975: 63).

Terry Hubbard also saw that the *wantok* system was counter productive to anyone trying to set up their own business because all friends and family wanted a share in the profits, regardless of whether they had contributed or not. This impeded economic development in most cases. Then again communal activities seem to suit the Madang people as is shown by the canoe project. This style of business venture could eventually become the norm. Mr Hubbard concluded, “as traditional values are lost, so too is a little pride and self-respect. The Madang District, as it moves further into the mercenary western type economy, continues to have its traditional culture slowly eaten away and the thought of these people not identifying successfully with either the old or the new, of losing all pride and self-respect for a culture certainly worthy of both emotions, is not a happy one”.

But there were many interested in preserving the culture and interest is being fostered in schools by the Department of Education. Villagers were invited to teach traditional arts to the children. Culture days were held every week when the children are encouraged to wear traditional dress to school and emphasis is made on those days for learning the traditional culture. The Maborasa Festival, which is held each year, also stimulates interest in the colourful *singsings* which vary from place to place in the Province. Many villages still hold traditional yam feasts when the yams are cooked in long lines of pots. Guests are summoned to the feast with the booming of the *garamuts*. Each year, initiation ceremonies are held when the boys are taught the village customs in secluded bush places followed by a feast and a *singsing*.

In the 1970s, village life continued as it had always done with gardening, hunting and fishing still being the main pursuits. Village houses are still built in the traditional cool and airy style with bush materials. What is missing is the material culture even though many the old men could have passed on the traditional skills of making shields, bows and arrows and spears. In some of the villages near the Ramu River, these arts were still known and created but villages on the coast, who have long been in contact with western ways, have given up these items which identified

their culture. Even if these items were preserved only for future generations by being created for the cultural centre, then the culture would be passed on and would be visible to tourists.

In carrying out my research, most of my informants were from the following Bel Villages.

**Riwo Village** is where I met Dau, an elderly man with thick glasses. He was a good informant and told me that it was always polite to call on the clan of your trade friends first when visiting the village even though you might want to visit someone from another clan. I was fitted into this category too so, when I visited someone else in Riwo Village, I had to go back to Dau to say hello first because he was the one I had first contacted. It was as if he had proprietary rights on my friendship. It was difficult to do sometimes if I only had a short while there, but I did try. A similar situation prevailed at Bilbil, where Maia claimed he had “ownership rights” to my visits.

Bek, of Riwo, listed seven *panudaimon*, or clans, in Riwo Village – Tabad, Badinanen, Binagez, Soakage, Dauzagaz, Mituntibun, Malapau. Each clan had one or two sub-clans except Binagez, which had four sub-clans. The informants said that a sub clan was started when there were too many people in the main clan to feed at a clan feast. In Riwo Village, a man from Kranket Island had married into the Malapau Clan so, if his family came to visit, they would always meet the relations from that clan first. The Dugus Clan in Bilibil village married into the Binagez clan, which was Bek’s, so the Dugus Clan and the Binagez clan regard themselves as brothers. There were, and still are, relationships like this between all the different Bel groups. So it is not only common ancestry that keeps them unified, but present connections through marriage.

The traditional Deb festival continued to be held on Siar Island in the 1970s. It was celebrated at the full moon in October 1978. The Riwo people were invited to a night’s celebration by the Siar people and were greeted by a large structure, the Deb, to celebrate a long friendship between the two villages.

The Deb is a tuna fish and the towering fish-like structure is a least twenty metres high and dwarfs the people standing alongside it. Inside the structure are parcels of sago and galip. The food and clothes around the base are presents to the visiting Riwo people. The young Riwo girls danced the moon dance during the night of celebration. After the celebration the Deb is lowered and the food in the stomach of the fish-like structure is distributed.

**Siar Island** is north of Madang along the northcoast road, past the Teacher’s College and Nagada. The village road is at right angles to the main road and wanders under the groves of coconut palms. Part of the village is now on the mainland, opposite the island. One of the men I met on Siar was Paul who offered to paddle me across to the island to interview some of the older men. He set me up in the canoe in front of him and gave me a paddle, telling me to do so many strokes on one side and then on



*The traditional Deb festival was celebrated at the full moon in October 1978.*

the other. We began by both paddling and then I noticed that Paul behind me and out of sight had stopped paddling. He was letting me do all the work while he chatted on about the history of his people.

Siar had a sad history of being dominated by invading forces. First it was the Neu Guinea Kompagnie who eyed the Siar land for plantations. When the Siar and other Bel people rebelled against the Germans, nine or ten Siar men were executed as the ringleaders. Because these executions were to be an example to the rest of the villagers all the people were lined up to witness them and it has stayed in their collective memories down the generations. Paul told the story: “Before the blindfold was put over one of the men, he said sorrowfully, *O Siar, mi lusim you now* (I’ll never see you again). There on the beach, the men were tied up and half hung before being shot”. The Siar men who watched their friends shot could not believe the power of the guns. “We could not see the bullets in the air. It was not like spears or arrows.” They were frightened of these weapons and



*Hull being shaped on Kranket Island by Tomasin, on the right. The Kranket Islanders traditionally hollowed the hulls in this way.*

since then have been nervous of people in authority. Around the cooking fires at night the younger men have been counselled never to rock the boat of those in authority. Recovering their position in the time of the Australian administration, they again lost it to the Japanese during the invasion in 1942 to 1944. In the 1970s, the Siars were again enjoying their village life both on the mainland and on the island not far from the shore.

As they were close to the town of Madang, they encourage the expatriates in town to come out to the island on the weekends and, for a small fee, enjoy the pretty beaches with their golden sand under the swaying coconut palms. Many people found it a welcome relief from town life.

**Kranket Island** had an interesting history. The naturalist Biró had been collecting specimens there in the 1880s when his gun exploded and the people thought he was attacking them. Biro tried to find some words in his little word list as he was about to be speared and the people laughed at him and said his mind was wrapped in paper! The people there had once played a prominent role in the resistance to the German government back in 1904. After banishment, the people turned to Christianity and a Lutheran mission was established on the island. After its shaky beginning in the 1890s, the Island became a stronghold of the Lutheran Mission. During the war some of the missionaries stayed on and were imprisoned on Kranket Island where they were ordered to grow sweet potatoes in large gardens. After a bombing raid on Madang, the explosions killed hundreds of fish and the soldiers were out collecting them. The Japanese told the missionaries they also could collect the fish.

After the war Kranket Island was a scene of desolation but gradually a new mission was built and many of the villagers were employed by the mission in Lutheran Shipping or other ventures. They were very strong in their faith and did not want visitors from any other religion preaching to them. Their main form of transportation, apart from their little canoes, was a small pinnace

that plied between the island and the wharf.

At first when I had tried to catch this pinnace, the captain had looked askance at me with my black bag and asked me what religion I was. He must have thought I was a Jehovah Witness going to convert the workers. On several occasions, he had waited until my back was turned and then had taken off without me. I sorted this out with some of my Lutheran friends and one particular morning in July 1977, he treated me more kindly and we chatted together, as I was the only passenger. I

was visiting Kranket Island in the hope of gathering genealogical evidence, which might trace the arrival of their ancestors. As I had no way of getting a message to them, there was a risk they might all be at their gardens. That morning as we left, the clouds were getting thicker and darker by the minute and, being the only passenger, I realised that no one else was mad enough to make the journey. We chugged out past the other wharves and into the open harbour. Already the waves were getting quite choppy, but worse was yet to come. Thunder rolled through the sky as jagged streaks of lightning flashed to the water. The waves grew bigger and began to splash across the bow of the boat and into the bilge and then swirled around our legs. The captain handed me a plastic container and indicated that I start bailing out the water. It was difficult to keep one's balance while doing this but the look on the captain's face showed there was no alternative. Why, oh why, hadn't I decided to stay at home? The captain meanwhile kept a steady hand on the tiller and steered through the heavy sea. Fortunately it was not a long trip and we were soon in safely at Kranket Island. I made my way up the slope to the village and found everyone had stayed home because of the terrible weather. Within an hour, the storm had cleared and the sun shone. Tentatively, I got my notebook out to write the date 7. 7. 77. Since then I have always remembered where I was on that date. It proved magical to me as the elders gave me a genealogy, which stretched back ten generations to their founding fathers. Given that the family tree may have been telescoped over the years, one must regard it with a grain of salt, but the names of the original founders were most likely correct.

Madmai, of the Yanupain Clan, told me that his ancestors, Berma and Glomba, had once lived on the island of Yomba which stood in line with the other volcanic Islands, Karkar and Bagabag. Hankow Reef is all that is left of this island after it blew up and sank into itself. The inhabitants must have had plenty of warning of the eruption because many made it to the shore safely. They landed all along the north coast as far as the Rai Coast at Mindiri. These small settlements are all Austronesians and know of their links to Yomba Island. Yet all that is known of the island is in these oral traditions of the people themselves. If the island erupted

and sank there would have been enormous devastation with tidal waves and times of darkness. Modern science supports the belief that Hankow Reef was once a volcano because from a high altitude, the reef is seen as circular, as noted earlier. Madamai said that, ten generations ago, his ancestors, Berma and his wife, Glomba escaped before the tidal wave hit the coast and went first to another island before coming to Kranket. They could make pots and build canoes but, because there was no clay available, they lost the art of potmaking.

The people of Kranket were also the traditional hullers of canoes and had passed the knowledge down through the generations. These hullers knew how to choose the right tree, invoke the spirits while it was cut down and then hull it with stone axes. These logs were up to 12 metres long and were the base of the large two-mast and one-mast canoes. In themselves, these hulls were trade items and paid for with large pots lined up for their length.

The Kranket people have close associations between different clans in Bilbil Village. Mitibog and Laupain are connected to the Dugus Clan; whereas the Ataupain Clan is connected to the Luan clan. The Bilbil men have married far and wide to women in Kranket, Siar, Rai Coast, Amele, Yagaum and other local villages. When these women come to live in Bilbil Village, they must be taught to make the pots by their mother-in-law. Women who marry out of Bilbil are banned from making pots as it would threaten the Bilbil pot trade. In the past, relationships between different villages in the Bel group were not always friendly. However, now they are only friendly rivals, competing for jobs in town.

**Yabob Village** is the home of Ber Nansi who lived near the telegraph station above Yabob Island in the 1970s. He was a man of great standing in his clan and village as he was a former *luluai* under the Australian administration and helped set up the councils and the school. His area of the village had a garden with colourful shrubs beside his native-material house. For a while, he had two tree climbing kangaroos in a fenced area. I did not know if they were kept as pets or were for eating at a later date but they were enormous creatures with thick long tails used for climbing the trees.

Usually when I went to visit him, I took provisions for his table and for morning tea and he seemed to enjoy our talks. We would sit in the *hauswind* with a cool breeze blowing. It was peaceful there overlooking Astrolabe Bay. The usual pigs scrounged around for food and a few chooks scratched in the dirt as I settled myself down with the tape-recorder. I found Ber an intelligent man with the wisdom of years. He was about 80 years old at the time as he could remember the Siar Revolt in 1904 when he was a small boy. His people were banished to the Rai Coast at that time and stayed with their trading friends at Yeimas. Here they built a village nearby for themselves and planted their own gardens. Ber became familiar with Yeimas and later as a young man he went there on trading trips with his father, Nansi who had a Chinese boat, the *Arbus*. Ber talked of the trading trips they made down



*Yabob potters in 1994, showing their clay holes.*

the Rai Coast when they would be away for two months or more at a time.

Speaking of the 1904 Revolt, Ber dismissed the idea that the Yabob people were involved:

The Siars and Krankets and Bilibils had to make a big road to PWD. They could not work in their gardens and felt that they were in jail. They decided they would kill the Germans. The Siars and Krankets began this trouble. The Yabobs and Bilibils knew about it, but we did not go. They said, "Siars are making the trouble, but the Yabobs will get into trouble too because of this talk." There is a false notion that the Siars sent the word to Bilibil and they wanted to fight too. The Bilibil and Yabobs people have heard this talk too but it is not true.

Ber spoke of the Chinese boats and why they were popular with his people who found the canoes too difficult to build. So they decided to sell pots for money, sell some copra and grow vegetables to sell in town. "We told everyone to come to a party and cooked some vegetables. The money from all of this was enough to buy a boat". Ber could remember going on trading trips with the Chinese-made boats. Copra was not a trade item in those days because there were not many coconuts on the Rai Coast.

Ber:

When the English came, my father-in-law, Beg, was the *luluai*. Kawas was the next *luluai* and he continued for a long time. In the Japanese war, Kawas was still the *luluai* but he was old. Afterwards, I was the *luluai* and I helped with the beginning of the school and the council too.



*Maia's wife, Kobar, outside her hexagonal house.*

The war with Japan was seen as a very stressful time. Ber was on the island with his people and they were very frightened, as there were so many boats. They first saw them at about 9 o'clock at night, and they seemed to stretch as far as Saidor. "It was a full moon and we could see them in the sea".

**Bilbil Village** is where I made my first local contacts. My first visit there was in February 1973. I had often seen the large red pots stacked upon one another in the Madang market and they attracted attention with their shiny red exterior and smooth texture. Perhaps this would be the place to begin. Where did these pots come from and how were they made? I decided to delve into some of the oral history about the pottery and the history of the pottery villages.

The people in Bilbil Village had featured in Miklouho-Maclay's diary in the 1870's when Maclay was the first settler in the area. I well remember the first time I went to Bilbil, which is now on

the mainland opposite the island. I turned off the North Coast Road where an old sign said "POTS FOR SALE" and drove down to Od Village, where the people directed me further on. Eventually, I came to Bilbil, parked the car and approaching a young girl, asked her if I could speak to some of the old men. She took me down between the rows of neat thatched houses where chickens scratched and pigs rooted deep holes. A crowd of small children who had been playing in the shade gathered around. The first man I met was Gab who had once been *luluai* of the village. He was a short man with hollow cheeks and a far away look in his eyes. He proved very talkative and spoke rapidly in *Tok Pisin* which, fortunately, I understood. He was very kind and took me up to an old man whom I knew all about the history of the people and the pots.

This man was Maia Awak who had the lined craggy face of an old warrior. He solemnly shook me by the hand and thus began a friendship that was to last until his death in 1978. Over the next few visits, Maia told me about his life and I recorded this on tape. Sometimes, we sat in his bush material house beside the smoking fire. Everything was blackened by the fire, but this was of no concern to Maia. When he realised that I was interested in hearing about his life, he really opened up. He believed that the souls of the dead went to Ngur Hill or to Degasub on the Rai Coast. There Tinigai inspected each soul, at the entrance to the underworld to see if they qualified to enter. One of the first prerogatives was that you must have your nose pierced. Maia's nose was pierced with a hole large enough for a bone to be passed through. He would have no trouble getting past the gates to the underworld, but he was concerned for me, as I was one of the unsaved. He and I were sitting next to

his fire one day and he begged me with the adjure of a missionary to let him pierce my nose through the septum. "Come on Missus. It will only take a minute. I'll get a hot coal from the fire and hold it in your nose and in no time at all you will have a hole!" I wondered what my family would say if I turned up with a hole through my nose big enough to put a bone through it. To this day, I remain unconverted. Maia was probably a sorcerer as well. He certainly knew a lot about it and in his smoky house, he would whisper the technique in a most conspiratorial way. "The sorcerer grabs bits of things from the floor with his toes like this", and he demonstrated, "and stares at you with his eyes so you do not see what his toes are doing. Then he takes the object you have dropped, wraps it in an banana skin and holds it over the fire while he mutters secret spells". Three of Maia's siblings had died before he was born and his father, Awak, put it down to sorcery being made over the babies in the womb. Awak was sure that if Maia had been born on Bilbil Island, he too would have died from the sorcery.



*Sibol cooking a traditional meal in a large Bilbil pot in 1977. Old pots are used as a support.*

Maia was seventy-two years old when I met him and seemed quite old - perhaps because of his hard life. In recalling his story, he happily admitted to filching fish from the Chinese fishermen as a child and later pilfering gold from Ludwig Schmidt in the 1930s. During the court case against Schmidt, Maia realised he could have been hanged for offences he had committed in the Highlands so he pre-arranged the evidence to clear himself and his friends and he was successful.<sup>1</sup> No matter that he was taking on the Crown of England and the Australian Justice System as applied to New Guinea. We were soon to learn that Maia had not changed his ways. He was fascinated by everything in our house. Since he was now a friend of the family, he had the attitude that what was ours was his too. Gradually we began to miss cutlery and a few odds and ends. So I arranged a stratagem with Sani, our houseboy, for Maia's next visit. I gave Sani some money to buy a supply of betelnut that we knew Maia could not resist. Next time Maia came, I sent him off down to the boyhouse, "because Sani had some betelnut for you". While he was away, I retrieved the cutlery and any other things from his dilly bag. I never mentioned what I had done, but Maia must have sometimes wondered what had happened to all his ill-gotten goods once he got home.

Maia's eyes were beginning to deteriorate so we took him to the optometrist at the hospital and he was very pleased to be able to

see the world again. He wore the glasses everywhere even fishing on the reef and it was there that they fell off and disappeared. Maia was lost without them. Within the next couple of weeks, my prescription glasses were missing from the house. I asked Maia if I had left them in the village. "No missus. You didn't leave them there." Days later, Brian and I were driving down the village track, when we spied Maia walking in the same direction. We slowed down to give him a lift and when he turned around, I saw he was wearing my glasses. "He's got my glasses on!" I whispered. Brian without turning a hair said to Maia "Would you like a lift?" and as Maia got into the car, Brian lifted the glasses off Maia's face and gave them to me. Maia got in without a word and we all happily drove on to the village. We knew what Maia was like, but decided to accept him as he was. We couldn't change him at this stage and anyway he really cared for us. Once when we had been away on leave and returned, Maia was in tears when he met us. "I thought you had *gone finish* he cried".

He had grown up in the days when the traditions were still adhered to but saw many changes through the years. He watched as the forests were cut down along the coast to make way for plantations. Forests where the people had collected materials needed to make their canoes. For the first thirty years of Maia's life, the Bilbil continued to build these canoes but, gradually, the art died out.



*Inland people had arranged for a market day beside an inland road. Here pots are exchanged for food.*

Lack of materials, the introduction of motor vessels and other economic changes were some of the main reasons.

Maia's wife, Kobar, was now an elderly woman with kindly eyes and, for some reason lived in a house next door to Maia. It had a hexagonal shape, which must have been quite difficult to construct in the usual way with the upright posts supporting the *pungal* roof and the split bamboo walls and flooring. These houses were cool and blended in well with the scenery. We sat outside her house and talked about the pottery and she later took me over to meet her daughter-in-law, Sibol, who was one of the best pot makers in the village. "Whack, whack whack" I could hear the tapping of the stick against clay. Sibol was busy under her house, making yet another pot. Kobar and some of the other women had taught her to make the pots when she was young. Sibol had a shy smile and a gentle handshake. She rubbed the clay off her fingers so she could shake hands and was apologetic at the state of them. She had a special area fenced off from the pigs and dogs and children. In one corner were balls of raw clay freshly collected from the bush. They were kept under plastic to keep them moist. There was a row of pots in various stages of construction and various stones and paddles used for forming the pots.

Over the next weeks Sibol introduced me to the process of making a pot.<sup>2</sup> First, with other village women, we went to see where she collected the clay from the inland holes at Margui. When we arrived at the clay deposit, Sibol got down in the clay hole and pulled off the protecting coconut fronds and plastic sheeting. She

worked with confidence and was soon digging out the clay and handing out bits to her daughter, Sima, and other women, who formed the clay into large balls and put them in the *bilums* or string bags to take them back to the village. The air was hot and muggy, but the village women were hard working and strong and cheerfully helped each other.

Another day, Sibol demonstrated the technique of making pots. She picked up some of the clay, wet it and kneaded it like dough to form an oval shape. With a deft movement she inserted a thumb to make a hole and spun the clay around with the other hand to make the lip of the pot. Inserting a stone *pati*, she tapped the outside of the pot against the stone using a paddle so that gradually a pot shape emerged. She had great eye/hand co-ordination as she turned the pot to obtain the final

shape. After drying for four days, she added a slip (a red coating painted on the pots) and fired the pots, which went a bright red. The pile of red pots was now ready for sale.

Even in the 1970s, there were a number of ways of distributing these pots. The favoured way was at the market in Madang where hundreds of people gathered to buy and sell food. The Bilbil women set out their large red pots and many smaller ones that proved popular with the tourist market. At other times the women filled their *bilums* with pots and took them by truck up the hills to trade them for food or pigs. Then again the people on the Rai Coast still needed the pots for bride price and for cooking. If arranged beforehand, coastal vessels would anchor offshore. Old Maia drummed on the *garamut* and the women hurried down to the beach with their *bilums* of pots to load in to small canoes that carried them out to the ship.

Most of the women's jobs remain - pottery, gardening, child rearing and cooking, whereas the men's work of hunting, guarding and trading in canoes have all been discontinued for various reasons. The men tend to sit around and talk or plan meetings and work in the council. They build the houses and help in the gardens when necessary and unload the ships at the wharf, but it comes down to the women to do the nitty gritty hard work of survival. Sibol's daughter, Sima, often looked after my daughter Joanna who, at three, would happily wander off with her village friends. Sima's father, Masil, was a carpenter and constructed many houses from bush materials with roofs thatched with *saksak*. During the week, Sima attended Tusbab High School but at the weekend she sometimes helped Sibol make the clay pots.

We attended many feasts in the villages. Food was cooked in large pots set out in a long line. If we arrived earlier enough, I helped peel the yams and taro. Usually we took chickens as our contribution for the feast. The large pots were all lined up, each stabilised with a small hole in the ground. A leaf was put inside each pot - and then they were half-filled with water and a little seawater for the taste then taro, yams, chicken, flying fox and pork were added. After this the leaves of the *hombor* were added. Then little fires were made around each pot. When the food was cooking, well water was added to the pots and the fires were made bigger. When the food finished boiling and the fires died down, it was time to bring out the wooden Siassi plates to serve the food on.

We sat on mats, each with our own serving of food. By this time it was usually quite dark and I was unable to distinguish the flying fox bits and the chicken. Even the chicken tasted of flying fox, which had a strong odour. It was important to sit correctly so that no one had his back to another. Kobor once told her grandson off in no uncertain terms when he sat with his back to her. "You rubbish man, don't give me your back!" she chided. Some families dished out all the food for their family and then re-distributed it onto smaller plates. Some wives even decided to take their food home to feed their children while their husbands remained with the party. Through contacts made at these village feasts we established a rapport with the people, which was built up during the time we were in Madang.

One traditional ceremony that has survived in the Bel Group is the initiation ceremony. In pre-contact days, the boys were initiated during the *meziab* when they learnt the sacred songs and secrets of the tribe. They also learnt about the customs of the village and the rules they must follow if they were to remain respected members of that society: they should not steal, murder or disturb the social order of the tribe. Their roles were emphasised as the future of the village depended on their strength.

When the Bel group planned their revolt against the German Government in 1904, it was in a secret *meziab* meeting on Bilbil Island. As a result, the Germans banned the *meziab*, and banished the Bel people to the Rai Coast. The Bel group continued to hold *meziab* and initiation ceremonies spasmodically and secretly for many years. However in 1919, when they joined the Lutheran Church, the Bel people of Siar and Kranket relinquished these ceremonies. The Bilbil and Yabob people did the same in 1936 when they finally joined. Before the baptism ceremony on each of these occasions, the sacred flutes and other objects associated with the *meziab* were thrown into the cleansing fires and initiation ceremonies also ceased as they were seen as part of the *meziab*.

These initiation ceremonies were revived after 1939 because the village elders were concerned at the breakdown in law and order in the village. The young men were not longer obeying the village leaders. They also lacked energy and vitality, which was blamed on the absence of circumcision when the mother's blood was supposed to be freed from their bodies. "Evidently the leaders of the Bel villages had come to a consensus on this issue and thought it safe enough to revive initiation without causing too much controversy" (Fugmann 1978: 265).

The initiation period was usually over two weeks with the circumcision taking place on the first day. As a precaution, the initiates were forbidden to climb coconut trees until their wound had healed. During the following days, each initiate must learn a number of rules including food to be shunned: red fish, certain types of vegetables and fruit. Later, when he returns home, he is to avoid food cooked by menstruating women as this is seen as tainted and drawing out their energy. The two weeks are devoted to training in the rules of society and behaviour. It is a good



*The men march through Bilbil village on their return from their initiation ceremony.*

opportunity for the village leaders to reassert their authority in the village. Many had complained that the youth no longer listen to them so one of the main objectives of the initiation ceremony was to make boys obedient (ibid: 265).

Writing in 1978, Rev Fugmann was supportive about the resurgence of initiation ceremonies:

Today there is a conviction that a remedy has been found to solve the problem of a tribal disintegration. In preserving and promoting identity with their traditional culture, their tribe, and their role as men, initiation became necessary and as such, constructive and not destructive. This alone justifies its continued practice, making it morally good and not in conflict with God's will.

The Biblical message is interpreted in this direction. It was God's will, which made Abraham the recipient of God's command to circumcise all Jews. Similarly the ancestors must also have had God's revelation to start this tribal custom in Papua New Guinea. Therefore it cannot be abandoned especially in view of Christ's own circumcision.

For the Madang Bel villages, initiation is something apart from their religious belief. It is part of their identity with the past and with the future generations. Now in times of change, diversification and breaking of tribal ties, initiation has become a possibility to preserve their identity and a means of safeguarding the welfare of future generations (ibid: 273).

Many of the old incantations and veneration of cult objects, once part of the *meziab*, were omitted from the new-style ceremonies. Although the dance of the masked *meziab tambaran* might lead the boys back to the village it was more, "symbolic than an expression of the bygone traditional religion" (ibid: 267). To such an extent was this that the whole process was seen as more secular than religious.

Sometimes, Lutheran pastors took an active role, including Pall Tagari, who toiled hard for the Lutheran Church often travelling down to the Rai Coast, Nobanob or the North Coast for meetings and to give instruction to church members. In 1978, Pall invited us to Bilbil Village for a feast to welcome the initiates back to the village after their training on the island. On this occasion, there were 70 young initiates from Bel villages including Karkar, Bilbil, Yabob, Riwo, and Kranket. They had arrived on Bilbil Island two weeks previously by canoe and motorboat. The island, once inhabited but now deserted, was an ideal setting for the ceremonies. On the first evening, Pall went around the whole group being introduced to each young man by their fathers or guardians. On the second day, they were circumcised with the help of a medical orderly who safeguarded them against infection.

After two weeks training, it was time to return to the mainland. They arrived on the mainland early in the morning of our visit

and washed in the sea and at the village well. Afterwards, they were smeared with the red paint made from a mixture of their blood and the red ochre traded from the Siassi Islands. The maternal uncle of the initiate played a crucial role as they provided the red ochre and the food for their nephew and, on another day, might even supply a pig.

Later that day, we watched these young men striding confidently through the village. They were dressed identically in red *laplaps* girthed with white belts. A small white feather was stuck in their well-groomed hair and croton leaves inserted into their plaited armbands. Carrying a small woven men's coconut leaf bag in their right hand, their skin glistened red in the sunlight as they paraded along the village path. Bare feet kicked up the dirt as they walked in line. They did not march like soldiers keeping in time because that was not their purpose: it was rather to show they were ready to take a more responsible place in village life.

Here was a ceremony renewed from traditional times. It was seen as part of the culture revitalised and acceptable to both the religious and the traditional beliefs. If government officials had been aware of it, they would have encouraged the practice as one way in stopping the breakdown of the law and order situation in Madang which was part of a nation-wide trend. It was also a way to restore the authority of the clan leaders in village life. Now at last the young men were being taught to obey them.

The local girls were becoming educated and wanted to show off their attainments so Maureen Hill organised a beauty contest for them, based on traditional dress, appearance and confidence. It was to be held as part of the Maborasa Festival in 1978. The Madang Hotel was decorated for the contest. The girls, dressed in their traditional *bilas*, were standing nervously in line and looking very attractive. Going by the big men in the front row, this was something more than a beauty contest: it was a power game. "My daughter is the winner" was the attitude before it even began. The three judges were trying to determine marks out of 10 in three different categories *bilas* (decorations), presentation and personality. The atmosphere became too stressful for one of the judges. Muttering, "I've left my glasses at home", she took off. By the time a substitute (me) had been found, three of the contestants had come and gone. I scrambled to fill in the marks from what I could remember of the first three girls. Then it became noticeable that the second judge, sitting next to me, preferred one of the girls to the others. (She was his relative). "Look at her, she's beautiful," he whispered to me. "Give her full marks for the *bilas*". He took his pen and boldly gave her a 15 out of 10 in that category. I remonstrated with him. "How can you put 15 out of a possible 10. He looked slyly at me and grinned. Then the girls came forward one at a time on to the stage to answer questions, put to them by Maureen Hill, about themselves and New Guinea. Out came the pen again and the same girl got well over the mark allowed and when the marks were added, the counters did not question his marks and his niece won easily. There was uproar about this and she was subsequently

disqualified. “She’s had a baby and look, her breasts are hanging down”, it was pointed out. I never did find out who the final winner was.<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, there was a breakdown in law and order in Papua New Guinea generally. Back in the 1960s there had been a great push for universal education in New Guinea for students as far as grade 6. As a teacher I remember other teachers urging their students on, “if you don’t work hard you will just end up in the village as a nobody”. It was the wrong attitude to develop in their students because village life was put on a much lower level than the town life. For centuries, their people had been self-sufficient and happy to grow their own food, go fishing and support themselves. Although the parents were anxious to teach their children the basic techniques of house building, gardening, and making fences and fishing, there was not sufficient time any longer. In many ways, village life is ideal as it has a strong social fabric with a sense of belonging. But, many of the children were no longer really interested.

As a result many partly educated youths flocked to the towns to get work and when they were unsuccessful they turned to other activities to get the food they needed. There is no social security system in Papua New Guinea so if you don’t have money you starve unless you can live with *wontoks* or steal or join a gang to survive. Some even returned to the village but were often disgruntled at their life. The old people’s wisdom was no longer believed in many cases and the breakdown in discipline permeated village life as well.

Within twenty years, the Government had introduced top-up schools which added 2 years to primary schooling and this enabled many students to obtain a better education.



*Maborasa Festival in the 1970s.*

*Top: The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary band paraded in their colourful uniforms.*

*Above: Maborasa Festival procession. Buffalo pulling a miniature village house.*

*Left: Male dancers with their hand-held kundus got into the swing of the drumming.*

*The Festival was still being celebrated in 2005.*



1. See Chapter 10

2. For full details of the pot making process, see Chapter 6.

3. Unfortunately, a local photographer did not get told of the changed result, and the wrong photograph got sent to the *Post Courier*.



*Maia, with one of his model canoes, a palangut.*

## Chapter 15, Building the Canoe, 1978



*Once we went on a trading trip. There were about ten canoes, lalong and palangut. We went ashore at Rimba then Kul and Mindiri. We sold pots to the people there, then we sailed to Singor and Biliau and did the same, then we went on to Galek, Yeimas, Wab, Mur and Sel. Next, we sailed to Bonga where we stayed about three days because the people wanted to shoot a pig for our new canoe. After the pig feast, we lined up some pots to exchange for mal, galip, and wooden bowls. We returned along the coast to Yeimas to get galip and mal and to Biliau for mal and plates. Here we stayed a couple of days to cook a pig and have a feast. Then we returned to Singor to collect more mal and plates, and, finally, we arrived back in Rimba where we rested for two days. While there, we killed some wild pigs, cut them up and boiled them in clay pots. We then put the pieces in baskets and the innards in bamboo. After Bogati, we headed home. When we arrived, we decorated ourselves, adjusted our feathers, applied red paint and then we danced all night (Maia Awak, interview, 30 August 1976).*

The National Cultural Council's booklet on culture of Papua New Guinea has a two-page spread of a Madang trading canoe in 1905. The Council saw it as an important symbol of Madang's culture. It had two sails one leaning backwards and one upright. There was very little known about these canoes apart from the description by Miklouho-Maclay. The last of these canoes had been built in the late 1930s. They were a symbol of the high stage of the builders' technological achievement.

With the assistance of many people and organizations in Madang, we were able to construct a traditional canoe, using almost all the techniques and materials that would have been used in the past. It was only a one mast canoe, a *lalong*, as the only log that could be obtained was too short for a larger two mast canoe, a *palangut*. The following is the story of how this canoe was built - the trial and tribulations and the final success of the project.

By the 1970's, there were only five men left who knew how to build these canoes – Maia, Derr, Pall, Damun and Gab. The following are short biographical notes on each of them.

**Maia Awak** was born in a time when many of the old village customs were still followed so he witnessed many changes in his long life. As a youth he had helped his uncle, Nom, build the *palanguts* and went on trading trips, but he began to crave adventure and, between 1928 and 1934, he travelled around New Guinea. A few years later, Maia married Kobor and settled into village life. However, this was later interrupted by the Pacific War, when the people had to flee their village. After the war, Maia became headman of the Gapan Clan. He took a hand in fixing bride prices, feasts and burials and liked to regale his grandchildren with the stories of brave warriors of the past. He was always interested in the culture of his people and was very happy to make models of the *lalong* or *palangut* trading canoes - some of them are now in Museums in Sydney, Townsville and Port Moresby. As he whittled away at his models, he would tell

me stories of his sailing experiences of long ago. On and off, Maia and I dreamed of building a full-scale canoe but, for a few years, it remained just an idle dream. Then I met other men who knew how to build these canoes and the dream grew into a reality.

**Derr Mul** was Maia's cousin and headman of the Luan Clan. He could remember watching his father, Mul, build the large canoes and had helped with the smaller jobs smoothing the planks and the *tilau* using wide iron tools bought at the German store. He was a nice old fellow who lived with his relatives not far from Maia's house. Although he was crippled with arthritis he was usually cheerful. Derr's son, Nalon, continues his father's interest in preserving the culture of the people.

**Pall Tagari** was the headman of the Dugus Clan. His father, Tagari had been the *tutul* in the German times and had travelled to Africa and other countries. Pall was the Lutheran pastor at Bilbil and travelled to many other places giving instruction. Because of this, he was familiar with most of the languages in the Madang area and was fluent in at least six of them. This was most helpful when trying to contact villagers from other areas. He was a good organiser and a great walker. At his age (66) he thought nothing of walking into Madang and back again from Bilbil, a distance of ten kilometres.

**Damun Maklai** was also a headman of the Dugus Clan. His father, Nomu, was the last of the great canoe builders to die. Damun helped his father to build these canoes and was the one who spoke with the most authority. It was his grandfather who was being born on Bilbil Island while Miklouho-Maclay was visiting the island. Maclay asked whether the baby was a boy or girl. When the answer was, a boy, he said, "Well you must name him Maclay after me". So that was how his grandfather came to be called Maklai and Damun's full name was Damun Maklai. He was very proud of his association with Maclay, the Russian scientist who was so enthralled by their canoes.



*Derr, Damun, Gab and Pall. After Maia died, these four men were the canoe builders in 1978.*

**Gab Kumei** had once been the *luluai* of the village. He remembered quite a lot about canoe building, but not as much as the others.

So we knew there were five men in the village who knew something about the old trading canoes, but not one of them could remember all the details from start to finish. They had to pool their knowledge in endless discussions and arguments before work could begin on the building of the canoe. We knew it would be a big challenge but time was running out and, if we were going to do it, it would have to be soon. Apart from helping to initiate the project, it was my job to buy the rations, keep account of the money, liaise with the government, do the correspondence, arrange the transport and keep records of progress. The organisation of the labour and the building of the canoe itself were left to the old men, Maia, Damun, Derr, Pall and Gab - they were the overseers of the project. They were also the chiefs or headmen of their clans, Luan, Dugus, Gapan and Murpatt, which was good because it meant that every clan was represented in the project. Without the knowledge and interest of these men, this canoe would never have been built and the process would have been lost.

In September 1977, the Area Authority donated K700 towards building the canoe for which we were very grateful. The JANT Timbers Project Manager agreed to let us have a log for the purpose of building the canoe. Tomasin, of Kranket Island, agreed to carve the hull of the canoe. Tomasin chose a log from the JANT Mill and it was carried by a JANT end loader down to a small

wharf and pushed into the water from where a boat from Lutheran Shipping transported it to the back of Kranket Island. Here it was left to soak in the water for 2 to 3 weeks and then pulled ashore. Tomasin inspected it to decide where to put the opening, and, about the middle of November 1977, he began to hull the log. Over several visits to Kranket Island, we watched Tomasin hulling the canoe with a small tomahawk. The log was originally 9.5 metres long, but was one metre shorter than this when completed. Later, he and his friends pulled the hull of the canoe up higher where they planed the outside with planes and rasps.

Tomasin finished the hull a few weeks before Easter 1978 and then added a temporary outrigger (*giaman saman*) to keep the canoe from toppling over. A small pinnace, the *Laita*, pulled the hull along the coast to Bilbil Village where the people were eagerly awaiting the canoe with palm leaves and *gorgor* (ginger leaves) to splash it with seawater in the old way. But they did not throw fruit at the crew or throw them in the water, as they once would have done. Nor did they pay for the hull with pots, although they still make pots enough to do this. Tomasin was paid a sum of money from the donation that the Area Authority had given. The temporary outrigger was removed that afternoon and the five old men, Maia, Derr, Damun, Gab and Pall inspected the hull to see whether the canoe would be a *palangut* or a *lalong*. All depended on the length. If two masts were put on a short hull then the canoe would be driven into the water nose first when the wind became strong. The men decided that it was too short for a *palangut* so it would have to be a *lalong*. They did not measure

it, but just went by the look of it and they said that, if it had been about a metre longer, they could have made a *palangut* out of it.

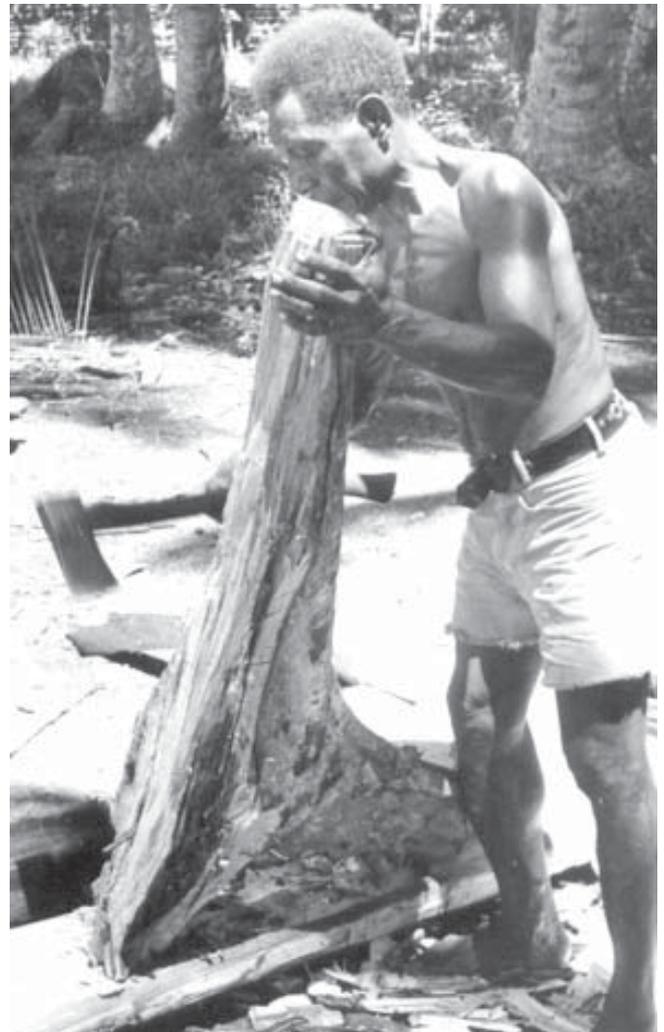
One interesting thing about the canoe was that everything to be used had to be made anew. Previously when a new canoe was made after a short length of time had elapsed, there were still old *damdam* (prows) and even hulls which have been stored away under a house to be used later. Such was the case on Tami Island, where they were reconstructing an old canoe. Silas, on Wonam Island of the Tami Group, was using an old *dam un dam*, (Tami name for the prow) and an old hull. He had been on the project for a long time as he had to work alone or with very little help. With the canoe on Bilbil, the hulls, prows, planks, etc. had all to be made anew, as there were no old ones. The only thing to be resurrected was a large old oar. I watched this canoe grow from a hull to canoe with a large superstructure. There under the coconuts near the sandy beach, I often sat with the men while they busied themselves. The blue sea beyond was calm and beyond was the island of Bilbil where the *tabuna* of these men constructed canoes of a similar nature over generations on a sandy white beach. Now in 1978, the Bilbil were following in the steps of their ancestors.

There was a group of about 30 men, eager to learn and to assist in the construction and, although they were not all present all of the time, work was progressing. There was, however, a small faithful group who did most of the work and were being paid by rations of food. All the clans helped to build the canoe, Dugus, Luan, Murpatt, and Gapan. The following men took part from each clan: Dugus - Damun, Pall, Kumei, Rai, Siali, Pasagai, Yangier, Adeb, Hon, Masbud and Dumbel; Luan - Derr, Gab, Nail and Sikera; Murpatt - Naleg, Kore, Bagarin, Molimol and Lapiu. Gapan - Biu (Sepik married to Bilbil), Masil, Gain, Maia and Kubei. It took seven long months to build the canoe after the hull had arrived.

