The background of the cover is a photograph of two human skulls resting on a grey, textured rock surface. The skull in the foreground is more prominent and has several thick, vertical red and white paint stripes painted across its forehead and crown. The skull behind it is slightly out of focus and appears to have some yellow markings. The overall scene is outdoors, with some green foliage visible in the background.

Sepik I - Part I

Prehistory – From the
Beginning of Time to
1885 or First Contact

LAURIE BRAGGE

A History of New Guinea's Sepik Region.

By Laurie Bragge

Volume 1 From the beginning of time until 1885 or first contact Part 1&2

Volume 2 The Winds of Change 1886-1941

Volume 3 The Sepik at War 1942 -1945

Volume 4 Coming to Grips with the Future 1946-1975 & Beyond Part 1&2

Volume 5 Department of District Services & Native Affairs Policies,
Guiding Principles & Support Documents.



Introduction To Sepik History.....Sir David Attenborough

Preface to Sepik History..... Laurie Bragge

Forward to Sepik History.....Peter Turner B.E.M.

Epilogue.....Ron May

Sepik History - An Introduction by Sir David Attenborough

Half a lifetime ago, on my 45th birthday, I was on the banks of a remote river with a rainforest backdrop in the wilds of New Guinea. With me was a film crew, and we were accompanying an Australian administration patrol into a hitherto unexplored area in which we hoped to meet native people who had had virtually no contact with the outside world.

It was May 1971. We were on foot, doggedly walking through rugged tropical terrain in the headwaters of the mighty Sepik River. In addition to the Europeans, the patrol consisted of 107 carriers, a medical orderly and five armed native policemen. It was led by Laurie Bragge, an Assistant District Commissioner in charge of the remote Sepik outpost of Ambunti. I was to discover that Laurie was a veteran of many such patrols, and his demeanour of quiet competence was very reassuring in such challenging surroundings.

The documentary we produced entitled *A Blank on the Map* captured the essential elements of that adventure on the April River. The years went by, and I was delighted to hear again from Laurie in 2015, informing me he had retired and was researching and writing a comprehensive history of the Sepik region of New Guinea. I scrutinized some of the material he had sent me, quite breath-taking in its size, breadth and scope. It came as no great surprise to me that Laurie had undertaken such a great task. Sitting around the campfire chatting in those remote jungle locations many year before, I realized that Laurie, with rare perception, was taking more than a casual interest in the native people he met.

He was subsequently to explain to me that he had not initially set out to research the history of the Sepik as such - rather, as part of his job, he had interviewed tribal elders in order to understand the detail of land disputes which had the potential to erupt into tribal warfare. To his amazement the elders, over 200 in all, were each not only willing to discuss land ownership, but spoke further about subjects such as their pre-history, traditions, myths and legends, their view of the cosmos etc, sometimes for hours. It emerged that they wanted their oral histories recorded. They explained that every time a Sepik elder died, part of their culture died with him. Their younger people were not interested - if Laurie would record their stories, then future generations would have access to their knowledge.

The timing of this unique interaction was crucial in the history of Papua New Guinea as self government and independence from Australia fast approached. In New Guinea, the conservative Sepiks recalled the German occupation early in the 20th century, then the Australians, the Japanese, and then Australians again. Now, they believed, the Australians were going to leave. *Our experience of the past makes us fearful of the future.* They were worried and confused, and sought desperately to understand the changes about to befall them. Bizarre belief systems emerged such as that of the infamous cargo cult. Indeed within months of my patrol with Laurie in 1971, over 10,000 native people assembled at a place on the Sepik called Mt. Turu where they expected to witness a transformational interaction between the supernatural and material world.

This tumultuous period is described in the post World War 2 volumes of Laurie's work, tracing the uneasy development of New Guinea up to Independence in 1975 and beyond. Of special interest is Laurie's role in the de-classification of the last Restricted Areas, a defining event in PNG history which occurred not two months before our April River patrol. As one of the country's most experienced field officers in first contact and Restricted Area patrolling in the late 1960's and early '70's, who better to describe these dramatic events on the former colonial frontier than Laurie Bragge?

These volumes are preceded by *The Sepik at War* recounting the desperate struggles, tragedy and chaos on the Sepik River during the bloody 1941-1945 conflict with the Japanese invaders.

Underpinned by tectonic events and geography, Laurie's earlier volume which is focused on pre-history, traces human migrations and anthropological origins up until the arrival of Europeans with their steel, diseases and Bibles, an occurrence which saw northern New Guinea become a German colonial outpost. The volume describing 1914-18 wartime events and the period before it, the transition from German to Australian administration following WW1, and the epic expeditions and patrols of the 1920-30's brings the narrative forward to the outbreak of WW2.

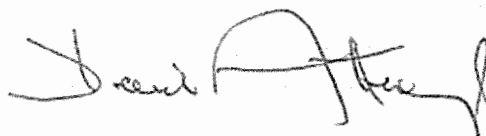
The wealth of original material from the Sepik elders which was taped by Laurie, interpreted, typed and filed away in the early 1970's forms the nucleus from which much of his writings have been drawn. Included also in his extensive archive are innumerable patrol reports and copies of documents, maps and official correspondence which had been discarded from overloaded filing systems. This rejected material from a number of government stations on the Sepik, much of it historically invaluable, was salvaged, sorted and filed by Laurie during his tenure there.

Throughout much of this vast compendium there is a common thread – that of the Kiaps, a Pidgin word of German origin which refers to the patrol officers who were the personification of 'guvmen', the Australian Administration representatives of government responsible for pacification and control of much of the country up to the time of Independence in 1975. The Kiaps were a bold, fit and resolute group of largely young men who had multiple responsibilities, often working in remote places, charged with introducing villagers to Western values, economic advancement, and systems of law and order which the Kiaps were obliged to enforce. Theirs was an adventurous life, one which carried great risk at times, but much reward as demonstrated by the respect they received from those within their sphere of influence.

The 'Kiap System' of indigenous administration in PNG was unique in the annals of colonial history and, as a former Kiap himself of course, Laurie describes with great verve his participation in it. Head hunters and cannibals, explorers, adventurers, missionaries, traders, recruiters, administrators, soldiers, prospectors, madmen, art and artefact dealers, heroes and villains all appear in these pages, but the focus is firmly on the Sepiks themselves as they emerge from the stone age and strive to adjust to the white man's world in the 20th century.

Indeed Laurie's recording of the history of the Sepik is much more than a rollicking adventure. During my brief time with him, I detected a latent academic with an enquiring mind, clearly a person capable of astute observations and a determination to record. His knowledge, his expanding archive and tribal art collection first attracted the attention of anthropologists when he was working on the Sepik, and the academic interactions continue today.

I commend these volumes which comprise Laurie's Bragge's history of the Sepik, a work which is engaging and immensely informative. I am delighted to support Laurie's contribution to cultural preservation, a legacy from the now long-dead Sepik elders who entrusted him with their oral traditions. With detailed referencing throughout, the broader narrative is most comprehensive. This work represents an uncommon convergence of rare personal experience, great acumen and insights, and diligent recording and research. These volumes would stand proud on the bookshelves of any casual reader, student or researcher, and they present a most worthy addition to the histories of Papua New Guinea and Melanesia.



David Attenborough

Preface to Sepik History Volumes 1 to 5.

In the interest of beginning at the beginning, at no point during the collation of the research used in writing these volumes, did the writer intend documenting Sepik History. The research was compiled in the course of my duties as a Patrol Officer and Assistant District Commissioner in various parts of New Guinea's Sepik Districts, but primarily Ambunti..

The driving force to write these volumes came from Sepik elders who wanted their oral histories documented, so that their sacred knowledge would not be lost to future generations. An undocumented mutual obligation evolved half a century ago: Hundreds of Sepik elders told me the oral histories of the origins of their peoples, on the implied condition that I would record what they said.