Spier's theory mentioned that, "the three major elements of the technological input are knowledge, resources and labour" (1970: 3). Each of these elements was important in construction of this new canoe. The knowledge came from the five clan leaders but even they had to pool their knowledge and their memories because it had been so long since they had helped to build canoes in the late 1930s. The resources needed to make this canoe had to be transported from bush and coastal areas miles away from Bilbil Village, as in the old days. The labour was found in the village itself but this too had its limitations because many of the capable young men had other jobs or were busy in the village making gardens or building houses. On many days, there was no work on the canoe while other activities, quite rightly, took priority. But when the labour was available, then the canoe area was a hive of activity with the older generation teaching the younger ones. I think more village projects would succeed if this policy were used instead of just paying each man so much money. It was what Judge Hahl discovered back in the days of the German Colony when he decided to reward the villagers with a big feast when they had finished their part of the road, and the people

worked with a will as they had something to look forward to. It was the traditional system as well. If a man asked a group of clansmen to help him build a canoe then he was honour bound to put on a big feast as a reward.

In this canoe project, few of the men involved had ever been employed full time. They were all village men and often combined together to help build houses or develop a new garden so were quite happy with this traditional form of payment. The rations used on this project were bags of rice, tins of bully beef, tea, sugar and cigarettes. This was the choice of the men themselves and the rations were supplemented from the village gardens at times. Damun was put in charge of these rations and portioned them out on each day spent on the project. As well as that, the men knew there would be a feast and celebrations at the completion of the project and looked forward to it.



*Shaping the tilau cut from the buttress of a tree.*



*The tilau supports hold the side planks in place.*

Despite this, there were a few misgivings in the village. Pall came to our house one day with a worried look on his face. He rather doubted that the project would succeed because there was too much jealousy and infighting in the village. For years, they had been trying to get a pottery house established to replace the one that had fallen down in 1974. Because of disputes over the ground where the house was to be built, the project had fallen through and Pall was sure the same would happen with the canoe. We decided to involve as many people as possible in the project so that no one would feel left out.

On Wednesday 5 April 1978, I went with the men to get more materials. I organised a three-ton truck that the Area Authority ordered from the Transport Department at a cost of K43.00. After 2 more trips like this, we were to learn that there were cheaper means of transport. The men clambered on board the flat tray while I sat up with the driver. It was quite a long drive and rather muddy after the recent wet season. When our truck pulled up at Ato Village, the headman came out to greet us. We had already obtained his permission to get material from his bush area so we showed our gratitude with a gift of cigarettes and betelnut. His broad smile showed us we had hit the right chord. This gesture was in keeping with traditional times when payment may have been pots, tobacco and betel nut.

We drove on to a bush area that was low and swampy from recent rain. After splashing our way through the trees, the men cut *tilau* frames from the buttress together with part of the trunk. In the canoe, the *tilau* supported the weight of the superstructure of the canoe, together with the *atat* stanchion, which was added later. The mosquitoes, ants and bush mites were vicious and I had forgotten to bring a repellent. All the men find them a nuisance. One man jabbed his bush knife into a tree and at once it was covered in large wasps. If a swarm of these descended on you,

you would be a hospital case. At one stage, Pall thought he knew a short cut, but the water became deeper and the bush thicker until he decided we were lost. Not for long though, as the yahoos sounding through the bush soon brought us to another group of men.

They were cutting down a *gau* tree to be made into planks or strakes. The *gau* tree was the preferred timber for the strakes. Not a heavy timber, the *gau* is strong enough to support the superstructure. Sometimes a few trees were cut before a suitable one was found. In cutting these trees, the same incantations were made as for the original canoe tree. There were five men working on this tree. When it fell it crashed onto some other trees and stayed 20 feet up from the ground, so the men had to chop those trees down to get to the

trunk. Cutting trees down was done without any fear of disturbing the *masalai*, as in former times. As the strakes were planks, the log had to be split to the proper size. Dragging these logs through the bush was heavy work and required many hands, again with the help of the *bog* group and a series of rollers as with the main hull.

Once the log had been dragged to a more open site, it was split in two with the aid of axes and wedges. To do this, the log was marked on one side along its length with a hatchet. It was then turned over and the operation repeated. This line was then deepened with wooden wedges being inserted in the split at one end where the log was cut sufficiently to allow wedges to be inserted. As they were forced further into the log, it started to split. The process was assisted by two men using poles to help wrench the log open. The wedges were moved along and hammered into place, and eventually, the log split in half. Next the rounded side of each half was cut at right angles every 50 centimetres to a depth of 5 or 6 centimetres. The men then chopped horizontally through each of these cuts lifting chips of wood between each cut off until the log was the shape of a rough plank. Then came the work of planing and smoothing the log. It would have been a long process using stone axes but with modern tools, work went quickly.

The men had to cut *damdam* as well that day. The whole area was very swampy because of the rain and I worried about crocodiles. Recently, a man-eating crocodile had been sighted nearby when it strayed from the Gogol River. The men half warned me and half joked that if one appeared they would all run off and leave me with it. I had this possibility in my mind as I watched the men chopping at the long surface root of a tree to get a *damdam*. As the roots curve along under the water, there was much splashing as the men chopped at it. I was just on the point of taking a photo when a much louder splash directly behind me nearly caused me to drop the camera. I was sure it was a crocodile - but it was only

another of the men coming up to help. There was much merriment and joking about me and my crocodile. When the film was developed later one of the negatives was blank. In my fright I had pressed the button. Back at the village, the men heard from a group of police that a boy had been eaten by a crocodile in a nearby village the previous day. They found his head and leg and the police were trying to find the crocodile. We were right to be frightened of possible crocodiles in the jungle.

A week later, we hired a truck to go to the beach at Dogia. On the way, we dropped off some of the men at Ato village to collect more logs. Having got permission from the headmen at Dogia Village, and giving him cigarettes and betel nut for his trouble, we proceeded to the beach where we saw the spinal bone of a large crocodile. The men picked it up and discussed its possible length and strength. It was an old bone and did not belong to the large man-eating one, which had been taking people off this particular beach. The men pointed to a small creek where it could be lurking. They reckoned that even though they carried axes and knives they would be powerless against a large crocodile should one attack us. We kept a watch out, but saw nothing and I am reminded that, in the old days, the men would have been on the alert for hostile bushmen as well as crocodiles.

Altogether there were 25 men on the beach, moving into different areas to cut materials for the superstructure. I accompanied 3 of them about a kilometre along to look for the *wap* trees. Not any *wap* tree will do. The chosen trees are near the beach with one sub-trunk at right angles to the main trunk. Apparently the *wap* trees are shaped like this only near the beach, probably because the sub-trunk is striving for the clear sunshine on the beach, rather than fighting its way skywards. Masil shouted that he had found what we were looking for and the other men came up and nodded approval. Masil began to cut a T shaped joint for the *atat* after marking off equidistant points on each side of the branch. He used a steel axe as opposed to the stone-axe his ancestors would have used. The *atat* was later trimmed and steps cut in it so that it could be tied securely onto the canoe and used to support the pot cage and shelter. This joint was very strong. This just goes to show the ingenuity of the people's technology, which enabled them to fashion T shaped materials without the help of nails, hinges or glue.

It is interesting that the use of this T-shaped joint is quite widespread in the built-up canoes in Papua New Guinea. Richard Parkinson described these supports in the Aitape canoes. "In the large canoes there are for each boom four supports - these are shaped branches of hardwood on which a piece of the main branch or stem is left; the base being securely fastened to the boom; they form the supports for the lateral crates" (Parkinson 1907: 31).

The men cut six *atat* while we were at Dogia that day. After everything was piled on the truck, we went back to Ato to pick up the rest of the men who had been gathering vines and cutting another *gau* log to be used as a plank. This log they had trimmed

in the bush and dragged along a bush track with a vine. To help over the muddy places, rollers were put under it until it could be loaded on the back of the truck and taken to Bilbil. Here the men put eight poles crossways under the log and two men to each pole carried the log from the truck to the canoe site with much labouring and toil. The traditional way of carrying logs had not been lost although the truck was a great modern invention to carry the log to the village!

One day, Derr and I sat near the beach where we had a good view of Bilbil Island where the *tabuna* used to make these canoes many years ago. Three men were shaving wood off the planks, readying them as strakes for the canoe and every now and then he gave a few instructions on how to smooth the logs. Derr informed me that April was the traditional time for making canoes so we began at the right time. In the old days, they had more skilled men involved in canoe building and fewer interruptions but they had the pressure of time to complete the canoes before the trading time in May.

Afterwards, I went to visit Maia who was failing fast after a dog bite. Lately, he looked quite old and shrivelled and had a faraway look in his eyes. He was too ill to join us on the beach and he asked me for a blue laplap which I promised to bring. Over the years we had given him many things he wanted, medicine, prescription glasses, an ice frig, a pillow, basic things he needed. Knowing he did not have long to live, we went out to see him the next day with the blue laplap and found him huddled over a smoky fire. He refused to go to hospital and said it was his time to die and be planted in the ground. It was the last time I saw him.

Four days later, on 18 April 1978, Pall visited us and returned home on a PMV. As soon as he reached Bilbil, he heard the wailing of the women. Someone had died. It was Maia. Although we had been expecting this, it was a shock to us, since we had known him well over the years. His death was typical of many of the old village men. When he knew his end was near, he shook hands with his friends bidding them goodbye. Last of all he shook hands with his wife, Kobar, who was now a frail old woman. Tearfully he thanked her for all her work in looking after him then lay down and died: a dignified end for an old leader.

After Pall had conveyed the news to us, we set about getting a coffin as requested. It took a while but we duly put it in the back of the station wagon and drove out to the village. The people were gathered around Maia's house sobbing and wailing their grief. As they didn't know whether we had managed to get a coffin, the men had improvised with some old timber, in which Maia was now lying wrapped in the blue laplap. When we turned up, there was much discussion. They agreed that, since we had gone to the bother of getting a coffin, Maia should definitely be transferred to the new coffin which was taken up on the veranda of a house. There was much activity but Brian and I kept a respectful distance. Having transferred Maia to the new coffin, what was to happen to the old one? It could not be just discarded

so it must be buried too. So, when the procession wound its way through the village and between the houses there were two coffins: one heavy one with many pallbearers and the other much lighter carried by two men. They were carried down to the small cemetery where yellow crotons and daisies grew. The procession stopped at the newly dug grave and the two coffins were duly lowered into the ground one on top of the other. Perhaps Maia was one of few people interred with two coffins.

Afterwards, we sat in the village and thought of Maia and his long life and his interest in the old culture of his people. As he was a convert to the Lutheran Church, he had a mixture of the old and new beliefs and I wondered if his soul had gone to heaven or to Degasub on the Rai Coast where Tinigai guarded the underworld.

For a week, no further work was done on the canoe out of respect for Maia. When the men discussed what totem would go on top of the mast, all agreed it should be the cockatoo, the totem of Maia's Gapan Clan. It was a fitting tribute for a man who had helped so much in reviving the old customs. We were now down to four men who knew the art of building these canoes, Derr, Damun, Gab and Pall. Derr was crippled and suffering from arthritis and they were all suffering from bad eyesight. We arranged visits to the optometrist and bought glasses for Pall. I was often amused at how their characters were similar to their English equivalents. Gab was very talkative; he had the gift of the gab as the saying goes. Pall was a good pal or friend and had a good organising ability. Damun was a real diamond in his knowledge of canoe building and as a teacher of the younger men. Derr was the dear of the lot of them the way he would cheerfully hobble down to the canoe site in spite of his afflictions. It gave him a new lease in life for, instead of sitting at home with nothing to do, he instructed the men who treated his knowledge with respect. Many of the old leaders expressed disappointment with the new council system as they no longer had the prestige they once enjoyed as leaders of their clans. The younger men hardly listened to them, which led to a breakdown in discipline. With this project, these old men were given the respect they deserved with their knowledge of the art of making these canoes. This knowledge cannot be found in books; only in the memories of these old men. Unless it was recorded now, it could be lost forever. With Maia's death, we all began to realise this more than ever. When any of these old men die, it was as if a whole book of knowledge died with him.

The four men each knew a varying amount about the canoe. Not one of them knew the whole process and so they must pool their knowledge. Damun probably knew the most as he learnt a lot from his *tabuna*. He was very clear about the process of making the canoe. Derr understood quite a lot but he was old and forgot some things. Pall does not know as much as Damun. Gab probably remembered least of all the old men. He kept giving the wrong instructions and then says, "Oh, I don't know about this". So Damun was the one the men usually turned to at the different

stages of making the canoe. He secretly enjoyed being the centre of attention and valued for his knowledge. Damun said that the different stages will be done in the following order: 1, add the *damdam* (prow or breakwater); 2, caulk the canoe with the *dim* putty; 3, add the *ro* on top of the top-strake; 4, lash the *yand* (crossbeams) to the canoe; 5, attach the *sam* (float) to the crossbeams; 6, build the platform *bedel* on top of the *yand*; 7, Put the *piriar* (mast) into position; 8, add the top platform, the *susu*, on top of the first platform; 9, build the *yoyou* or little house on top of the *susu*; 10, the sail goes up; 11, the decorations are added; 12, finally, the sides of the canoe are painted. When the Kranket and Siar people came to Maia's party, they looked at the canoe and said, "They are making this one just like the *tabuna*". The Bilbil were very pleased to hear this. Damun says that he only watched his ancestors making the canoe so he was slow on the job.

On 5 May 1978, my son John, his friend Mako, and I had a nostalgic over-night visit to Bilbil Island with Derr and Masil. Derr pointed out the different parts of the beach where the clans once built their trading canoes. The Dugus clan had the largest and best portion of the beach, on the right hand side. Next to them was the Gapan clan's section, then the Luan and lastly the Murpatt clan. Derr told us stories about his father, Nomu, who had built a canoe in the Luan section. It was wonderful to return to the island, which Maia had once shown us around. We sat on the beach where Miklouho-Maclay had landed in 1871. At that time, the island was crowded with houses and many canoes were drawn up on the beach. Now the only house on the island was a fisherman's house where we stayed overnight; the only boat on the beach was the one we had come over on. Nature had taken over in the form of large trees and jungle and the island seems to be haunted by spirits of the past. Peering amongst the bushes we saw the old village well where the women once collected water in their earthenware pots. Shards of these pots were now scattered everywhere testifying to the once flourishing industry which was an essential part of the trading system. A *lalong* could take 40 large pots. If Derr were the captain, he would decide on the crew of 6 and some passengers. The *palangut* could take 10 crew and many passengers. Derr and I talked until the evening turned to dusk and the moon hung in the sky. It was a beautiful little island, which had been enjoyed by many generations of Bilbil before they shifted to the mainland where they built canoes in the same place as the new one we were building.

Back at the canoe site, the *tilau*, which support the superstructure, were shaped and ready to use. They had been cut from the buttress of the *gau* tree (*Combaefaceae terminalia*) which once grew plentifully around Bilbil. There was no need to cut the whole tree down, as only one *tilau* need be cut from each tree. The section is chopped out from the tree roughly and then trimmed down. The knotty texture of the buttress made for a strong piece of timber. In nature, the buttress supports the weight of the tree whereas, in the canoe, the *tilau* supports the weight of the superstructure.



Two men carry aerial roots for the damdam. The one on the left was finally used.

Before the *tilau* were lashed onto the canoe, they were placed along the top of the hull in twos to judge the suitability of the pairs. The longest part of the L-shape was placed on the outside of the hull and was shaped so that it did not follow the curve of the hull but extended in a vertical line. There were four large ones, *tilau tinan* and four smaller ones, *tilau ninan*. *Tinan* means mother and *ninan* means child. This mother/child relationship is used again with the upper and lower platforms. Pairs of *tilau* formed the frame of the canoe and supported the plank sides or strakes. The *tilau tinan* are the ones that form the base of the superstructure while the *tilau ninan* are trimmed level with the top of the second plank or top-strake. For this reason they are aptly named. A small niche was cut in the base of each *tilau* frame so that it fitted neatly on to the hull. Each *tilau* needed much shaping and trimming before the right shape was attained. There was a space a few centimetres wide between the top of the hull and the outside of the *tilau* so that when the strakes were added they were flush with the hull and did not protrude at all. The vine used to lash the *tilau* together was called *waramer*. It had to be freshly cut from the bush before being soaked in the sea to ensure it was not too brittle. Large amounts of this vine had to be made ready for the lashings because, if supplies ran out, many days were lost waiting for more vines to be soaked. When the *tilau* were lashed together with the *waramer*, the lashing was called *milil*.

On 8 May 1978, there were nine men working and the *tilau* for the canoe were being tied in place. Last week while we were over on the island, they bored 27 holes on each side of the canoe with a hand drill. These holes were for the vines that fasten the hull to the *tilau* as well as to the strakes. The strakes had been put into position temporarily to mark the spot where they will be tied by the bush vine. The places for the holes were marked with a ruler and a biro. At first they could not remember how their ancestors had drilled these holes before the advent of steel tools,

but Derr came up and said that they used the bones of a pig, which were sharpened in the shape of an awl and hammered in with wooden hammers. It was a big job and it might take a man a whole day to make five holes using this method. Derr, Pall, Damun and I discussed the young men who were being trained by them. Derr says, "They are like babies. We must teach them everything, and it is hard work, heavy work. I must tell them, 'hold it like this, sharpen it this way'. Their hands are not accustomed to it and we waste many days. Later we will be able to make a big canoe with two masts. This one-mast is the school. Once they know the art it will be good. Already some are clear about it, but others are slow."

Where there are two strakes, as in the Bilbil canoes, the bottom strake is the garboard strake and called *bai tinan* or mother plank, the one above it, the wash-strake, was *bai nanun* or child plank. When it was time to lash the strakes on to the canoe, holes were drilled into the hull about 4 cms from the top. The *bai* were placed temporarily along the top of the hull and any further places needing trimming were marked and done. Then the spots for the holes to be drilled were marked on the planks directly above the holes in the hull and then drilled, each hole being over 2 cm in diameter. Corresponding holes were made on the upper side of the strake. The holes were known as *bai bab*.

Next, both sides of the canoe were lashed closer together through holes 5 cms from the top of the *bai nanun*. The vine was bound across and back six times, then the binding was lashed around itself to make the *hunan* lashing. It draws both sides of the canoe together acting like a brace. A batten or thin rod, *siger*, covers the seam between the two strakes to make the canoe more watertight. Above this, six thwarts are inserted into the top of the top-strake. The two on each side of the centre were, however, cut short and acted as braces rather than thwarts, although the men called them all *gimagim*. A long, thin piece of timber runs along the top of the top-



One of the damdam being tied into place with *waramer*.

strake horizontally and binds the thwarts into place. Known as a *ro*, it acts as a rail for the sailors to tread on and must be smooth so that it does not cut their feet and must be shaped to the curve of the canoe.

The *damdam* or prow boards had been smoothed and shaped and were standing against a tree. Having heard that there were no carvers left in Bilbil, I suggested that the brother of the Councillor on Bilbil (who was a Sepik) should be asked to carve the prows in Bilbil designs. The Bilbil men who were convinced he would use Sepik designs viewed this with scepticism. They decided they could do the carving themselves with Damun sketching the design to be carved and Masil, a carpenter, doing the carving. There was much discussion over the *damdam* because no two match very well. The finest shaped one was too long and the men say would be better on a *palangut* than a *lalong*. They may need to make another trip into the bush to procure a *damdam* that matches. In the end it was decided to use two *damdam* that do not match exactly. My comment was one looked like the head of the canoe and the other like the tail. But then the canoe could go in either direction, so the tail will become the head.

A few days later, the men had to cut the ropes on one side of the canoe because the *tilau* were too far in. All the vines had to be cut and the *tilau* pulled further out and then rebound. The *bai*, strakes, had yet to be tied back in place. There was much discussion about the extra planing needed on the plank for it to fit well. The *bai* also needs to be trimmed down about 6 cms. Derr was showing the men where to put the holes for the second plank, directly above the ones of the lower plank. The upper plank, or the *bai nanun*, was a smaller plank. It was the child of the plank below, the *bai tinan*. It was fitting that both the top and bottom planks came from the same tree.

Pall and I went to see Paul Bodi who was in charge of the Department of Home Affairs in Madang. He was very interested in the canoe project and wanted us to involve some young boys in learning the craft, especially those from Grade 6 who were not continuing their education. We decided to organise a village meeting for Sunday 28 May to discuss this. As a result, over the next few months, a group of young boys who had finished Grade 6 came to the canoe site when there was activity.

Work on the canoe itself had been at a stand still because there have been insufficient vines to fasten the strakes together. Once cut they must be soaked for a week. There will be hold-ups like this until the men learn the amounts needed in the first place. The red vine, *wara mer*, must be freshly cut in the bush and soaked. On 5 May, Brian and I went out to see progress and to take photographs. The *wara mer* was still soaking in the sea and would not be ready for a few days. Some of the men were busy carving the *damdam* in a beautiful design they have not seen for years. The old men were sketching the designs and the younger men were carving them. The man working on the *damdam* today was Simbera and he told us that this particular *damdam* was the one

that I had photographed in the bush. Masil was trimming down another *damdam*, but it was still in the rough early stages. It was very tough wood to carve as it was full of knots.

Another man, Tegil, was working on a *ioking*. He was just making a trial one with the help of the older men, later he will make a real one. The *ioking* was carved out of one piece of wood in much the same way as the Trobriand people carve table legs out of one piece of wood. Once the *ioking* was finished, the end of the carving drops down at right angles to the rest of the wood making an ingenious decoration for the side of the canoe.

On 6 June 1978, Damun became upset when some of the men mislaid his tools. He gathered up the ones that were left and marched off to his house saying that if he wasn't there to train them, nothing would happen and the canoe would just rot on the beach. As a result, there had been no activity at the canoe site itself for many days. Pall came to our place with the news. It was almost as if he were saying, "I told you so. This idea of building the canoe won't happen". I drove Pall home that afternoon and went out to see Damun with the hope of straightening up the matter. When I got close, he turned his back on me. Not a good sign. I apologised to him and said how much we appreciated the work he was doing on the canoe. Later, his friends found his tools and presented them to him. He accepted them but would not return to work for a few days until his anger subsided. In future, his tools will probably be better looked after.

Pall went to Dogia to get the *yand*, (*Sterculiaceae commasonia*) for the crossbeams. The men were preparing the *damdam* to go on the end of the canoe. So they will fit snugly, the end of the strakes was being sawn off smoothly. Two sticks, the *dol*, will be placed at each end with the *damdam* to straighten the canoe. Damun said that they would hang a rope from the mast and tie a basket to it. The rope was called *urir* and it must be very strong or it will be blown away in the wind. The basket was called *sareg dob* and was used to put smokes and betelnut in. Speaking of progress, Damun says, "We are going slowly. We old ones must sit and talk and remember and then try it and then later we must sit again and teach them all".

Over the following days, the men carved pieces in their houses. One thing that holds up the work was the definite order that must be followed. The outrigger cannot be added until the canoe was almost ready to go in the water or the wood dries out and it would be ruined. The sail cannot be made in advance because it depends on the height of the mast and this depends on the "look" of the canoe. Kube came up and said that they were waiting for the old men's advice before they can continue. They were like children waiting for instruction.

On 28 June after all the rain, the men went out by truck to collect the timber for the next stage and a pile of material is ready for the platform to be made on the canoe. A group of men began to tie the bush vine on the *damdam*. The lashings were purposely set at



*Top left: The dim bark is soaked in bilge water in the canoe and then scraped. Pall and Damun inspect it to see if it is ready.*

*Above: The tool used to plug the dim into the holes along the canoe once all the side planks and breakwaters are in place.*

*Left: The women scraping the dim bark. This is one of the few jobs they do in building the canoe. Sima and Joanna are on the left.*

the bone formed the handle and the other end was sharpened so that it serves both as a trowel and a poker.

an angle for strength. The vine was lashed around eight times. The men did not do it an exact number of times, usually they just go by the look of it, probably between 8 and 10 times. They then bind the lashing itself by looping the vine around and around these lashings.

On 23 July, the Bilbil people had a busy workday on the canoe. Six women were scraping the *dim* bark with *kina* shells to make the putty for the canoe. The bark had quite a rough texture on the outside but the inside was soft and pulpy after being soaked. The women had to keep the bark covered with leaves to keep it to keep it as damp and moist as possible. As the *dim* was produced, young boys rushed the pulpy red mass to the men who applied it to the canoe. I sat next to Derr who was fixing a split in the end of the canoe near the *damdam*. He had to make the split wider so he can caulk it with *dim*. Every crack and crevasse was plugged with the *dim*, which oozed red juice. The tool, which was used to insert the *dim* into the cracks, was made from the hind leg of a pig. The men could find nothing in the trade-store that would do the work of this tool, which they call *dim sol*. The thick part of

The *dim* bark had been soaking in the bottom of the canoe for many days and as a consequence it had a strong smell. Everyone wore old clothes for this job. If the *dim* got on your clothes, it would not wash out. Consequently, Derr was dressed in leaves in the front and a *mal* made of laplap behind. The others teased him and said he was trying to be like his ancestors. They began work at ten o'clock making the *dim* and I arrived at three o'clock. So they had been working almost constantly for five hours. It was hard work and tiring for both men and women. Occasionally they stopped for a smoke or to chew betel nuts or when the women told the men to climb the coconut trees to get nuts so they can have a drink. The women seemed to enjoy the work and gossiped and laughed. The whole operation had to be completed in one working day and they were still working at dusk.

Sungai said that the, "*dim* is like teeth. It makes the canoe strong and stops the seawater from going inside". The *dim* has a strong smell and the bottom of the canoe subsequently had to be cleaned out after the caulking.

Early on 7 August 1978, I sat in the shade of Dumpain's house watching and listening to a village meeting. Thirteen men were congregated under the trees and having a discussion. They all seem well versed in public speaking. The first subject was about the malaria spraying. Was it a good thing? The people said it was affecting their houses and food stored there. Their cats and pets were dying from the spray. Pall's wife, Katalun was worried that the spray around the yam house might affect the yams.

That day there were over thirty men working on the canoe. The canoe had been tipped sideways and supported by logs. The water had become putrid from the *dim* bark, which had been soaking in it, and this now drained out. It needed a good clean out and drying out before we could paint it. The men have agreed to have it painted with copper based paint to protect it. The men all helped to carry the canoe to a new place, which was more open with fewer coconuts. When they were lifting it they say, "1, 2, 3, UP", just as in English except they say *aria o salo* up or just *aria*, up, for short. They also say this when lifting big logs. The crossbeams were placed against the canoe, ready to be lashed into place. Six men were going off to the bush now to cut the *sam* (*Cananga odorata*), the float. This had to be left until now because, if it had done earlier, it would have dried out in the sun. Others will cut the wood for a mast and bring it back to the beach. The vines for the rope were being put in the sea to soak.

The men worked all day. Six men returned from the bush, carrying the wood for the *saman*. The bark had been peeled off in the bush and it was now a long shiny white log. The mast can be cut from various woods. The one used here was called *piriar*. Gab said the mast had been cut too short. "The hull of the canoe will come here," he points. "The platform and house here. That only leaves so much for the sail. This was not enough, so they must cut another mast." Fastening the crossbeams to the *tilau*, vines four strains thick were passed through a triangular shaped hole and twined around. Five men pulled them in one direction. The vines were then hammered into place with a stone. There was much shouting and urging while this happens, although it was all good-natured enough. The vine was lashed around and back again. By three o'clock, one *yand*, a crossbeam from the hull to the float, had already been lashed onto the canoe. The men then prepared the four strands of vine, for the second crossbeam. As yet, the *sam* had not been attached, as it had to dry first. The *sam* is used to indicate that side of the canoe like port or starboard. In pidgin, this is *hap i gat saman* and in the Bilbil language, it is *sam lon bidil*. The other side of the canoe was called *hap i nogat saman* in pidgin or *tai lon bidil*, or *tai* for short in Bilbil. The Siassi canoes, which are the closest to the Bilbil ones, also have the under-crossed connectives to connect their float to the booms. This is interesting because the Bilbils themselves say their people were greatly influenced by the Siassi traders.

Gab of Bilbil said, "the *sam* is like a woman along-side the big canoe which is like a man. The *sam* must go with the canoe just like a woman goes with her man". This was not just a picturesque

comment by Gab. He was actually using the terms for the canoe and the *sam* in the *tok bokis*, which the Bilbil used at sea to confuse the evil spirits. In the *tok bokis*, the canoe is *tamol* (man) and the float is *pain* (woman). Gab commented about the *sam* when the canoe is at sea: "If it was a very big canoe, they would be strong enough for the men to walk around and the platform would be bigger. This *sam* is just a watchman for the canoe, and helps it".

The canoe was 8.50 metres long and the float was 7.35 metres long so it was a problem to get the float exactly in the middle running parallel to the canoe, but 4.90 metres away from it. To do this, the men used a stick and measure the right distance from the first lashing on the front of the canoe across to the *sam*. The position of the *sam* was adjusted accordingly. This process was repeated from the lashing on the rear of the canoe. To ensure that the *sam* was centrally opposite the canoe lines were drawn at right angles at the front and rear of the canoe. The distance between the *sam* and the point where the line lies opposite the *sam* was then measured at each side again with the stick, which was marked accordingly.

When the distance was longer at one side than the other the *sam* was pushed along to half the distance it overlaps and then everything was measured again. Through this method, the *sam* was placed centrally to everyone's satisfaction without the use of setsquares and measuring tapes. The men did not know that the distance from the canoe to the *sam* was 4.90 metres. It was only when I measured it that they knew this. They were guided just by the look of the *sam* beside the canoe. There was much trouble in readying the *dom*, or connectives, which were to be pinned into the *sam*. Damun was busy sharpening a stick to be used as a *dom*. Derr was instructing the men about the *dom*. Strictly speaking the pidgin term for it would be *nel bilong saman*, but Derr joked and said it would be *liklik diwai*, meaning small sticks. It sounds as if he does not think much of Pidgin English as a language of expression. In comparison to this, the Bilbil language was very descriptive and every little part of the canoe had its own name. Often it was difficult to find a parallel word, even in English. This was because the Bilbil had a very individual way of building their canoes. The *sam* is attached to the *yand* using the *dom*, or connectives, which are crossed sticks that are hammered into the *sam* and tied to the *yand* with vines.

Damun on the *dom*:

The *dom* must be strong, if they get loose at sea, then the men take the canoe ashore and hammer them in again. The steersman must watch the *dom* and see that they don't come loose or the canoe will sink particularly if there is a strong sea or a big wind, the steersmen must turn the sail so that the wind does not fill the sail too much. It is like when you are fighting. You stand up with your shield and this wards off the spears that come. So you must watch for the strong winds and ward off the wind to protect the *dom*, loosen the sails and hide the *sam*. (Mennis, 1980: 106).

The next day, we were at the building site at 9.30. There were ten men here this morning. Derr and Damun were the two experts who were giving advice on the canoe. A fire was alight so they could light their cigarettes and burn off the shavings from the canoe. The men were almost smoked out when the breeze blew the fire in their direction. Both sides of the canoe have been lashed together six times across the top and down through a hole five cms from the top of the top-strake (*bai*) and back. The vine was then lashed around and around itself. This binds right across the canoe and draws each side nearer together, acting as a brace. Next the crossbeams to the float were lashed on to the canoe and to the central *tilau*, which not only took the strain of the crossbeams but also of the platforms and the shelter.



*Bamboo platform built over lower structure. This is the base of the potcage.*

One day, when a group of us were watching Sekera shape an *atat*, he was having trouble with his tomahawk so I joked and said he should ask the *masalai* to sharpen it. They answered that they did not know any *masalai* for the canoes, although they did know the names of other *masalai*. They were very interested when I said I had seen some of the names printed in a book. When I inquired how good were the stone axes to make the canoes, they answered, "If we had the *masalai* to sing out to help us we could do it easily". They were quite serious about this. Just how much have they given up their old beliefs? They also said they gave up invoking the *masalai* when they began to use steel axes, as they no longer needed to sharpen them. A few days later, I told Derr and Damun the names of the *masalai*, Dabag and Ligin. We squatted down and whispered as if it was most secretive. Derr recognised the name, Ligin, as a *masalai* his forefathers had invoked. I had found these in a book edited by Lutheran Missionary, Hannemann. There was even an invocation to Dabag to keep the canoe watertight. Derr and Damun were both very interested and want to use the invocation at the launching. Dobuk was the name of the canoe *masalai* in the Bilbil language whereas the other two are from the Kranket language. It was a dreamy morning with waves beating on the sand. Billowy clouds rest along the top of the Finisterre ranges above and below the sea was a bright blue and the dark green of Bilbil Island sat in the water offshore.

In August 1978, we had a visit from Peter Lawrence, author of *Road Belong Cargo*. I brought him out to see the progress on the canoe. Knowing so much about the Madang area, he was impressed. He began questioning the men about cargo cults and it was amazing the information they had. Until then I had not really bothered about cargo cults but now I knew I could no longer avoid them. Some of the cargo cultists were actually in favour of reviving the old culture as they regarded this as a way of bringing the cargo.

In the afternoon of 16 August, I drove to the village and picked up Damun, Derr and Pall to gather vines for the canoe in the Gogol bush. This time it was for *kunda* (*Analcarnaceae barringtonia*) for the rigging for the mast. It extends high in the bush and was a form of monkey vine and was used for the rigging from the top of the sail to the forepart and rear of the canoe. As we were driving along a JANT jinker truck kicked up a loose stone, which landed with a loud thud on the windscreen. As I pulled over, the whole our windscreen shattered into frosted pieces of glass. The three Bilbil men got out of the car and looked at the tyres expecting them to have blown. I was rather bemused at their behaviour as the problem was obviously not a flat tyre. We hammered the remaining pieces of the windscreen out and the men had great fun standing on the front seat with the heads out of the front window something they had never been able to do before. We continued on with all the side windows closed and we concluded that a shattered windscreen was just one more of the trials of building the canoe. That day we managed quite well and collected the *kunda* vine in the bush for the rigging.

The shelter must be built on the canoe first before the men can decide the height of the mast. It was better to have a longer mast to begin with than one that turns out too short. Before the final decision was made, a temporary mast was erected and the men gathered around to determine whether it was the right height or not. Once the potcage and shelters had been built, it was easier to determine the height of the mast as it must be in proportion. According to Pall, different types of masts were used depending on where the canoe was going. If the canoe was to be sailed only from Bilbil to Yabob, a distance of less than a mile, the men might just put a bamboo mast on the canoe. If, however, the canoe was being sailed on a long trip, then the mast needed to be strong but not too heavy as it would unbalance the canoe or break if the wind became too strong or if the canoe faced the wrong way (Mennis, 1981b: 105).

When they had determined the correct length for the mast, the men returned to the bush to cut a *mara* tree (*Rhamnaceae altophia*) or a *piriar* tree which was cut longer than necessary, just to be on the safe side. Also collected from the bush at this time was a piece of hardwood, to be used for the mast step. A smaller *atat*, a *nanau*, was also used on the mast to hold the sail.

Damun had just arrived looking very pleased with himself. He just found his old glasses after losing them for months. They were owl shaped and make him look very serious. The *atat* was to be fitted into place. Its modern counter part was the stanchion. It must be fitted to take tremendous force when sailing. The texture of the wood was knotty and was very strong in the natural formation of the tree. The lashing to hold the *atat* in place must be very strong, but it was not the strength of each strand of vine that counts; by themselves they break easily but it was the combined strength of many vines and the lashing over and over of the lashing itself that gave it the strength. A group of people had gone over to the island to collect the leaves to decorate the top of the mast. Biu, the committeeman was sitting on the canoe leaning against the prow with a dreamy look on his face. I asked him if he was already dreaming of sailing on the sea and he said, "Yes, but I've just dropped my paddle into the water." Masil was sitting on the platform of the canoe tying extensions on to the *tilau* as supports for the upper bed of the canoe. Pall and Damun were sitting on the bamboo base of the canoe platform enjoying the cool breeze. For all the world, they looked as if they were sailing on the sea.



Gain putting a hole in a nautilus shell which will be added to the mast decoration. My daughter, Joanna, is holding the cockatoo totem.

On 23 August 1978, I went out to the canoe site briefly to deliver notices of a meeting of the Cultural Council in town. The men were very interested in these meetings, but only if I collected them. This time only, Pall Tagari attended the meeting. Paul Bodi was there as well as Kaki Angi and Nalon Derr (Derr's son). The main thrust of the meeting was the design of the proposed Cultural Centre for Madang. Kaki Angi stated that he had been a member of the old committee four years earlier, but that it had stalled for lack of funds and he said he would be happy to be re-elected as President of the Cultural Council. At this meeting, the members of the Cultural Council put in a submission to build the Madang Museum and Cultural Centre. Kaki Angi said he was hoping for government assistance as well as council funds. It was decided to accept the K20,000 grant from JANT Timber Mill.

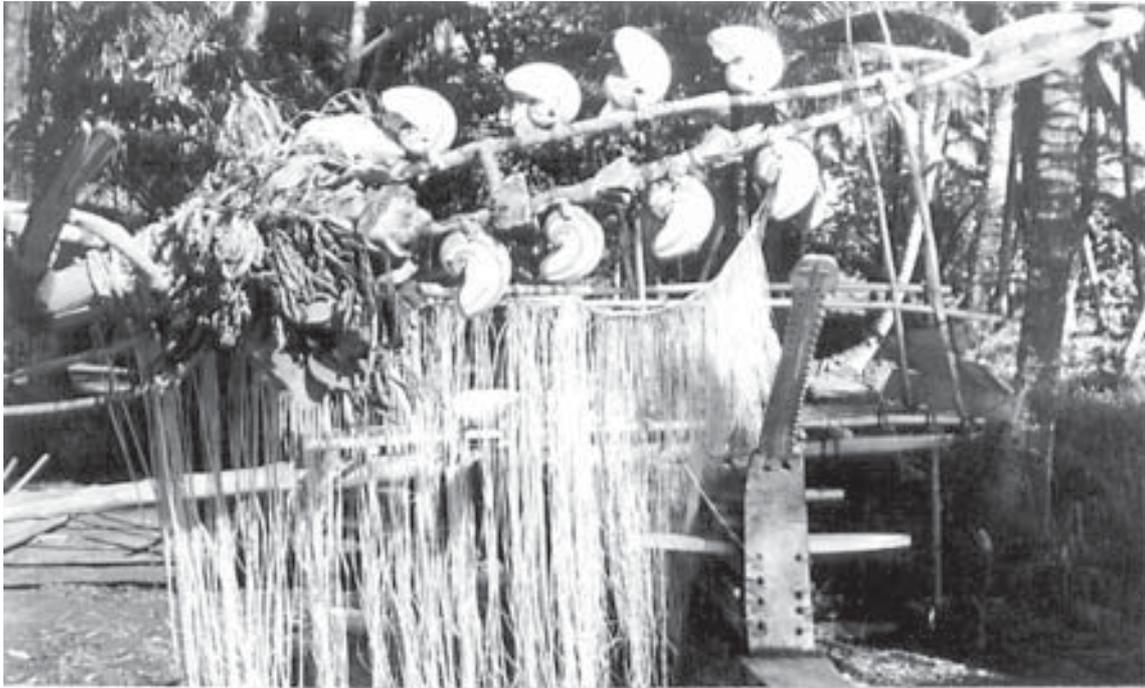
The design of the building was shown and admired by all. It had the resemblance of all the cultural and spiritual factors in Madang according to Kaki Angi. Furthermore, there was little western material used as much of it would be built from local timbers. It was decided that information about the building should be disseminated to the people of the Province, the Madang Authorities, and the National Cultural Council. Nalon Derr, Gabriel Buanan and Philipus Aganai were nominated to draft a constitution.

In the end, the full cost of the Cultural Centre was K131,000. The Cultural Council offered to pay about half of the total cost of K65,500 to cover the initial building costs with judicious use of local materials. The Provincial Government with the help of the Local Government Councils raised about K20,000 and the other K45,500 would have to come from somewhere else. K20,000 may come from the National Cultural Council in Port Moresby as they had made a similar grant to the Sepik Cultural Centre in 1973. So the building was to go ahead and it would be opened within the next two years. Unfortunately, it would not be finished in time for the establishment of the Madang Provincial Government in October 1978.

We decided to try and finish the canoe by the date the Madang Provincial Government was to be established, 16 October 1978. Derr agreed, as the sea will be calmer then. There was pressure trying to complete the canoe to coincide with the festivities, now only 6 weeks away. The men tended to rather rest on their laurels. When one part of the canoe was finished, they sat around and admired their handiwork as they were very proud of their achievement. In the old days there would have been a pretty tight schedule as well. By the time the men were putting up the mast the women would have been told, "Quick finish shaping all your pots and get them ready for firing. The canoe will be ready to go soon".