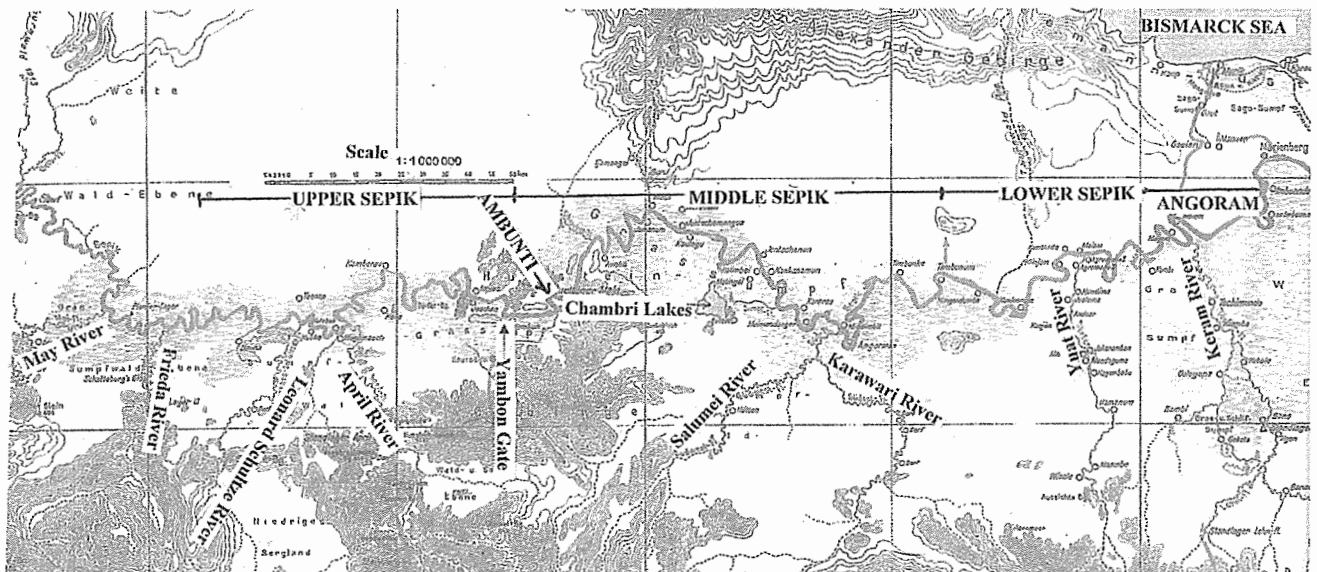
Anthropologist Paul Roscoe of the University of Maine, upon reading hundreds of pages of these interview notes, described them as "Pure Gold".

PNG traditional religions place great importance upon the spirits of the dead, who reside with the living and guide them with ancestral wisdom through their daily lives. Either the spirits of my many informants, or perhaps my own conscience, saw me sifting through this "gold" and writing to fulfil my obligations to the elders.

I started writing these volumes with what I considered to be the easiest and left the hardest to last. *Sepik 1 pre-history*... was always going to be the hardest as there is very little written by others on the topic and so I needed to rely almost exclusively upon the stories of the elders. To credit of the elders, I believe Sepik 1 contains more original historic information than is recorded in my four later volumes.

ooo000ooo

The separation of Sepik 1 Volume 1 from Sepik 1 Volume 2.



I chose Ambunti at 232 miles above Sepik River mouth as the general point to separate Volume 1 of Sepik 1 from Volume 2. Downstream of Ambunti is the Middle and Lower Sepik - described in Volume 1, while Volume 2 describes the Upper Sepik.

By chance there was a fortuitous time lapse which separated Middle Sepik oral histories from those of the Upper Sepik; a time lapse which facilitated a better understanding of the Sepik's ancient past. When the civil administration in the Sepik took over from the military administration on 26th

February 1946, the Sepik administration's primary focus for the reduced staff numbers available, was on war damage compensation, repatriation of labour who had been stranded in other districts where the war had left them stranded, the re-establishment of administration services and infrastructure re-construction. On-going pacification and exploration of new areas was put on hold until the priority tasks were completed.

In terms of recording Sepik History, particularly in the Upper Sepik, World War 2 and its aftermath created a time warp. Tribal time effectively froze for a period of about 15 critical years. This allowed me to interview Upper Sepik elders who had actively participated in, and could clearly describe their personal involvement in head hunting, cannibalism, initiation and other pre-contact events.

It also demonstrated there is a transition period between actual and effective first contact with the outside world. For example, as noted in Chapter 45, steel axes acquired through age-old trade for dog teeth valuables, were used in the massacre of Auom people, by killers who had not previously met Europeans. It could be argued that the presence of steel axes constituted contact with the outside world. The writer would argue that this contact would not be effective until the Western Law was explained to the people and the consequences of breaking that law were understood. In other words customary law was valid until effectively replaced by western law.

Patrol Officer GWL Townsend's example during the investigation of the 1923 Japandai massacre [Sepik 2 Chapters 26 & 27] was an excellent demonstration of this point. He made no arrests, and explained to the people involved and to the wider Sepik District, that he accepted that the people had killed the Japandai people in accord their pre-contact customs. But killing was against the new law and was punishable with death by hanging. There would be no punishment for killing the Japandais, But headhunting was to stop! Anyone who continued the practice would be convicted in the Supreme Court executed by hanging. There were three such group executions in the Sepik [Sepik 2 Chapter 32]. These hangings brought an abrupt end to headhunting in the Middle Sepik but headhunting and cannibalism continued in the Upper Sepik well into the 1950s.

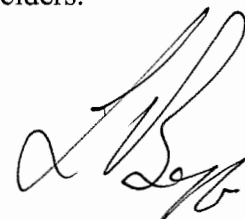
ooo000ooo

There was another time warp between Middle and Upper Sepik. The history of tribal migrations and the settlement in Middle Sepik villages happened in the distant past, whereas Upper Sepik migrations and settlements, in most cases occurred within living memory of the elders of the 1970s. A study of Upper Sepik events, sweeps away the mists of Middle Sepik mythology, and shows how it must have the migration and settlement patterns must have occurred there centuries earlier.

ooo000ooo

A valid criticism of the pre-history of the Sepik in this volume is that it focusses primarily on Middle and Upper Sepik communities, while many other Sepik communities that have gone unmentioned. I conducted patrols in most parts of the Sepik and always wrote detailed patrol reports, but when I went back through those reports, diaries and journals, I found nothing to compare with what the elders told me in my four years patrolling the Ambunti sub district. I agree with Paul Roscoe, the information the elders provided was Pure Gold.

I see the contribution to my Sepik 1 to 5 volumes as an outstanding achievement by many very determined Sepik elders who, half a century ago, insisted that I document their oral histories. Of these volumes, Sepik 1 is probably the most important as it provides a vast amount of unique information on the pre-contact history of the Sepik. This clearly was some of the material the elders did not want lost from their oral histories as time claimed the lives of the elders.



Editorial

As described elsewhere in my work, the filming of David Attenborough's documentary '*A Blank on the Map*' was carried out during my patrol to the April River headwaters in mid 1971. Also accompanying that patrol was Ray Langford, sent along by the mining company he worked for to take geological samples and build helicopter pads for further exploration.

Many years later in mid 2014, by chance Ray and I were independently researching aspects of New Guinea history through the University of California, a repository of many pre-Independence patrol reports. Recognizing a link, the librarian there kindly put us in touch again. We were both retired, I had commenced writing *Sepik History* and Ray, who had already written a couple of minor historical works, showed an interest in my material. A collaboration developed.