#### The next stage for building the canoe

The *bidil*, or lower platform, is built on the booms to accommodate crew, passengers, or cargo. The base of this



*Nautilus shells tied to the two sticks, gungun, which are then attached to the mast.*

platform is made by laying poles laterally over the outrigger booms and on top of these, other poles are laid parallel to the booms to form the frame of the platform. The bamboo flooring is then laid between them and fastened carefully in place with cross-weaving stitch at right angles to the hull. A hole is left in the bamboo flooring for the mast to be stepped into the hull of the canoe. This lower platform forms the base of the pot cage or cargo hold for the canoe. It extends well over the outrigger side of the canoe to balance it and to act as a brace against the wind when on high seas. Once this platform has been laid the supporting posts are tied to the *tilau* extending their height to the level of the second platform.

Before the mast is finally installed, it lies at an angle almost horizontally on the beach while the mast extension, *gungun*, the mast prong, *nanau*, and the totem rigging and decorations are added. The *gungun* consists of two sticks, which are lashed together to the top of the mast. They then diverge and run parallel to each other, a few inches apart, for a distance of 1.25 metres before being lashed together again. One of the sticks then extends to provide a support, in this case, of the white cockatoo, the totem of the Gapan clan. The totem is carved from wood and is set in a nest of leaves on the highest point of the mast. On each side of the *gungun*, a row of four nautilus shells is tied. They are painted in red stripes longitudinally. Underneath, the *gungun* is the *nanau*, which supports the sail. This is carved in the shape of a long bird's bill and resembles a clothes peg. Along the mast stays, yellow *saksak* leaves from the sago palm are hung and spliced. Resembling a grass skirt, these are coloured red at intervals.

The *lalong* had a nest of leaves at the top of the mast in which the bird totem nestled. It is significant to mention here that the legend of how Honpain brought the pots to Yabob features this nest of leaves and a little bird who lived in it, called *kirikundu* (Mennis, 1981a: 44).

The *mawarden* is a compartment above the pot cage and is used for storing firewood, food and coconuts, in effect a small bulk-store for the canoe. When at sea, the only access to it is by standing on the outrigger. The ends of the compartment are protected at each side by the *pei* boards and posts which jut out from the upper platform. The middle two boards are rectangular as only the top and bottom boards are tapered to give the side of the canoe its characteristic shape. From three long poles, protruding through the *pei*, hang three wooden fish. These fish carvings have been cut from the poles from which they hang in such a way that they fall at right angles to the pole - a very ingenious carving. The smaller fish on each side are called *ia nanau* or child fish. The long one in the middle is known as *sou*.

The *atat* supports the whole structure and takes a tremendous force when sailing. The *bamp* compartment is used for storing blankets, *bilum* and small trade items. It is alongside the captain's platform (*bidil nanun*) where the captain sits to get a fine view of the sea and coast. To make the *pit* mats for the roof, the men first remove the centre from many *morata* leaves. These are then doubled over a piece of bamboo and sewn in place.



*Derr Mul weaving the sail.*

The *gagarin* is the cage-like compartment on the large trading canoes and was used for storing cargo, particularly pots for trading. Up to a hundred pots could be stored in large pot cages. The bamboo slats are 4 cms wide and 10 cms apart to let the wind through while still holding the cargo safely. A solid front would catch the wind force and over-balance the canoe. The frame of this compartment was gradually formed as the canoe construction progressed. The base of the compartment is the floor of the lower platform. The frame is formed by posts, which have been tied to the *tilau tinan*, and also to the *atat*. A rectangular box-like frame is attached to these supports and slats of bamboo are tied on. The rope used to tie the bamboo in place is called *sikandu*, and it must be dried overnight before it can be used.

The red paint for the canoe is made from the *tamol bem*, a seed from the *bemai* tree, which is pounded with a stone and mixed with water. It is then mixed with ground clay, *tan ben*, which is found in the bush near Ou Village. This red paint is also used to paint the skin of dancers. The black paint for the canoe is made from clay, *mum*, which is found on the Rai Coast. The white paint is lime. There are various types of lime, *kambang*. Some come from a rock called *lailand kambang* and another is made from shells. The *kambang* is mixed with seawater and the juice of the *dim*. A large red fish, *morogobu*, is painted on the sail. It is a reef fish and goes out in to the deep water like the canoe. The telltale fish at the side of the canoe are also painted red and white.

Paint was applied to the mast every foot or so with hands liberally covered in red clay paint and replenished with paint from coconut receptacles. The mast was still in a horizontal position. The *saksak* hangings on the mast stays were also decorated at this stage. To do this, the painter put the paint in a coconut shell smeared his hands with it and then bunching the *saksak* hangings, he applies

the paint in one section. He then repeated the process lower down, leaving a section about a foot wide unpainted. In this way all the *saksak* hangings were colourfully painted and fluttered like bunting. Their purpose is to show which way the wind is blowing. The men say, "The *tanget* is talking we must turn the outrigger and give more wind to the sails". Other tell-tales made from bark are in the shape of long fish. Pall described all these tell-tales as the compass for the canoe, If the sailors didn't watch them closely, the canoe wouldn't sail well (Mennis, 1980a: 107). One part of the rigging is called *sareg dob* from which hangs a basket the *urel mangas*. This basket

which carries tobacco and betel nut swings out in the wind, but can be drawn back by a small rope that is attached. This vine is not very strong in itself so it is wrapped around the *bu* vine for strength.

On 7 September, the men carried the mast over to the canoe and hoisted it into place. A wooden cockatoo, the totem of Maia's clan, had been carved by Masil who was now boring a hole through the middle of it to hold it in place. Once done, he painted it white. Now it was sitting proudly on top of the mast in a nest of leaves peering over the side. The men said it was looking out for fish or will do so when they were at sea. The mast is stepped into a hole in a square shaped piece of wood, laid on the floor of the hull and held in place by the two platforms and the shelter.

Kasare, an old man from Yabob, had come to help with the finer details of the decoration on the mast. He was actually from the Gapan clan, but had resided in Yabob for many years and was still regarded as an authority on the totems. There had been a dispute at Bilbil over the totems because, when Maia made his model canoes, he combined the totems of two clans, the Dugus and the Gapan. So he had the half moon of the Dugus under the cockatoo. When the men were preparing the totem for the new *lalong*, they copied Maia and carved a moon sign (*sinasin*) as well as the cockatoo. Kasare soon put them straight about it and pulled the half moon totem off the mast. They all agreed that it would be against the custom of the canoe to combine two totems. It was the first time Kasare had seen the canoe and he was quite excited about it.

The size of the sail is marked out to the correct size on the sand. Two poles, *silail*, are placed alongside the marks and stakes are driven into the ground - 6 of them. The warp rope, *mara*, and the weft leaves, *garabud*, are then done with the *mara* stretched from one pole to the other. The men are now busy weaving the sail. They need plenty of *garabud*, pandanus leaves, for this stage.

Gradually the sail took shape. Some men wove the *garabud* leaves between the *mara* and others flattened out the leaves so they don't curl up. When the sail is made, it is called *baind*.

The sail was taking shape. The rope had nearly all been tied in place - all the strands go across from one pole to the other. Biu says that these poles will later be removed. Pipoi was here today too. He and Gab were great ones for giving advice. There were 66 strands of *mara* going across from one pole to the other. Gab, Biu and Masbud were weaving the *garabud* leaves through the *mara*. Other men were flattening out the leaves so they don't curl up. The leaf was woven to the end and then doubled back through 6 of the *mara* warp ropes. The *mara* ropes were between 6 cm and 10 cms apart, whereas the leaves were woven closely one beside the other.

Yesterday, the strands of the *mara* ropes were 6 to 10 cms apart, but, today, when I arrived, they were hard up one beside the other. Apparently Gab had been wrong yesterday and there was much discussion after I left. Biu complained that Gab didn't know what he was talking about. Damun and Derr knew best how it should be done and I was later talking to Damun's sister and she also said that the strands were too far apart. Now we are waiting for more rope and who should wander up this morning but Gab and he set to work helping as if nothing was wrong. They don't seem to bear grudges, which was just as well as they live all their lives with one another in the same village.

Pall and Derr said that the paddles must be made of *kwila* or other hard wood because the sailors must be able to paddle in rough seas. In the end we got *kwila* from Wewak timbers to make the paddles, which were called *bon* in the Bilbil language. This was the first sawn timber to be used on the canoe - all the rest had been hand done. In the meantime the men had been busy putting up the end of the platform. These long flat planks were called *pei*. This was put only on the outer side of the cages compartment at the bottom and on the top of at the other side. The three fish at the end have their own names. The ones at each end were called *ia nanun*, child fish; in pidgin *atun*. The long mouthed one in the middle was called *sou* or *long maus* in pidgin.

Most of the men have gone off to unload a ship that had come to Madang. They take this in turns with other villagers and were quite well paid. As far as the canoe building goes, it was just one more interruption which delays progress. Not that one can begrudge them these outside interests, but in the old days their life was untroubled by such delays. There would of course have been other types of interruptions, fights may have occurred with the bush people or visitors may have called in to the island, but overall they had far fewer interruptions. They were isolated on their island and because of this relied solely on their canoes for transport. Now they have boats, cars, PMVs etc. to get them around so there was not the urgency to finish the canoe.

On 3 October, a gentle breeze was blowing on the *tanget* leaves and old Derr was sitting up in the canoe patiently setting small



*Masil putting the finishing touches to the roof of the shelter.*

bamboo slats in place. Other men were busy weaving the sail. Two men just arrived with more supplies of *mara* rope from the bush. It just showed that they still don't know the right amounts yet. They say they have plenty of *garabud*, but I wondered if they would have sufficient when the time comes.

Later, Derr worked on the roof of the canoe in spite of being sick with fever. Indeed the other day he frightened me, as he seemed half-delirious, poor old fellow. He had been a real inspiration to the other men at Bilbil in making the canoe. Unless he was ill, he struggled down to the canoe on two crutches and sat working on the beach making the sail or the *morata* for the roof or whatever stage they were up to. He quietly gives advice, not like some of them. The canoe had given him a new lease on life as it were because he had again acquired an important position in the village community and was not just dismissed as an old man to sit out the rest of his days in his house with nothing to do.

Five men and one woman were working on the *morata* or *morat* (Bilbil name) leaves for the canoe. Once these leaves have been sewn and overlapped then it was called *pit*. When they were put on the canoe, they were called *yoyou* which was the name for the whole shelter. Sibulas was the woman helping with the *morata*, peeling out the centre stick so that Nail and Nangu can sew the leaves onto the *pit* with a small vine from the bush called *mogou*.

Some were working on the *morata* mats, *pit*, for the roof. The two *morata* leaves were turned over a piece of bamboo about two metres long. The leaves were overlapped to the middle of the previous leaf with rope made from a large vine. The skin of the vine peeled off in strips and was threaded through the leaves. The end was sharpened so it pierced the leaves easily. Masil was on the canoe working on the *kapalai*, which was used to put the sail on when it was not being used.

24 October was painting day. Derr was sitting under a young coconut tree making a red brew to paint on the canoe. The inside of a seed *tamol bem*, from the *bemai* tree, was pounded with a *pai* or stone and mixed with water and then mixed with ground paint called *tan bem* which was found at a bush place called Ou. The black paint used in 1978 was made from the inside of a car battery. Before it was made from clay called *mum* found on the Rai Coast. The white paint was traditional lime mixed with saltwater and the juice of the *dim* which, surprisingly, does not turn it red. If the *kabung* (lime) was mixed only with saltwater and applied it would wash off. The *dim* bark was scraped off and was quite fibrous. Water was added and the juice was put with the *kambang*. When not being used, it must be carefully covered and stored. There are three colours used on the canoe: white, red and black.

For the opening ceremony, there were arches and bunting all along the road. The village itself was in a state of feverish activity grass was being cut, rubbish burnt, ground dug over and large areas cleared. We hoped it would go off well. The canoe was looking

shiny and fresh. Yesterday the men put the preservative paint on it and now it looks as if it had been varnished. On the day before the opening, the sail was raised on the canoe. It looked beautiful with its large red fish on the sail called *morogobu* painted in the middle of it. In pidgin called *pis plang* or *baret* fish. It was a reef fish when little and goes out to the deep water when big. The sea was too rough today for the canoe to sail so we had to wait for the next day. Pall and I have just been looking at the canoe with the sail and we were very excited about it.

Rosalie Christensen from the Teachers College gave us some black stone from the Orinma and, further up, it was a trade item according to Derr and called *mumu*. They have used the black charcoal from batteries but Pall and I put this real black paint on a few places, particularly the broken tail of the fish that we glued on yesterday. The telltale fish made of bark were being painted and a lovely round shield was made by Amil of Josephstal.

Nalon Derr, the Provincial Secretary, was the son of Derr Mul, one of the canoe builders and our staunch supporter. He chaired the meetings concerning the celebrations to be held over the week of Wednesday 25 October to Tuesday 31 October 1978. At this stage, Gabriel Buanan was the Administrative Secretary, Peter Colton was the Provincial Planner, Galeng Lang was a Councillor. It was the third Meeting. Lions and Rotary clubs would be responsible for organising the bonfire. Regular Broadcasts about the celebration was made over Radio Madang. Speeches were to be made by the Interim Premier, the Minister for Decentralisation, the Prime Minister and the Governor General and there was an Official Government Celebration Dinner. The Provincial Government and the Chinese Community were to meet the dinner expenses. There was a Maborosa Ball, traditional dancing, string bands and Chinese Dragon dancing. The Administrative Secretary was to seek approval from the Governor General for the use of firecrackers.

One of the items on the agenda for the Provincial Government celebrations was the launching of the Bilbil canoe of which Derr Mul had been one of the main builders. Now his son, Nalon Derr, had become the leader of his people as his father had wanted. Nalon Derr proudly acknowledged the work of his father when he indicated that the Bilbil people had been working on a large traditional canoe over the last four months. This canoe was now ready to be launched and he asked the Committee's views as to the inclusion of this item in the Celebration Programme. "It was resolved that Chairman liaise with Mrs M. Mennis as to what can be done to sail this canoe be as an added attraction to the Provincial Government Celebration".

The launching of the canoe was called, in pidgin, *opim dua* and took place on 28 October 1978. The village was decorated with *wassis*, the new shoots of the *saksak*. The people had also made *bogim* or *sima yaron* i.e. huge arches. One of these was in the middle of the village and another on the road. The middle of the village was fenced right across with coconut leaves.



*The dancing group at the opening of the canoe.*

I had a preview of the flute playing before the ceremony began. An old man from Hudini rocked back and forth in time to the beat playing a short flute as he sat in the top cabin of the canoe. Derr played on a longer flute which rested on the canoe. These bamboos or flutes, known as *kau*, were blown by the men to show their happiness. They say they cannot just sit there, they must blow on the flutes. Quite a crowd gathered in the village in front of the coconut fence. The Corrective Institution band played their bagpipes while everyone waited. Then suddenly the fence was broken down and there were the dancers all in their finery ready to escort us down to the canoe, with a *singsing* called *daig*. This used to be danced on full moonlit nights by the boys and girls. In former days there might only be a few *kundu* and the people clapped their hands, but now there were many of them.

Some of the visiting politicians gave speeches and congratulated the men on their wonderful achievement. Then Mangin flogged the canoe with *tanget* leaves to rid it of bad spirits. The women brought pots to load into the canoe. There was a feeling of expectancy with everyone waiting to see the canoe launched, but it was decided that the sea was too rough. Guests were entertained at a *mumu* feast and received gifts of small Bilbil pots.

As Monday, 30th October 1978 was the official holiday for Provincial Government, the men decided to launch the canoe. The sea was still a bit choppy but the men were all eager to launch it once Dadau, the Councillor, gave the order. They used rollers under the canoe and the boys and girls all helped lift it down. Once it was in the water there was a scramble amongst the kids to get onboard. And then there was consternation amongst the older men who had all stayed onshore because the sail was up and no one onboard really knew how to sail the canoe.

There was a tree stump near the shore, which had to be avoided so there were more shouts when the canoe nearly hit it. One fellow jumped into the water and pushed the canoe away from the stump. There were still varied commands from the older men, Masil being the loudest. I asked him why he didn't go on board and he laughed. "I'll just have to teach these boys how to use the sail," he said. They soon lowered the sail but I couldn't bear to watch any longer as the wind sprang up stronger and the waves began to increase. Anyway it returned to shore safely although some of the paintwork was smudged.



*Down she goes. The canoe is launched into the sea.*

It was stated at this time that:

We the people of Papua New Guinea, united in one Nation pay homage to the memory of our ancestors, the source of our strength and origin of our combined heritage; acknowledge the worthy customs and traditional wisdom of our people, which have come down to us from generation to generation; pledge ourselves to guard and pass onto those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now. By authority of inherent right as ancient, free and independent peoples, We the People establish this sovereign nation and declare ourselves under the guiding hand of God, as an Independent State of Papua New Guinea. And we assert by virtue of that authority that all power belongs to the people, acting through their duly elected representatives, the respect for the dignity of the individual and community inter dependence are basic principles of our society. That we guard with our lives our national identity, integrity and self respect also that we reject violence and seek consensus as a means of solving our common problems so that our national wealth, won by honest hard work be equitably shared by all.

We who were born or lived in Madang Province do recognise fully our responsibilities and duties toward our province, and our leaders. We are fully aware that we are part of this nation of Papua New Guinea. We will always be loyal to the Papua New Guinea Government and its leaders. We therefore declare our loyalty through the Christian principles and the guiding hand of God the Almighty.

It was the following year on Saturday, 4 March 1979 before the canoe finally made its first voyage. The men rose early to the beat of *garamut* drums, because they wanted to use the *yawan*

wind before it dropped. The early morning sun picked out the red designs along the strakes. From the top of the mast the wooden cockatoo peered down as the men raised the sail and pulled the rope vines to anchor it. The canoe was dragged and pulled to the water over rollers, which facilitate the process. Many of the village children excitedly helped in this stage. The *teteb* shells and totem were clearly visible as intended to signal to trading friends of the arrival of the canoe. As the canoe continued on its way Pall, Derr and Damun checked on the sails and then settled down to regale the others with tales of past trading trips. They were all very proud

and pleased with the way the *lalong* sailed along the coast, the first of these *lalong* to sail for forty years.

Kube, the only man to wear traditional clothes was dressed in a dogtooth headband while *bulra* glittered on his chest. Around his waist hung a tapa cloth garb. His skin had been rubbed a shiny red with singsing paint. Standing on the front of the canoe he blew on his conch shell and the sound reverberated across the bay. He blew the particular notes that his ancestors once did in Astrolabe Bay.

After this stirring achievement, everything started to fall apart.

It was difficult to decide what to do with the canoe. The men wanted to keep it in the village and the tourists did come and look at it as it sat on the beach. I tried to get various service clubs like Lions and Rotary to donate money towards saving the canoe by building a structure in the village. I gave a talk about the canoe. It was a slide evening at the Smuggler's Hotel. While rushing around fixing the slide projector I fell over the side of the *house wind* where we were and chipped a bone in my ankle. I passed out with the pain. When I came to, I thought I could not disappoint these people who had come to listen so I sat and gave the talk about our project and how we built the canoe and were now anxious to preserve it. Every now and then the pain came back in swirls and I would black out momentarily. I had no idea I had broken my ankle but here was my chance to get support for the canoe project. After the talk, my request was dismissed. I was told that the village people had access to their own bush material and could build a structure themselves. I was very disappointed. A doctor in the audience was very concerned when he saw that my ankle had swollen to the size of a football. "You've broken your ankle! How did you manage to give the talk when you were in such pain!" All for a good cause! But it was a lost cause now. The doctor hustled me off to the hospital and I was in plaster for



*The Bilbil canoe on the beach before its first voyage to Madang.*

the next six weeks. In hindsight it would have been best to have had the canoe moved to Madang and stored until it could have been displayed in the soon to be built Cultural Centre. Instead it lay and rotted on the beach with no shelter.

In the meantime, some cargo cultists from Kauris came to visit. They were pleased to see the finished canoe, as it reminded them of their traditional culture and the story of the two brothers, Kilibob and Manup. The President of the Daubso Association told me that, when Kilibob built his ship, he did so at Budup, at the spot where evidence shows a European sailing boat put in for repairs. He went on to say that the canoe that Manup made was a *lalong*, which was the same as the one we had built at Bilbil. So, from the earliest legend about the place, we had come a full circle to the canoe we had built. The Kauris cargo cultists still followed Yali but their thinking had changed considerably. Before, the idea was to become as European as possible but, when this did not bring them the power, these cultists reverted to believing that they must return to the ways of their forefathers to get the power, that is, the cargo.

At that stage in 1979, Madang was lucky in having an active Provincial Cultural Council who were at that time busy organising the financing of a cultural centre for the province. The Council tried to foster, encourage and assist in the preservation of the local indigenous culture. There was a wealth of oral traditions in the form of *singsings*, music, songs legends and myths but time has played havoc with material culture. The *haus tambarans*, carved house posts, the *telum* (carved statues), large traditional canoes, fishing baskets, weapons, traditional tools, sacred flutes, *singsing* decorations and even pots are rare these days and, in many areas, have died out completely.

There were two outstanding examples of cultural revival in Madang. The first was the carving of two posts for the Madang Provincial Government representing Kilibob and Manup, who are the creator beings in Madang's mythology. Kaki Angi, the President of the Cultural Council, organised the carving of these house posts in his village of Aronis and they have the design for water carved on them along with the personal marks of the spears of these mythical brothers. The second example of cultural revival

was the building of a *lalong* in Bilbil Village in 1978. This was the first canoe to have been built since the late 1930s. There were only five men left who knew how to make the canoes but they were able to instruct a group of younger men in the craft. It is possible to revive almost forgotten arts, but it must be done soon or it will be too late.

The Madang Cultural Centre was designed by architects, Murray Clayton and John Proctor, following the recommendations of the Cultural Council. The building is in the shape of a men's house from the Madang Coastal Region. The building is 10 metres high and almost 40 metres long, and it makes a strong impression on the Madang skyline with the fringe of the ocean behind accentuating the steep slopes of the roof. The interior of the building is daunting with high ceiling central support poles of 400mm thick *kwila* trunks stretching up to the apex of the roof. A special glass fronted room, sectioned off from the main exhibition hall, houses the old and most valuable artefacts. In 1981, I was approached to be the liaison officer between the National Museum and the Madang Cultural Centre. To do this, selections were made from the following artefacts from the collections of the National Museum in Port Moresby: masks, shields, headdresses, bows and arrows, spears, axes, fishing nets, food bowls, drums, body ornaments, frontlets, combs, headrests, pots, wooden plates, and grass skirts. All of these had to be checked, listed and packed for transport to Madang. I accompanied the display items to Madang where we organised display boards, glass cabinets and floor areas for different displays. Descriptive information was also written to match the displays. The posts of the two culture heroes, Kilibob and Manup, had pride of place near the door of the Centre.

The opening ceremony was held in conjunction with Madang's Maborasa Festival in June 1981. The *Haus Tumbuna*, including the Madang Cultural Centre and Provincial Museum, was opened by its patron, Mr Kaki Angi, who is also Provincial Minister for Commerce, Culture and Tourism. Sir Michael Somare was an honored guest. *Singsing* groups from Madang, Morobe, West Sepik, Oro and Manus performed their contrasting styles of traditional dancing. The people from Aronis drummed on the *garamut* on the evening

An article written by the author and Rowena Hill at the time gave this description:

Where else but in Madang would you find a handicraft shop, exhibition hall, library, dance area and tourist information centre conveniently located in the one place? The Madang Museum and Cultural Centre, which opened last month, is the first attempt in Papua New Guinea to combine a tourist information service with a museum. It is also the first cultural centre to be established with financial backing totally from its provincial government. The National Museum lent the Madang Cultural Centre most of the items for its opening exhibition. The loaned material from the National Museum included shields, weapons, hunting equipment, wooden

carvings, household utensils and personal ornaments from Rao, Breri, Simbai and Kominimung. A total of 103 items were carefully packed and sent by air cargo to the Madang Centre ready to be displayed by Peter Watlakas, the Cultural Officer, Ellis Williams and the Information Officer and visiting artist, Tabah Silau.

The art and prehistory departments produced a colour map showing the distribution of the languages of the province. The centre will not concentrate its efforts entirely on inanimate objects, but aims to be a living museum: local artists, craftsmen *singsing* groups, musicians and drama groups will be encouraged to use the museum's indoor and outdoor facilities to meet, discuss and perform their art. This way they hope to keep oral traditions alive as well as create new art forms. Local villages provided other exhibits and a collection was on loan from the Madang Teacher's College. By no means the whole of Madang Province was culturally represented, but the staff of the Centre hope to collect from the areas unrepresented. The storage facilities were inadequate for a large collection so an expansion of the building was anticipated in the future. Besides exhibiting traditional artefacts, the Centre opened with a display of modern paintings by local Madang artists including Akis, Kasalai Ruai and Tabah Silau. The development of the Centre showed the interest the Madang people had in their own culture and other provinces which do not have cultural centres were expected to follow their example.

Other provincial museums housing ethnographic collections are in the North Solomons, Enga, West New Britain, Southern Highland and Western Province which are all financially backed by the National Cultural Council as well as their provincial governments. The J.K. McCarthy Museum in Goroka was established on a private basis but is now a branch of the National Museum. Many educational institutions in the country have their own collection of local artefacts and crafts for teaching purposes, such as Sogeri and Tari High Schools and the University of Technology in Lae. Other small museums are privately funded or run by missions, for example Telefomin Baptist Mission. Such centres serve to educate local communities about their cultural heritage and provide a collection house for local material. The National Museum, the first public museum in Papua New Guinea, was established in 1954 but was not opened until 1959. With its background of experience, it can act as a parent institution guiding provincial museums and cultural centres in the preservation, storage, display and general care of artefacts as well as providing material for exhibitions (Post Courier, June 1981).

There was great interest in Papua New Guinea in June-July 1980 when the South Pacific Festival of Arts was held in Port Moresby. Its aim was to encourage the preservation and revival of the traditional cultures of the Pacific and to encourage new forms of

cultural activity, while giving the world a greater awareness of the cultural riches of the Pacific peoples, and fostering a greater sense of unity among them. Representatives of 26 island groups plus people from Australia and New Zealand came to Papua New Guinea for a riot of colour, with song, dance and poetry. They entertained each other and their host nation. Dancers from the Madang Province provided colourful displays with red-dyed grass skirts, pig tusk ornaments, red ochre skin tones and dogteeth necklaces and colourful croton leaves.

This was the third Festival of this nature, the first being held in Fiji in 1972 and the second in Roturua, New Zealand in 1976. Since it began, many of the participating countries had won their independence and assumed their own political destinies, which brought a new dynamism to the festival. As well as the dancing, there were exhibitions of traditional canoes in the Pacific including some from Papua New Guinea. Madang was also represented by the model canoe completed by Maia many years earlier. In addition, an exhibition of artefacts and musical instruments was on show. It was important to see where the art and culture of the Madang Province fitted in to the larger picture in the Pacific.

*Right: Kilibob post made specially for the inauguration of the Provincial Government.*

*Below: Pots on display in the new Madang Visitors and Cultural Bureau and Museum, which was opened in 1981.*





*The Office of the Madang Provincial Government.*

## Chapter 16, Madang Town and Province in the 1990s.



*It was September 1994 and I was back in Bilbil Village after an absence of 14 years. The leaders of the Dugus Clan greeted me happily and dubbed me “an old woman of the village”. We sat reminiscing about old times, but many faces were missing. “Where are Gab, Derr and Damun?” I asked.*

*“They’ve all died. All buried in the cemetery”, was the answer. “Come and see”. They took me through the village down to where the golden daisies bloomed and the yellow crotons glowed in the sun; down to the cemetery. Old Maia’s grave was there. He had died when we lived in Madang. The date on his cross was 22. 4. 1978, nearby was Derr Mul’s grave showing he had died in November 1990 and then Damun Nomu Maklai who died in September 1992 so I had missed seeing him by a couple years, but there was no sign of Pall’s grave.*

*“And Pall?” I hesitated, they had not mentioned my old friend from years ago.*

*“He’s still alive, but his memory is going.”*

*It was sixteen years since these men had built a large trading canoe, the first for forty years. It would be too late now to resurrect this art for all the old men had died or lost their memories. Fortunately, I had recorded the whole process in photographs, tapes and notes. Sadly I turned back to the village. “When are you going to help us build the next canoe?” the men asked. They were half joking, half-serious. “We have picked out a tree, but we need your help.”*

*Later, I caught up with my old friend, Pall Tagari, in a village near the Gogol Bridge. His move from Bilbil Village had been over a land dispute. Since his father, Tagari, had been adopted from the Rai Coast, it was argued that Pall did not have any rights over the land where his house stood. It was good to see him again. I knew from his smile and his tears that he remembered me, “Ah, Missus Brian”, he said. He had always called me that and now was no exception. He was sitting outside at his daughter Mina’s, house and had no conversation apart from his greeting and his smile. We both had a smoke like the old times and laughed a bit. I remember watching ten fat geese waddling past us along the village track one behind the other until they disappeared among the village houses. It reminded me of what had happened to Pall’s memories. They too were lost amongst the village houses. The old spark was gone. I was just so thankful that we had recorded his wonderful stories in the 1970s. Now he had no memories of the old trading days and his other friends, Maia, Derr, Gab and Damun were long dead. Another day I called into to see him and gave him a new shirt, some money, and photographs of himself. It was a sad goodbye and I never saw him again.*

For years the world media had been highlighting the trouble with the *raskels* or the criminal element in Papua New Guinea. The high unemployment and lack of benefits for the unemployed meant that youths had no means of support and turned to crime. Traditionally, the people had supported themselves with their garden plots and had been self-sufficient, but some of the next generation were no longer content to be farmers or gardeners. Once they had had a little education, they drifted to the towns seeking work and amusement. There had been some horrific crimes highlighted and I was worried that there could be some risks in visiting the country.



*Meeting Pall Tagari again in 1994, a year before his death.*

When I returned to Madang in September 1994, our old friend Archbishop Benedict To Varpin arranged accommodation at the Catholic Mission Centre, a safe haven surrounded by a high wire fence. Warnings were issued not to go out alone and definitely not to go to any villages. Yabob Village, about two kilometres south of the centre of Madang, was once the home of my friend, Ber Nansi, but he had long since died and I had no new contacts. As there had been some recent trouble in the village I was not sure of my reception so when I heard Fr Golly was going to Mareg, one of the Yabob Islands, I asked if I could accompany him. The day was to be special because they would be having the blessing of the pots after Mass.

Departure time was 7.30 a.m. from the Catholic Centre and I arrived at Fr Golly's unit as he was packing the car. After greeting me, he said, "Just a minute Mary, I've got to get my Mass kit." I misheard him with his Polish accent and thought he said, "musket". Well, I froze on the spot. Musket! - was it going to be that dangerous? But Father had already gone and came back a little while later with his Mass kit. We laughed over my apprehension and the similarity of the words. As we drove out, the roads were already busy with people going to work. We took the lower Yabob Road, skirting the worst of the potholes, and came to the village. The houses along the water have some of the best views in Madang with cool breezes. A small canoe soon came across from the island and we clambered on board with it sinking perilously close to the water line. I put my camera in a plastic bag hoping it would survive a ducking. The paddlers sent ripples into the blue/green water and requested us to shift closer to the outrigger so we wouldn't fall over. What with all the shifting around to comply with this request, the canoe was a bit unstable, but we managed.

Scholastica and Theresa were there on the island to greet us. They proudly told me how their family were amongst the first Catholics in the village in an otherwise Lutheran area. It happened almost a century ago when Fr Aufinger visited to collect the sacred songs the people had once sung to the winds and the sea when they went sailing. Mareg Island is so tiny that everyone has a beautiful view of the sea; even the cemetery with its carefully sanded and flowered plots. The altar was set under the trees and decorated with bougainvillea. There were no pots in sight, and Father said, "That's funny, Lucus asked me to bless the pots today".

Theresa and I then went to her house and found a pile of pots, which we carried back and put beside the altar. They were the large red earthenware ones that the Yabob people had been famous for up and down the coast. The readings in the Mass were about the earth which translates into pidgin as *graun* (ground) so even the liturgy seemed apt for the day. The women always referred to the pots as *graun* saucepans. It was a beautiful setting and Father Golly gave a lovely homily about a young man giving his bone marrow to help his brother and how we could relate this to our lives. It was then time to bless the pots and Father had made a fine piece of liturgy just for them. They were blessed and sprinkled with holy water. Next it was time to bless the cemetery and we processed down there.

Then Lucus approached Father, "When will you bless the boats, Father?"

"Boats! You didn't ask for your boats to be blessed", Father Golly was puzzled.

"Yes, you said you would today."

"Oh no! I thought you said you wanted the pots blessed."

Anyway, the boats were duly blessed as the pots had been earlier.

Maybe we have started a trend - maybe it was meant to be because it seemed a way to blend the old traditional culture with the liturgy of the church.

One funny thing about conversations in New Guinea is getting used to the different accents. There are Polish, German, Indonesian, Indian, and Australian as well as all the accents in New Guinea. This ends up in conversations like the following.

"That bloke is a crook"

"He can't be a cook, he's a carpenter."

"I said 'crook' not 'cook'"

"Oh crook, O.K. I hear it now".

The day I spent with Fr Golly eased me in to the changed atmosphere in Madang and I found the people as friendly as ever but there was still the warning not to go out alone. But this was Madang where I had had so many friends in the villages and I was itching to go further afield and visit them. How else was I going to see them unless I stayed with them? I listened to the advice for about a week and then I took off by myself staying with friends in Bilibil village and travelling along Bogia road on the back of an open truck getting thoroughly sunburnt, but always finding the people kind and friendly.

That evening, I sat in the *haus win* on the waterfront in Madang. The view was peaceful as far as the eye could see. Down the coast were the Islands of Yabob and Bilbil in the deep blue sea. Beyond them, the clouds were building up along the Finisterre Ranges a view that Michlouho Maclay would have seen when he arrived in the area one hundred and twenty years previously. He was the first outsider to settle here and since then vast changes have taken place socially, politically and economically. The town of Madang stretched out behind me and nearby to my right were the houses built by Europeans but occupied now by Papua New Guineans who had been educated to take their place in governing their own country. Madang was now a growing town within a Province of the same name, a place with great potential.

Twenty-three years earlier, when our family first lived in Madang, Europeans working in private enterprise or with the government occupied the houses. But, with Independence, the jobs and the houses became localised. Some of the gardens were well looked after with colourful shrubs and trees; others were dry and neglected. The new government officials could identify more with their own people but resources were stretched because of lack of funding. As there were no benefits for the unemployed, they had to rely on their extended family or even rob to survive. Some youths roamed the streets adding to the general unease. Even at this stage, Madang officials were suggesting the removal of the squatter settlements as a way of easing Madang's *rascal* problem. Some new laws were being flouted and local rivalries also led to tensions. For example, in an attempt to clean up the red *buai* that



*Looking across to the Finisterre Range, with Yabob Island on the left and Bilbil Island in the distance.*

is spat on walls, footpaths and cars there was a ban on selling betelnut in the town. Betel nut markets had been set up on the perimeter of the town for this purpose but many people did not have cars. To circumvent this law, wives of public servants, often from other provinces, sold betel nut and the *daka* catkins from their front lawns and people queued up to buy them. The local Madang people felt peeved, as they were missing out on the business. People from many different areas of Papua New Guinea lived in Madang and worked in the government offices so the townspeople were not an homogenous group.

Our old house was now the home of the Town Magistrate and his family, who were friendly and welcomed us. A lot of the trees in the backyard were gone, but the lawn was well kept and mown as far as the lagoon. Because the town now had reticulated water, the old water tanks were gone and the guttering pulled off with just the supports left hanging. Now, in 1994, the town water was restricted to two hours a day. Thankfully, some water tanks were

again being installed. The lagoon at the back of our old place had been cleared of weeds and the water was visible with its many water birds, a beautiful and peaceful scene. The town people now sat outside much more than the Europeans ever did and life was more informal, much like a large village, with neighbours joining in for afternoon drinks under the shade of the trees. Much of the cooking was done outside on open fires. It seemed like a change for the better and much more sensible except in the mosquito season.

The Public Motor Vehicle, PMV, was a favourite way of getting around town for those without vehicles. PMVs ranged in size and type from mini buses up to big trucks. They are cheap and a way to meet the local people. Mini buses travelled frequently on Modilon Road during daylight hours. At each stop, the driver, who also took the fares, opened the sliding door. At rush hour they filled quickly, then two lamp-posts down the road, someone at the back would want to get off. This meant that half the busload



*Madang market. Some of the pots are now made smaller to cater for the tourist market.*

of people had to get off to let this person out. All the passengers then piled in again until another two lamp-posts down and then the process was begun again. Most people who owned cars used four-wheeled drive vehicles. Main roads like Modilon and the North coast road were good, but even the side streets in Madang were full of potholes and people swerved around them like drunks. One evening I was the only passenger returning from Nagada, a few kilometres out of town. The driver of the PMV had a few of his henchmen sitting up the front, dressed like rascals with their long hair covered in beanies and hiding their faces behind dark glasses. Actually I felt quite safe with them. While they were there no other rascals would dare attack us. They were very polite and took me all the way to the front gate of the mission complex.

At this stage, many telephones were out of action and some departments had their phones disconnected because they had not paid their bills. If phones did not work, communication broke down, appointments could not be made or changed and people got hot under the collar. Despite this, the Madang people kept going in their own happy-go-lucky-way and the Province was much more peaceful than some others. To overcome the communication difficulties, people sent *toksaves* (messages) by Radio Madang and this service was available for anyone. The Member for Madang, Peter Barter, often sent *toksaves* all around the Province and they provided a good communication tool as long as everyone listened in.

Most mornings I was awakened at 5.30 with the cacophony of birds, the same chorus that Otto Finsch mentioned back in 1884. There was a particular strident willy wagtail, which had a loud piercing cry. It was larger than its Brisbane counterpart and had multiplied to the extent that it was the sparrow of Madang chasing cats and squawking. Beon, the mission cat was able to catch a few, much to Brother Theo's delight – he didn't like them much either. Behind their cries were the warbles of so many varieties

of birds that, while Moresby might be known for its barking dogs, Madang should be identified by its bird life and the flying foxes that blacken the sky every night. In the nearby pine trees there were thousands of these upside down neighbours that flapped their wings to keep cool in the midday sun calling as they opened their half umbrella bodies and closed them again. Then late afternoon they start to fly around again.

One day I set off to see Madang town to note the changes. The day grew hotter and hotter - 37 degrees. How did the people cope? Today I met up again with Mako Nakuk, a friend of our family and his cousin, Barbara, who works in the pharmacy and we had lunch with her two daughters in the park and swapped stories about Madang. She related how Mako and her brother had formed a small gang a few years earlier. They broke into the bookmakers' shop to get money but finding none they took an amplifier, which they then dumped in the lagoon. The police arrested them and they were in the town lockup for weeks. Mako got sick and his mother, Belo, sat outside and pleaded with the police to let him out so she could look after him. She got quite emotional and it was a sad time for them. Afterwards, Mako thought it very funny and often laughed about it with his mates. Perhaps that was the trouble. They didn't take it seriously. It was a bit awkward for me, as I had taught Mako to drive back in 1978, not knowing then that he would become the driver for a *raskel* gang. So much for my driving lessons! Afterwards he reformed and was now a model worker and father of six children. He took me on a guided tour of Madang town.

No one walks far in Madang before sitting and resting in the shade. Mako and I sat in the shade near Steamships, which was once a big department store. It was now only a big trade store with an upstairs section with saucepans that everyone uses instead of the earthenware pots. It is the price of progress, but maybe the skills could be handed on as a folk art if nothing else - what else were the Madang people traditionally if not high sea traders, canoe builders and pot makers? Next stop was the market to check on Madang artefacts and I found only the odd Bilbil pot or two and even some Ramu bows and arrows, but that was all. Rosalie Christensen, then of the Madang Teacher's College, had done a survey on the Madang market in the 1970s and concluded that most of the artefacts found there were from other districts. In 1994 things had not changed in the interim. Sepik art in the form of beads, masks, pots, bilums and baskets predominated in all tourist outlets in the town. The Sepiks are clever carvers, but many of the carvings are non-traditional and Madang people could easily learn to carve too. Alternatively, they could also make clay pigs and fire them as the Yabobs once did.

Down the road, we came to the old German cemetery, where one man was working in the sweltering heat fixing the old headstones. He had taken them from their graves and was lining them up with new cement in ordered rows, like pegs on a pegboard. Gone were the shady trees and the shrubbery. Away he chipped at the cement rocks piling them together and pouring new cement over

the top. Many were the graves of young people who had died of blackwater fever in the 1890s far from their homelands as they tried to establish the German Colony. When the new-look cemetery gets a fence around it and some greenery, it might not be too bad, but the old atmosphere has been lost forever. Whatever happened to the *longlong meri* (mad woman) who used to wander the streets of Madang and sheltered at night in the trees of the cemetery? She was from the Rai Coast and was quite aimless and harmless.