It was fortuitous for me. In compiling *Sepik History*, my maxim was "...*the moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on*". I knew my work was going to be voluminous - I didn't have the time or inclination to dot the i's or cross t's. Ray had an eye for detail, he was willing to follow behind my quickly moving finger, forging my sometimes rough material into reasonably coherent and readable text.



engagement with key individuals and organizations, etc.

Mistakes were corrected, critique offered, some suggestions adopted – although still imperfect, sentences, paragraphs and whole chapters began to read easier. Whilst I was focused on the strict regimen of research and writing, Ray was able to step back and formulate broader ideas on possible publication,

The final result - about 250 chapters and attachments, and almost a million words – has profited by his input [and that of many others]. Between the two of us – *opposite*, Laurie left, 2017 - the amateur historian and the part time wordsmith, I believe we have muddled through reasonably well – thank you Ray ... LB

ooo000ooo

Foreword - (for inclusion in History of the Sepik by Laurie Bragge)

Laurie Bragge was my new boss, and the night before our departure on a lengthy patrol, we had an argument about what patrol gear, including food, I was allowed to take. Bragge, veteran of some of the more distinguished 'big bush' patrols of the previous decade, was of the 'greyhound' patrol philosophy. Every kilo counted. By comparison, experience had taught me that I needed an unstressed nutritional regime to cope with long periods of heavy physical exertion. Fortified by several glasses of port, I stood my ground - I would take my tinned fruit salad and lima beans! It was not an auspicious start.

It was early 1975. Direct descendants of Sir Hubert Murray's fabled 'Outside Men', young men of strong and independent character, we were discussing logistics in 'The Residency' at Lake Kopiago. This station was under Laurie's jurisdiction, being ADC at Koroba. Newly promoted as ADO at Lake Kopiago, I was to accompany Bragge on a patrol into the problematic North Hewa. I was 23 and Laurie Bragge was ten years older.

Lake Kopiago Sub District was classified as 'pacified' and under full Government control in the late 1960s. Across the Lagaip River to the north however, it was a very different matter. Sparsely populated and with little contact with the outside world, the North Hewa had been subjected to a reign of terror by vigilante 'witch killers', whose sense of invulnerability had claimed at least seven victims including the only appointed government official, Tultul Aria. The offenders had issued a challenge to the kiap - stay away or else! The North Hewa area was 'Restricted' until only a few years earlier, as were the Waina Sowanda in Amanab District and West Mianmin in Telefomin District, both long troubled areas extensively patrolled by Bragge during postings to Amanab, Ambunti and Telefomin in the Sepik, in the 1960's and 1970's.

Bragge's patrol the previous year, in 1974, into the North Hewa had been 'resisted' and casualties avoided only by his adroit handling of tactical matters and the cool headedness of his police. The patrol had quietly left Lake Kopiago so as to not give any forewarning of their mission, crossed the Lagaip River, and after a sleepless night in the rainforest, conducted a dawn raid in the Tarei valley. After a fierce engagement, with potentially fatal consequences for one of the policemen, the patrol arrested seven of Tultul Aria's killers.

.....

When I arrived in PNG in 1971, there were about 600 serving kiaps, out of a total of about 2,000 who had held the appointment since the 1880's. Up until the 1960's, nearly all kiaps were 'outside men' (i.e. serving in remote far-flung places) but by the 1970's half of these officers served in non-field positions in various Headquarters, Local Government, Welfare, Village Courts, Co-operatives, Intelligence and Judicial roles. The rest served on District Stations (between 10 to 20 in each Province) with about 10% of these at isolated 'one-man' Patrol Posts; the end of the Government tentacle, with limited amenities, boundless opportunities to promote Law and Justice, Community and other 'coal face' developments and, of course, high stress levels. These remote 'commands' were sought by young officers seeking adventure and responsibility.

Having preceded me to PNG by ten years, Laurie had witnessed and participated in many of these changes and challenges. Amongst the ranks of many extraordinarily high achievers in the kiaps service, 'Loribreg', was certainly one of the Field Branch's most effective post WWII 'first contact' or 'initial census' kiaps. He excelled in everything he did - he set new Service standards of superior

performance, and in the exercise of common sense and good judgement. If I remember correctly, he also brewed pretty good beer!

.....

Long standing Departmental policy dictated that when a patrol had experienced 'difficulties', the Patrol Leader must take the next patrol back into that area and sort out any ensuing problems. Following his first foray into the North Hewa, it was to Laurie's credit that his most pressing concern was for the welfare of the villagers disrupted by the long arm of the white man's law. There was also unfinished business. Hence the purpose of this second patrol in which we both participated.

That patrol in 1975 achieved excellent results early, with four murder suspects being initially apprehended. Potentially perilous dawn raids were planned and executed in a manner which assured success, without casualties. I quickly developed total confidence in Bragge's sound judgement and sage advice, and I learnt much from his uncommon abilities and experience. He returned to base after assuring himself that I was capable of completing the initial census. This entailed a series of dawn raids, to 'capture' villagers who would have otherwise fled from the patrol's encroachment into their land. The task was completed after two months, with the arrest and sentencing of a total of eight murder suspects, and enough excitement to last me several decades.

Laurie had established himself as the pre-eminent patroller and administrator of the broad Sepik region. With a discerning eye and enquiring mind, he became expert in Sepik art and history. The sophisticated academic rigour displayed in Laurie's literary work is the result of a wide anthropological, ethnographical, historical, and geographical knowledge which has been attracting wide recognition. He speaks largely from first-hand experience, adding poignancy to his narrative.

We were both posted to the West Sepik in the year following our North Hewa patrol, I as Assistant District Commissioner (ADC) Lumi District, and Laurie as ADC of neighbouring District, Nuku. In 1977 we served again together, at Aitape, for a short time before I was posted to Simbu Province. We have remained fast friends. My words here are not meant to create or embellish a legend. Rather I seek to place 'Loribreg' in the context of how this most excellent historical and adventure-filled narrative has been compiled, and by whom.

Peter Turner ML BEM (Former District Officer)
Administrator / Attorney Wapenamanda District Development Council
Wapenamanda, Enga Province, PNG

Lent 2016

**Sepik History 1 Sepik Pre-History - From The Beginning Of Time Until 1885
or first contact.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sepik 1 Part 1

Chapter 1. In the beginning: The geology, landforms and geography of the Sepik basin.

Chapter 2. The Arrival of Man 1 – The “Papuan”

Chapter 3. The Arrival of Man 2 – The Austronesians

Attachment 1: An oral history of Austronesian migration and settlement

Chapter 4. Tracking New Guinea’s now vanished “archaic civilization”

Chapter 5. The Anthropology of Religion.

Chapter 6. Of cultural and religious borrowings.

Chapter 7. The nature of pre-contact land tenure

Chapter 8. Science’s illumination of Sepik Pre-history

**Chapter 9. Of Human and cultural reincarnation, the psychology of endurance and the
immortality of stone.**

**Chapter 10. Sepik religion, Initiation, Age Class, Female skin cutting and Moiety social
structure.**

Chapter 11. Haus Tambarans - the churches of the people

Chapter 12. Sepik Haus Tambarans

Chapter 13. Headhunting

Chapter 14. Cannibalism

Chapter 15. Sorcery and Magic and more in the context of Magico-Religious beliefs.

Chapter 16. The Creation Myths of the Ndu and Ancient Migrations to populate the world

Chapter 17. Ndu social structure and reflections of an Austronesian past

**Chapter 18. Sawos legends – the origins of Sago / Fish trade – a necessity of Middle Sepik
survival**

Chapter 19. Sawos – From Mebinbit to Gripma to Nogosop and Gaikarobi

Chapter 20. Sawos – Wereman mother, daughter and related villages

Chapter 21. Sawos – Torembei mother, daughter and related villages

Chapter 22. Sawos – Magro and Yambunei ancient Sepik communities

Chapter 23. Sawos – Yamuk mother, daughter and related villages

Chapter 24. Other Sawos villages – Burui Kunai Division Ambunti sub District

Chapter 25. Other Sawos villages – Sepik Plains Division Ambunti sub District

Chapter 26. Iatmul Pre-history

Chapter 27. The Nyaula gods Tangweiyabinjua and Magisaun

Chapter 28. The origins and early history of the Manambu and the demise of Maumi [also known as Ngginyap, Mondigo and Tibando-Jibaga], Amei and Wankainkaiuk.