Next we came to the Sir Donald Cleland Park, with half the sign missing, and looking jaded. The dry weather had defeated many of the waterlilies. Chinatown, as we once knew it, was no more - the tradestores were nearly all demolished in about 1980 and nothing had replaced them. They were probably destroyed as a reaction to the movement of Chinese from Papua New Guinea to Australia after Independence. They just boarded up their tradestores and left the country. The old picture theatre in one of the few quonset huts remaining, was now a store. Gone also was the Kuo Min Tang building from where the dragon dance once set out and wound around the streets and hundreds of noisy crackers exorcised the bad spirits of the previous year. We then walked around to Ho Kits and suddenly I was disorientated as to what used to be there, everything had changed so much. We met relatives of the Chegg family, Janet Chung and her sister Anna Chung whose husband runs Island Airways. Janet took me around to the International School, which my children had attended and saw that they were up to date with computers and some very good programs.

I talked to John, a Chinese man born in Madang, and he filled me in on some of their history. He said that in the 1970s Chinatown was quite big. Most of the Chinese had come from the South of China and 90% were Cantonese speakers. His father came out as a young man in the German times and worked in Rabaul, building the steps going up to the residency on Namanula Hill. When the Australians took over, his father came to Madang working as a carpenter with public works pre-war and built many of the trade stores. John told me that the number of Chinese in Madang has been about the same since Independence. A Chinese family owned the stationary shop and others import meat and goods to sell to the local markets. An example of this was Joan Chan Trading Company. After speaking to the Chinese people, Mako and I continued on our tour around Madang and then back to the Mission Centre.

That day, Mako agreed to be my paid guide during my three-month visit, and, during that time, we went to some unusual places, including a carver's hut and saw many weird carvings. I knew that the carvings were sometimes possessed by ancestor spirits. That night I had a nightmare about evil spirits trying to hold my head and suffocate me. I fought myself awake only to find the sensation continued even when I was wide-awake. It was terrifying. Initially, I decided not to mention this dream to anyone but when I saw Mako the next day he bumbled on about this terrible

dream he had had of being attacked by evil spirits and how he had screamed and woken his cousin. Was it just a strange coincidence that we both had the same experiences? When Barbara and her friends heard the story, they empathised immediately as, like all New Guineans, they had a great belief in evil spirits as real entities. Rather than laugh at my experience, they understood and expressed concern and I felt closer to them than ever before.

On 19 September 1994 came the news that the two large volcanoes Vulcan and Tarvurur (Matupit) were erupting in Rabaul. Over the following days the eruptions proved so devastating that it featured on the international news. There were only five deaths from the eruption but 60,000 people lost their homes, including the family of Archbishop Benedict. Their village was covered in ash and their coconut groves were destroyed. Large amounts of dust and ash were deposited on the surrounding countryside and the town of Rabaul had been completely evacuated. Many came to Madang, which was just a two hours flight away. Lakunau airstrip near Matupit Island was completely destroyed, leaving only Tokua airport, near Kokopo, operational. Blown by the wind, the ash from Rabaul covered Madang airspace and over the following weeks, the airport was closed to small planes travelling inland as visibility everywhere was very low. The grey ash cloud over Madang town caused bright red sunsets.

By the end of October, the Japanese Government had donated \$US100,000 to Operation Unity in East New Britain. Japan had previously given 5 million yen worth of relief supplies to the victims. Peter To Rot,<sup>1</sup> a public servant, organised the disaster funds from the Madang Province. There was a great need for toiletries including soap, bandaids and medicine for the evacuees living in tents at Keravat and Kokopo. Martin Tsang, of M & S Tsang Pty Ltd, gave medical supplies worth K15,000. The Chinese and Mixed-race community in Madang raised a further K2,500 and Roger Middleton on Karkar Island airfreighted food supplies by RAAF caribou to Tokua airport, near Kokopo (Madang Watcher, November 1994).

After the eruption, about 12,000 Sepik people were evacuated from Rabaul and told to return home to their villages on the Sepik River. However, many of these families had lived there for three or four generations and regarded Rabaul as their home. Over the following weeks, many Sepiks arrived by ship in Madang and stayed with relatives in the squatter settlements on the edge of town, others returned to the Sepik (Post Courier, 31 October 1994). There were other consequences of the eruption: Airlink, a third level airline serving the island regions, shifted its head office to Madang.

Peter Barter provided help in Rabaul, evacuating people in his helicopter. The Catholic Church also played an important role in the aftermath of the eruption. Besides providing relief to the victims and caring for them in their hospital, Vunapope gave over one of its plantations to the town of Kokopo, which would now



*Bundi people, 1994.*

take the place of Rabaul. Furthermore, both the Lutheran and Catholic Churches in Madang collected food and clothing, while Peter To Rot co-ordinated the collection and dispatch of four shiploads of basic supplies to Rabaul.

Although Archbishop Benedict wanted to return to Rabaul to visit his relatives, he was advised against going by his doctor because of his bad asthma. Once he had contacted his people by phone and been reassured they were safe, he continued with his usual schedule around the mission stations. By accompanying him I was able to get a wider glimpse of the whole province: the Mountain regions, the Coastal areas, the River plains and the Islands.

The people in the Madang Province live in four distinct geographic areas. Firstly there are the mountainous regions in Simbai and Bundi; secondly the coastal areas - the Rai Coast, the Bel area and North Coasts; thirdly are the people who live along the Gogol

and Ramu Rivers; lastly are the people who live on the larger islands like Karkar Island and Manam Island. The Bel people, in the villages of Kranket, Siar, Riwo, Yabob and Bilbil, had trading traditions with the people on the Rai Coast, the North Coast, the Gogol and Karkar Island.

**The Mountain Regions:** As late as 1983 a new tribe was “discovered” in the far west of the Madang Province. This was in the Simbai area, where the Jimi and Yuat Rivers meet. Peter To Rot told how he went on a patrol to this area. Dubbed the Lost Tribe Expedition, it was filmed by Hagai Film. Carol Jenkins, a researcher and anthropologist, was also with them.

Peter To Rot said:

We did a big patrol to that (Simbai) area and to our surprise, we found a fan belt and nice woollen blankets in a village and one of the villagers had been employed at nearby Ruti Cattle Station on the border with the Western Highlands. They were not all that lost, but a report came from Hagen saying that they were lost. When we did the census, it was just a small tribe of just 300 or so. They had old style steel tomahawks, aluminium saucepans and heavy-duty blankets. In our report we said that they were not all that lost. They had in fact been contacted by some of our colleagues in the past but not officially. Peter Crambell, a patrol officer, spent most of his time in the Simbai area and shot the deer commonly found there. He patrolled those “lost tribe” areas with Steve Robinson. When we first saw this new tribe they had scabies, *grille* and *big bel*. Caroline Jenkins subsequently set up a village school with the help of two volunteers from Canada. They also set up an aid post and the people were immunised. Australia donated a small bulldozer to build the airstrip. When Carol brought some of them down for the last Marborosa Festival, they all came to my place and looked much healthier, so Carol Jenkins did a fine job there (Interview, 1994).

Peter To Rot also spoke about the Bundi people who lived on the slopes of the Bismarck Range. In 1976, when he was stationed there as a patrol officer, there were two sad accidents. First a volunteer from the New Zealand Peace Corps, Joe Campbell, who was working for the Local Government Council, was killed while trying to build the road to Brahman. He was crossing the area where they had been blasting earlier in the day and some loose rocks on the mountain above fell down and crushed him. He rolled thirty or forty meters to the river where he died. Peter To Rot had just put up a monument for Joe when the second tragedy occurred. It was a Saturday morning and the people were busy holding a market. The weather was bad, with low cloud and they could hear a plane trying to land. Apparently the pilot could not see the airstrip so he circled around. Finally he found a hole, through which he dived, but he was already half way along the strip and didn't have enough space to land. As he was still trying to pull up, he hit a tree at the side of the airstrip. The plane crashed, killing the pilot and all eight passengers. In their wisdom the

Bundi people decided that the *masalai* that killed Joe Campbell was also responsible for the plane crash.

The Bundi airstrip was one of the most dangerous in Papua New Guinea. It had been built in the 1950s using bullocks to flatten an area on the top of a ridge, but other higher ridges surrounded it. To approach the airstrip the pilot had to land uphill. Because it was a one-way strip, the plane was then turned for take off.

I had Peter To Rot's words about the accident in my mind as we flew into Bundi with Archbishop Benedict who was ordaining Joseph Poga as a deacon. The airstrip was just visible through the thickening ash-clouds from the Rabaul eruption, but we managed a safe landing. A crowd of school children were at the airstrip to greet their Archbishop. We were escorted to the vehicles with children singing their rain song, "We need rain to wash ourselves. Our gardens need water to grow". The area was experiencing a long drought.

Although the ash clouds marred the view during our visit, the mountain air was fresh and invigorating. Each afternoon, mist and cloud come up the valleys silhouetting the trees starkly along the edge of the station. Everywhere people walked about climbing down to collect water from the streams and then returning up their village tracks: their short stocky legs grew strong from the constant walking. The subsistence economy sustained them well and was supplemented with trade store food.

The Bundi Mission Station had been started in 1933 by Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and Brother Antonius, and had now grown to a flourishing centre. Those first missionaries journeyed around on horseback but, by the time Fr Anton arrived, there was only one horse left. He used it before he got sick with epilepsy and had to return to the USA for treatment. When Fr Morrison took his place, he did not ride so he shot the horse and the people had a great feast. The horse's skin was subsequently nailed to the kitchen wall in the mission house. When Fr Anton returned, his reaction to the death of his beloved horse has not been recalled, but the story was still being circulated in 1994.

Fr Ross and his party passed through Bundi sixty years earlier on their way to Mt Hagen, and I was keen to talk to the oldest people to see if they remembered this occasion. I saw an old man at the edge of the verandah with his head down and chatted to him for a while. Then I asked him eagerly, "Did you see Father Ross go past here when you were little?" He turned sightless eyes towards me, "*No missus, No, mi no lukim, ai belong mi I fas*" The poor man had been blind all his life, and I felt foolish for having asked him if he had seen anybody. He just sits on the verandah at the mission centre and Fr John helps him. Eventually, Rudolph Gandine Katekis, who was a small boy when Fr Ross and party passed through Bundi, was able to give some information about them. Many people thought they were spirits of dead ancestors.

The mission centre had a medical clinic and provided social services. When the people built the school they used local timber.

In his time, Fr Morrison had co-ordinated the various villages to come together for festivities. The mission station is well ordered with small buildings around a central oval, used for ball games and plays put on for visitors and we were no exception. Sadly the youth and their new ideas were taking over from their parents who were no longer revered as the protectors or curators of the culture. There was a certain amount of breakdown in law and order. Not all people stay with the church and there is growing concern about smaller denominations which have come into the area and fragment the parishes, undermining the work of the mainline churches.

The nearby government station and hospital had been opened in 1956 but it was still only a small outpost. The road up to it was scary: just carved into the hillside with a complete drop off to one side. There was a small house in the sub-district, a medical clinic and a small police headquarters.

Before the deaconate service on the Sunday morning, the dancers feet thumped the ground with grass skirts and headdresses swaying to the beat of the drums. Yes, it was time to dance and sing, as another local Bundi man became a deacon. Then the Archbishop with his tall red mitre joined in the procession with rows of altar boys dressed in red. They were preceded by two rows of the dancers who led the procession into the church and stood near the altar providing a very colourful background to the ceremony. Joseph Poga had a special seat built for himself on a litter and was carried into the church like a big chief. The Archbishop had reservations about this, but Joseph, flanked by his parents, looked very happy on this his special day. As a result of bringing the culture into the ceremony, hundreds of local people were attracted to it. That evening there was a very colourful *singsing* in the school hall followed by a great feast.

While we were in Bundi for those few days, the clouds and ash from the Rabaul volcanoes continued to billow into the sky and were carried across mainland New Guinea by the winds. By the time we were ready to leave there was a thick build up of clouds and ash and we began to worry. The pilot flew over but could not see the airstrip and he returned to Madang. Later he tried again and managed to land. As we were taking off Bishop Benedict blessed the plane and us. There were many dangerous moments as the plane taxied down the airstrip and took off into the clouded valley: enshrouded ridges and mountains surrounded us. At any moment we could have crashed. The pilot climbed as high as possible as quickly as possible and we were able to return safely to Madang. Thereafter, Bundi airstrip was closed to further traffic for many weeks.

**The Coastal Regions:** In September, Mako and I drove down to stay in Bongu Village on the Rai Coast. As the coast road was quite rough, we hired a 4-wheel truck, needed to ford the rivers. There were few bridges and so many rivers and creeks that, in the wet season, it is impassable. The only other access is by sea or by helicopter. As it was raining when we left Madang, there was concern that we would not get through. Each time we came



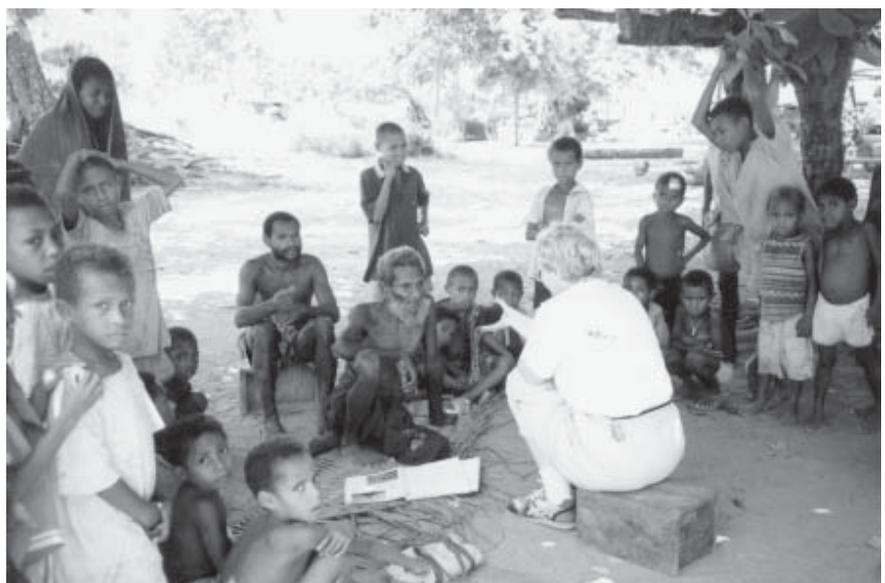
*With Mako, Lucy and family at Bongu Village, Rai Coast, 1994.*

to a river, there were markers as to the safest place to cross over the many rocks and pebbles. Sometimes it was difficult to see how deep the river was and Mako had to wade in with a stick to test the water.

Mako lives in town so he was happy for the chance to see his wife, Lucy who lives in Bongu Village and their children: Steven, who is adopted, is 19, Shane 7, Josiman 5, Galiki 3 and Taschi a year old.<sup>2</sup> In the afternoon, Lucy and I took the children down to the beach. Because I had helped bring up Mako they called me *Bubu*, grandma. The houses in Bongu Village are clean and the whole area well kept. The toilets are perched precariously on a small cliff overlooking the water. With the heavy seas pounding underneath there was a natural flushing, which could be a bit disconcerting. The women and men have their own parts of the beach for washing and socialising. That evening we cooked the meal over an open fire and afterwards many villagers gathered in the village square to listen while I talked history with some of the old people.

The Rai Coast villages include Bongu and Gorendu where Miklouho-Maclay settled in 1871. The oral traditions keep his memory alive. They relate how the Russian man once came into their small bay in a sailboat. The people wanted to run away as they were afraid, but in the end they approached him. Having no common language, they had to

*An evening of storytelling and interviews in 1994, Bongu Village, Rai Coast.*



“talk with their hands”. When Maclay gave them some salt to taste, they put it in their mouths tasted it, then they spat it out. “What’s this?” they spoke with their hands. They did not like it at first, then others came and liked it. After this, they were friends with Maclay. They gave him a mat to sit on and tried to decide whether he was a good man or not. After Maclay returned to Russia, he came back to the Rai Coast with the seeds of melons, cucumbers, corn and pawpaws. Maclay built a house at Bogadjim and stayed there for some time.

Another time, the people treated Maclay to a feast cooked in a Yabob pot. They lined his pot with leaves and then added yams and green spinach leaves and chunks of pork. On top of this quantities of yams were added. Then all the other pots in the line were filled from a basket of yams. The hosts took the large bamboo containers with fresh water and seawater and started pouring water into each pot, adding approximately one-third seawater to two-thirds fresh water. Each pot was then covered with a breadfruit tree leaf and half coconut shells” (Tumarkin, 1982: 175).

After Maclay left in 1883, the Germans came, and made a big plantation by cutting back the bush. They planted tobacco, rubber trees and coconuts. The village men worked on the plantations and were paid with German marks. At first they thought they were just stones and threw them away, declaring that they had enough stones already. Rice was described as ants’ eggs and also thrown away until its value was recognised. Later a railway line was laid to carry the copra to Erimahafen. The people at Bom (Bogadjim) later used parts of this railway to build a drier for their copra after the land was returned to them.

In 1994, Bongu Village had not changed much from when Maclay visited. Of course the village people now wear trade-store clothes, have cooking utensils, and are educated and aware of the wider world. However their houses are still built of bush materials and shaded by coconut trees. The people cook on open fires and wash in the sea or the river. They also grow their own gardens and keep pigs and chickens and supplement their diet with fish from the sea. It is an idyllic way of life and the social structure in the village gives the people support for their whole life.



*Logs awaiting shipment on the Rai Coast at Garagassi Point where Super Mahogany was clearing the forests in 1994.*

During our visit, my first to Bongu Village, I felt very safe, surrounded as I was by “family”, and when I slept there was always a woman sleeping near me to make sure I was OK. They could not have been more solicitous. My greatest worry was the rain that began to fall and Mako saying we could be stranded if the rivers rose much more. Before we left, Mako and I drove down to see the monument dedicated to Miklouho-Maclay at the place where he came ashore and it is just as it was. There was a sharp contrast with Garagassi Point opposite where a logging company, Super Mahogany was now in production clearing the forests and piling up logs on the wharf where they are loaded onto a company ship. The Company officers have surveyed the forest and bought the timber rights. Later the people say they will grow rice on the flat land.

Sometime later, I travelled along the North Coast Road to Malala, near Bogia, with Archbishop Benedict and his secretary. The road was far better than the Rai Coast road. Several bridges built in the 1970s by the Public Works Department crossed the main rivers and, more recently, the road has been upgraded to a highway with overseas aid. However, recent attacks on people travelling on this highway gave it the reputation of a *raskel* zone. The Bogia bank had been closed after a number of hold-ups and the people had to go to Madang for their banking. If this was not possible, they relied on the missionaries going to Madang to do it for them.

However, word was soon out and then the missionaries were attacked so they had to cease being the local bankers. There was not much community activity in the area and the stores were run down. Brother Cassius, a builder and carpenter, operated a good store at the Bogia Mission. He used to go to Madang every week to do the mission business and finances, following a very close schedule. The *raskels* knew what his schedule was and they waylaid him and stabbed him several times, robbing him of the mission funds. Many missionaries have been attacked or their cars stolen over the last few years.



*Fishing net near Malala, showing the same style of net that Biro photographed in the 1890s.*

Bogia had once been a flourishing centre for the North Coast. Peter To Rot had spent 6 years there in the 1970s, when it was the central meeting place for arrivals and departures of all the outstations in the area. There had been a primary school, a church and a large presbytery where the priests had their meetings. Bogia supplied meat to the outstations in those days but there is nothing there now. Times have changed; the schools have become localised and are run by boards. The VSOs (volunteers) have left and now one priest looks after three or four stations.

We were on our way for a special celebration at Malala High School, which was this side of Bogia, and it was there I met the famous Sister Frances who had done wonders at the High School for many years. The day was soon after the eruption in Rabaul and despite the fact that he was very upset and worried about his family, Bishop Benedict continued his missionary duties. We drove down by the mission 4WD but on the return trip, I left this air-conditioned comfort to visit several villages where people had once made pots so I could carry out a pottery survey. I was told that this was a very dangerous undertaking as there were *raskels* operating along the road. I remember walking down to the first village, not having any contacts there and feeling very vulnerable, but I need not have worried as the people instantly took me under their wing and helped me. They live in similar villages to those on the Rai Coast and once built large canoes but today only build the small variety and the men were busy hulling a canoe as I watched. They had three-cornered fishing nets similar to those described by Biró in the 1880s and once used Yabob pots so, even this far away, the trading system of the Bel people was well known.

Bilbil and Kranket were Bel villages and had hardly changed since we lived in Madang in the 1970s. It was good to be back

and sit with the Bilbil men as they pontificated one shady afternoon. They dubbed me “the old woman of Bilbil Village” a title I felt honoured to have. I remember our friend Maia had tried to put a hole through my nose so I could be one of the tribe but I had declined. He had died back in 1978 but his descendants still lived in the village. After talking with the men I wandered up to Sibol’s house where I would spend the next couple of nights. Sibol was Maia’s daughter-in-law and she and her daughter, Sima welcomed me. The house had a *morata* roof, *saksak* walls and the same bamboo flooring of all the houses. Soon it was the allotted time for the women to wash at the well which was some distance away. There had once been a water pump in the village, but it had been dismantled because of a land dispute. Sima was there with her children. She lowered a small pail down the well and then emptied it into a large bucket, which was carried to a large piece of rusty tin on the ground. Here the children soaped themselves and had water poured. There was lots of laughter and they seemed to enjoy this communal life. They seemed so healthy with their white teeth and shiny brown faces and were a credit to their ancestors Maia and his wife, Kobor. The children had white teeth but not so the teenagers and older members whose teeth were stained with red *buai*.

That evening, I sat with about six young women who are keen potters and making money from their skills. I began to make the survey of the potters through questionnaires and also through genealogies to obtain some idea of who makes pots or why they don’t. They were being taught by their mothers, mothers-in-law and even older sisters as the survey day showed up.

They were all chewing betel nut and I asked them what it tasted like. “Have you never tasted it?” They sounded incredulous.

“No! Never”.



Wegwi gave me a nut as nonchalantly as if I’d been a betel-nut chewer all my life.

“Try’m Try’m”, they all urged.

My teeth were not strong enough to bite the hard green skin off the nut so Sima peeled it with her teeth and gave me the inside white nut, with an encouraging smile. At first there seemed to be no taste but then it got stronger as I chewed the middle of the nut. The *daka* berry was then produced to dab into the lime powder and poke into the betelnut. The effect was instantaneous. Not only did the mixture in my mouth turn bright red it had an instant effect on my brain. The girls all looked at me and studied my every movement. “It’s going red now – good”. After I had had a few chews on it they told

*Sima, Maia’s granddaughter, with baby Simmy. Her mother Sibol is on the left*

me to spit it out onto a banana leaf. Then I had to drink a lot of water to clean it away. I was glad I had tried the *buai*, but I doubt there will be a repeat performance.

That night, sleep was impossible with the snuffling of the pigs. They must have made a hole for themselves around the house posts and were contentedly snoring in their sleep. As it grew light, the children began to move around the house, which vibrated with every step, then the chooks and the pigs seemed to join in. It was time to get up. I noticed the walls of the house were decorated with colourful *bilums* stretched out over the bamboo posts. I told Sibol about the pigs and she promised to move them the next night. The village is well kept and there seems to be a strong committee, which encourages the young men to learn the art of building houses, yam houses and keep tradestores. The committee also encouraged the girls to make the pots, as it brings money into the village. There was a youth group and they showed interest in building another *lalong*.

Traditionally, in the evening, groups of people gathered to discuss the day, the weather and to gossip. As there were no fences around houses, people interacted far more than in suburban towns. Socially this was very healthy. The support and laughter that occurred far outweighed any disputes. It was interesting to see how the village was changing with the introduction of electricity. Previously the main thoroughfare between the houses was dark but now a few electric lights had been set up. Electrical gadgets were being bought for the houses and this could lead to a more convenient lifestyle. The men counted three washing machines and two electric stoves. A ban is currently in place on building non-traditional houses. The members of the council decided that tourists would only continue coming to the village if it retained its traditional look. However the occupants of one house had a modern kitchen upstairs in their bush material house.

Aerials were sprouting up everywhere and television provided the evening's entertainment for a few people. It meant that people went to bed later and rose later in the morning. Television gave them an awareness of the outside world on an instant basis. Previously they had radios and newspapers but this was different. The house next door to Sibol's had a TV aerial and the owners were eagerly watching the screen. They had cooked inside and seemed to be cut off from their friends who were still sitting outside in the cool night air. Some people peered through the window to get a glimpse of the television screen. It remained to be seen the overall social impact this will have on the people. They may get tired of the television or they might get more involved with watching it.

While Sibol continued to make pots and sell them, she did not cook in them any more. When I asked her if I could get photograph of her cooking she agreed but said she would only pretend to be cooking, as she preferred to cook in the aluminium pots. Her daughter, Sima, knew how to make pots but since she was married into a Kranket Island family she could only make them when she

visited her mother. The ban on potmaking once you marry outside was still in place.

Sima's husband, Desmond, arrived the second day and it was good to meet him. Desmond and Sima had known each other since grade school on Kranket Island. Desmond trained as an electrician at the Lae Technical College. Sima was such a sweet mother, and her baby, Simmy, just woke up and smiled away at her. She carried him in her *bilum* suspended from her forehead and, while she worked, she hung the *bilum* on the branch of a tree and Simmy relaxed in the little hammock. When it was time to leave we walked to the road by a long hot track. Sima followed behind holding Simmy and shading him with a big black umbrella. Her little boy was beside her. After a while, Desmond came back and took the baby and the little boy and said, "You must give him the umbrella too". Sima laughed and handed it over and there was Desmond striding ahead choosing the shadiest tracks as we followed. On the way, they showed me their garden where they had been planting yams. Each yam plot is marked out. Sima had already planted her garden plots, but today she was doing her mother's garden because Sibol had gone to the Rai Coast to be with her husband, Masil. The yam gardens are planted very systematically. An area is dug and then mounds were made at different intervals. On the top of each mound a hole was dug into which seeding yams are placed one or two at a time sideways then soil is heaped on top. We walked across the garden and then kept going to the road to wait for a truck.

Another day, Desmond picked me up from the Mission Centre and took me to the Madang market to meet Sima with her three children, all neatly dressed. He had a motorboat parked near the CWA Cottage, so we all piled in and headed off to Kranket Island to visit his family. It was interesting to see the children and the school building just near where Pastor Helmich had the original school in the 1890s in German times. In 1896, when Biró visited the island, he encountered Pastor Helmich busily teaching the children and anxious to keep their attention. This did not stop the children running after Biró as they thought his pursuits of chasing birds much more interesting. Today the school children, their descendants, look a bit different to those photographed by Biró and the school building now has a more permanent structure although it was rather shabby.

Sima and Desmond had lived in their house on Kranket Island for seven years and were surrounded by their relatives. Desmond's parents, devout Lutherans lived next door. Their houses were pleasant with white sand patios and a wonderful outlook onto the passage looking over to the Madang Hotel where guests paid hundreds of dollars for the same view. The breeze was cooling and Desmond's parents and sisters welcomed us very warmly. Village life has a lot going for it. It is gregarious and social and caring. The old people are an important part of the family whose forefathers lived on this land for generations. It must be good living with solid family values and support system: a peaceful existence near the water and an ideal place to live.

One of the places tourists can stay now is at the Kranket hostel or at another more expensive and luxurious establishment near the lagoon. The lagoon is frequented by weekend parties keen to escape the heat of the town. Here snorkelling and swimming in the beautiful clear water is a favourite occupation.

On 6 November 1994, I visited Riwo Village with Joyce Makim. Here, there were several candidates for the upcoming elections with their platform statements on notice boards. The first candidate was Jack Mulugin, an Independent. He was high school educated and his platform included community service, development of businesses and spirituality. The second candidate was John Yondik who listed a number of issues: village development; small-scale business; youth development; church groups; roads; health; schools; training for small businesses; and classes in traditional skills. He was the only one to put culture in his profile. Another of his objectives was to help village police keep peace and order. The third candidate was Angmai Bilas. Sir Angmai Bilas, is one of the best known men from the Bel group and he has been a political figure in the Madang and National arena for a long time. He was one of the first representatives in the House of Assembly and he is known for his support of the people of West Papua.

An observer said that many of the candidates list youth as a focus to “grease the youth up” to vote for them. Many of them will be first time voters and with the increase in population this could swing the votes one way or another.

Riwo Village is the most exciting place. Here the people celebrate their traditional feasts as well as the feasts of the Church. Corpus Christi is celebrated with a procession of canoes, which pass through archways. While the Church in Australia is busy getting rid of “trimmings”, the Church here is seen as belonging to the people. While there, I interviewed Philip Tamen, Joyce’s eldest uncle, who told me that the feast does not happen every year. But, when it does all, the clans get together to dig out the yams for the feast called *Soabul*. Five pigs might be killed to celebrate the occasion and there is a food exchange. The Yabobs and Bilibils come too. *Soabul* means a feast and was the traditional feast used by a big man to get prestige. Now the feast was used in the Christian Churches to celebrate big feasts in the church. Another case of syncretism.

Joyce introduced me to another uncle, Philip, who has just finished making a canoe, a large trading canoe like the ones they used to make, but without the house or pot cage. Philip found his log washed ashore near Riwo Island. After weaving the sail, he decorated it with a fish design. I introduced him to Adrian Kennedy and the two of them might work on resurrecting the canoes in Riwo particularly as it is the 20th anniversary of Independence next year. Philip explained some of the terms used: *wag* is the name of a canoe in general, (Riwo it is *wog*). A *dadeng* is a market and *wain* is a general term that can mean someone has gone away for a holiday. So if the men were away on a trading trip they might call it *dadeng wain*.

In previous times, if the Riwo went to Karkar on a trading trip, they had to get permission from the coastal people before they could go inland. When they went to Yabob and Bilbil Island, the Riwo traded yams, taro, *saksak*, planks and hulls for pots.

**The River Regions:** The Ramu River had always sounded fascinating. The culture was similar to the Sepik river people and there were probably trading connections between them going back hundreds of years. All these river people were famous carvers and artists and often came to Madang to sell their products at the market. I was able to visit their area for the first time in October 1994. Again, I had the privilege of accompanying the Archbishop and his party to a large confirmation ceremony. I was to learn that the people really appreciate the church these days and used cultural items in the ceremonies. The vessels used on the altar were carved wooden chalices and the *singsing* groups take part in the procession accompanied by the drumming of the *kundu*.

The day we set out for the Ramu River, we left Madang at 9.30am and finally arrived at our destination, the Kayan Mission Centre, at 6.00pm. We drove along the north coast road under the coconuts, past Malala and Bogia and then turned off down a very bumpy track edged with high grasses to the roof of the 4-wheel vehicle. The people were anxiously waiting to greet their Archbishop on our arrival at Damur Village and what a welcome! Garlands put around our necks and a band welcoming us. Then it was on to Gamai Village, where the car was left. Again more garlands and decorated archways to greet the Archbishop and a feast was set out. Six of us sat around a table in the middle of the village square and ate fish with rice and gravy over the top. Of course there was the inevitable *yams* and *kaukau*, which were good in small quantities. I was the only European within miles but at no stage did I feel intimidated. The people were caring and cheerful and all wanted to shake hands with us. The sights and sounds of the day were extraordinary, and the people were so excited that their Archbishop had come and he was one of them.

We were then sung down to two canoes tied together for stability. Planks laid across provided support for the Bishop’s chair garlanded with more shredded fronds. The Ramu canoes are very swift with pointed wooden crocodile heads and no outrigger. The single canoes are paddled standing up which requires much balance and poise. Our double canoe was paddled past many lagoons and inlets. We passed a wide fish trap set right across one inlet with only enough room for a canoe to get through. Later we were shown the special net placed half way along the trap. When we arrived at the village, the choir sang its song of welcome to the Archbishop with more garlands, more speeches and more hand shaking. Then the string band played and suddenly down the track came another *singsing* group surrounding us with their swirling skirts, stomping feet and bobbing chest decorations.

The Bishop’s chair was then moved to the truck and tied on there. I sat firmly in the front next to the driver. Bishop Benedict was feted with the *singsing* group all the way through the village. It



*A singsing group greets Archbishop Benedict To Varpin when he arrives in Kayan Village.*

was growing dark by now and the drumming, the dust and the darkness could have been scary, what with the tall dark village houses now appearing on either side of the truck and the hundreds of people streaming past, and peering in but it was all great fun - one to be remembered for a long time.

Next day, I attended the confirmation ceremony in the village church. I noticed how the people enjoy the pomp and ceremony of the *singsing* and the procession into church and then how Archbishop Benedict did his part with his red robes, his shepherd's crook and his red mitre which towered over the people. The ceremonies show how the church has developed since Independence. For the big services like Confirmation and Ordination, colourful ceremonies were the order of the day with processions of *singsing* groups preceding the altar boys and the Bishop into the Church and around the altar in the church. Afterwards, in the presbytery there were serious discussions about issues in the church and problems faced. There were other religions creeping in, leading sometimes to divisions between villages. These talks are a chance to bring things out in the open and discuss them. The results of these discussions will be mulled over in the village for weeks to come. Kayan has about 800 people in its parish and Bosman, across the river, has about 1,800.

The lower Ramu area has a lot going for it. The scenery is superb and there were endless lagoons to paddle around in. The water is clear and smooth and full of fish, *makau* etc. There were mangrove trees with large roots fingering into the mud. Most areas are too low and swampy for houses and gardens, so villages are few and far between. The people live by fishing, gardening and their

coconut groves. They raise pigs and fowls. Stories abound of crocodiles taking dogs and other animals. A long time ago a crocodile even tried to take a buffalo. Latching on to its hoof, the crocodile tried to roll it over but the buffalo was too large. Snorting and puffing it tried to shake off the predator, but the crocodile's jaws had locked on the hoof. Little by little, bellowing out his plight, the buffalo dragged the crocodile into the village. The people rushed out when they saw what had happened, killed the crocodile and tended to the buffalo.

I met the member for the Lower Ramu in Kayan Village, Hon Teddy Tamone. Walking past the meeting-house, I had noticed a blackboard listing the main points for a meeting. It was evident someone must be standing for election in the Provincial Government elections. I asked if I could speak to him and after much waiting around, he was fetched from the lagoon, but asked me to return later as he had to dress as a politician. Later he was ready and quite a few people gathered in the *hausboi* and were given betelnut. The candidate spoke very clearly about his platform into the tape recorder. I asked if he had any plans for a good road and he agreed that it would be a priority; having just driven on it I agreed. Anyway the meeting was scheduled for 1.45, which was very shrewd of him as all the people were in a festive mood after the confirmation in the morning and the *singsing* group performed for him as well. For very little capital outlay, he had a large audience for his platform speech.



*Madang Provincial Government Elections in Kayan Village. Mr Teddy Tamone MPA is about to launch his campaign.*

*Karkar Island*

*The Takia are part of the Bel Group and do not speak the same language as the Waskia on the north of the island. The Waskia are linguistically closer to the people of Korak Village on the North Coast with whom they traded. The Middleton family own five plantations on Karkar Island: Kulili, Wokalon, Wadaw, Bulu and Kaviak.*

**Island Region:** On 7 November 1994, I had arranged to visit Karkar Island to stay with the Middletons who own several plantations there. I flew over by Island Airways and the pilot told me that more airlines seem to be moving into Madang: MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) had been going for a long time; then Island Airways started up a few years ago; and now there are others. They were vying for the lucrative Freida River run. We flew over Karkar volcano, now dormant after the blasts that had killed Robin Cooke and Elias Ravien.

By 1994, there were 40,000 people living on Karkar Island. To cater for these people, there is a large Lutheran hospital and a High School. The government has a hospital and ten schools. The Catholic Church has stations at Tabel and Kinim and three or four schools. The water supply for Kavasob Village was jointly funded by Canada and the Madang Provincial Government and constructed by Department of Works. With the people of Kavasob helping, it took only 6 weeks to complete.

It was interesting to fly over the extensive plantations on Karkar Island. The first plantations was established in 1912 by Paul Schmidt who was later joined by Bruno Schwartz, his brother Oscar and Eidelbach. Between them they planted up Marangis, Kulkul and Kavailo plantations and later Kulili Plantation on the understanding that it would be exempt from expropriation. From

the beginning, opposition increased from the local Karkar people and Schwartz was speared. He had alienated the land from the people on the grounds, that "Governor Hahl in Madang asked him to 'tame and develop' the island in accordance with the popular belief that plantation labour was a suitable substitute for warfare" (McSwain, 1977: 54). Paul Schmidt planted 132,644 trees as well as 10,000 cotton trees and some cocoa bushes. Oscar Schwartz married Caroline Schmidt who was experienced on plantations. She laboured along with the men but despite fighting for their rights they lost all their plantations in 1926 to the Expropriation Board.<sup>3</sup>

Marangis, Kulkul, and Kavailo were then sold by the Board to CPL (Coconuts Products Limited) and Kulili to W.M Middleton with a ninety-nine year lease (ibid, 54). Later Middleton acquired four more plantations on Karkar Island, Wokalon, Wadaw, Bulu and Kaviak. His two sons John and Roger eventually took over the plantations.

John Middleton has had a distinguished political career in Papua New Guinea. In 1968 he stood for the Sumkar electorate alongside two other candidates, Kaki of the Sumgilbar Council and Wadaw, a former policeman. Middleton was successful and was a member of the House of Assembly from 1968 to 1972 and of the Parliament until 1977 during which time he was aligned with the United Party. He was also on the Constitutional Development Commission. (Later, in 2002 he was knighted by the Queen for his contributions to Papua New Guinea).

I had breakfast with Roger Middleton and his wife Rosa. Their two large dogs, about the size of calves, were easily the largest dogs I have seen. They have a beautiful garden around their house. Then John Middleton arrived and took me to his house. The guest room is a separate building with the rolling surf at my door across green lawns and beautiful gardens. Anna sets a high standard in her garden and is rewarded by beautiful bougainvillea of all colours as well as other exotic tropical flowers. She encourages



*House on Karkar Island showing colourful walls plaited in traditional motifs.*

the plantation workers to plant gardens and gives them seedlings and cuttings. Each year a garden competition is held and awards are given for variety, colour and neatness. As it was time for the annual inspection, I went with Anna and helped decide. The village houses are very decorative with different designed and coloured matting on the outside walls.

The Middleton's house shows off New Guinea art at its best, wooden pigs from all over the country are displayed and there is a *bilum* section with pictures of *bilums* and real *bilums* very artfully displayed. In the middle is a large crocodile table and Sepik and Madang pots are set in corners. The outlook is towards the sea. Three large dogs keep law and order from the verandah.

The plantation day begins at 6.15 in the morning and those who don't appear have their pay docked for the week. Most of the workers are second or third generation, mostly from the mainland but some from Karkar. As well as producing cocoa and copra, there is a coconut oil press. At that particular time the copra price was depressed but the Middletons kept on regardless.

A police officer visited Karkar to check the village law and order committees in the villages. He had heard good reports about these committees on the mainland coast, but it was a comparatively new idea and depended on the people who were on the committee. He investigated a case where a woman complained she had been heavily fined by the Law and Order Committee for turning up on the wrong day for the market. She had got her days muddled.

The Takia people on the south of Karkar Island once traded with the Yabob and Bilibil people and the other Bel people to whom they are related linguistically and culturally. They also traded with the villages on the North Coast at Megiar and Sarang. They traded wooden bowls, kunum (mortars and pestles) as well as red ochres, dogs, woven armbands, *galips*, (*Canarium almond*), betel nut (the nut of the *Areca* palm) and drums, dogteeth ornaments and also canoe hulls for the larger canoes or small fishing canoes. The Takia were the middlemen for Bilbil pots, trading them further afield to the Waskia people on the north of Karkar and also to the people living in the bush towards the volcano. The people on the mainland always attributed the Karkar people with strong magic because of the power of their volcano.

The Yabobs and Bilbils went to Kinim near where the airport is today and there they obtained the red ochre traded from Urugen Village and also *kunum* and *kundu* (hand drums) from the inland people. They also called into Kavailo on the southern end of the Island where they traded pots for products like wooden bowls and plates. These pots were then traded further inland. So the pots would have travelled far and wide around the island even if the traders themselves did not. The Waskia, on the north of Karkar Island were linguistically closer to the people of Korak Village on the North Coast and traditionally traded for their Korak pots. The Waskia do not speak the same language as the Takia.



*John and Anna Middleton point out the red clay, used as a trade item, near Urugen.*

The Middletons later took me up to see where the red clay is extracted at the edge of another plantation. This red clay was once a trade item all along the mainland coast and the other islands. It was one of Karkar's most lucrative exports and exchanged for clay pots at Yabob and Bilibil. Because the red clay was such a precious trade item, no coconuts had been planted over this area in the Middleton's plantation. Another day we visited a village near more red clay deposits, but the area had been turned into a garden and a large tree had been cut down. The people told us they don't use the red clay anymore for *singsings* but buy red paint from the trade store as it is easy to get and apply on their faces and backs.

Anna and I saw an old man sitting in a traditional style house wind with a traditional style bamboo fish trap made from *makos kunda* vines. The old man described how he camouflaged the fish trap when he hid it on the reef. It shows that traditional items of material culture are still being made in the old ways. Fishing traps were the same here as their ancestors had made and also on the North Coast the traps were the same as those Biró described and photographed on the Rai Coast.

The Middletons have had good and bad years in their time on Karkar. Things were booming in the 1970s with good prices for copra. However by the 1980s, the price of copra began to drop while at the same time cost of living and wages rose. The family has also experienced natural disasters like the long drought in 1993 followed by fires, which wiped out a large area. Then there have been volcanic eruptions like that in 1974 when Wadau Plantation was affected by ash carried by the wind. Subsequently there was a build up under the volcano resulting in a major eruption in March 1979 which killed two volcanologists, Rob



By courtesy, Dylup Plantation.

*The Middleton family are now diversifying into diving and fishing.*

Cooke and Elias Ravian. It was a personal loss to the Middletons because Rob Cooke had often stayed with them on his trips to Karkar.

The next generation of Middletons, while remaining in Madang have diversified from just plantation management, as the prices of copra have not been good. Derek and Joell Middleton run Karkar Hideaway on Wadau Plantation offering relaxation for those who need to unwind from the hustle and bustle of city life. Although not a dive resort, it is surrounded by exceptional diving and fishing grounds and is used as an extension to those established dive sites in the Madang waters.

Dylup Plantation near Sarang also belongs to the Middleton family. The plantation is a 2,400 ha estate 67 km up the north coast from Madang. It produces coir matting from coconut husks as well as copra but it also has diversified. Brett Middleton is the owner/skipper of the *MV Talio*. With so much fishing within range on any given day, anglers can enjoy a variety of world class sport including sailfish, yellowfin, and mackerel. The waters surrounding Karkar and Bagabag Islands are the hunting grounds of blue and black marlin and on remote reefs, tuna, Spanish mackerel, giant trevally, coral trout and more sailfish can be found. One of the favourite reefs is Hankow Reef which is exposed at low tide. Accommodation overlooking the Bismarck Sea is also provided on Dylup Plantation so anglers can have an early morning start.

In 1996, the Middleton family established PNG Aquaculture at Dylup Plantation Estate. This project has been established to farm the local species of redclaw crayfish, as well as black tiger prawns. Ian Middleton, a marine biologist and aquaculturist, saw the great

potential of aquaculture development as it has a good physical environment for all tropical aquaculture practices from extensive to intensive and pond to cage culture in fresh, brackish, and marine waters. The local village people are being encouraged to participate.

While I was on Karkar, John Middleton told me of Gaubin Hospital, which was established in 1947 by Edwin Tscharke (Ned) who worked there until his retirement in 1988. Tscharke was a Lutheran missionary, hospital administrator, health educator and physician. Born on 25 December 1918, he wanted to be a doctor but was unable to because of financial circumstances.

Because of his close association with the Lutheran Church, Tscharke felt called to do missionary work, and in 1941 was sent by the church to Finschhafen, New Guinea, as a lay missionary. In 1942, during the invasion of New Guinea by the Japanese, Tscharke served with the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. He was wounded and while recuperating in Australia, completed an army educational correspondence course in Anatomy & Physiology for X-ray Technology, through the University of Melbourne. He returned to New Guinea in 1943, and undertook a Tropical Medicine training course, from which he graduated as a medical assistant. On 10 March 1945, Tscharke married Tabitha Grace Rohde.

In 1947, when Edwin Tscharke first arrived on Karkar, he was advised by Pastor Mileng<sup>4</sup> and Jack Lindner that Karkar was no place to for his wife, Tabitha. In those early days there was little communication with the mainland and many of the basic stores needed were unavailable for building. The new hospital was built of bricks made on the island. Ned recalled there was a period of 4 ½ months “when there was not a single ship of contact from our hospital in Madang. At that time we boiled sea water to get the necessary salt. Even essential items, one of which was flour, were out of stock from the stores in Madang at different times.” (1973:15). By the time he retired in 1988, he had established a 200 bed District Hospital at Gaubin and he had been instrumental in controlling the diseases which badly effected the population. In 1947, the population of Karkar was about 8,000 people but by the time of his retirement it was 30,000. This staggering increase if extrapolated throughout Papua New Guinea shows the population explosion during the 1970s to 80s. In 1966, in order to involve the local community in primary health care, Tscharke set up a training school for nurses and aid post orderlies who could staff outpost medical centres. He wrote a number of manuals, texts and teaching guides, aimed at providing relevant information to the indigenous people.

Tscharke's wife, Tabitha, provided him with tremendous moral support, and also made valuable contributions in her own right to the establishment of primary health care facilities on the island. They have two children, Margaret and Michael, and several grandchildren.

Tscharke's skills were recognised in 1989, when he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine by the University of Papua New Guinea. He died on 22 September 2000, 82 years old.

A second volcano near Karkar Island is Long Island about 50 kilometres from the New Guinea mainland. One major eruption on this island was in about 1700 when there was a time of darkness over a wide coastal and inland area. The first evidence of occupation is about 1,000 years ago. This is based on research done by Brian Egloff and Jim Specht of the Australian Museum. In discussing the pottery shards found on Long Island, they pointed to the oral traditions about Yomba Island as indicating an alternative source for the pottery sherds found on Long Island (1982: 441). The island lay on the trading network between Madang and the Rai Coast and many trade items changed hands including pottery, pigs' teeth, bows and arrows.

Another large volcanic island near Karkar is Manam Island with an area of 32 square miles. The volcano dominates the island rising 1800 metres to an almost a perfect cone. Activity of the volcano is frequent and is monitored by "a modern seismological observatory built into the mountainside. Much of the island is covered with a lava flow but there is also volcanic soil that produces coconuts and cocoa and supports the population." (Ryan, 1972: 670).

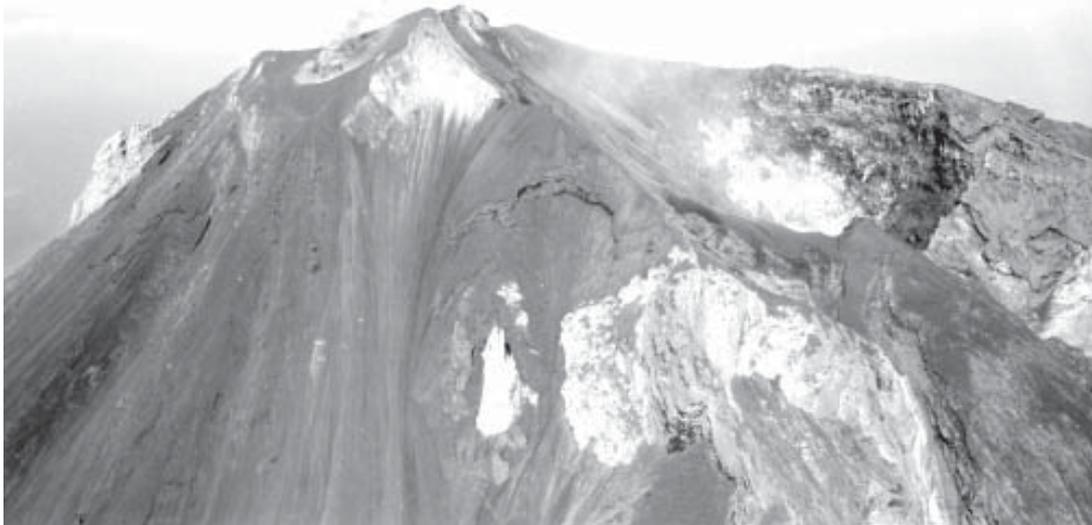
Because the volcano seems higher and more visible, the Manam people have always been attributed with the strongest magic with

the spirits in the volcano helping the people. The Manam people are closely related to the people on the lower reaches of the Ramu River and there was quite a thriving trade system between the two areas.

As we drove along the road towards Bogia in September 1994, we had a clear view of Manam Island, about twelve kilometres offshore. Wispy smoke coming from the crater gave warning that it was about to erupt again. Over the following years Manam has erupted many times. During 2002, there were mild strombolium eruptions sending up plumes of smoke into the sky which were reported by pilots in the area. In October 2004, there was significant activity which led to the evacuation of people living near the volcano to safer areas of the island. Again in the middle of November 2004, there was much volcanic activity. Over the next few months the villages and gardens on Manam Island were destroyed in large eruptions of the volcano which devastated the island and forced the evacuation of nearly 10,000 people to the Bogia area, causing a humanitarian crisis. Archbishop William Kurtz of Madang visited the refugees on several occasions and expressed concern over the living standards of the islanders. They had been forced to live in tents which did not provide screening from mosquitoes and conditions would be worse when the wet season set in. It was feared that malaria could be a problem in those conditions. Caritas Australia has been providing assistance with education and medical facilities (Catholic Leader, 30 October 2005).

1. *Peter To Rot has the same name as his famous uncle who was beatified by Pope John Paul II.*
2. *Lucy's father is a political representative of that area.*
3. *See Chapter 10.*
4. *This is the same Pastor Mileng who escaped his trial because of the bombing of Madang.*

*Manam Island in an active phase in 1974.*



# *Pots*

## *Potters and*

### *Posterity*



**Vanishing skills,  
Madang Province,  
Papua New Guinea.**

## Chapter 17, Pots, Potters and Posterity

### *Taim Bilong Ol Pipol.*



*One area of our development which I strongly believe we must do our utmost to preserve and pass on to our children and their future generations is our rich culture. It is acknowledged throughout the world that Papua New Guinea inherits one of the most diversified and unique cultures in the world. A lot of our well-known widely practised traditional customs have been destroyed through the influence of Western civilisation. Yet we still enjoy the abundant richness of many that we inherit from our wise ancestors.*

*Since entering politics I have become conscious of the existence of Papua New Guinea's rich culture. Soon after I became head of the Government, I directed that the Government give priority to the promotion of Papua New Guinea's cultural heritage.*

*This we have done through education at various levels and the national Cultural Council which was set up to promote the preservation of Papua New Guinea's culture — I ask you all to preserve the culture of your forefathers for you will be persons without identity if you depart from them. (The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, The Right Honourable Michael Somare, 1979)*



*Sir Michael Somare with the manager of Kristen Pres and myself at Madang airport, 1994.*

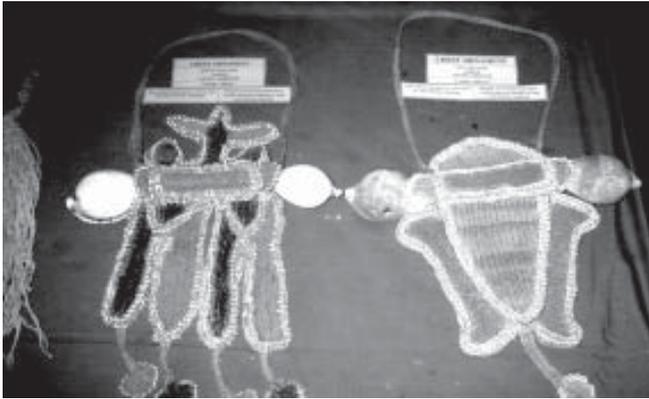
In September 1994, one of the highlights to mark the nineteenth anniversary of Independence in Port Moresby was the Hiri Moale Festival which had been growing every year since its inception in 1989. Three large *lagatoi* had been built in the months prior to the event. Moi Avei said that holding the festival, “was a way to

help people accept their culture and thus their identity”. The building of the *lagatoi* was a project initiated by the National Capital District and given to different villages before Independence Day (Post Courier, 7 September 1994).

The celebrations began in the morning when thousands of people excitedly gathered on Ela Beach to watch three *lagatoi*, with their large crab claw sails, came towards us. On the beach, Papuan women with long grass skirts swirling waited to welcome the men. As they approached, the roar of the crowd expressed delight in the colour and the pageantry of the occasion. There was something magical about this re-enactment of the traditional *Hiri* welcoming ceremony. Later the celebrations of the Hiri Moale Festival continued at the Hubert Murray Stadium.

The people in Madang have a culture which is just as colourful as the Motuans. The women once gathered on the beach to welcome the men returning on their *palanguts* and *lalongs* from their trading trips. They also wore long grass skirts and carried large earthenware pots. For a special event like Independence Day, it was worth all the preparations to re-enact those days to get a feeling for the old culture.

In 1994, I received a letter from Mrs Janetta Douglas who has been working on the project to regenerate the Hiri friendship of the trading people along the south coast of Papua New Guinea. She wrote, “I believe Madang should create a similar festival along the Madang/Morobe Coast and involve trading



*Chest ornaments decorated with shells on display in the museum.*

partners and friends even up into the Highland area through the Gogol traders. It would be nice to think that your study had an ongoing effect in the lives of the people rather than just recording a lifestyle that can never be reactivated". If this were to happen in Madang, it would be an event to celebrate. The interest is there and it would help the tourist trade. There could even be a revival of building the canoes since the old men who built them in 1978 trained a few of the young men in the art. Hopefully this book may encourage the Madang people to develop a Festival along the lines of the Hiri Festival in Port Moresby. Furthermore the various clans in Madang might contact the old trading friends of their own families. Getting to know the descendants of these clans/families would foster a wide friendship network in Madang and would not cost much financially. It would encourage the young people to understand and learn more about their past.

The Madang people are still very interested in their culture, particularly their dances, songs and traditional dress. One of the main celebrations in the Madang Province in 1994 for the 19th Independence Anniversary was held at the Holy Spirit Memorial High School in Bogia from 14 to 16 September with the annual *Takasy* Cultural Day festivities. The name of this show is an acronym for the legendary and epic heroes of the Bogia District where Holy Spirit students come from: **T**unayange, **A**ramu, **K**amdong, **A**rabaka, **S**iandam and **Y**abu. (Kamdong was a cargo cult leader in the 1950s).

This festival was aimed at creating awareness and instilling a sense of appreciation for traditional arts, crafts and dance among the youth. Several elders of the local tribes taught the students the tunes and beats of their various dances, which featured in the show. The Bosman students performed with dances and songs from the Lower Ramu River. Also featured were string bands, traditional dancing and choirs from other areas. Mr Tabah Silau, a contemporary artist, sang some of his own songs at the show.

Madang had no Maborasa Festival in 1994. The name being coined from the first two letters of the main coastal areas in the

province, Madang, Bogia, Ramu and Saidor. Years earlier, Tabah Silau was one of the executives on the Committee of the Festival and it was a great success between the years 1983 and 1987. He noted that the Festival was of International standing, and the hotels were booked out by tourists attracted by the *singsing* groups from all over the Province and the exhibitions of culture as well as agricultural and industrial displays. Now, sadly, this festival was not seen as a priority and there was a lack of funding for its promotion and organisation. Tabah has always been interested in Madang culture and history and expressed concerns at the lack of support given to the arts. He thought the government was providing money for economic ventures at the expense of other projects. He mentioned that no Maborasa Festivals were held between 1988 and 1992 and that the small Festival held in 1992 was not on the scale of the previous ones. Tabah is a man who can speak from experience on these matters. Born in Umum Village near the Bau Community School which he attended before going on to Tusbab High School, he showed early promise of becoming an artist. When he exhibited some of his work at the Rabaul Art Show, the critics encouraged him to develop his talents at the National Art School in Port Moresby. However, after two years at the Art School, he grew tired of the "communal style" of painting. Leaving before finishing the course, he set up his own studio in Madang and, established his own individual style of painting. UNESCO sponsored him to exhibit his work in Brisbane and in 1983, he travelled overseas exhibiting his work in England, New Zealand and some Pacific Islands. Tabah mentioned other artists from the Madang area including Akis who was helped by Ulli Beier. Akis was well established before Tabah attended the Arts School. Unfortunately, Akis and the other painters have all died and Tabah is the only one of his contemporaries left.

After Independence, Madang became quite a centre of the Tourist Industry in Papua New Guinea. It has lush scenery with its deep lagoons that flow in from the harbour. The Elizabeth Sowerby Orchid garden has many wonderful blooms. The Madang people are amongst the most placid and peaceful in the country. The airport has been upgraded to take larger aircraft but is not yet to international standards. Tabah Silau regretted that very little of the tourism money found its way to the village people who provide the background colour and pageantry the tourists want to see. In recent years, Tabah turned to poetry to express his thoughts on life and its disappointments. He had written and illustrated a book of these poems but was unable to get a sponsor to get them published. In speaking about Madang he said, "I see Madang as being quiet and slow in gaining momentum in the national economy and in politics. Men from other provinces are coming here to stand for politics and the Madang people are being pushed aside. They are also slow in being proud of their traditional culture. Domination by the Highlanders and the Sepiks are pushing the Madang people to one side". He expressed an eagerness that the Maborasa Festival be revived with an emphasis on the traditional culture. Artefacts, canoes and pottery could feature as was being done in Port Moresby with its great Hiri Festival held annually in



*Tabah Silau in front of one of his paintings at the Museum. Tabah is currently (2005) the Director of the Madang Visitors and Cultural Bureau and Museum.*

September. There could be canoe races on the lagoons and ceremonial sailing of the large colourful trading canoes which could still be built.

Tabah:

It would be great fun to build these traditional canoes again and have them sail from Mindiri on the Rai Coast in to Madang. It would create interest in the young people to build and sail these canoes and in the pottery making. At the moment the situation is depressing for the young people as they have little pride in their culture. Direction is necessary from the government to give the people a sense of identity. Most young people would be interested in venturing into businesses like pottery and canoe making if only the government provided encouragement. There are still people out there who remember what was done in 1978 with building the canoe. If the government got its act together they could help the people build these canoes and provide storage facilities for them so they were not destroyed. The Madang people could incorporate the traditional sailing and all the ceremonies that accompanied it into the Maborasa Festival.<sup>1</sup>

One of the people I was anxious to visit was Nalon Derr, the son of my old friend Derr Mul. Nalon spoke kindly of his father, who had ensured he got the best education possible. When Nalon was 12 years old, his father paid for him to go St Peter's Lutheran School in Brisbane where he sat for the Junior certificate in 1964 and Senior Certificate in 1966. The following year, Nalon enrolled in the Preliminary year at the Papua New Guinea University when study skills and general subjects were undertaken. In 1968, he began his degree majoring in Geography and History and followed this with a diploma in teaching. His first job was as a graduate Officer in the Institute of Technology in Lae, where he was attracted by the natural beauty of the town.

Nalon Derr speaks of his father who was head of the Luan Clan:

Derr Mul had all the confidence in me and believed that I could become a leader of the people. He was a man of character and keen about the traditions and his village. He could even make a pot and kept some good pottery tools but, really, it is only women's work. My grandfather was Mul, one of the great canoe builders in Bilbil Village. My great grandfather was Kalong, a great leader of his people before the Europeans came. So through them I know many of the traditions of my people. However, when my father died, I regretted not spending more time with him.

Women potters of the Luan Clan.					
Name	Age	Place of Origin	Marital Status	Children	Taught by
Angum	40	Luan	Married	6	Mother, Yo
Ladong		Gapan	M to Meaning Derr's son	4	Mother, Tatun
Guruad	Old	Luan	M Siar man. When he died she returned to Bilbil		Mother
Bulok	Very old	Luan	Widow of a Kavieng man		Mother, Kundul
Ginani	30	Luan	divorced	6	Mother, Nunui
Muke	35	Luan	single	1 adopted	Mother, Rubak
Liki	60	Dugus	M to Nail	1 adopted	Mother, Malal
Yoripain	39	Dugus	Widow of Henkelman	5	Mother
Susu	39	Amele Village	M Dador	6	M-in-law, Rubak
Duguspain	Old	Dugus	M to Serbung	5	M-in-law
Wabuk	Middle aged	Gapang	M to Parr, Derr's son	7	Mother, Tatun
Biu	24-25	Karkar Is	M to Walok, Serbung's son	3	M-in-law, who is still teaching
Gabiaim	Middle-aged	Morobe	M to Koro	2	Bulok
Buri	Young		Divorced	2	Mother, Rubak

It can be seen in this table that if the woman is from Bilbil she has probably been taught to make the pots from an early age by her mother. Those who married into Bilbil from outside will usually be taught by their mothers-in-law. Many of those who taught them are not listed as potters in the above list as they were probably deceased at the time of the survey.

Nalon worked with Kaki Angi, the President of the Area Authority in the interim government, and Peter Colton, who was the acting secretary, trained Nalon for the position. After 1983, Nalon Derr became the Secretary of the Department of Madang, a position he held until 1989. At the time Nalon was replaced, Andrew Ariako was the Premier. Nalon spoke of the present (1994) predicament of the Provincial Government, which had been suspended for the last two years. The only time the government was stretched financially when he and Kaki Angi ran the Province was during the transitional period in 1979 when the new structure was being introduced. Nalon also mentioned Max Moeder, son of Franz Moeder who was not given enough time to fulfil his ambitions. Max was strict in running the Province and did well. It was a shame because at that time according to Nalon, mixed-race people were not encouraged to hold government positions. Nalon spoke optimistically about the future of Madang, "so long as there was good leadership and financial management, the whole country will progress if it has political stability".

I was interested to see how the people of Bilbil Village had changed in the fourteen years since we had left Madang and made several over-night trips to the village. Under the trees by the sea, the women were preparing their pots for firing. It is great to see so many of the younger generation learning the skills of potmaking. Many girls from other areas of Papua New Guinea

have married into Bilbil Village and are being taught by their mothers-in-law. They obviously see a future in this craft and the presence of tourists buying the pots. Old Minei says she is the only one left who knows how to make the very big pots, the *bodi reambul*, for which the Japanese pay a big price. It seems she is not passing these skills on, which is a pity. She was taught by Minei (same name), who lost her leg to infection.

When I asked people in Bilbil Village what work they did, they hung their heads and told me they just stay in the village doing nothing. They thought that to be employed meant you sat in an office in town. One man I spoke to replied that he just stayed in the village but, the next minute, he told me he had been running a poultry business for years and was making a lot of money. He also assisted in building houses, running boats and gardening. He was a very enterprising self-employed man and certainly was not sitting there doing nothing! If village people run their own businesses, they should be proud of their projects. The girls who are potters should also be proud of the skills learnt from their mothers; skills that had been handed down for thousands of years.

The following businesses were operating in Bilbil Village: The pottery business involved 64 women who worked together to get the clay and make the pots; Chicken farming employed 9 men who worked for the Yagaum centre, which supplied food,

transport, sawdust and sprays as well as the day old chickens. For example, Gehard had 3,000 chickens at a time with a turnover every 6 weeks and they sold for between K1.00 - K1.45 per kilo; The transport business had a truck, a bus and 2 hire cars and employed about four men; the betelnut business was thriving with betel nuts and *daka* being sold at the *buai* markets or locally in the village; the village women baked cakes and have been doing so for about five years; other women fried strips of beef, bought from the butchery and then sold them at the markets; the Pipoi family owned the four stores in the village;. Most of the men fished and many sold their catch at the markets; copra was sold in small quantities to C.P.L. for K16.00 for a bag; some yams were sold but, as the yam is the staple diet, they were mostly kept for home consumption in the yam house and some were kept as seeding yams for the next year.

#### Informal Pottery and Culture Survey along the North Coast

Because of time constraints, I was not able to carry out a thorough pottery survey throughout the whole Province, rather, I talked to selected villages and obtained as much information as possible.

In studying the position of the pottery industry in 1994, I divided villages into four categories:

**Category 1:** Bilbil and Yabob Villages and Barum, Mair, and Ouba villages in the Trans-Gogol, where the pots were still being made and the next generation are being trained in the art. Yabob Village was listed in this category in 1994, but, sadly, within a few years, the women ceased to make the pots.

**Category 2:** Those villages, who made pots until recently but no longer do. The old women/men still have the knowledge but the younger girls/boys are not learning the skills. Korak and Utu Villages would be representative of these.

**Category 3:** Villages which once used to produce pots but now no longer do so and the knowledge is virtually dead. In this category would be Mindiri, Bosman and Baiteta.

**Category 4:** Villages that I visited where pots were never made but who knew about the trading system and who once bought pots with trade items. Villages at Malala and near Bogia, and Bogadjim on the Rai Coast. They still had the oral traditions of the way it used to be and the trade friends they once had.

Rather than count how many pots there were in each village, I was interested in counting the numbers of potters, not only those

Women Potters of Murpatt Clan in Bilbil Village 1994				
Name	Age Group	Marital Status	Children	Taught by
Mama	old		5	
Jon	old		2	Mother, Raink
Onob	Middle-age	M to Kubei	Not known	Not known
Yabim	old	widow	Not known	Not asked
Suminki	old	widow	Not known	Not asked
Gad	young	M to Elis	1 adopted	Not asked
Rug	young	M Weiman	1	Mother, Mama
Wasun	Middle-age	M to Tegel	10	Not asked
Rahil	Middle-age	M to Gere	many	Mother, Mau
Lelen	Middle-age	M to Molmol	6	Sister-in-law, Yon
Dang from Karkar Island	young	M to Waria	1	M-in-law, Mama
Dalpain	old	M to Mangan	Not known	Not asked

who still made pots, but also those who have the knowledge and with encouragement could pass it on. These potters once made hundreds of these pots before a trading expedition, but now they make them at any time for the local Saturday market and for bartering or for visiting tourists. Because the Yabobs and Bilbils were such active traders in the past, stories of the pots and the canoes are found right along the north coast to Bogia and beyond. Although the traders did not travel that far, their pots went far beyond by being traded through trading zones.

#### Bilbil Village

In recent years the importance of encouraging cottage industries such as PMV operators, betel nut sellers and even bottle collectors has been stressed. The traditional pottery makers also need



*A young girl preparing to fire her pots on Bilbil village, 1994.*

Women potters of the Gapan Clan, Bilbil Village 1994.					
Name	Age	Place of origin	Marital Status	Children	Taught by
Sibol	50s	Dugus Clan	M to Masil		Mama Lik
Lakit	50s	Murpatt Clan	M to Gain	10	?
Minei	Old	Dugus Clan	M to Dob	7	Mina, (one leg)
Sipora	40	Siar Village	M to Setla	8	Mother-in-law
Kiliapain	50s	Mis Village	M to Los	6	Mother-in Law
Dui	50s	Gapan Clan	M to Kamanang	7	Mother, Gobor
Minim	50	Siar Village	M to Asuang	7	Mother-in-law
Blandia	26	Bilbil	M to Yakobus	1	Kaniugi, mother-in-law
Salome	27	Bilbil	M to John	3	Mother
Makis	30		M to Mase	3	
Duwe	old	Bilbil	M to Lalu	6	Mother, Rurub
Bada *	Middle-aged	Gapan Clan	Widow of Sim of Dugus Clan	7	Minei
Merigan*	Middle aged	Gapan Clan	Widowed	2	Minei
Daum	30		Married	1	
Gamoi	40		Married	9	
Asual	young		M to Mike	3	Sipora, mother-in-law

\* Married in Dugus but returned to Gapan when widowed

These fifteen women were all keen potmakers. Note that those who married into other clans within the village as in the case of Bada later returned to their clans when their husbands died



*All sizes of pots, including an old style water pot, ready to be fired in 1994.*

encouragement to set up cottage industries. Of all pottery making villages visited, Bilbil Village is the only one with an increase in numbers of potters. The results of the Bilbil survey in 1994 showed that 64 women were currently making pots, not counting girls who were learning the art. Of these 64, about 40 were taught by their mothers and 16 by their mothers-in-law and the rest by sisters-in-law, friends etc. The clan leaders encourage the business but give little constructive contribution towards this end. They liked to sit round and discuss issues but because of land disputes they have not built another pottery stall for the women. It may be somewhat of a power struggle since it is the women and not the men who get the attention as the potters. The men might encourage the women verbally as they can see it brings money into the village but the women do all the work of collecting the clay and making the pots as well as caring for the children and cooking. Both men and women do the gardening

Women Potters of Dugus Lat Clan, Bilbil Village 1994.					
Name	Age	Place of origin	Marital status	Children	Taught by
Pado	Old	Luan	M to Rai	5	Mother, Rang
Lena	Young	Gapan	M to Jonah	2	Mother, Mod
Gireg	Middle-age	Dugus	M to Giambe	2	Mother, Padod
Gurubel	Youngish	Dugus	M to Lensky	4	M-in-law, Mambor
Watapain	Middle-age	Dugus	M to Sapur	3	Mother, Mambor
Mambor	Old	Amele Village	M to Salib	7	M-in-Law
Paro, Derr's child	Old	Luan	M to Hon	4	Mother, Raruke
*Marin	Middle-age	Dugus	M to Gerbard	7	M-in-law, Mambor
Erite	Middle-age	Yabob-her mother did not teach her pottery	M to Hob	4	M-in-law, Baroror.
Bararor	Old	Luan	M to Kiau	3	Mother, Rubag
Nake	Old	Luan	M to Dumbel	4	Mother, Rubag
Unib	Middle age	Luan	M to Paulus	7	Mother, Rubag
Sibilang	Middle age	Dugus Lat	M to Tom	7	Mother, Dom
Mure	Middle age	Dugus Lat	M to Yatu	2	Mother, Gabar
Rubag	Middle	Dugus Lat	single	0	Mother, Gabor
Neiman	Old	Dugus Lat	M to Sasalei	3	Mother, Baieg
Kaem	Old	Amele Village.	M to Sekere	5	M-in-law, Kair
* Adopted from Gapan Clan					

and the men do the fishing, building the houses and carry on various businesses. In 1994, pottery was only sold to the tourists in front of one village house. Here the tourist buses pull up and view the wares exhibited on the ground. In wet weather few sales can be made as there is no covered accommodation.

Another venue for selling the pottery is in town at the Madang markets but the ban on selling betel-nut works against the pottery trade. As the men can no longer sell their betelnuts in town, they only take the PMVs to the *buai* markets on the outskirts of the town. The women need to have the protection of the men and so they do not often get to the town market. The alternative is to sell only from the village to the tourists and locally for bride prices and as exchange for food. The village is looking at building another pottery house for the business, but there have been problems about a fair distribution of the profits, and of course, the ever-present problem of land for a pottery house.

Women Potters of the Dugus Tan Clan, Bilbil Village 1994.					
Name	Age	Place of Origin	Marital Status	Children	Taught by
Mau	Old	Gapan	M to Pasagai	7	Mother
Birid	Young	Dugus Tan	single		Mother, Kanigi
Lidia	Young	Dugus Tan	single		Mother, Aijo
Miriam	Young	Dugus Tan	single		Mother, Kanigi
Kanigi	Old	Od Village	Widow of Rauk	5	M-in-law
Momo	Middle-aged	So Village	M to Pasau	6	M-in-law, Kanigi

Paddle and anvils were still being used to shape the pots. The anvil is usually a river stone specially chosen for its shape and is often handed on from one generation to the next. Each woman adds her own design to her pot with a sliver of *pitpit*. If a woman marries out of the village or even into another clan within the village, she is banned from making pots. After she is widowed and returns to her clan she can begin again. This was the case with Merigan who married into the Dugus clan, but has since returned to the Gapan clan. Another interesting case was where a husband and wife lived in another clan area, but decided to move together to the wife's clan area. Old Kundul was listed as a

potmaker as a mark of respect for her contribution in passing on this important skill, even though she was too old to make them. The Gapan Clan has only two young women who are interested in the potmaking, but there may be others who are in training, but not yet considered good enough to qualify. When talking to a group of young women in their 20's, they said they made pots as it was a way of getting money. According to some, it is the only way the women have of making money, particularly if they are single.

### Yabob Village

In 1994 when I visited them, the Yabob women were still making pots although they were soon to cease this valuable work. Once famous for its pot making, Yabob village would soon rely on Bilbil village for pots for bride prices etc., the few old potters who were left in the village were now facing an overwhelming apathy among their people. Part of the problem was the squatter settlement, which stretched right up to the fringe of village. The deep clay holes near the boundary between the village and the settlement were being used by the squatters as rubbish dumps and the clay was now contaminated. The women showed me the holes with the rubbish in them and shook their heads angrily at the defilement of the clay. In 2004, plans were in progress for the Provincial Government to evict all the squatters in Madang and to remove all their shacks.

Kitab, David Ber's wife, spoke of the clay and the pots:

There are different places to get the clay, but it is hard to get all the rubbish out which the people living nearby put into the holes. We get the red clay and put it under the house then I go and get the black clay and put it with the red clay and mix it and put it in the water. Afterwards we knead it on



*Potters in Yabob Village showing a squatter settlement near the pottery holes. In 1994, there were a few potters still in Yabob. In the Nob Clan, Yeyeg, Dik Sabu, Gabar, Maturau and Kaning were still making pots.*

top of the white sand. Then we try the clay and then see if it strong enough to make the mouth of a pot. I get the white clay from this side here (points). Red clay is called *Dara*, Black clay is *saran*, and white clay, *kabaran*. We make big and little pots and water pots and then add the decoration. A slip is applied and the pots are set in the sun to dry. Then I make a little fire and heat the side of each pot. When I have finished a heap of pots I make a fire place and put the firewood all around then I put the pots inside and cover it with kunai grass and the fire burns it. Later when the fire cools I get the pots out with a stick to see if they are ready. Then I can sell them.

Furthermore, since the pottery house has been closed, the tourists continue on to Bilbil Village where a prominent place has been set aside in front of a house to sell them. Yeyeg of Nob still made pots in 1994 and stored them in her house but it was not easily accessible. Yeyeg said that her mother taught her to make the pots and one of her daughters, Gabar, made pots and so does one of her cousins, Dik Sabu. The young girls understand how to make the hole at the mouth of the pots, but they cannot finish making the pots, but they could learn. Yeyeg said that plenty of women knew how to make pots. Four of them including herself, Dik Sabu, Gabar, Maturau and Kaning in the Nob Clan still make pots.

The women here sell the pots for bride price or give them to their relatives who are getting married. The Yabob people don't sell pots in the market any more, leaving that to the Bilbils. Even before, the Nob Clan women did not sell in the Madang market but just sold them from their houses. Wistfully, Yeyeg said, "Later I will make a little house to sell the pots and the tourists will come and buy them. Before my mother taught me to make the pots. There is still a lot of clay for my daughters and grandchildren.

We must not let the government build houses on this area. It is our land".

Gabar, Yeyeg's daughter, added her own views:

My mother taught me how to dig out the ground and pound it and put it in the water. I know the first three stages, but not the last. I began to learn this art in primary school. My father's mother taught us and I could make the finished product but then we went to school at Tusbab. I came back to the village in 1975 and later went to New Ireland. Now I am back in the village and learning again. I have four children. One in Grade 8, Grade 5 and Grade 1 and the youngest is at home. If the school wants me to teach the young kids how to make pots I will do that. They have a new subject called practical skills. My mother, Yeyeg, would help them. Our children go to school at the Yomba demonstration school.

One can see the positive attitude of these two women. They were eager to teach the younger generation and keep the old traditional style going. Back in the 1960s, a Dane, Jorgen Petersen built a pottery house in Yabob but instead of encouraging the traditional style of pot making he introduced the women to throwing pots on a wheel and then firing in a kiln. This gave quite different shape to the pots. After he left the women reverted to the old way of pot making for which the village is famous and the rusted wheel is stored at Willie Ber's house. Sadly the old pottery house has fallen into disrepair and no one uses it. When I inquired from a government official why the traditional arts did not attract financial aid I was told that the villagers should be able to support themselves. The Yabob potters were aware of the Binnen Pottery factory in Madang set up with much government assistance where pots are made on a wheel. An English woman started it in 1982 and, when she returned to England, Nomu Rauk of Bilbil Village took over. They sell cups and saucers but not Bilbil or Yabob pots. It would be good if the new ways could co-exist with the old ways of making pottery. The point about pottery making is that overheads are minimal. The materials cost nothing, the clay comes from the ground and only a few basic tools are needed to form the pots, which are then fired on an open fire.

David Ber, son of my informant Ber Nanci from the 1970s, talked about the old trading days and it was heartening to know that the oral history was being handed on to the next generation. Listening to David Ber was like listening to his father. David said that the North Coast people and the Karkar Islanders came to Yabob and traded food, wooden plates and pigs for pots. Other times the Yabobs and Bilbils would sail to the north coast as far as Sarang in the *lalong* and *palangut* canoes to trade the pots. The men used to tell the women to get the pots ready and then the men would sail off. Sarang was their limit, but the pots sold there were re-traded as far as Bogia to Tangu and other bush places where they made pots with the long base. David Ber said they recently saw these Tangu pots for the first time because the roads have made access easier.

In the other direction the Yabobs exchanged their pots for the conical shaped ones found in the Trans-Gogol, as they were better for cooking *saksak*. There was still a need for the pots David said, "Our friends in the bush want our pots more than ever to make the big feasts. Other people come and bring pigs and have a feast and buy the pots". David added a few words to do with trading and their meanings. *Dadeng* is the day for a market when the Bilbils bring their pots and *nelli dadeng*, or *dadeng nelli*, means that you have marked a day to buy things. If the pots are being traded, the name used is *wain deowa*. When they return from trading the time is called *wain debal*. If they wanted to make a trading day they would make 5 knots in a *tanget* leaf - each day you must break off one knot to count the days to the market.

The New Year began traditionally with the rising of the Pleiades stars in the pre-dawn sky about June/July. This is a very important event and a very ancient custom in New Guinea and many Pacific

cultures, including the Indians in America.<sup>2</sup> When the Pleiades stars were about to appear, the *likon* in Yabob waited to see them in the early morning and then it was time to dig up the yams and have a feast.

David Ber said:

We do not celebrate the Rising of the Pleiades (*Biris*) any more, but later, if they want to revive these stories and turn it into a festival that would be good too. Yams were cooked and piled on the plates and the families met together. After the feast, each family cooked again and they called to other family members to come and eat. They built shade houses near the gardens and invited others to come. When the yams were ready, they would be stored in the yam house where there were two sections. The top or attic section, was where the yams to be eaten were stored, and the bottom section, where the yams to be planted were stored. When the shoots come, we plant them but we take the shoots off the yams we will eat. There is big trouble if someone steals our yams because they are our lifeblood. The *bushmen* did not steal our food in the past. Now we have the squatter settlement men around and they don't have work in town and sometimes steal our yams from the gardens and from our yam houses near the settlements (Interview, October 1994).

David also told me the story of Malu a baby born in Yabob Village many years ago. He developed sores all over his body. And his parents did not want to keep him so they put him on a little canoe and pushed it out to sea. Male's canoe was blown down the Rai Coast, where some Gorima people adopted him. As an angry young man, he met Michlouho Maclay and threatened to kill him. Maclay called his bluff and the story had a happy ending.<sup>3</sup> Like in ancient Sparta, children who were not wanted or who were weak were left out in the elements. Thus in Bilbil we have the story of a baby who was left exposed in the cold wind and was rescued by a childless couple. They named him Dadau after the cold wind and adopted him. He became a great leader of his people and the name Dadau travelled along the trade routes up and down the coast.

Another day I visited Yabob with Mako. His former teacher was the clan leader, Balem Beg. It was a peaceful afternoon and the women were friendly. They expressed sorrow that the young girls are not interested in learning the skills of pottery making from their mothers or mothers-in law. At Balim's house, I had a *kulau* (green coconut) and it was the most delicious drink I've had in a while. Contemplate getting hotter and hotter and then a cool *kulau* arrives. It was refreshing to drink it straight from the nut. The men talked on and on about the *papa bilong graun*, meaning the family that owns the land, and somehow this prevents the men from building a pottery house which would then have be shared by people of different clans. Tourists need a central point where they can come and buy the pots. The tourists have to find the women in their houses where they make the pots and buy them

off them. Furthermore, the women receive very little help from the men in their pottery making. The women have to do the gardening as well as potmaking and cooking of the evening meal and look after the children besides; it is almost an impossible task. It was as if the men did not want the women to be famous for their pottery skills any more. It was a different story in Bilbil Village where the councillors openly supported and encouraged the women. That was my last visit to Yabob Village and I got the feeling that within a few years their pottery industry would decline altogether.

My fears were confirmed in the most recent edition of the *Lonely Planet*:

Long before Europeans came to the area, Yabob was known for its fine clay pots which were traded far up and down the coast, but unfortunately the villagers have recently stopped making them (*Papua New Guinea*, Lonely Planet, 1998: 206)

This is a sad ending for a long tradition of pottery making in Yabob Village. There were many reasons for the demise but all are redeemable: firstly, the women needed a pottery house to store and sell their pots but the men wouldn't release a plot of land for this; secondly, the clay holes are quite deep and nearby squatters have been using them to dispose of their rubbish; thirdly, the young girls in the village disdain having their hands dirtied with the clay to make the pots which their mothers and grandmothers once made; fourthly, it may be a factor of male dominance as the women were always the potters and, since the men no longer make the canoes, they may feel overlooked when tourists come looking for women potters to buy their wares. The attitude of *yu meri tasol* (you are only women) needs to be changed as the women need encouragement and incentives to carry on this tradition. Pottery should be seen as a viable cottage industry attracting government grants. The Government should ensure that the pottery holes whether at Yabob or Bilbil or the Gogol are safeguarded by fencing off the areas and erecting signs to say they are NOT FOR RUBBISH.

The attitude that traditional businesses in the village should be independent and do not need government assistance should be altered. Much money has been spent on introduced businesses like Binnen Pottery in the town centre. Maybe both town and village pottery industries need financial assistance as they provide important locations for the tourists to visit. Being in such close proximity to the town, the Yabob Pottery Centre could have been a real draw card for tourists. Sadly, this may never happen now.

### Gogol, the Ham Group

The Ham group of pottery villages lies between the Gogol and the Naru Rivers. To get there one travels along the Gogol Road past the village of Bilbil and heads inland. These people are Austronesian speakers and Z'graggen described them as being



*Gogol pot in 1994.*

of the Ham language group. Included in this are Barum, Mair and Gonua and Ouba although some of the last belong to the Girawa language group as well. The word for a pot in the Ham group is *mis*, which is borrowed from the local language and is not an Austronesian term. Dr Colin De'Ath listed many of the items of the traditional material culture of the area. There were two types of stone axes, a smaller variety for the women and larger one for the men. Conical clay pots and round ones, wooden platters both round and elongated were produced locally as well as traded from the Rai Coast. Gourds for betel-nut lime were plentiful; bilums were made from the bark of the tulip tree. Fire was produced by taking a strip of dry bamboo and pulling it vigorously to and fro around a piece of softwood, "imbedded in scuffed-up banana and other kinds of leaves".

Colin De'Ath said:

Ladles (spoons) and small soup plates were made from half coconut shells. Sheaths from the *limbom* or black palm were used to sleep on, as cradle for babies as food or water containers and, when sewn up, as containers for the dead

who were bound into a foetal position. Dog's teeth decoration were made locally and traded; shells and coconut ornaments were traded from the coast. *Mal* or beaten out bark cloth were made locally and worn by men as waist bands and genital coverings. Bamboos were cut in a special way attached to high trees to make sounds in the wind; *garamut* were traded within the Gogol and were worth between one and two pigs each; salt was procured from the coast by importing dried banana stems and other porous plants which had been soaked in salt water and then burning them down. Vine rope was also burned for salt; leaves from ferns and palms were used as calendars – each day a segment of the leaf would be broken off; fur and feathers, including *kumul* or bird of paradise feathers were used for decoration or traded. Nearer the coast, the Naru people exported log canoes (1978: 70).

As can be seen, the Ham people had developed quite a rich material system and were part of an energetic trade network, both from the coast and further inland. Not only with pots, but also wooden plates, ornaments and pigs. De'Ath even lists women marrying into other areas and being paid for through bride price as being part of the trade network (1978, 282). In 1994, when I approached Gonia Village, the people were friendly but did not seem to be interested in pottery any more. A few of the older men still know how to make them but have not done so for years. They are building their toilets over the clay pits so that says a lot about their attitude to their traditional ways and their lack of interest in their pottery. Still there are some deposits further up on the hill. May and Tuckson mentioned that there were numerous clay pits in the Gonia area and that the villages have easy access to the supply as many lie within the village precincts (1982: 182). It is to be hoped that some have survived the alternative uses some have been put to.

On 12 October, I got a lift with Mer Blanco who was going to the Gogol. He dropped Andrew (one of his workers) and me off at the Barum market. Immediately, we met three interesting people whom I was able to interview. First was Councillor Komon Paigom from Ouba, then a young man, Ockili from Mair and lastly a man from Barum Village. In this area, it is the men who make the pots and, because of this, they can easily hand the skills on to their sons as the clan system is patrilineal. Rosalie Christensen described the making of Gogol pots as she saw it in 1975. According to her records the people in the bush beyond the Gogol area made pots the same as those in the Gogol but in those places both women and men made the pots, whereas in the Gogol, only the men made them. This is the same story as I obtained from the women at Baiteta, near Rempu Village. The men dig the yellowish clay from the ground and then roll it on *limbum* to make many long thin "fish lines" to make the bottom of the pot. When the pot is finished it is put inside a house for several weeks until strong and is then fired.

Rosalie Christensen stated that a Gogol pot must be made from start to finish in one day:

If a potter works quickly, he can make several in one day. Unlike Yabob or Bil Bil, the Gogol technique does not allow the potter to leave the pot partly finished and come back later to work on it. If a man cannot finish a pot he has started, he can ask another skilled man to finish it for him. Any pot left partly finished will get too dry and will have to be abandoned. Each potter is quite free to make whatever shape he likes or whatever size he likes. He can finish and decorate the outside surface the way he pleases (1975: 89).

**Men at Mair Village who made pots in 1994:** Older male potters: Koser, Gumei, Mario and Olakum. Young male potters included: Kadoo Muduras, Dur, Ockili who wrote the list, Ubi, Kanib and Tomas.

**Men at Ouba Village who made pots in 1994:** Older male potters: Dumakib, Bomiok, Gulideu and, Seseli; Young male potters included: Gibon, Yon, Yau, Humnag, Gab, Obusir, Nuruai and Komon Paigom, the Councillor.

**Men at Barum Village who made pots in 1994:** Older male potters: Koser, Luon, Pililau, Konik. Moyon, Yagas, Ogo and Sidel. Both Koser and Pililau were taught by their fathers, which seems to be the usual custom.

These villages are in Category One of the survey and it was heartening to see the men still interested in their old traditions. As can be seen by the lists above, the village at most risk of losing the art of potmaking is Barum. These old men hope to pass their skills onto the next generation, but so far this is not happening. The most rewarding part of the day was meeting young Ockili of Mair Village, who proudly related how he had learnt the skills from his father. Councillor Komon made the observation



*Gogol pot showing coil construction above the base.*

that if a Bilbil girl married into Barum, she would lose the art of pottery making because only the men make pots there. The road to Ouba Village has just been opened very recently and it was great to see a village that we could only walk to previously. I met Ogo Sidel on the Barum Road. When I asked him if he personally still made pots he replied in the affirmative but said, "we don't have the clay. We buy it and we don't sell the pots we use them to cook in". Sometimes they would give them to their friends as gifts. He added, "Ouba and Mair still make pots and we can buy Yabob and Bilbil pots at the market".

The Bilbil used to trade their pots for the Gogol pots, which have a small opening at the top. They liked to cook the *saksak* in these pots because they make the *saksak* sweet. The Bilbils buy Gogol pots from Gonua, Boi and Atu. These people in turn are happy to buy the Bilbil pots because they cook the food more quickly than theirs. Other Gogol places, Bor, Atu, Sehan, Tulimu and near Amele make the pots with the long bases. All kinds of pots are used in bride prices. Sometimes there may be a three-way exchange. For example man a might kill a pig to exchange the meat for pots so he can make up a bride price.

Komon Paigum blamed the JANT bulldozers for destroying the clay deposits:

I make pots from clay. My father and *tabuna* taught me from when I was little. They are not iron pots but ground pots. We should not lose this custom. If you look after them well, they can last 12 to 15 years. Pots have their season for being made too, from June to August, and you can make 10 to 20 pots in one year. There is special clay for the pots, it is a bit like rubber and each place has an area where they can get the clay. I don't teach my children because bulldozers have destroyed our special clay holes. There are other clay deposits all over the place and the company said it was up to the landowners to explain where the clay deposits were. The landowners had to look after the deposits. I made pots until 1990. Now we make only one or two pots a year. If one of our pots break, then we make another one. If the tourists come, we line the pots up for them. We have just finished a *haus tambaran* here at Barum. Mair and Ouba men can all sell here to the tourists if they wish. Bows and arrows, *bilums* can all be sold. We don't sell in the market in town even though there is no ban on that. We are just completing our own *haus tambaran* here. We told Peter Barter about it. Plenty of tourists came to town yesterday on a tourist ship, but they did not come to Barum. When we have finished the *haus tambaran*, we will straighten the place and advertise for the tourists to come.

Komon said that JANT came and disturbed the water and the clay and that the fruit trees are all gone and also it is hard to find materials to build houses. Trees and vines in the timber area are gone now and the people who live there find it very difficult. The people need *morata* and wood for their houses and bushvines to

tie everything together. For the future, things don't look good inside the timber area of the JANT Company. The ground is no longer any good for gardens and the water is polluted.

We have the timber area where the Company grows timber and the land outside the timber area. We must keep the land and forest for our children. My land is outside the timber area and, if the Company wanted to clear it, I would say, "No!" There is a change now. If the people in the timber areas are short of building materials they can buy them from the people who still have the bush areas for example, *saksak*, *kunda* etc. They buy this with money, a different trade. In the past, they bought things with their pigs or pots, dogteeth, pigteeth, plates - all these were used as their money. These things are still present, but the customs of the ancestors have changed. Money is the big thing now. However, we still have bride price with dogteeth and we can buy brides with this money.

Barum, Mair, Ouba all have the same type of round pots and the men make the pots. JANT have built bridges and made the roads, but the wooden bridges have not been maintained. There is ongoing conflict here between the JANT and the owners of the land particularly when clay deposits are smashed by logging. This has not deterred the men from making the pots so there must be enough clay deposits available elsewhere. We got talking to Ockili of Mair, a young man who has learnt to make pots:

I was worried that if I didn't learn to make pots from my father then, when he died, it would be too late and the skill would be lost. There is a pot season and I make about 20 pots in the year. I am now 20 years old and started to learn when I was 15 years old. I went to the Barum community school. I am learning to make pots for the knowledge itself whether I sell them or not. I enjoy making them.

Another young man approached us and showed us his identity card. It is the first time this happened to me, but it showed the changes that are occurring daily. Pililau Kunik was appointed by JANT to assist with landowner related matters. The card was signed by forest division manager, Kanawi, in 1992. The card enables the bearer to travel on company vehicles when called upon to do JVC committee duties or attend JANT meetings.

I am the spokesman of the place and also of JANT. In this committee we discuss any problems the village people may have with JANT. We try to think of solutions. Sometimes JANT has worries and we come back to the village and try to solve them. If there is no solution, we must report back to JANT. On top of this, there is a big dispute about timber rights in the Trans-Gogol area and I have been on the committee for this too about planting young trees and keeping the area clean. We want to set up timber businesses in the Transgogol area. There is a problem with this job too. I am the spokesman for the company in the Barum area. My

parents agreed to JANT Company because they thought we would be able to develop businesses within the company, but I think they have tricked us. We should have good houses and good education. We have talked and talked. JANT agreed to provide services for us, but they have not done so. They may have built bridges and roads, but now we want good houses. Times have changed. These houses belonged to our ancestors. Other districts have changed. They have good houses and good services. Other countries have good houses.

The above statements may even have cargo cult overtones. After the war the people had been promised better houses and conditions which were not forthcoming. The reaction of the people was to turn to cargo cults with Yali as their leader. They thought if they followed certain rituals then the good times would come up and they would all get large houses and the Europeans would work for them. Overall, for whichever reason, the people feel they have been badly done by and by showing interest in their plight I was told all their grumbles. After JANT cleared the land, the JANT Reforestation Company, JRC, replanted it. When the timber is ready, JANT will buy it and clear it. The people complained that JANT buys the timber piecemeal and not by the hectare. If they bought it by the hectare the people think would get more money.

Pililiau went on to say:

Since Independence, we haven't made many pots, as it is too difficult. Here is a Barum pot. To make it, we work the clay then for the top part we make a fishline with the clay and wind it around. Then we dry the pot and fire it. Afterwards, it is ready to cook with. We can sell a pot for K5.00. I can make pots like this. Inside the council, we have been discussing the pottery business. If the tourists come, then we need to make a house and store to put the pots with plates and pots to sell. If the road is not made, then what is the point of making pots for sale?

### Utu Village

Utu Village is situated on a small river between the headwaters of the Gum and Gogol Rivers directly inland from Riwo on the



*Little girl in Utu Village.*

coast. The road to Utu was long but well maintained as JANT was moving into the area to remove timber. When I went into Utu Village, the men took turns talking about making pots in the old days. They had not made them since 1975 and there were only about four potters left. The head teacher of the village primary school, Chris, although not from this area, is interested in the culture of the people, but he had not been aware that pots were made in Utu. He would like to encourage the old men to pass on their knowledge to his pupils.

Chris said to me:

You came today and asked about pottery and I could not answer, but then these old men knew about it, so why couldn't they teach the younger generation? They say that they can get the saucepan from the store to cook with, but they must have an interest in the old pots as well. It costs nothing too. We have to pay to get the store pots, but these are free from the ground the food is sweeter and does not burn. Plenty of people say that education has come to Papua New Guinea and changed the culture, but this need not be if the people are strong. We must use the education in the right way and the culture of the place must be held onto. If you ask the young people about the *singsings* of their place, they have no interest at all. They do not know them.

This village could still be in Category two of the Survey as there is a chance that the skills may be revived particularly if Chris encourages the old men to teach his pupils. Marcus, one of the elders said they used to make pots before the war. He was only a young schoolboy at the time and was really frightened of the bombers. The Catholic Priest remained with the people and they were anxious for his safety. They wanted to hide him in the bush, but he refused to hide. "If the Japanese are happy for me to stay and work that is OK, but if they want me to leave well it doesn't matter". Twelve Japanese soldiers lived in the village up on the hill for a year and employed the village men. Later, they said they were leaving and the Australians returned.

Marcus complained:

The Japanese had not been truthful when they said that the Australians would not be coming back. After the war, we



*These old men in Utu Village used to make pots but no longer do.*

came down here from the old Utu Village further up and built a new village, but during the landslides, after the 1970 earthquake, our houses nearly all fell down. In the wartime, we did not make pots but, after the war, we started again. When making the pots we start the coil down the bottom and work around all the way up. There are three different kinds of pots. When you cook you make a small hole in the ground and support the pot and then put the firewood around.

I had a copy of a photograph, taken in the 1970s by Mrs Christensen, and I wanted to line up some of the villagers the same way as they were in the original. This was a problem, as they insisted in standing next to their husbands and I had trouble getting them into position. Out of the crowd came an old man. "No no!" he said, "You must be here and you here and he changed them again. No! The missus wants us like the photograph so they all got changed around again". To keep them happy, I took a photograph of them lined up with their spouses beside them. What an effort! I then took a photograph of the men with the remaining pots which they did not want to part with.

Chris also mentioned that their *tok ples* (language) was dying out. If he said a word in Pidgin or English he would ask the kids to say the word in their language and if they did not know he would tell them to go home and ask their parents what the word is. Another problem was inter-marriage. If a man from Utu married a Rabaul woman, then the children would probably grow up speaking Pidgin English rather than the *tokples*. This could be overcome by spending holidays in the villages of both families so that the language of either side is not lost. Some children these days can understand their *tokples*, but they cannot speak it.

A councillor from Utu told about the *singsing* that was used that day. It was not from Utu, but from Amele and is called *Daik*. He complained that there was little promotion of the culture and it is being lost with radios etc. He said that Utu used to have *garamut* and *kundu* drums. In the last five years he had not seen a *garamut*. Finally he concluded, "Culture in Utu is not dead yet, if the tourists came, there might still be a chance even if it was as a hobby. However the Utu people might lose their art through the lack of encouragement".

### The Rai Coast

Bongu Village is located near where Miklouho-Maclay settled in 1871. Bongu Village was never a pot-making village so they were in the Category Four of the survey. It was interesting to talk to people who had once traded with the Yabob and Bilbil for their pottery.

Mako and I drove into Bogadjim Village and spoke to Joel and Simbal who had oral traditions about the trade in the days when the Bilbil and Yabob men sailed to Bogadjim in their canoes. Here they exchanged their pots and kina shells for taro because they did not have food. The canoes would come ashore and the village people would prepare to trade and prepare a feast. When they were leaving they would feed them again and they would return to Bilbil.

Joel and Simbal said:

The Yabob and Bilbil travelled to Mindiri and other places along the coast. The Dugus clan had their own individual trade friends at these places. They would come off the canoe and call out their names and then their trade friends would go forward. Then we would greet them and take their shells and pots to our house. Later we would back the amount they brought with taro. We would ask, "How many kina shells? How many pots?" then we would work out the amount of taro. My children would be friends with my trade friends. It was not possible to fight with your friends because they were like brothers. Small arguments were discussed and settled by talking not by fighting. We still have friends in Bilbil. The Mindiri made pots in the time before the Europeans. We have friends at Mindiri and get *galip* from them. They would bring pigs and we would help them with their bride price. I saw the canoes with the shelter on top when I was a child.

The people of Mindiri Village speak an Austronesian language and the women traditionally made pots. However they are now in Category Three of this survey. Knowledge of the pottery was dying out even in the 1970s. The Mindiri people had a thriving pot trade of their own before the arrival of the Germans. Wangum and Bail of Mindiri Village spoke of the many villages that Mindiri traded with (Mennis, 1981b: 91). It appears that pottery was a thriving industry in Mindiri until just before Maclay arrived in 1871 and when the village was attacked by the Yabob/Bilbil men over the monopoly of the pot trade. The Mindiri range of vessels is almost identical to that of Yabob/Bilbil. The cooking pot, *bornda*, is similar to the *bodi* but generally lacks the sharp-angled shoulder. According to Derr Mul, the Bilbil people quite liked the Mindiri pots because they were thick and strong. It might take longer to cook in them, but the food was sweet. At that stage, in the 1970s, there were only a few women still making pots at Mindiri. May and Tuckson described the pots during their visit to the village and noted that the pots made there are very similar

to the Yabob/Bilbil. They once made water pots but ceased at the time of the war. They also made the sago cooking pot called *magob*. "The cooking pot called *bornda*, is similar to the *bodi* but generally lacks the sharp-angled shoulder. Characteristics of the *bornda* are the bulges located below the shoulder and running around the widest portion of the vessel." (May and Tuckson, 1982: 182). Interestingly enough they were told that the shape copied the four cornered jungle fruit in design. The ethnographer Biró compared the shape of some artefacts to fruits on the Rai Coast during his visits in the 1890s.

The Mindiri women ceased to make pots in the 1970s and it is doubtful any potters were left in 1994 at the time of the survey.

### North Coast

Moro Village is a pleasant village on the North Coast near the Malala Teachers' College and southeast of Bogia. The villagers were all busy when I arrived, some men were hulling a small canoe, and others were putting fishing nets out to dry. I met John Dunbar who spoke of the time of his ancestors when they used to build large canoes. Materials for the canoes were obtained from their own bush areas. After the hull of the canoe was carved, a platform was added and bound in place with bush-vines then designs were painted on the sides. A mast was placed centrally to hold the mat sail and a platform and a shelter were added. Three or four of these Moro canoes ventured out on trading expeditions right along the coast as far as Bogia and Manam in one direction, Bilbil in another, or out to Karkar. The canoes would be welcomed at all these places by *singsings* and pig feasts. The men would trade *brus* for *kunda*, armbands and pots. Moro Village is in Category Four of the Survey because, while they never made pots, they were an integral part of the trade network and once built the large canoes.

Being on the coast, Moro Village was a favourite stopping place for traders to the area so as well as being visitors to other places they were also hosts. Moro was famous for its *brus* or tobacco, which was eagerly sought up and down the coast. The *brus* was given to the guests initially as a present before the negotiations and then used as a trade item. Even though the Yabobs and Bilbils did not always travel that far up the coast, their pots were traded by middlemen along the coast and inland and bartered for other pots or pigteeth. Nearby Korak made pots for the Moro people. Their pots were heavier and took longer to cook the food than the Bilbil pots. Often Korak was the first port-of-call. Here they bought the Korak pots which were heavier than the Yabob/Bilbil ones and took longer to cook food in. After they left Korak they went to Dugumur and on to Medibur where they had trading partners.

Yabob pots were more famous here than those from Bilbil. (The reverse happens on the Rai Coast). Occasionally the Yabobs sailed to Moro bringing their pots in exchange for *brus*, spears, bows and arrows and wooden plates. At other times, the Karkar Islanders

acting as middlemen brought Yabob pots to exchange for the *brus*. Traditionally, Moro people are thought to have come from the bush and one of their ancestors, Bakuk showed them how to make canoes and catch fish by using fishtraps. The Moro people talked a little about Kilibob and Manup who lived at Budup, near Sek. So, again, the old story is verified that the basis of the story of these two brothers was at Budup.

John Dunbar spoke about magic and it appears that the magic rituals to bring on the right weather were still known of. One famous forebear was Saket of Medibur who whispered certain words over the *tanget* leaves and could make the sea rough or stop the winds. The sailors gave him presents as an insurance against bad weather. Men who ignored him could suffer dire consequences and may even drown.

The Moro people went on their trading trips about June when the winds were not too strong. If they were late travelling to Karkar, they used the evening star called *maribung*, but if they left home before dawn they would use the morning star called *kibala*. The men would follow the shore as far as Sarang and then go straight to Karkar where their first place of call would be Kurum. Here they would visit their trading friend, Kaiuk, a big man and the ancestor of Stehl Mileng and family. The two families had been trading friends for generations and were still friends. John said, "They don't come here now nor do we visit them, but we still know about them. My children are not very clear about this".

John spoke of the trading:

Karkar people make good *bilums* with a good colour, the same as us. We also make leaf baskets and wooden plates from the *pira* tree, which is found anywhere along the coast. We used to walk along the road for four hours now we can walk about six hours because they are better. A long time ago, we only walked as far as Korak before returning. In the other direction we went to Bogia and Mamue. We would sleep two nights and then come up to Mamue in the bush where we made gardens with the people. In June we dig out the yams. We plant them again in August and September.

The Malala people are related to the Pila, Saki and Tani villages on the coast near Bogia and opposite Manam Island (Z'graggen, 1975: 83). They were not potters but were traditionally part of the trading network and still retained knowledge about the pots. The area from Korak to Busui and inland is known to the Madang people as Laden and they, in turn, call the Madang people the Bel group. In between is the North Coast area.

Steven Mirgam Soni who was in his late 50's, related how he saw a large sailing canoe when he was 11 or 12 years old. The canoe went on to Medebur (Austronesian speakers), but did not go to Manam or Karkar. It was not the same as the very large canoes that his forebears used to sail to Karkar and Manam. Their name for trading is *taumair* and they would take *brus* and



*Girls in Korak Village with two pots, a Korak pot on the left and Bilbil one on the right. Their grandmothers once made these pots but the art has died out.*

exchange it for pots. They do not grow *brus* much any more, only one or two bushes, for their own use. If their trading friends on Karkar Island asked for it, they will find *brus* as a present and they in return might give them Bilbil pots in exchange, which they probably obtained from their friends or relatives. Since our people originated from the bush, the people there are related to us.

Steven has not seen a Korak pot for 15 years. He thought the Korak pots lacked strength. They might cook the food quickly, but broke easily. The Bilbil pots, on the other hand, are made from strong clay and are thick. They might take longer to cook the food, but they last better. His people used to get pots from Suaru village also. Steven's younger brother was working on a

small canoe when we arrived, but he stopped politely when he saw we were taping the conversation. We sat in the verandah of the house and talked about canoes. He would not be able to make one of the large trading canoes as the art has died out in his village. The Korak people haven't made pots for fifteen years. They used to make pots in the time of their ancestors, but the clay hole is no longer usable. From a distance, things do not seem promising for the Korak pots and I was so hoping to get one. It is interesting that each clan in Malala had its own name for their large sea-going canoes, although they were all of the same construction. In the Avodokan Clan, they were called *wogala* and in the Avokun clan they were *Tamatololi*. Before, there were three places nearby that produced pots that the Moro people used, those at Suare, Korak and Bilbil/Yabob. They used to trade their *brus* for *kunum* (mortar) to mash the taro and got pigs from Manam and Karkar; pigteeth and red paint for *bilas* was bought from Karkar. *Brus* was the main export of the Laden area. It was good *brus* and many areas wanted it. In some areas, the men would roll the *brus* in banana leaves and some with *mangas* leaves. Now *brus* is not grown any more, but they grow coconuts instead.

Steven said:

The time of trading is over and now we make money from coconuts. Someone today said that the Hiri trade was different. It was famous and involved many people, but the Madang trading network was just as large and probably involved more people, so it should be just as famous. My mother told me about the canoes and the trading, but I didn't see them.

The Korak people are non-Austronesian language speakers and they are closely related linguistically to the Waskia people on the northern part of Karkar Island.

Paul Kaing of Korak Village:

I don't know the year when the women stopped making pots called, *koman*. I remember my mother making them, but I don't know what year they stopped. They used to cook food in the pots and used them for presents. We used to cook taro and bananas in them. Now with the young people they don't learn how to make pots. The clay, *alumil*, comes from up on the hill at Kunumum. Our people made canoes and sailed to Karkar. We used to trade with the Karkar - basket, *galip*, and live pigs. Our families had trading friends on Karkar and we still have them, but we have lost contact now. At the time of our ancestors, they all planted *brus* and exchanged things with the Karkar people, but now is the time to make money. We have *daka* and copra and betelnut to make money. The betelnut is not ripe yet here. Our people used to go to Karkar to trade in our big canoes with sails. Each clan had its own name for their canoes. Gowa Clan called theirs *kambual*, Tome call theirs, *Saranguel*; Korando, *Marara*.

The following are the clans and the women who used to make pots:

**Gowa Clan:** Lalep, Niva, Maiko, Sapu, Masis, Tum, Muadik and Cecilia.

**Tome Clan:** Maisa and Osaiver. Lena died in 1974; Nanok is still alive, but her eyes are bad.

**Korando Clan:** Agumin, Selele, Mura, Kusisi, Moreng, Misis and Pelel.

**Mopal Clan:** Reka, Usarum, Lenga, Warang, Manok, Damange, Mandiv, Gamet, Iner, Tanum and Kobabing. Altogether, there are only three women left in 1994 who would be capable of making pots: Tum, Muadik and Ripada.

This information places Korak Village as being in the second category in the survey. There are still women there who once made pots although they had ceased doing so some years earlier.

John Adina was on the council from 1962 to 1974 when the young people were still learning the art of potmaking. Now that the schools have started up, the young ones don't think about pot making very much. The leaders on the council still think about the culture but the knowledge is vague. The pots were seen as part of their heritage, but now they are no longer made. John pointed to a Bilbil pot and to an old Korak pot, one of only two left in the village. When John was young he saw the large canoes which his people sailed in taking their pots as far as Yabob and Bilbil but not to the Rai Coast as that was too far. When they went to Karkar Island, they usually sailed in June when the winds were not too strong and there they exchanged their *brus* for *galip* nuts. Sometimes, other canoes visited Korak and his people were hosts to the traders seeking *brus*. Many people came ashore on the beach where John and I were sitting.

Having interviewed the people I wanted to see at Korak Village, a group of men and children, accompanied me to the road and waited with me for a PMV to come along. We waited for nearly an hour as most trucks travel in the morning if they were going to Madang. The Korak people were determined to see me safely on a truck, as they did not want me to come to any harm. During that time, the children entertained themselves and us with games and singing. I had never met them before and I will never forget how kind they were. Finally, a PMV came along and I was able to leave, heaving myself up onto the back of an open truck along with many other people and their produce. The trip on the back of this truck was so fast, I thought we would all be killed. When I complained to a fellow traveller, he climbed over the side near the cabin and told the driver the missus wanted him to go a bit slower! I got thoroughly burnt that afternoon, as we were a couple of hours in the hot sun. I got off at Megiar, to see some more people about pottery and met Sister Dominique, a wonderful missionary.

At Megiar, I met Martin Kalamín Sugor of Aronis village, which is now on the coast near Megiar but, formerly, it was about 1½ hour's walk inland behind its present location. He was born in 1926 and went to school at Alexishafen in 1938 when Fr Noss and Sister Alexis took him to Sek.

Then the war with the Japanese started:

We were asleep when the Japanese arrived, but, next morning, we saw all the planes, ships and boats of the Japanese. They stretched far out to sea and filled Sek Harbour and there was no escape. They had machine guns and rifles and we were afraid. The *kiaps* had all run away and the missionaries had no strength against them. We left the school and went home to Aronis where we helped our parents in the gardens. My ancestors taught me the laws of the clan, what to hold dear and what was worth fighting over. I had to learn what was sacred and could not be touched. For instance, if you stole the betel nut belonging to another, then you would get sick or may even die. When I was young, my father would beat me or stop me from eating for a day if I did not listen to him. We did not have coconuts then, but after the war the *didiman* (agricultural officer) encouraged us to make coconut and *kaukau* gardens to make money. After the war, I went to Kulili Plantation on Karkar, where I was a secretary. Madang was the closest government station. The patrol officer would come out to the villages on patrol and line up all the people and count them and their names were recorded in a book called the Roll Call. The book stayed with the *tultul* or *luluai*. The *luluai* and *tultul* system was kept up through the war but, in 1960, local government councils took over and the work of these officials finished.

Martin was a councillor from 1976 to 1993, when he retired. He said that to be elected to the council you had to satisfy the people that you were a good speaker in several languages not just your own village language and you needed to be able to read and write a little.

Martin talked of his marriage:

My sister was married to a man from Aronis. They reciprocated this arrangement and I married her husband's sister. It was an exchange arrangement. I bought her with pigsteeth and dog-teeth ornaments, plates and Yabob pots. Matukar, Megiar people got the pots from Yabob and traded them with the bush people of Aronis. Ten pots equalled one dogteeth necklace. We cut the bush back around our village and now you don't see the bird of paradise. I've heard their call in the bush, but Dylup plantation cut more trees. We do business with Dylup who buy our copra. We make our own copra by drying it in the local copra drier in Aronis village. I got a loan from the bank in 1967 so I could build my own copra drier, at a cost of one thousand kina. The *didiman*

from Madang brought out all the materials. The council got the bulldozers and made the road to Gusap and Barum.

According to Martin, the Megiar sailed their large canoes to Karkar Island, where they traded their *brus*, *bilums*, and the *buai* called *tawan*, which gives you black teeth. However his Aronis people would all have drowned if they took to the sea on their own.

Martin:

We did not go on trading trips to Karkar, we belonged to the bush and we did not know how to paddle a canoe. If you had someone in the family married to a Megiar then you could go with them to Karkar. Now they have better ways of getting there.

My people used to buy Yabob pots. This happened until I was big and then things changed. The Second World War started and many customs changed. Then the white men's world started to take over. My *tabuna* told me about many of the customs and I have passed this on so the knowledge is still here today. This knowledge included *singsings* such as *kanam*, *sibang*, *mukoi*, *sigan*, *mamsong* and *yau*. Other people could buy these *singsings*. For instance if one of my friends wanted to buy it, they had to get a pig ready, and get the *bilas* ready, bow and arrows and *kumul*. If they wanted the song as well as the *singsing*, they would have to pay ten or twenty pigs. If there were plenty, we would give some back and then we would cook one or two for a feast. Dogteeth were like money in those days. When a dog died or was killed, our ancestors used to eat them. They took the teeth out and tied them together with rope to make the neck ornaments called the *bulra*. The *maror* or clan leader organised the feasts. In the morning of the feast he gave orders and the people had to obey him. That was the law. If they were having a *singsing*, then he would tell one person to get the *koniak* and another to get something else. Before, women were not allowed in the *haus tambaran*, but then the missionaries came and this custom stopped.

The Aronis people originally came from the mountains near Bargam, and have their own origin myth.

The Story of Ogdum by Martin:

*There is a story related about the Bargam Mountain in the early days of our people. Ogdum came down from the clouds on a thread. There was water everywhere covering, all the mountain. As he came down on the thread, the water retreated from the mountain and there were stones and coconuts on the ground. The man put one foot on the coconuts and the next on the stones and then the ground. Then a voice from the clouds commanded him to get into the canoe, which he would find on the beach and to paddle the canoe. At this time, there was complete darkness in the*

world. Ogdum then paddled the canoe in the dark and was told to paddle it to Kurundal close to Wasap. When he arrived, he was summoned to the mountain and told to look towards the beach and call out to the sun. Ogdum did this and the sky cleared. He shouted and the sun came out and the water receded even more until there was no river there. Ogdum left this place and returned to Mount Bargam. He found another man had been created with the same name as the mountain, Bargam. Then a woman came and married Bargam. Ogdum went back to where he had come from. The woman's name was Boida and she married Bargam and had a family and eventually our family came. This story belongs to the Bargam area.



*A boy wearing a Baiteta pot in 1994. The younger people were surprised to learn that their grandparents had once made pots.*

**Baiteta** villagers were once pot makers and there are Baiteta pots in the National Museum in Port Moresby. They are a gumnut shape similar to the Barum pots. One Sunday, Mer and Mellie Blanco took me out to Baiteta for an afternoon drive. We followed the North Coast road to the vicinity of Rempi and drove inland from there. The road is difficult to negotiate and needs an upgrade, but the scenery is really beautiful, with views to distant mountains and valleys. It would be an ideal road for tours if it were in better condition. The villages are well kept and the breezes are cooler away from the coast. One day, people will commute from Rempi to work in Madang. The cool breezes and views make it an ideal situation. The vines were flowering with hanging scarlet flowers and the road wound through the jungle forests. When we arrived at the village, the first people we talked to were teenagers so I asked them about the pots in English. They were unaware that pots had ever been made in Baiteta. They were incredulous at the photo of the pot from the National Museum. Then an older woman, Regina told us about the pots, which were made by both men and women in this area.

An old woman, Lynette, then appeared from her house at the back of the village. She was carrying a pot that she kept in her house and said:

We once made pots, called *waik*, and gave them to our friends in exchange for *bilums* and bows and arrows. They were also used for bride price payments. The bush areas past Baiteta also made pots. Tourists used to visit Baiteta until the road became too rough. When they came, the women

demonstrated cooking with the pots and put on a *singsing*. We used these pots for cooking and the food had a good taste. The men used to make them in the *haus tambaran*. Here is a pot made by Katinamul who lived a long time ago. We only have this pot left and we sometimes cook our food in it. In the time of our ancestors, both men and women made pots. This generation does not like cooking with clay pots, and we cook like the Europeans. If the tourists came back, we would make more pots.

Antonio, who is about 85 years old told us about the pots. She said, that further inland, men and women used to make them. They dug the clay out and prepared it for potmaking. Then they took some clay and made a hole and then patted the pots, fired them and then traded them. Antonio showed us one of the other types of pots with a coil around the top, which were made by the men and are similar to the pots found in Karog and Efu. The bottom part is shaped and then the top is made with a long coil around and around. Antonio said that the bush people used to send pots to them but not now. This custom has died out. She said, "As far as I know, they are not making them in the bush any more. During the war, we stayed in our village but after we saw all the bombers coming we hid in the bush and carried our children to safety".

The pot I bought had the date 1962 on the side. It did not have the coil top but is more like the Yabob pots with a more pointed bottom.<sup>4</sup> Baiteta may be a place where they had different pottery styles, which were mixed and matched. The roles of the men and women were not strongly identified and pots were apparently made by either sex. In Baiteta, each community points to the bush people as the previous makers of pots. Here again we are looking at a pottery industry on its last legs. There are probably people in the bush with the knowledge to make pots but, once pot production ceases and the knowledge is not handed on, then it is only a matter of time before the industry is beyond redemption. The Baiteta pottery industry has been lost for a long time so it would be classified as Category Three of this survey.

Madang pottery, like that found in Baiteta, is one of the distinctive features of the Province and if we want tourism to develop here with the potential of the Japanese or Chinese markets, then pottery needs to be encouraged at the grassroots level. Many said, "We don't make pots any more because we now use European pots". But people should value the pots for their own intrinsic worth.

They are products of a culture and can become symbols of the Madang Province.

### **Bosman, near Kayan on the Ramu River**

I visited Kayan Village from 24 to 26 October 1994 with Archbishop Benedict, when he had a confirmation ceremony.

I walked to the village and met Caroline at the entrance. She was very friendly and introduced me to various villagers and then took me to her house, which her youngest son had built. He,



*Children holding a long forgotten Bosman pot in Kayan Village.*

unfortunately, had drifted off to Wewak and was killed there earlier in the year, possibly by a rascal gang. She gave me pawpaws and bananas and I gave her buns from Madang. There is a long house in the village for extended families. It was the first I had seen in Papua New Guinea. It was interesting and showed the people's good architectural abilities. Evidence of their culture is still everywhere to be seen from their fishing traps to their large *garamut* drums which were colourfully decorated. As they were near the sea, the Kayan people have the advantages of swimming in the sea and being able to paddle canoes and fish in the lagoons of the Ramu River. It is probably not advisable to swim in the lagoons, as the odd crocodile is found. Higher up the Ramu River proper, there were crocodiles everywhere as the river is low.

While I was at Kayan, I spoke to five girls from Bosman about the potmaking in their village. None of them make pots nor do their mothers, whereas their grandmothers made them so there too the art is nearly dead. In Kayan Village, I was able to see a few Bosman pots, which are very large and stored in the corners of the houses, but I did not buy any. Bosman pottery is again in the Category Three level of the survey - "Gone but not forgotten."

Bosman is on the Bur River, a tributary of the Ramu River about 20 km from the mouth of the Ramu. May and Tuckson described the pots:

Two types of cooking vessels are made. The first is a wide-mouthed ovoid vessel with a pointed base and everted rim ranging in size from 28 to 40cm high. This type is not decorated. The second is a semi-spherical pot with a rounded or slightly pointed bottom. It can be restricted or straight sided and the top rim is bevelled (1982: 199).

### **Binnen Pottery**

Binnen Pottery was started in 1984 by a number of overseas potters, who came to Madang to help with the business and who were paid by a special grant. One of these potters was Lesley Everley. The clay used at Binnen comes from Simbai and many items are made: teapots, cups, mugs and vases. Many Papua New Guineans like the wares made at Binnen Pottery and order items from the collection. Overall there have been three overseas potters to help Binnen Pottery including one from Japan and it was still operating in 1994. At the time, it was thought that the pottery would not interfere with the Yabob or Bilbil potters. However, it is a pity that all the grants go to the commercial pottery businesses. Perhaps the traditional potters need help and encouragement as well. If the government were to help build pottery houses where the tourists could access the village wares, it would help the potters. At the moment, they are stumbling because the village men are squabbling over which piece of land can be freed for this activity. Madang people could have their own pottery industry and produce the traditional pots in more of the villages than just the Gogol and Bilbil if they got help from the Development Fund.

The National Museum has an important collection of earthenware pots from all around Papua New Guinea. Many of these pots are no longer made or found in the villages. As there is a world wide interest in pottery, the people should be made aware of the value of keeping these crafts going for the future, not just for Papua New Guinea, but also of mankind. It would be good if pottery making were seen as a living inherent part of the culture and not just preserved in cabinets and displays in a museum. It is not one of the objectives of this book to encourage people to revert to the old ways, but somehow retain old skills as part of the national identity. Madang, in particular, was a Province noted for its variety of pots and this gave the Province its unique flavour but few villages are making the pots now.

But there are many other issues. Pots are no longer used for cooking or for bride price, so why bother? Are we imposing our beliefs on these village people? Do they want to retain these skills themselves for their descendants? One has only to see the appeal that the Hiri Festival now has in Port Moresby to see the emotion which cultural festivities like this hold for the people. Perhaps if the people of Madang saw an emotive exhibition of their own pots, canoes and trading system, they might see the aesthetic value their pots could hold. Many people bemoan the fact that their

pottery skills are being lost, but, in many instances, they are powerless to prevent this. It may be argued that pots are too bulky and fragile to transport in tourists bags. But tourists would happily watch the process of the pots being made and fired, even though they may not buy the products themselves. For example, in Brisbane during the Warana Festival, crowds watched a group of Madang women making pots with great interest. Village feasts with the food being cooked in the pots could become as much a feature of the tourist tour as the kava feast in Fiji. One reason tourists are not coming is the law and order problem. I did not notice any law and order problems in Madang in my three months stay in 1994 but it was a different story in Port Moresby. However if care is taken, then a reasonably safe holiday could be had. Papua New Guinea does have *raskels* but does not have terrorists as experienced in many countries.



*Binnen Pottery Centre in Madang town.*

Economically the village system has changed and pottery skills have disappeared in many areas of the Madang Province. Now, with a cash economy, people buy trade store pots, which are quicker to use and easier to clean and last longer. In addition, one cannot use clay pots on electric stoves, which are now becoming more common with the advent of electricity in the villages. We are not advising a return to cooking with the earthenware pots except perhaps for special occasions or feasts. In 1994, Yabob potters faced difficulties from encroaching settlers on the fringe of the town using clay holes as rubbish dumps. In more recent years there have been moves to evict these settlers on Government land and sent them back to their home provinces. At times, force has been used to evict them and this has caused hardship for these people, some of whom have lived in Madang for three generations or more. However this policy may have freed the town of certain *raskel* elements. It certainly freed Yabob Village from the pressure of squatters who stole from their yam houses and gardens and turned their clay holes into rubbish dumps.

Another problem is the indifference of the younger generation in some areas to learn the skills of making pots. The Yabob girls see pottery making as a dirty business and dislike getting their hands grubby with the wet clay balls. The opposite attitude was found in Bilbil Village, where many young girls are learning the trade, with the opportunity of making money from the tourists who visit the village.

In 1994, the pottery industry did not attract financial backing. In an article in *New Nation*, there was a long article on the setting up and running of your own business. It encouraged people to obtain loans or grants to begin their business or to support a

business that is already running. There was a photograph of a Madang woman potter at work and the caption read, *Traditional pottery – a craft performed in the village which can be used to earn money and is the kind of business which does not require outside financial help* (*New Nation*, November/December 1978 No 12, No 10). This statement is misleading as village potters do require help desperately. They need pottery houses to sell their products in any weather and they need help with advertising their wares both domestically and overseas. Packaging and posting the delicate pots require skills in themselves. Advertising on the Internet takes time and expertise. Because pottery making attracts overseas tourists, this money should be perhaps in the form of a grant rather than a loan.

Traditional pottery could still be encouraged. A number of visitors to the Cultural Centre asked where they could get transport to the pottery villages and they were advised how to get to Bilbil Village but the road at that time was hardly passable in 1994. The pots are not just for tourists. In India, they find that storing vegetables in pots keep them fresh for longer and they could be used for the same purpose in the villages. Cooking in the large pots could be a special ceremony like the Japanese tea ceremony and something tourists could get involved in by preparing the vegetables, learning what leaves are added for taste, putting firewood around the pots and then waiting for the meal to cook while watching a *singsing*. This could be done near the hotel. Pots could be featured in a TV series describing what the pots could be used for and what their traditional role was in the trading system. In modern times, smaller pots can be used to decorate a bookshelf or used for pot plants. Pots could be given as presents to friends, so that people don't just depend on the tourist trade.

When a pottery house or other village project is completed, they could have a big feast with dancing and so on. A committee could be set up to access government funding or overseas grants to initiate projects and keep it going. What can be done to preserve the pottery art for future generations? Perhaps hold display of pottery making at local shows or have a competition to encourage the women to continue. The women need to feel gifted in their art as well and, if they were to meet other potters from around the world, they would begin to think they were part of a larger group of potters.

Other countries preserve their culture because of its uniqueness to their country and they proudly demonstrate their abilities in creating their particular crafts. But the desire to do this must come from the people themselves. A village meeting could be organised with a *kap ti* (cup of tea) for all those who attend. At this meeting, a film of potters in other countries could be shown and various magazines devoted to potters of the world could be handed out. Other potters could be accessed on the Internet. Good speakers from the government could stress the importance of the pottery industry in Madang's history, build up incentives and gauge interest. Agreement of the people could be sought about a suitable piece of land for a pottery house, combined with a workroom, where young girls could be taught the pottery skills by the older women.

Some potters at Yabob expressed their willingness to go to the schools and teach pottery to the children so that the art does not die out. This would also give potmaking status as a subject that could be studied. In the village and those girls who learn the art could be given a certificate to show they are now qualified potters. Tours to show different styles of pottery would be of immense value to potters from around the world of whom there are very many. The people at Baiteta described in detail where the tourists used to come until a few years ago, they showed the *garamut*, which was beaten to summon them to the *singsing*.

We are now at the do or die point with the pottery industry in Madang Province. As the village survey shows, it is nearly at the point of no return. Yet the village people themselves would be quite happy to get the potmaking going again if the tourists came. Again tourists may not want to buy a pot but they may be happy to view and film potmaking in action in traditional Madang style.

In Africa pots are seen as people:

Pots "are" persons and that concepts of the body are closely related to and partly determinative of decorative expressions on pots. — Pots share with persons the characteristic of owing their existence to having been irresistibly transformed, by fire and by enculturation respectively, from a state of nature into cultural entities. Pots were indeed the first, and in many parts of the world for millennia the only artefacts to have been produced by transformation rather than mere modifications of raw materials. We hypothesize that humans, recognizing the fundamental similarity with regard to transformation and other more obvious resemblances, therefore extended to pottery certain of the concepts regarding and treatments accorded to the person (David et al, 1988: 365).

They were describing the people in Northern Camerouns, and mentioned that the red slip used on the pots is the colour of power which protects the pot against breakage. "The weaker the person or the pot and the more exposed to sorcery or other supernatural risk, the more red is needed as protection." (ibid: 372). In Madang, after the pots are painted with a red slip and fired, they are a glowing red colour, and are described as being like the initiated boys who are decorated with red paint in a similar manner.

In Papua New Guinea, some may argue that European style pots have replaced traditional earthenware pots and that we should let the pottery knowledge and skills just fade away. However, I would like to parallel this with the vanishing species of the world - humanity justifiably argues for the preservation of species of the animal world. What about the preservation of skills as well. Once the skilled potter's hands cease to teach the next generation another rare skill vanishes forever. It is important to preserve this knowledge for future generations.

In this way the legacy of Honpain, the first Yabob potter, will not be forgotten!

1. *On a recent visit to the Yangtze River in China, one of the highlights was an excursion on small sampans up a side stream. The local Chinese crewed the canoes and there was eager competition between the tourists on the different canoes to see who would arrive first.*
2. *It would be an ideal time to have a Pan Pacific Festival.*
3. *See Chapter 8 for a fuller account of this story.*
4. *As the date said 1962, I left it at the Cultural Centre in Madang as it was too old to be exported.*



*Director Alos Yagas and staff in front of the Madang Visitors and Cultural Bureau and Museum, 1994.*



*Aerial view of Madang in the 1970s showing the many lagoons and waterways.*

The title of “prettiest town in the Pacific” may not be an official one, but has often applied to Madang. The town is perched on a peninsula jutting out into the sea and is liberally sprinkled with parks, ponds and waterways. — Madang is the most tourist-oriented city in Papua New Guinea and this, fortunately, translates into a wide range of facilities but falls a long way short of being plastic. It is not, however, the place to come if you want to see untouched local cultures. By far the greatest attraction is what lies beneath the surface of the sea. Until recently Madang seemed to be immune from rascal problems – people fondly imagined that it was too beautiful for such things! (Lonely Planet, 1993: 199)

## Chapter 18, 1990s and beyond



*First of all I do not want to be quoted as saying that crime does not exist in Papua New Guinea - it does. There have been some horrific incidents that would frighten off the hardest of visitors. But at the same time, the crime situation is NOT general. 99% of Papua New Guinea remains as safe as it was before Independence - the places tourists want to visit are in remote, rural areas and in reality they are the safest. It may come as a surprise to many that over a 30-year period, no tourist of ours has ever been involved in an incident. We do not employ any security staff, nor have we called on the police for any assistance at any time. This record is not a coincidence, it is because we operate in areas that are perfectly safe, we have wide respect from the people, and we make sure that itineraries are planned to minimise the exposure to criminal activities — Even though there has been a decline in tourism, I am the eternal optimist. We all know that PNG has enormous tourist potential. I am confident tourism will play an important role in the economy of PNG.*

*It would be easy to blame crime for the decrease in tourist arrivals and I have no doubt it could be a contributing factor, but it probably has more to do with the fact that PNG does not have a tourist image. We are just one of numerous small countries fighting for the tourists and most other destinations have been working on it consistently for many years. Australia is our nearest market and certainly the one with the most potential, yet we fail miserably in attracting any volume of bonafide tourists (Sir Peter Barter, Minister for Health and Tourism and long time resident of Madang, *Una Voce*: 1999).*

Sir Peter's argument about the tourism market was well founded. Little is done in Australia to promote Papua New Guinea as a tourist destination. The *Sunday Mail* in Brisbane has tours advertised to Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Bali, all of which have not been without incidents or terrorist attacks, but there are no signs of tours to Papua New Guinea. The people of Madang are very friendly and go to any lengths to make you feel welcome. Over many years, I have experienced this first hand and can highly recommend them and they are more peace-loving than people in

some other areas. The scenery is ideal and there are lovely beaches and deep-sea diving activities. One of Sir Peter's initiatives is the Melanesian Foundation that was established by the Melanesian Tourist Services for the purpose of providing assistance to the village people where tourists visit. For ten years, the Foundation has been supplying and delivering around 1,000 school desks a year. In 1999, the Foundation constructed ten medical aid posts and reintroduced the National Health Radio Network in Madang and some other Provinces. Over the years, the people of Papua New Guinea were appreciative of the work Peter Barter did for Madang and for Papua New Guinea as a whole.



*The Melanesian Explorer, moored outside the Madang Resort Hotel in 1994.*

Madang is one of the major tourist areas in Papua New Guinea. Its beautiful location around the deep harbour dotted with islands make it a holiday-makers' paradise for both local and overseas tourists. Many other features make this possible: its road to the Highlands and along the coast; its excellent hotels; cruises up the Sepik River; and diving facilities on the reefs. There is village-style accommodation on the islands in the harbour, particularly on Siar and Kranket Islands, both Bel group villages. One favourite occupation of tourists is diving on the reefs and around the wrecks, doing a harbour cruise or just swimming and taking in the beautiful scenery. Teptep Village in the Finisterre Ranges offers accommodation and from there many walks can be undertaken. Usino Village also has village-style accommodation and many walks to the nearby Ramu River. The large volcanic Islands of Karkar, Long, Bagabag and Manam can be visited and



*Peter Barter's helicopter on the visit to the Rai Coast to settle a dispute with the students.*

walks up to the caldera on Karkar can be undertaken with local guides, although some caution needs to be taken. Manam Island, however, grows more dangerous with eruptions and many people have been evacuated. There is great deep sea fishing on the reefs around these islands and Long Island has some interesting lakes.

Initially, Peter Barter came to Papua New Guinea as a pilot for the Franciscan Mission at Aitape and later joined TAL based in Goroka. He started the Melanesian Tourist Services and has been based in Madang for many years. In 1992, he was elected Regional Member for Madang and, in 1994, he became National Minister for Health. In 1996, he became the first Governor of Madang and later, in 1997, the Minister for Provincial and Local Government Affairs. Sir Peter continues his involvement in community affairs as well as being Managing Director of Melanesian Tourist Services and Chairman of the Melanesian Foundation. For more than 30 years, he has been involved with the promotion and development of tourism in Papua New Guinea. Having his own helicopter, Peter Barter was able to fly rapidly out to trouble spots in the Madang area to see what assistance might be required from the government.

In October 1994, RipN-Sarepo (pseudonym) wrote a letter to the Post Courier:

Personally I think the world is in dire need of Peter Barter's. The Regional Member for Madang and the Minister for Health I am referring to. I am in no doubt thousands out there would agree. He has, I think, done tremendously well so far in the last two years he has been in the House. He loves his Madang people. He loves the people of Papua New Guinea, not because they voted him into power but unconditionally. Even before he was MP, he always responded in times of calamities regardless of creed, race and nationality. He showed that he cared. It is really heartening to see him using his privately owned helicopter, boats and vehicles in the relief efforts. PNG needs "Peter Barter's". Leadership is action not position (Post Courier, 12 October 1994).

I had first hand experience of Peter Barter's helicopter on a flight to the Rai Coast. High School students there had gone on strike, as they were worried about getting dysentery from dirty toilets. The situation needed urgent attention so things could revert to normal. The problem at the High School involved both Peter Barter, as Minister for Health, and a representative from the Department of Education who came with us. Peter went to a garage sized building beside his swimming pool, wheeled out his helicopter and fixed up the rotors. We took off low above Madang, then flew inland over a large swampy area, probably a flood plain with lots of coastal villages. Bongu Village from the air looked neat and tidy; rows of houses with *saksak* roofs lay under the green fluttering fingers of the coconut palms. The school is near the Gowa River, inland from Bai and Bibi and half way between Mindiri and Saidor. The head teacher of the school was an Australian and lived in a nearby *donga* with his wife, Wendy, and two sons. He had been there a year and had successfully improved discipline and academic standards at the school. That afternoon, we sat in the open-air hall and listened to the discussions between Peter Barter, the Education Department representative and the students. Eventually the problems were resolved and the students agreed to return to class.

The official launching of the government barge, *MV Ramu Ranger*, held on Sunday, 25 September 1994, was at the Madang Resort Hotel. The barge was intended to be a travelling hospital providing health services along the Madang coast, the islands and up the Ramu and Sepik Rivers as far as navigable. It would also provide medical transport for people needing to access the Madang hospital and will gain funds through the carriage of goods and people. The barge itself was a symbol of progress for the Madang Province. Peter Barter was the host for a large gathering with many important members of parliament and different councils present. The Malabo Theatre Group, the Siar Dance Group, and the Bilia string band performed. The Madang Resort Hotel with its well-kept gardens, gleaming swimming pool and shady lawns were all evidence of the vision of the Member for Madang. The Administrator, Mr Wep Kanawi, and Sir Peter Barter both addressed the gathering and the general gist was that it was better to tie funds to something large like this vessel. The barge was then blessed by Archbishop Benedict To Varpin, who sprinkled Holy Water so liberally that the photographers ducked for cover. Maria Ziegler, from the Catholic Mission, then opened the mobile clinic which was like a caravan and designed to reach inland villages.

### Health

In 1994, Mr Bart of the Madang Health Department had a reputation for being a hard worker and set a good example as a public servant who did his job well. He explained that there were 32 health Centres in the Province and 280 aid posts, each of them caring for a group of 3 or 4 villages. The Bogia area has 7 Health Centres, Rai Coast 3, Karkar 4 plus the Karkar hospital, Middle Ramu 5 and Upper Ramu 6. The Madang Town has 8 plus the

hospital. Those who cannot be treated at aid posts were sent to the Health Centres where Health Extension Officers attend to them. This process is affected by poor roads, lack of funding for vehicles, refrigerators lacking kerosene and also shortages of supplies of gas. There is a population explosion but people were not utilising family services.

The Matron of the Madang Hospital was Josephine Weror whom I knew well in previous years. She proudly showed me around the new modern hospital. Josephine had just attended a course on traditional family planning methods. Held at the Madang Lodge, it was funded by the Papua New Guinea government and US Aid. With better health services, more babies were being born but fewer mothers attended family planning clinics. In 1993, there were many thousands of women of child bearing age in the Province and only 1,271 of them attended the clinics. The report concluded, "Family planning is the root of all other social problems. If we can control the population then we would have a suitably sized population to govern in this Province. It would receive adequate services to its satisfaction and be more healthy, happy and strong". The report acknowledged that not all churches would agree with its approach, especially the Catholic Church. "There should be mutual understanding between these leaders and other Provincial authorities through briefing and awareness before the new approach gets put into practice."<sup>1</sup> Wherever I went, women in the villages complain of the rising population and that the children were getting out of hand and pointed to the growing number of children running around. "What are we to do? They won't listen to us", they complained. Some youths have even assaulted their own mothers. Perhaps, if clan leaders were given back some of their traditional responsibilities and powers in the village, it might help with the discipline.



*Aid posts like this one in the TransGogol area provide basic medical service for the village people.*

Part of the problem in the villages was the drugs that were introduced from the Highlands in exchange for betelnut. Betelnut palms do not grow in the Highlands and very little marijuana is grown on the coast so there is quite a trade in the two narcotics between the two areas. When marijuana is traded against the betelnuts that grow on the coast, this sometimes leads to a shortage of betelnut. People hide the cannabis and sell it in the settlements to the young people who also chew betel nut - this combination of narcotics causes upset and violence and lack of motivation. Some parents told me they were afraid of the youth and the break down in law and order. A Drug Awareness Committee was set up in August 1994, to tackle drug abuse and to treat the cultivation of drugs as a serious issue. Felix Oltimo, Director of the Committee, said the committee comprised of representatives from many government departments including Health, Police, Youth and Home Affairs, and the National Narcotics Bureau.

While many people believe in immunising their children against diseases, some people still believed in the local medicine man with his herbs and traditional remedies, some of which have been proven to be beneficial scientifically. There was talk of a lady from the Philippines making a lot of money prescribing herbal medicines and the local people flocked to her. While she was in town, there were fewer people at the outpatients clinic. Sometimes whole villages meet about a sick person to try to heal the negative vibes around them. "You there have a grudge about this person. It is making them sick." This is very beneficial and may lead to a whole village improving their attitude to the sick man who may improve, particularly if he had really been psychologically affected by attitudes towards him.

Government Services have been cut back in many areas because of lack of funding and lack of co-operation from the people. Some government people were not motivated in their jobs and were dubbed "fortnighters" as they sit and wait for their fortnight pay to come in and don't worry about the people in the outstations. The mission workers, whether Catholic or Lutheran, were seen as being more motivated and more disciplined than their government counterparts even though they received less pay.

In 1994, Maria Ziegler was the Acting Secretary of the Catholic Health Services and was a member of the Church Medical Council, which had representatives from about 20 different churches doing health work in the Province. They are a strong ecumenical group and present a united front to the government. Recently, they celebrated their 25th anniversary. Maria had previously headed the commissions in Peace and Justice, the Commission for Women and also for Youth. These positions were localised one at a time by Archbishop Benedict: Petronella Sampai took over the Peace and Justice; Sister Bineta, of the St Therese Sisters, took over the Family Commission and Women; Terisita Kol took over Maria's work as the acting secretary of the Catholic Health Services and was trained in Waigani and NSW. Maria was quite pleased to train local people to take her various positions and was looking forward to retiring to Germany.

Peter To Rot, a Tolai, and a public servant in Madang, completed his Public Administration Certificate in 1973 and has spent all his working life in the Madang Province. He was appointed Assistant Secretary for Local Government in the Province.

### Government

Peter To Rot told me:

I did a lot of patrols in that area (Simbai). We were linking the road from Simbai to Bundi as it was our objective to open up some of those areas. We also got the people to plant hundreds of coffee trees during that time and the people are happy we did. Before, Usino was the district headquarters and then the Middle Ramu was split up into two districts. Walium is the headquarters for the Upper Ramu District and the Middle Ramu headquarters is at Aiome, which looks after Simbai and Singapi. There were still a lot of expatriates before Independence with each district having up to six officers but, after Independence, the numbers were scaled down and, by 1994, they had half that number and had difficulty covering all the area on patrols. Nor did they have as much money as in the past. "We sometimes joked among ourselves that we were 'petrol officers,' and no longer 'patrol officers', since we did not operate on foot, but in trucks".

The Provincial Government was so committed to rejuvenating the Local Government system, that this department received a separate budget. Peter said, "This began in 1990 until now. Before



*Peter To Rot and family in Madang.*

that we were under Provincial Affairs as a section but now we have a branch of our own". There were 15 Local Governments including Madang as well as three non-council areas still with *luluais* and *tultuls*. These three were: the Simbai in the Middle Ramu; Wanuma in the Madang District; and Teptep in the Saidor District. Soon these areas would become additional wards of existing local government councils rather than having councils of their own. For example, Teptep would become an additional ward in the Saidor District. They had a lot of funding under the village services to cover roads and maintenance. Peter said, "There is over K1.5 million for the local government councils for projects which we are working on, but it is a slow process to make sure the funds are accounted for" (Interview, 1994).

I visited the Lands Department to obtain a map of Madang town. My husband, Brian, had been the Regional Surveyor in Madang for eight years 1971 to 1979 so this was his department. It had shifted from its former position in the main headquarters building to a new small grey brick building, which is rather short on space. That morning, staff arrived for work as usual, but there was tension in the air. The department was still a National one and depended on National funding and, as the latter had been frozen over the last couple of weeks, work had virtually come to a halt. There were no department vehicles or money for hiring them and the workmen who had been with the department for many years lined up for their last pay cheque. The few professional members of the staff continued as best they could. Every now and then, an irate member of the public bounced in and stared around aggressively. "Have you found the plans/valuation/title deeds", they might ask. When they received a negative answer the customer complained, "We have been coming everyday and it's always the same".

Eventually a plan might be found, but then the photocopier was not working and, even if it were working, there was no money to buy paper. "Come back in two days time after we get it copied at another department."

"What if I ring up and check?"

"Don't bother the phones aren't working. We couldn't pay our bill so we've been cut off!"

How was anyone supposed to work under these circumstances? At least the air conditioning was working and the power was on. The Senior Surveyor, Francis Rave, did his best when I visited the office. He found a map for me and we walked over to another department to get it reduced and photocopied. Later Lucius Dretala, the Senior Provincial Manager, found another map for me. They said that the main office for the Department of Lands was now in Lae. Lucius sees the lack of money as the big problem. The Department was undergoing restructuring with four sections under the one roof - Valuation, Town Planning, Surveying, and the Provincial Lands Office. Next year, another section will join these. Hopefully, by that time there will be extensions to the



*Students being shown survey equipment in the 1970s.*

building and money for vehicles. If they stay with the National Government, they will have to wait until the budget in March next year to see what their allocation is in the first quarter. However by next year the department might be under the Provincial Government's funding, but that is another story.

### **Education**

Because of lack of funding in 1994, students from some of the schools were sent home. By mid October 1994, under a directive from the Education Minister, many trainee teachers from the Madang Teacher's College were also sent home. Questions were asked in the press as to whether the Minister for Education had a plan to ensure students affected were guaranteed a place in their colleges when they return to finish their education. The future of a whole generation was under threat and people were keen to know if their children's education would be jeopardised. This was all part of the squeeze on public spending felt in all departments at the time and it served as a warning to them to plan their financial spending wisely.

Many of the primary schools were adding two years to their primary syllabus. These schools were called top-up schools and took the load off the few high schools in the area. School fees were quite a burden for parents with several children and many missed out on their education, indicating that the universal primary education goal had not been reached, particularly in isolated areas. According to records, "In 1995-96, around 20 percent of school aged children did not attend school" (Moore, 2003: 190).

The Madang Teachers College was established in 1964 about 8 kilometres north of Madang on land originally owned by the Mis people. The College began as a primary teacher in-service college but when these functions were re-located to Port Moresby in 1979, it changed its program to a pre-service teacher training college. Until the establishment of the Divine Word University, it was the highest form of education available in the area. The Madang Teachers College is a centre of learning and culture and stores the artwork of Rosalie Christensen, a long-time lecturer at the College. By 2002, it had grown to 38 academic staff teaching five curriculum strands: Language Development, Mathematics/Science, Community Development, and Social and Spiritual Development. Most of the students are Grade 12 school



*School children in Megiar Village.*

graduates drawn from all around Papua New Guinea, but from the Madang Province in particular. The College is now staffed with lecturers from the National Department of Education.

The Madang University Centre is a branch of the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby. In 1994, the Centre was a long distance educating institution catering for over 700 course registrations per year. The Centre enabled students, who were



*Teachers of Tusbab High School provide secondary education for the brightest students.*

working on outstations, to further their education. Once they gained some academic training, some of them transferred to the main campus of the universities in Lae or Port Moresby. There were over 300 enrolments in 1993 and its future seemed assured. However there was a severe shortage of administrative staff. They had trouble hiring vehicles to communicate with sub-centres at Ramu Sugar and Malala (Annual Report, 1993).

The Divine Word Institute, later a University, was developed on a block of swampy land leased in 1964. Originally it was set up as a high school, opening in 1968 with over a hundred students in two Grade seven classes. Over the years, it developed into the Divine Word Institute (DWI). The handbook stated, "DWI offers its educational services only to those interested in improving themselves intellectually and spiritually so they can become responsible citizens and positively affect the development of Papua New Guinea society. — Its program of education was designed to help students develop into concerned professionals, dedicated to social justice, to the national wellbeing and to international understanding". Emphasis was placed on the value of work, self-reliance, responsibility to community and the acquisition of critical thinking. A hundred years after the first six Divine Word Missionaries arrived at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen in 1886, the Institute became the Divine Word University. The University library houses the Archbishop Noser Memorial Library containing thousands of books and manuscripts on theology, local religions, *Tok Pisin* and mission history. In the Calendar for 2001, it was stated that, "the Divine Word's two year Business Diploma and four-year Degree programs equip graduates with the fundamental knowledge, attitudes and skills to become competent professionals in the corporate and public sectors. All aspects of the programs stress ethical standards in business, something that is unique to DWU. The University offers external diplomas in management and administration to meet employers and workers' need and resources. Teachers' Colleges, Paramedical and Nursing Colleges, and seminaries have also become part of the Divine Word University.

In recent years, Peter Barter praised the contribution that the Divine Word University made to Papua New Guinea and was particularly interested in the Tourism and Hospitality Courses offered:

The Lutheran School of Nursing is affiliated to Divine Word University, and the Madang College of Allied Health Sciences has amalgamated with Divine Word University. The Diploma course in Tourism and Hospitality has been especially welcomed by the Tourism Industry. It has used the tourism and hospitality industry in Madang as a rich resource for work experience and course design. Papua New Guinea, with its incredible diversity of cultures, seascapes and landscapes has an open-ended appeal for tourists – and an opportunity for employment for our young people. Divine Word University is making a great contribution to Papua New Guinea.



*Tusbab High School girl's sports team.*

During 1994, RHI Entertainment chose Madang with its beautiful scenery for the setting of its movie, *Robinson Crusoe*. Other possible sites had been in Australia, Thailand and Malaysia. The Company poured K3.5 million into the local economy, using local actors and extras who were paid a total of K150,000 which was a tremendous boost for the local economy. The Madang people did themselves proud using the traditional culture: their houses; their dress; and their dances. In the film, Pierce Brosnan played main role of Robinson Crusoe and his "house" was a traditional two-storeyed house, near Rempi Village. Carpenters came from Australia and designed it but the local people cut the native materials for them, and hid the nails with the bush vine so that it would look authentic. Shot between June and August, it was seen as a big breakthrough for the promotion of Papua New Guinea overseas and showed they had the potential to produce a good movie given the right infrastructure: some aggressive advertising films like this would help the local Tourism industry. Perhaps because Pierce Brosnan was to become the new James Bond, the film was not seen as being on a par with his new image and was not shown in cinemas in Australia but available only on video.

### **The Boston Project**

The face of the Pacific War was revealed again with the Boston Restoration Project in 1994. Group Captain Armstrong was in charge of the project and said the RAAF aimed to restore two World War II Boston Aircraft to static display standard. One plane that was recovered in 1994 had crash landed in the Ramu River swamps towards the end of 1943, when there were a lot of battles fought. The tail number of the aircraft and the American records are quite detailed. Captain Armstrong explained that, from the records and investigations, it is apparent that the starboard engine had seized probably after being hit by a large piece of shrapnel which was found embedded in the firewall. This fragment had



*Boston Bomber salvaged from the Ramu swamps.*

penetrated the outer skin of the aircraft and chopped the main oil feeder line so the oil pressure to the engine failed, seizing the engine and causing the plane to crash. Although the Boston is capable of flying on one engine, it might not travel very far. The likely scenario is that it was hit by shrapnel on its mission and, not being able to reach its original Base, it landed in the swamp. It was the nature of the aircraft that enabled it to land the way it did. Not only does the Boston aircraft have a flat base, like a bathtub, but the two engine nacelles hang down below the wing quite a distance so that the aircraft almost lands on three points; like landing a mini flying boat. During the landing on the swamp, the aircraft would have pushed the kunai grass over and thus provided a buffer that would have contributed to the relatively undamaged bottom of the aircraft. The aircraft slowly ground to a halt and eventually sunk into the swamp becoming covered by vegetation.

The crew of the plane survived the crash and their names are on file. The Captain was J. L. Folse and the present team contacted the American Embassy giving them details of the aircraft including the tail number. Group Captain Armstrong hoped that, "they will contact these fellows and let them know about the fate of the aircraft: its re-birth so to speak".

Group Captain Armstrong told me:

It was interesting seeing the film of the aircraft rising out of the water. The RAN members of the team put flotation bags under the aircraft bottom surfaces and lifted the plane to the top of the swamp. As it broke through the surface it was raised up and was sitting floating on those bags. We attached a special lifting sling to it and lifted it out using a Russian Mil 26 helicopter. In the recovery operation, 31 men from the RAAF provided the base camp and the recovery organisation, including a diving team. In addition, there was a Navy Airlift Group, the fixed wing support to fly them from Australia to Madang, and then another aircraft, the

Caribou, to get them from Madang to Annaberg. Then the Australian army plane took them to the swamp site where they laid a special pontoon supplied by Jet Float Australia. Interlink provided the rotary wing (helicopter). The amazing thing was when the plane was lifted from the marshes the propellers began turning of their own accord. Although the aircraft has been there since 1943 - that is 51 years - the conditions of the non-ferrous parts is absolutely amazing. Of course, the metal has rusted, but the majority of the alloy materials like glass, plastic and rubber is in first class

condition. For example, a silk parachute and silk cords were found and when cleaned and laid in the sun to dry, there was an unmistakable aroma of mothballs. (Interview, 2 November 1994).

This Boston Project which was scheduled to be finished by the 31 March 1996, the 75th anniversary of the RAAF, had been in progress for about eight years. The RAAF had recovered four and a half aircraft wrecks from the jungles of Papua New Guinea, but they had a quantity of material as against quality.

He continued:

The project was virtually halted because of a lack of critical components. Hence our visit here this week to recover a complete aircraft from the bottom of the swamp near Bumbura Village. We now have five fuselages and nine engines and one set of control surfaces. Significantly, the quality of the parts in this aircraft is so much better.

The inner wings are excellent, only needing a re-paint for restoration. This is a G model. Out of 6 aircraft only one is an A model. The other five are G Models (G being for Gloria, J for Jessica the Australian model). We still have a problem with the A model, but a lot of the parts are common so we can use the components from this aircraft as patterns to repair these and make a second one for the Australian model.

The nose on this plane was almost undamaged so we might use it. We could put this aircraft together as it is, but this would be counter productive because we have the fuselages for both aircraft ready. We were looking for wings and rudders etc. One of those aircraft, a G Model flown by the United States Army Air Corp, will be returned for display at the National Museum and Art Gallery. The other, an A model flown by the 22 squadron, will be retained by the RAAF Museum in Point Cook, Victoria. (ibid).

### Provincial Government Elections

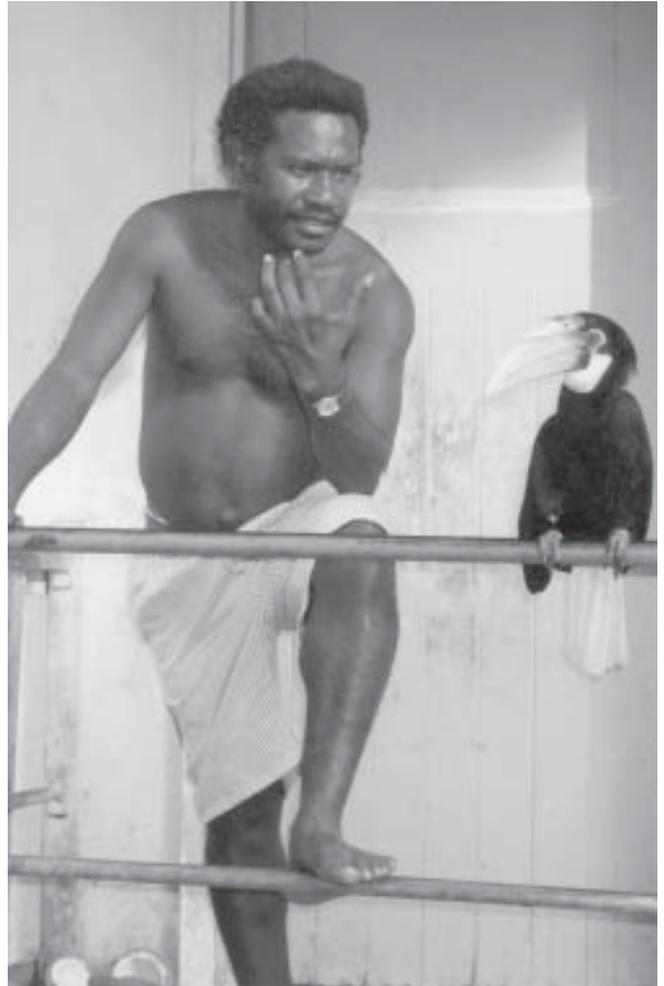
In October 1994, the Madang Provincial government had been suspended for 18 months. However, the time of the suspension was nearly over and had not been renewed. Ousted members were hoping to resume work and even vote for an extended term of office. Mr Castan Maibawa, the National Minister for Provincial Affairs and Village Services, stepped in and announced that the term of office for the current members of the suspended Madang Provincial Government would end that afternoon when writs for the Provincial elections would be issued. To ensure this happened, police were sent to guard the Provincial Government building, “with specific orders to move out any suspended members and their supporters if they forced their way in to occupy their offices”. The Electoral Commissioner, Reuben Kaiulo, said that nominations would close on October 28 with the polling period beginning on 6 November and end on 16 November (*Post Courier*, 13 October, 1997).” Even Mr Wep Kanawi, the Administrator, was working under heavy police guard and had lost the use of his government car because of shortage of funds. As a result, he had been forced to use PMVs to get to and from work and had to join the grassroots people.

In a progress report on 19 October, the returning officer, Mr Abraham Wari, noted that forty-seven candidates had already nominated to contest the elections. Among them was a woman from the Transgogol, Mrs Anilo Saugaria. This same article indicated there had been no reports of violence since the writs were issued. However, the financial situation in Papua New Guinea was affecting even the delivery of the ballot papers.

Mr Wari said:

Our only problem now is that airline and stationary companies are not accepting government ILPOCs [purchase orders] because of the current cash-flow problems faced in the country. As a result, election papers cannot be flown to the returning officers in districts like Saidor, Karkar, Aiome and other smaller out-stations. However with good support from the division of Provincial Affairs in Madang, I was able to get some of these things sorted out (Ibid).

Mr Wari warned that all current and intending candidates should nominate and pay their fees before 28 October when all writs closed. Around town, the campaign for the elections was hotting up. Photographs of the candidates were fixed to trees along Modilon Road in an attempt to influence voters. The main method used was to pile supporters into the back of a utility and boom out slogans so loudly that people stopped to see if there was a riot going on. Onlookers then shook their heads and said, “election *tasol*”. One issue in this election was Madang for Madangs. The Highlanders could win seats by busing their supporters down to vote, and could stack the polls by backing just one man in each electorate. The Madang people on the other hand were cutting their own throats by splitting the vote. For example Karkar Island



*Tabah Silau with his pet kokomo in Madang.*

currently had two Bundi people representing them, even though Bundi is in the mountains. With its small population, Karkar had 41 people standing for the current election. There was a chance that the person elected might not get his money refunded because it is possible that he would not get 10% of the vote.

One of those standing for the elections was Tabah Silau whom I had known in the 1970s as a promising young artist. Now he was interested in politics. I found him standing on the verandah of his house with his pet kokomo bird beside him. I eyed the kokomo’s large beak that kept opening and shutting in greeting as it hopped along the verandah railing towards me. Tabah assured me it was a friendly bird and had just featured in *Robinson Crusoe* alongside Pierce Brosnan. Tabah seemed upset that outsiders were taking the advantage of the complacency of the Madang people. The beauty of Madang and its location beside the sea were drawing many people to the Province and they did not always have the interests of the Madang people at heart. Even in small things like the areas for the Madang people selling artefacts in the markets



By courtesy, Sir Peter Barter

*Settlement near Madang in flood time.*

had been usurped by people from other provinces. Tabah also commented on the Highlands people selling betel nut in their front gardens near the Madang Provincial headquarters. This is highly illegal, as betel nut selling had been banned from the Madang town area for years. The local Madang people had to go outside the town boundary to buy or sell betel nut so it did not seem fair that Highlanders could do it in their front gardens particularly when their husbands had positions in the government.

Tabah was standing for the seat of the area south of Danup, which stretched as far as the Gogol River. This area included the town of Madang as well as the Bel group of people on the small islands near the town including Panitibun, Siar, Kranket, Yabob, and Bilbil. It is this group that I have concentrated much of my research into the culture of the people and the changes over the years. Tabah admitted that the Madang people were slow to become aware of politics and as a result had been dominated by people from other provinces. Tabah felt that the Madang people should be given a chance and be trained in politics. Looking at the history of these people, it must be remembered that they had had contact with outsiders going back to the German, Australian then the Japanese times and they were hesitant to make waves or change the status quo. For too long, they had learnt to be subservient and continued to have this attitude when people from within the country acquired positions of authority. Tabah, realising all this, was hoping to encourage the people to be more politically active, particularly the youth.

Another issue raised was the numerous squatter settlements around the town. Sister Christopher and Sister Joita, of the Missionaries of Charity, offered to take me to the kindergarten school for children from the nearby squatter settlement. After the lessons, we wandered through the settlement which was built in the flood plain. It had been raining and a group of ducks and five little ducklings waddled past. The open gutters carried soapy suds from the women higher up who were doing their washing. The tracks were slippery and the wallowing pigs revelled in the mud. It was November, the beginning of the wet season and, within a month, the river would rise and sweep through the settlement to the floorboard of their houses. "We swim when we want to go to the other side," one girl said. "But then we are frightened of crocodiles. A man let his crocodiles out and now they are breeding." Yet the people were patient and tried to make the best of the situation. They don't own the land and they should not build there, but they go ahead and live there anyway.

We met Mary Leahy who was married to Michael Leahy of the Hagen Leahy fame. Sitting with her baby on her knee Mary spoke about Joe Leahy, her husband's great uncle, who had adopted him when his own father married a European.

An old woman sat guarding her chickens in a pen built high off the ground. She said, "I tried to sell them to Yagaum but they didn't want them; now I'm selling to anyone who wants them at K8.00 each". She sat on her verandah with her legs dangling

above the muddy ground. The Sisters moved around the settlement, calling people by name and asking how they were. They paused to chat if anyone needed help or just for company. They know the poor and the lonely and those who were single and living on their own. Their cheerful disposition spills over into the village as their white saris with the blue stripes become sullied in the mud.

Even in that year, Madang officials were using the removal of these squatter settlements as a way of easing Madang's *raskel* problem. Many of the houses were illegal shanty huts built on government land. However, some people had lived there for generations and it was the only home they knew. It was a very difficult situation. Ten years later in 2004, the Post Courier stated that the Madang Administration had set aside K500,000 in its 2004 budget for the completion of the eviction of squatters in the province and town. The Governor of Madang was quoted as saying that the move was to show that his administration was serious in its efforts to rid the province of illegal settlers and they should voluntarily leave before they were forced to leave their shacks. It remains to be seen whether this move improves the *raskel* problems and the law and order problems in Madang. If young people don't have work and have no access to growing their own food, then they sometimes steal to get money. Others, however, have learnt to be independent and set up their own small businesses.

### **The Catholic Mission**

The Catholic mission in Madang has played a big role in the people's lives since the beginning of the 20th century. The first Bishop in Madang was Bishop Wolf who was appointed in 1922 and died during the war. His successor was Bishop Stephen Apelhans of the United States who died in an airplane crash near Lae in 1951. Bishop Noser followed him and became the first Archbishop of Madang, until his retirement in 1975 when Archbishop Leo Arkfeld took over. Archbishop Arkfeld was well renowned for his flying ability and was a very competent pilot but the main aim of his flying was to keep in touch with the many missions that had been established throughout the Wewak and Madang areas. He flew for nearly 42 years and accumulated 8,615 flying hours with 20,446 flights over the difficult terrain that is found in Papua New Guinea.

In those flights he had but two accidents with no casualties and both planes flew again. All that is a very good record! Also, his proficiency and courage as a pilot are attested to by those who know him, especially all of us who flew with him, and by all that he accomplished through his flying. Nevertheless, Bishop Leo was – and I certainly hope the same can be said of each of us priest-pilots – a better priest than pilot and he put his trust in God! (Fincutter, 1999: 95).

On 13 July 1985, Archbishop Arkfeld celebrated fifty years of mission flying when he blessed a new helicopter for Wirui Air Services in the Madang Divine Word Airways hangar. One of the

speakers was Fr Nilles, veteran missionary of the Chimbu Province, who had flown with the first mission pilots back in the 1930s. Also present at the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration was the Madang Premier, Max Moeder, son of Franz Moeder and grandson of Mama Caroline Schmidtt. But Wirui Air Services began to wind down operations after this time when it became no longer practical to continue the service and an arrangement were made for Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) to take over the service after the mission sold all its equipment in 1990.

Archbishop Arkfeld retired when he turned 75 and Pope John Paul II, appointed Bishop Benedict To Varpin as coadjutor-Archbishop in March 1987. Bishop Benedict was a Tolai from East New Britain. Born in 1936, he was ordained in Rabaul in 1971 and nine years later, was consecrated Bishop of Bereina, where he spent the next seven years before being appointed Archbishop of Madang. When interviewed in 1988 during a visit to Brisbane, Archbishop Benedict said the Church was already flourishing when he arrived in Madang. Out of 300,000 people, there were 100,000 Catholics. One of the most encouraging signs of growth was that the congregations were full of young people at every Mass. The 30 parishes in the Province each had up to 10 outstations. Not all parishes had priests, and parishioners were being encouraged to take a more active part in the Church through the Movement for a Better World. The Church has long had a stabilising effect in Papua New Guinea and proved a pivot for the lives of the people. Culturally, the Catholic Church, in particular, includes traditional colour and *singsings* in the church liturgy so that Confirmations and Ordinations were very big occasions with traditional feasts being held.

There are 60 community schools as well as eight health centres. There are three Congregations of Sisters: the Holy Spirit Sisters in Madang, Manam, Mugil, Megiar and Bogia to name but a few and they now have many local vocations; the Order of Sisters of St Therese, started by Bishop Noser for local girls, also has many members; and the Sisters of Charity.

The Church throughout Papua New Guinea overall is a well-run organisation showing that things done efficiently and money spent wisely brings results. Well run offices, machines that work and a communication network to the out stations means that morale is usually high and the atmosphere pleasant. The Church has not been through the trauma that the National Government has been through and, in times of crisis, the government has come to rely on its services.

As Archbishop Madang, Archbishop Benedict became known as a great builder. He, himself, gives much of the credit to Brother Theo, his manager. "He is a smart man and organises things well. There is a saying, 'The Germans live to work but the Americans work to live' and that is true of Brother Theo". The two of them made a good pair of workers. The story of how they built the Holy Spirit High school at Bogia is one example. It was going to cost a lot of money and critics were asking where were they going to get the money from, but they just went ahead and began clearing



*Before a Confirmation service, Archbishop Benedict stands with his priest and altar boys while the singing group gather behind, ready to be part of the procession.*

the land. They asked the Premier for some money and were given \$33,000. "I got my council together to discuss it and they said have you got two million to start this? No one believed it possible. Now there are four or five hundred students there. They go to grade 10 and then either go to Malala or they can go to St Benedict's Agricultural Training Centre."

After his appointment, Archbishop Benedict was busy fixing up old Church buildings as well as setting up new parishes. Some parishes named as being improved were: Gusap, near the Ramu sugar factory, which is run by a German priest, Fr Hans Dapper; Kwanga Station which has a big health centre and new buildings with a new permanent church; Megiar has quite a large station with accommodation and training for catechists run by Sr Dominique; Mugil has a big Catholic health centre and this looks after people all the way to Bogia; Saidor on the Rai Coast has a church, and four outstations which Bishop Benedict visits by car in the dry season; Ariangon has a new health centre and house for the priest, new classrooms and new houses for the teachers and nurses; Banara has a big school; Biang, on Manam Island, has a church, health centre and school.

One of Archbishop Benedict's favourite projects was the St Benedict's Agriculture Centre in Madang. The motto is *Orare et Laborare* (to pray and to work). There the students learn pottery, piggery, copra production and agriculture so they can learn to cultivate their land. The mission obtained a loan of 3 million

from the bank and over the years managed to pay it back. It is named after St Benedict, a great saint for the youth.

Archbishop Benedict described the work in the Halopa outstation eight hours walk inland from the Halopa Mission. The builders used an army helicopter to get the materials in.

He said:

Halopa is just near Alexishafen. Previously the road was good and I could get up there easily. Now because of no maintenance we have to use a four-wheel drive. There is a problem everywhere in Papua New Guinea. The politicians get money for roads and they build them but there is no maintenance afterwards. Even bitumen roads are not kept up. In Halopa there is a nice school with a view looking over the ocean. I used to go there often but now the road is wrecked. I asked Peter Barter if he could take me up by helicopter but I was squashed in the helicopter. When I saw the doctor about my health problems he told me to forget about rough roads and helicopters and speedboats. It was at this time that I was thinking of retiring.

Archbishop Benedict, suffering health problems, retired on 24 July 2001 and returned to New Britain. The next Archbishop of Madang was Archbishop William Kurtz, a Polish Bishop previously in the Kundiawa Diocese. Originally from Upper

Silesia which is now part of Poland, he arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1967 and was Parish Priest of Mai for thirteen years and then pastor of Koge as well as being Bishop Caesar's vicar general in the Simbu.

### The Lutheran Church

Lutheran Pastor, Magob Krou, is from Galek on the Rai Coast and was knowledgeable about the culture of his people. Galek Village was famous for its bow and arrows, wooden plates and bowls and *mal* and the village had trading partners in the bush and used to bring plates down and then exchange them for pots. In 1994, Pastor Krou spoke about the developments in the Lutheran Church in Madang Province and the previous areas of influence that the German Government had initiated. Things had changed now because there were Catholic mission stations in the middle of the Lutheran areas and also Lutheran mission stations in the Catholic areas as on the North Coast. In the Madang town, most of the population is Lutheran as also in Astrolabe Bay, but from Riwo to Malala and Bogia and inland North Coast is Catholic. Previously the Catholics outnumbered the Lutherans but now, according to Pastor Krou, the Lutherans were catching up as they work more closely with the people. There have been cargo cult overtones when the people thought the good times would come, but not so much now. Another problem mentioned by Pastor Krou was the smaller religious groups that had come into the Madang area; Gospel Lighthouse; Nazerenes; and Baptist. These people sing songs and throw their hands around. Many Lutherans join these other churches to have a look at their style but then they do not like what they see and they come back to the Lutheran Church. The Lutherans thought that it was only Lutherans that left and joined the other churches but then they found out that Catholics, Anglicans and United Church people were leaving to join these other churches as well.

Pastor Krou continues:

The Lutherans decided to begin a renewal movement so people would stay with the church instead of trying to find new ways of praying outside the church. Lutheran Renewal gets some ideas from the Gospel Lighthouse and the Assemblies of God. However, the new way of praying does not appeal to everyone. The old Lutherans prefer the old ways and they are not happy with the Lutheran Renewal which started at Meiro and the Lutheran church in town. Every Saturday night, the youth gather and sing songs and pray - maybe later it might become a service. The youth are happy, but the parents are afraid. Now we have two types of service - for the old and the young. The liturgy in the different services is the same, but when the pastor prays everyone prays which is hard for the old ones. There is a Lutheran primary and secondary school for girls at Baitabag and at Amron there is the Lutheran evangelist training centre and *tok ples* teacher training. Madang has two districts, Karkar Island and Madang. Karkar looks after itself and Bagbag

Island with its own circuits and parishes. Madang is a district and has eight circuits. Each circuit has a president, headmen and councillors and is made up of parishes which were divided into congregations. Six or seven congregations make up a parish. The district looks after all of them. The Ramu doesn't have a circuit but a congregation which is under Madang. The Madang District incorporates the Sepik River area at Angoram and Biwat and at Wewak. They don't have a parish or circuit yet because they don't have the numbers. In Biwat, half of the people are Catholic and half Lutheran.

Another day I interviewed Pastor Kamanang Namur who had just returned from a week-long meeting at Fulman in the Amele area. The gathering included all the 7 circuit leaders, 7 pastors and 7 headmen who represented the church in each area. Pastor Kamanang is the leader of the Amele Circuit and has to report on any problems the villagers have as well as bring messages back from the meetings to the villages afterwards. At the moment, the problems were law and order, keeping the Church strong, and the problems of the smaller churches that are coming in and converting Lutherans to other faiths. He said there were a few Europeans, all Germans, working for the church, one each at Bagasin, Wanima, Ranura, and Biliau. He saw that the women filled an important role in the Church working in the church, teaching others how to sew, mothercraft, Christian life, bible study and marriage counselling. In the Bel language group, this is called *dinekpain* (women's support group). The church has women's groups and so does the government. "If the women wish they can join the government women's group. I don't have any problems with that".

The Lutheran Church also has a few businesses such as Lutheran Shipping which is run on a business basis. It helps church members go to and from church conferences but they have to pay for their fares, and it provides transport for other people as well. The Lutheran Church used to have plantations, like Nagada, but now they have let them go back to the original owners. Lutheran technical services have also stopped their garage workshops. Kristen Pres, KPI, also belongs to the Lutheran Church, but it is also run as a business and if the church wants it to print calendars or books, it has to pay for them. The Christian Book Centre belongs to KPI.<sup>2</sup>

The scholars in the Lutheran Church are studying the mythology of the people in order to understand their thinking better and to come to terms with the two brother mythology found along the North Coast of Madang. There are various versions of Kilibob and Manup and each calls for the final reconciliation of the two brothers:

The final reconciliation of the Two Brothers is yet to come, but that it must take place in the here and now. Woe to us, if that innocent call has been silenced and has given place to the silent stalking of the rascal gangs, skilled in the art of squatter settlement of guerilla warfare, with their chance to

pounce and to snatch for themselves that which their more favoured Brothers have failed to share with them and theirs (Pech, 1991).

The ecumenical movement is strong in the Madang Province and in Papua New Guinea as well, especially between the Catholics, Anglicans, United Church and Lutherans. They are working well together and this could have been a trend that started at the time of the war. Archbishop Benedict was the chairman of an Ecumenical group to work with the other churches and was also a member of the local Council of Churches. When the World Council of Churches met in Geneva they invited him to go. Their headquarters is near the United Nations building and it is a big organisation. There are 1.9 billion Christians altogether in the world and, of these, 1 billion are Catholics.

The Lutheran church leaders see themselves as having “cooperated extensively with other churches in the past twenty years, most of this cooperation has been on the practical and organizational level. Little has been done in the sensitive theological level except with the Uniting Church” (Wagner, 1986: 350). The Lutherans acknowledged an important step in ecumenical movements in Papua New Guinea when the Lutheran, Uniting and Anglican Churches joined forces in a joint venture with the Catholic-owned *Wantok* Publishing and the *Times of Papua New Guinea*. The Churches became shareholder in a new company called Media Holdings in which the Lutheran Church has a 20 percent holding.

Another successful ecumenical cooperation was the creation of the Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, based in Goroka and staffed by members of the various churches. One of its publications is a quarterly magazine, *Catalyst*, which is a Social Pastoral Magazine for Melanesia, acknowledging that the Church affects the social as well as religious aspects of the people’s lives. The permanent members of the editorial board in 1975 were: Fr Joseph Knoebel SVD the director; Fr Hermann Janssen MSC, assistant Director; and Rev Robert Jamieson, member of the board. The latter, Robert Jamieson, was the Lutheran pastor in Mt Hagen and, in 1974, joined the staff at the Melanesian Institute for nearly three years. Fr Nilles of the Simbu area wrote to *Catalyst* with his suggestion that the missions should acknowledge the spirits of the ancestors. “The commemoration of the ancestor spirits in our Christian liturgy and rituals would give the Melanesian Christian the joyful realisation of worshipping God with the help and in communion with his ancestor spirits” (1977: vol 7, 53). He also recommended that the church use the name of the good spirit or god of their customs in the new liturgy. For example the Lutherans use the term *Anut* or *Anutu* in the Madang area to refer to God.<sup>3</sup>

### Womens’s Movements

Women in traditional society could not join in the *meziab* ceremonies and faced the death penalty if they so much as put it their foot in the door of the *meziab* house or watched the secret ceremonies. Opening the men’s spirit house at the beginning of

last century may have had adverse affects on the culture at the time but it was the only way forward. With the breaking of the power of the *meziab*, the women were liberated spiritually.

Traditionally, women of the Bel group held a powerful economic position as makers of earthenware pots, bilums, grass skirts and baskets all of which were used as trade items around Astrolabe Bay. Without the traditional skills of the women, there would have been no exchanges for food so desperately needed for survival. With the menfolk, they also gardened, growing the fruit and vegetables needed for the local subsistence economy, which is still the backbone of village life. When the men were off discussing cargo cult issues, it was the women who kept the village life and family life going with their care and attention. Now, with education, they can get employment with the government as teachers, nurses and secretaries even though most of the senior positions are still held by men. But many women still opt to live a peaceful village life carrying on the subsistence economy. Over the years, many Madang women turned to the missions for support and gradually formed their own church groups where they were trained to be wives and mothers under Christian principles. Some became leaders of their church groups but leadership in the economic and political world was still not encouraged.

Now there are new opportunities for local women to join international women’s groups in the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) that meets every three years in different countries. Started in 1930, it meets to address women’s problems internationally. In Papua New Guinea, the Country Woman’s Associations (CWA) began as an association for expatriate women and gave them a chance to meet, develop craft skills and learn



*Petronella Sampain. Her grandfather, Ber Nansi, would be proud of her.*

about the world through international days. Since 1972, local women were encouraged to join the CWA by the then Patroness, Mrs Johnson, wife of the then Administrator. At that stage, there were forty local women in the Association, many in Hanuabada village, Port Moresby, where the women saw it as a way to support each other. As in other years, in 1980, several expatriate members of CWA represented Papua New Guinea at the ACWW Conference in Hamburg, Germany. By 1994, the ACWW rightly expected that local women represent their county at the worldwide event and this has happened.



*Catholic Women on the move at the Catholic Centre, Madang.*

In 1994, the Madang Branch of the CWA had changed little. Meetings are still held in the cottage down near the water and most of the members were expatriate women. Meetings were now held in the afternoon because of security problems and there were many activities. Unfortunately, only a few local women go to the meetings. The Provincial Women's Council had run workshops but these were at a standstill because of lack of leadership in the council itself. There were two groups, the Women's Council and the Women's Awareness Group and a meeting was called to sort out the differences between the two groups but this was unsuccessful. Maureen Hill, who has lived in Madang since the 1960s, and was President of CWA for many years, said the best idea was to use the women's groups already established to form an umbrella group over the top.

In September 1994, the tenth anniversary of the founding of the National Catholic Women's Federation, women from the Madang Province attended the Federation's Conference in Port Moresby. The representatives came from the Holy Spirit Parish, Yomba, Ramu Sugar, Utu, Alexishafen, and Saidor. Ms Petronella Sampain made the uniforms and screen-printed the laplaps as well as arranging the tickets for the group booking. The Conference was held at the Don Bosco Centre, Gabutu and was opened by Archbishop Sir Peter Korongku. The theme of the Conference was, "Good families build a strong Nation". The Papal Nuncio said Mass for the group and Bernard Narakobi spoke about materialism, which was affecting families and happiness. There were over two thousand women representatives at this National Conference. It showed that Catholic Women could organise such a meeting in their provinces and then come together.

Petronella Sampain, from Yabob Village, is a good representative of a modern Bel woman. Her grandfather was my old friend Ber Nanci who had been the headman of his clan, the clan which invited Fr Aufinger to become their parish priest early in the twentieth century. As a child, Petronella attended the Gum Community School in Madang for six years, finishing her education at Grade Six level. After this, she attended the Vocational School at Alexishafen, and trained and worked as a cook for many years. Petronella says she owes her success to the endeavours of Fr William Saiko, who was her Parish Priest, and who encouraged her to continue her education. She began Grade 7 when she was 24 years old, through the College of Distance Education and, by 1987, she had completed Grade 10. She said later, "Everything is not that easy, you work for it and then you will be proud of the outcome of your hard work". Petronella studied for her Diploma in Social Development from the Administrative College and after getting her Diploma, she worked in administration, developing workshops and project funding. In 1994, she worked as the Catholic Women's Co-ordinator and with the Justice, Peace and Development Office of the Archdiocese of Madang. As well as travelling inside Papua New Guinea, Petronella also travels overseas to Conferences on Justice and Peace and Pacific Partnerships. She gets much fulfilment out of her role helping the Catholic Women's group in Madang and had organised them to go to the recent Conference in Port Moresby. When Petronella attends meetings with the other women, she takes along the bilum she is working on and through her example shows the women they should continue their traditional skills. Now another generation of women keep up with the standards set by their ancestors. Caring for their families is what they are good at

but, gradually, some are taking leadership roles and even venturing into politics despite the barbs of men who discourage them. Women are good organisers and good peacemakers. Petronella said that issues like health, education and youth are not receiving the proper attention and would perhaps be best handled by women. Her grandfather, Ber Nanci, would be proud of Petronella.

The movement, Women in Politics, was founded in 1986 to help women take their place in politics. However there are a few issues that need to be tackled before this happens. Women of the country must be ready to support female candidates if they think they can do the job. Currently, women are expected to vote for the candidate of their husband's choice and there is trouble if they don't. Men think that they alone should speak for the women, as that has been their traditional pattern. The *yu meri tasol* (you are only women) attitude needs to change. Women are becoming aware of their position and are frustrated at seeing their poor representation in Parliament which seems to be the new *haus tambaran* (men's house). Since Independence in 1975, there have only been four women representatives and, from 1987 to 1997, there were no female representatives in the benches of parliament, so it was a real men's house. In October 2001, the Women in Politics Symposium was held in Madang to encourage women to take their place in both the National and local political affairs. However the efforts to change the status quo have not produced results yet but, in time, women will show their worth in Papua New Guinea (Development Bulletin, October 2002).

### Economic Development

The Rural Development Incentive was introduced in 1988 to help economic progress in less developed areas. In the early 1980s, the Madang Province's main industry was agriculture with cocoa and copra being the most important. However, robusta and arabica coffee were also grown. Near Bundi, there was a cardamom plantation with potential for growing spices, pineapples, tropical fruits and vegetables (Investors' Guide). The Pioneer Industries Scheme was revived in 1991 to target development of new industries in the country. This scheme provides a five-year tax holiday for pioneer or new industries. "Since 1987, development expenditure by companies on land for primary production has been deductible by the shareholders of those companies." To encourage businesses within the Province, schemes and incentives for developing businesses were varied and innovative (Ibid).

A furniture business, the Tumbuna Factory, run by Sepik carvers began well and received a grant from the European Union for a building. On 6 September 1994, Mr and Mrs Poole of the European Union came on an official visit to Madang and, while there, opened the Factory. The idea of the grant was to help set up projects that would make the people economically independent. During the opening ceremony, the Administrator, Mr Wep Kanawi, thanked the European Union for their support of projects in the Madang Province. At this stage the European Union had approved a total of K23.5 million for projects including the



*JANT wood chip mill is a feature on the Madang skyline.*

Yandera rehabilitation program, rural water projects and the sealing of the Ramu Highway.

Rainforest once covered about 87% of the land in Madang Province. While keeping in mind the need for conservation, it must be recognised that timber is a valuable natural resource. In Madang, Japan and New Guinea Timbers, JANT, was established in the early 1970s with the cooperation of the Japanese and Australian Governments. A large chip mill was built near Madang airport at a cost of K2.5 million and the company spent a further K2.5 on roads to the bush areas which opened up previously inaccessible areas. JANT has operated for twenty years clearing and pulping hardwood trees to export to its mother company, Honshu Paper in Japan, to make cardboard packaging. It is the only place in the world where clear felling of tropical hardwoods is occurring exclusively for wood pulp (De'Ath, 1980: 1). The company has established extensive reforestation areas and one third of its wood chips in 1994 is from reforestation programs and, by 1998, it is hoped that the wood chips would come entirely from these areas. Wewak Timbers, an affiliate of JANT, began logging hardwood timbers from Madang in 1969 in a normal logging and milling operation. Dr Colin De'Ath wrote an extensive report on the operations of JANT and its effect on the local people and, in this, he noted that JANT declared it was running at a loss and did not pay company tax in 1977 (ibid).

Generally, JANT has been attempting biodiversity in natural forests through its plantation programme. Until 1989, the company was clear felling natural forests of kwila and other hardwoods to be turned into chips. However, since 1990, it is increasingly using plantations of eucalypts and, in the future, JANT is hoping to depend only on plantation growth for its chips. However there is still opposition from the local villagers, particularly those in the timber zones. Villager Komon complained that JANT disturbed the water and the clay areas needed for their pots:

The fruit trees are finished now. It is hard to find materials to build houses. Trees and vines in the timber area are gone now and the people who live there find it very difficult. The people need *morata* and wood for their houses and bush vines to tie everything together. For the future, things don't look good inside the timber area of the JANT Company.

The ground is no longer any good for gardens and the water is polluted (Interview 1994).

The government began investigating the possibility of a sugar industry in the Ramu Valley about 1978 and, after feasibility studies, a joint venture, Ramu Sugar Pty Ltd, was set up with the Commonwealth Development Corporation, Booker Agriculture International and some foreign and local investors with an initial investment of K70 million. Most of that part of the Ramu valley was kunai grass, which was quickly cleared to make way for the sugar. One of the aims was to meet the entire sugar demands for Papua New Guinea. The first crop was harvested in June 1982 with 114,000 tonnes of cane and processed in the factory. By the end of 1982, 6180 hectares was been planted with sugar cane.

Hollie Smith describes progress:

The valley's traditional landowners were participating in the project through Ramu's small holder scheme. The company provides technical expertise, field preparation, seed cane and agro-chemicals to people wishing to establish smallholder cane fields. Payment of required services is made when the harvested cane is sold to the company at the factory door. During its first year of operation, the scheme resulted in 80 hectares of small holder cane and this figure is expected to rise to 700 hectares in 1984. For the first time, Ramu landowners had an opportunity to participate in Papua New Guinea's cash economy without leaving home (*Paradise*, March 1984).

Ramu Sugar seems like a win-win situation benefiting the company as well as the people at the grassroots. In 2001, they made a large profit in their 25<sup>th</sup> year of operation. Peter Colton, Chairman of the company, said that sugar was a renewable resource of Papua New Guinea and noted that, while the mines and the forests of Papua New Guinea might run out within years, the sugar industry would go from strength to strength.

The future in livestock production could be in the Ramu and Transgogol areas where large tracts of land were available for development with the country's largest meat cannery being located in Madang town.

The Tuna Fishing Industry was established in Madang in the 1990s on a site that was once Vidar plantation belonging to the Alexishafen Mission. Archbishop Benedict negotiated on behalf of the mission and, with a view to providing jobs for the local people, sold the land to the Government who then leased it to ZZZ Canning Pty Ltd owned by Lawrence Zuanich, an American Ukrainian. Mr Zuanich had a plan to put up a fish cannery on the property but it was dropped when he went bankrupt in 1994. On 27 January, 1997, his debts were paid off through the sale when RD Tuna Cannery Pty Ltd bought the 860-hectare property for K3 million.

The Sullivan Report by Nancy Sullivan Pty Ltd in 2003, after the cannery had been in operation for several years, studied the effects of the cannery on the traditional life of the village people, some of whom were Bel people in Siar. It stated, "PNG is one of the places where social change is not always a threat to cultural integrity and where it is not possible to simply shrug off cultural loss as an inevitable by-product of development". However, cultural changes have been ongoing for the last century and the trading and exchange systems have been eroded over time by many other forces of change.

The Report made a list of the problems caused by RD Cannery: Fishing resources had been depleted in the Madang Harbour; the lights, noise and smell disturbed the local villagers; and people were forced to work for RD once their customary ways of fishing had been lost. In the sociocultural area, the wages paid gave the youth and women a measure of independence they had not had before and this caused some breakdown of family life as social obligations were neglected and there was a growing lack of respect for the elders in the villages. However, this trend had already started with the general breakdown of law and order and the introduction of drugs before the cannery was opened.

In Nobonob, according to the Report, the traditional initiation ceremony, which was carried out as late as 2001, is no longer done because, "elders fear the young men are neither as fit nor as pure as they need to be to endure its physical demands". These initiation ceremonies are held only every few years and hopefully will continue as it is one way of instilling some respect for the elders and of teaching the young the ways of behaviour. The Report added, "in Seg, the young women are selling themselves to get the fish they used to call their own". This is of grave concern.

Economic changes mean that the, "traditional customary trade practices of fishing and gardening have now been hurtled into the cash economy" (Sullivan Report). However, this has been happening since the German times when the people were forced to earn money to pay the annual tax. Trading and exchange systems have been changing for over a century and this effected the people's way of living long ago. Even religious changes were listed in the Report as fewer people were attending church services after a breakdown in their traditional way of life. Although mention was made of the scholarships to children of the St Michael's School, they were seen as inadequate in the light of the affect the cannery was having on the local people's way of life. Most of the Report was negative, although it had set out to list both positive and negative effects of the industry. Overall, it was proposed that the cannery be closed down until the issues of hygiene in the factory, equitable wages and many other issues had been resolved.

Two years later, several articles appeared in the media giving a more positive side to the cannery. The factory employs 3,500 workers and produces tinned fish for both the local and exports markets bringing much needed money into the local economy.



*Man and canoe near the Ramu River. People like this need to have their environment protected for the future.*

Payday sees the workers heading to Madang town to spend their pay cheques at the four largest shops, Best Buy, RabTrade, MST Supermarket and Madang Butchery, to buy various household items such as rice, flour, salt, chickens and pork and, of course, Diana Tuna fish from the cannery. The Company also offers scholarships to local children from the St Michael's School and these will increase on a yearly basis. The local villagers own the bus company, which transports workers to and from the town, and this brings in local revenue. On the negative side, there still have been complaints of the pollution in the local lagoon and of the smell and noise that affects nearby villages and the local fishermen complain that fish stocks are depleted.

The controversy continues. Meanwhile the Company has its own concerns that future tailings into Astrolabe Bay from the Ramu Nickel mine might affect fish stocks.

The Ramu nickel ore body was first discovered by the Australian Bureau of Mineral Resources in 1962, and investigations proved reserves of 143 million tonnes of ore. Highlands Pacific became involved in 1997 after acquiring a stake in the original company. In 2004, a deal was negotiated with the Chinese government and the state-owned Chinese Metallurgical Construction Company to establish the K2b Ramu Nickel Project. The Chinese want the nickel as part of their requirements for steel production. There will be a two-year construction period before mining commences and, at a rate of 232,000 tonnes of ore per year, the mine life is expected to be 40 years.

Opposition to the proposed nickel mine came from the churches, university experts, international environmental experts and even some Papua New Guinea government agencies such as the National Fisheries Authority. The latter feared contamination of Astrolabe Bay waters, which were described as the pristine Vitiáz Basin. They added that it might affect the tuna fishing industry in Madang Harbour, which was the biggest in Papua New Guinea. Despite the opposition, the Papua New Guinea Government was

satisfied with the Environmental Plan presented to it and it seems that the mine will go ahead.

By 2005, many of the local landowners in the Ramu Valley approved of the mine as they could see the financial benefits of such a project. However, concerns have been raised amongst village people downstream of the proposed mining operation and along the coastal village areas where mine wastes will be dumped, having an adverse affect on the local fishing if tailings solids release metals and unknown toxins into the sea.

The risks to the ecology, fish, animal and plant life in Astrolabe Bay cannot be accurately predicted. An old Rai Coast man even warned that the cargo mentality may even be re-born in the aftermath of the mine if people expect large amounts of material goods to appear, without any effort on their part:

We had the first church, mission school and station in 1886, and we were the first to see white man and other happenings recorded in the history of Papua New Guinea. On the Rai Coast, there is not much but we have a history of cargo cults, also, to preserve our environment and hope for goods and services to come from the sky.

It was this same Astrolabe Bay and Rai Coast that were once the scene of the trading trips of the Madang sailors when selling their pots along the Rai Coast at Bongu, Erima and Saidor and collecting the many artefacts produced by these places. Now the mine is set to extract nickel ore from deep within the earth's surface at a price well beyond what those traditional traders ever dreamt of and this local product could be the basis of the future development in the Madang Province.

Ancestors were important to the Bel group as they are to all people in Papua New Guinea. They provided people with identity and behavioural norms from previous generations. Ancestors were thought to be present in the village life and the people maintain the good life by keeping appropriate relationships with people whether they be alive or dead. Considering the changes that have taken place in Madang in all areas of society, in politics, economics and spiritual dimensions, I think the ancestors of the Bel people would be justly proud of their descendants today. They have adapted well and continue to value their common ancestry, traditions and culture of their past which they will carry with them into the future and pass them onto future generations.

1. Report prepared by the Health Branch of the Department of Madang Province, 14 July 1994.

2. Within a few years Kristen Pres was in financial difficulties and was bought out by Papua New Guinea Printing.

3. Anutu Conquers in New Guinea is a book on the Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea.

## Timeline for Madang and Papua New Guinea.

C 40,000 ago	The first people reached the Northeast Coast of Papua New Guinea.		<b>1884 to 1914, German New Guinea Administration</b>
C 3,200 ago	The first Austronesian speakers arrived in coastal Papua New Guinea, but it is possible that a major tsunami wiped out any communities that had been established.	1884, 12 Nov.	Acting for the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie, Otto Finsch took possession of the north eastern side of New Guinea. He named the harbour Friedrich Wilhelmshafen.
C 1,700 ago	Archaeological finds at Sio indicate people were making pottery which can be considered ancestral to that made by their descendants in recent times.	1885-1889	The colony was administered by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie and the first capital was at Finschhafen.
C 1,000 ago	Similar pottery that was probably made by potters living in the Madang area first appears about 1,000 years ago.	1887	The Lutherans began a mission on the Rai Coast.
1526	Jorge de Meneses, a Portuguese Governor to the Moluccas, named New Guinea, Ilhas dos Papuas.	1891	Lutheran Missionaries moved to the Madang area. Two missionaries and fourteen labourers were murdered near Hatzfeldthafen when they tried to establish a mission station there.
1643	Dutchman Abel Tasman sighted Umboi and Bagabag islands.	1892	Purchase of the site of the future Madang township near the present wharf.
1827	Dumont d'Urville entered Astrolabe Bay and named it after his ship. He made a running survey of the north coast.	Sept.	The German Neu Guinea Kompagnie begins clearing land for Modilon Plantation.
c1800	A three-masted ship comes to Budup and is washed ashore by a tidal wave.	1896, 13 Aug	Six Divine Word Missionaries (Catholics) arrived at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. They sailed on to Tumleo, near Aitape.
1871	Miklouho Maclay settled on the Rai Coast at Bongu.	1897, July	Members of the Ehlers-Piering expedition were killed at Stephansort.
1876	Maclay's second visit.		Von Hagen, the Director General of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie and Administrator was killed on the Rai Coast while trying to apprehend the murderers.
1881	Romilly (British Deputy high Commissioner of the Western Pacific) made a formal visit to the Rai Coast.	1897	The headquarters of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie shifted to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. It was now to be the capital of German New Guinea for two years.
1881	Otto Finsch, representing a German trading group, called into the Rai Coast to investigate commercial possibilities.	1899	The German Government relieved the Neu Guinea Kompagnie of its administrative powers and the Capital of German New Guinea was shifted to Herbertshohe (Kokopo).
Oct.	Papua (the southeastern quarter of the island) was claimed by Britain as a Protectorate.		
1883	Maclay returns for a brief visit.	1900	Hahl appointed village leaders, with the title, <i>luluai</i> from among village headmen in the

	Gazelle Peninsula and, in 1904, in the Madang area. Their deputies were called <i>tultul</i> .	1922	G.W.L. Townsend was appointed Patrol Officer in the Madang District. Don Waugh was the District Officer and Ward Oakley was his deputy.
1901-1902	The German Report for this year describes Madang as "the seat of the Administration of Kaiser Wilhelmsland and at the same time as the headquarters of the Neu Guinea Kompagnie. Nearly 540 hectares of land was under cultivation for Modilon Plantation.	1933	Judge Phillips' findings led to legislation over the land between the Gum and the Gogol Rivers.
1904	First Revolt planned for July among island villagers.	1936	Patrol Officer Nurton was attacked and badly wounded while on patrol on the Rai Coast. Ward Oakley became District Officer.
1905	The Catholic Mission was started at Alexishafen by the Divine Word Missionaries.	<b>The Catholic Mission in the 1920's and 1930's</b>	
1907	First Government School was opened at Namanula, Rabaul with some students going there from Madang.	1922	German Bishop Wolf was appointed to New Guinea and took up residence in Alexishafen.
1912	Second "Revolt" among the Bilibil, Yabobs, Siars, and Krankets.	1926	Father Ross, the first American Priest in New Guinea, arrived. He became Bishop Wolf's secretary.
<b>1914 to 1921, First World War, Australian Military Administration.</b>		1931	New Guinea Pidgin became the lingua franca of the Catholic Mission.
1914, 17 Sept.	The Terms of Capitulation was signed by Holmes and Haber, the German Acting Governor.	1932	Father Schaefer and Brother Anton Baas cross the Ramu River and established Guyebi Mission in the Bismarck ranges.
24 Sept.	Fall of Madang to the Australians.	1933	Bundi Mission opened.
1915	Holmes recalled.	1934, Mar.	Father Ross, Father Schaefer and their party walked from Bogadjim to Bundi and over the Bismarck Range in the Chimbu Valley and up the Whagi Valley as far as Mt Hagen.
Jan.	S.A. Pethebridge succeeded Holmes.	1935	MIVA of Germany donated a two-seater monoplane, <i>Paulus</i> , and later a larger plane, <i>Petrus</i> .
1915	The first Madang Garrison Commander and District Officer was Lieutenant Ogilvy.	1938, Oct.	Minor Seminary opened at Alexishafen with five seminarians.
1919.	Treaty of Versailles.	1939, 6 Aug.	Five missionaries were killed at Alexishafen when an overloaded mission plane took off.
1914-20	Missions continued as before.	<b>The Lutheran Mission in the 1920's and 1930's</b>	
1920	New Guinea Act was passed by the Australian Parliament and came into force in May 1921.	1918	Amele Station opened near Madang.
<b>1921 to 1941, Australian Mandate in New Guinea,</b>		1923	Samoan evangelist went with evangelists to Biliau on the Rai Coast. At a Conference at Nabonob the elders banned all dancing in Lutheran congregations.
1921	The capital of the Mandated territory was Rabaul with Wisdom being the first Administrator. The Madang District borders were increased to include parts of the Central Highlands	1930	Dr Braun arrived in Madang to take over Amele Hospital.
1920-21	The Australian Government set about expropriating German plantations.		

1934, June	Dr Braun and several other Lutheran missionaries made a trek into the Highlands of New Guinea, establishing a mission at Ogelbeng, near Mt Hagen.	1969	Opening of Wewak Timbers
		1971	Madang Town Interim Commission (formerly known as Madang Town Council) was established under an Act of Parliament in 1971. In that time Madang Town Council covered 10 Wards with two Councillors representing each ward, making a total of twenty (20).
<b>1941 to 1945, Second World War II, the Japanese Occupation.</b>			
1941, 25 Dec.	All European women in Madang were evacuated.		
1942, 21 Jan	Madang was bombed by the Japanese on 30 January.		
30 Jan.	Coastwatchers received an urgent message to withdraw to Kainantu.		
1942, 18 Dec.	The Japanese landed at Madang.		
23 Dec.	Alexishafen occupied.		
2 Mar.	Battle of the Bismarck Sea, Japan's greatest defeat in the South Pacific.		
1944, 6 Feb.	The <i>Dorish Maru</i> was attacked off Wewak.		
1945, 20 Feb.	20th February, 903 Australian troops of the First Army were stationed at Madang.		
15 Aug.	Japan surrendered.		
13 Sep.	General Adachi surrendered at Wewak.		
<b>Post war Years in Madang</b>			
1946	Trusteeship Administration in the Southern Madang District took over from ANGAU. From now on, Papua and the Trust Territory of New Guinea were both administered from Port Moresby.	1994	<i>Robinson Crusoe</i> was shot in Madang by RHI Entertainment.
		1994	Boston Restoration Project by RAAF.
		1996	Opening of the Divine word University.
1951	The Legislative Council had its first sitting.	1997	RD Fishing Cannery begins operation in Madang at Vidar Plantation.
1960's	Yomba Plantation taken over by the government for development. The administrative centre was shifted there and 45 acres of land was made available for more industrial development.	2004 Oct.	Manam Island erupted.
		2005	Ramu Nickel Mine Project Agreement by China.
1962	The opening of the Lae-Highlands Highway.	2005 Sep.	Celebrations of Thirty years of Independence.
1964	The House of Assembly replaced the Legislative Council. As Papua New Guinea was not yet independent, it was still governed by the Administrator.		
1966.	The population of the Madang District was 152,047 of whom 2,061 were expatriates. Population of Madang Town at this same time was 14,628.		



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## Glossary

### A

- Anut* Ancestral spirit. Some said *Anut* was their name for God.  
*As ples* Original place, birthplace.  
*Atat* T shaped stanchion to support the platform.

### B

- Bai* Planks or strakes tied to the tilau of the canoe.  
*Bai nanun* Smaller strake or plank meaning child strake.  
*Bai tinan* Large bottom strake of the canoe, mother strake.  
*Baza* A type of magic used against black magic.  
*Bel* Stomach, spirit of unity.  
*Bilas* Decoration especially for singsings.  
*Bilum* Netbag used by the women.  
*Biris stars* The Pleiades or seven sister cluster of stars.  
*Brus* Tobacco.  
*Buai* Betelnut, fruit of the Areca catechu.  
*Bulra* Chest ornament made up of pigs' tusks.  
*Bumbum or Bombom* A torch made of dried coconut leaves.

### D

- Dadau* A northwest wind.  
*Dadeng* Market day for selling the pots. Sailing to sell pots.  
*Daig* A singsing that was bought as a trade item.  
*Damdam* Breakwater at front of the canoe.  
*Darem* Men's House; house tambaran where the *meziab* took place.  
*Didiman* An agricultural officer.  
*Dim putty* Putty made by scraping the bark of the dim tree.  
*Dim sol* Tool made from a pig's bone for inserting putty into the cracks.  
*Dinau* A debt or obligation, delayed payment.  
*Dodo Yawarti* A south east wind.  
*Dom* The wooden connectives joining the crossbeams to the float.

### G

- Gagaren* The pot cage on the canoe.  
*Garabud* Leaves used to make the sail.  
*Garamut* Large drum, slit gong.  
*Gau* One type of canoe tree.  
*Giaman saman* A temporary outrigger.  
*Gimagim* The boards for the crew to walk on.

- Gone finis* Left Papua New Guinea  
*Gorgor* A type of ginger (*Alpinia*) whose roots are used in sorcery.  
*Gungun* Posts used to support the shelter on the canoe.

### H

- Haus boi* Men's ceremonial house.  
*Haus tambaran* Ancestral Spirit House.  
*Haus wind* Garden house to catch the breeze.

### K

- Kadal tamol* A sorcerer, a magician.  
*Kairgat* The kina shells used the scrap the *dim* putty.  
*Kambung* Lime chewed with betelnut to give the red colouring.  
*Kangal* Feathers.  
*Karag* Angry man or fierce wind from the south east.  
*Kilibob* Brother of Manup. The two brothers were creator beings.  
*Kognac* Intoxicating drink made from fermented fruit.  
*Kris* A sword, a Malaysian dagger or sword.  
*Kulau* Green coconut used for the juice.  
*Kundu* Hand-held drum.  
*Kunda* Strong vine.  
*Kunum* Mortar used with pestle to grind food.

### L

- Lakatoi* Large canoe, used by the Motu people in the Hiri trade by the Motu people.  
*Lalong* Large one-mast canoe used to trade pots.  
*Laplap* Material, or cloth worn around the waist.  
*Lapun* Old person.  
*Likon* Weather man who used magic over the wind and seas.  
*Lo* Law, custom, rule.  
*Luluai* Village or tribal chief appointed by the government.

### M

- Mabud rope* A *liana* vine used to tie things up.  
*Magob* Cooking pot without a rim.  
*Mal* A bark loin covering, traditional clothing for men.  
*Manup* Kilibob's brother.  
*Mara* The rope for the sail. (*Rhamnaceae altophia*).  
*Masalai* Spirits thought to inhabit streams, trees. Some are good and others evil.  
*Maus* Mouth  
*Maus Wara* To talk nonsense

<i>Mawarden</i>	Compartment on the outrigger side of the canoe.
<i>Meri</i>	Woman.
<i>Meri tasol</i>	Only a woman, ie not important.
<i>Meziab</i>	The ancestor spirits which were called up in the <i>darem</i> .
<i>Morata</i>	Thatch for the house made from sago palm leaves.
<i>Mumu</i>	To cook by steaming with heated stones.
<i>Muruk</i>	Cassowary, large flightless bird.
<i>Myths</i>	An invented story, an imaginary person.
<i>No</i>	Small pugnacious fish,
<i>Nomu</i>	Water pot with two openings.

**P**

<i>Palangut</i>	Two-sail trading canoe.
<i>Pangal</i>	The stalk of the sago palm.
<i>Panudaimon</i>	Clan.
<i>Pati</i>	Stone.
<i>Pei</i>	Side of the compartment on a canoe.
<i>Piriar</i>	Mast.
<i>Puarang</i>	Support for the mast.

**R**

*Raskel* Criminal or thief.

**S**

<i>Saksak</i>	Sago palm.
<i>Sam</i>	Float or outrigger.
<i>Silail</i>	Wood used for the sail.
<i>Sinasin</i>	The moon sign used as part of a totem.
<i>Singsing</i>	Dance.
<i>Soabul dance</i>	Given by a man to obtain power and prestige.

**T**

<i>Tabuna</i>	Ancestor.
<i>Taim no gud</i>	Bad time, wrong season.

<i>Tambu</i>	Forbidden.
<i>Tamol</i>	Man in the Astrolabe Bay villages.
<i>Tamolimol</i>	A goblin, apparition.
<i>Tanget</i>	Leaf used especially for magic
<i>Tasol</i>	That is all.
<i>Telum</i>	An ancestor statue.
<i>Teteb</i>	Nautilus shell in the Bilibil language.
<i>Tibud</i>	Spirits of the ancestors.
<i>Tilau</i>	Elbow joint used to support the upper canoe.
<i>Tilau tinan</i>	The mother <i>tilau</i> , large <i>tilau</i> .
<i>Tilau ninan</i>	The child <i>tilau</i> .
<i>Tivul tamol</i>	European, white man.
<i>Thon</i>	Bullroarer used in <i>meziab</i> ritual.
<i>Tohn</i>	Wooden ornaments placed in armbands.
<i>Tok ples</i>	A native language or mother tongue.
<i>Tultul</i>	The assistant to the chief of a village.

**U**

<i>Ubene</i>	Fishing net.
<i>Ulum</i>	Rudder.

**V**

*Vang* Also called *wag*, means a canoe. Maclay called the canoes *vang*.

**W**

<i>Wantok</i>	Friend or person of the same language group.
<i>Weremer</i>	Poisonous vine used to stun fish.

**Y**

<i>Yand</i>	Crossbeams or booms to the outrigger.
<i>Yawarti</i>	Also known as the <i>talio</i> northwest wind or that season.
<i>Yoyou</i>	The little house found on canoes.

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