Chapter 29. The pre-history of the Lower Sepik communities

Chapter 30. Origins and early history of the Chambri lakes pottery, stone adze blades, stone monoliths and mosquito basket industries

Chapter 31. Chambri Lakes communities

Chapter 32. The Sepik Hill Language communities of the Chambri Lakes

Chapter 33. The Creation of the “Bisis” World; the Story of Gawatuk.

Names of People, Spirits and Gods in the order they appear in the text

Sepik 1 Part 2.

Chapter 34. The Creation of the “Min” World; the Story of Afek.

Chapter 35. The Creation Myths of the Kwoma and Nukuma.

Chapter 36. Pre-history and Demise of the Souli Mogani [Kompong Nggala].

Chapter 37. The Cassowary myth of the creation

Attachment 2: Might the Yambon Gate have influenced the order of Sepik settlement?

Chapter 38. The origins and early history of the Yessan/Maio and Naiuri.

Chapter 39. The origins and early history of the war-like Swagup and the demise of Bodif

Chapter 40. The origins and early history of the Wogamas [Wogamush].

Chapter 41. Wongamusen – Pre-history of Kubka [Kubkain].

Chapter 42. Wongamusen – Pre-history of Hauna [Yauenian].

Chapter 43. Wongamusen – Pre-history of Chenapian.

Chapter 44. Wongamusen – Pre-history of Oum.

Chapter 45. Wongamusen – Yenak/Yenak of Oum

Chapter 46. Wongamusen - Pre-history of Tauri.

Chapter 47. Wongamusen - Alikai

Chapter 48. The Sepik’s semi-sedentary, semi nomadic hunter gatherers

Chapter 49. Sepik Hill language speakers of the Hunstein Mountains.

Chapter 50. Sepik Hill language speakers - Stone axe/adze manufacture and trade – Leonard

Schultze Rv. Headwaters

Chapter 51. Three Sepik cave systems of archaeological interest

Chapter 52. How Sepik culture appears to have evolved.

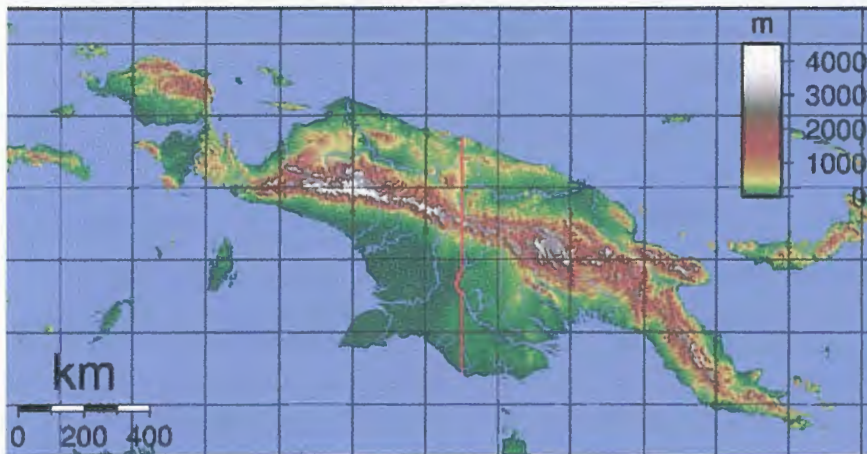
Chapter 53. Unanswered questions about the pre-contact history of the Sepik.

Names of People, Spirits and Gods in the order they appear in the text

Sepik 1 Chapter 1

In the Beginning - The Geology, Landforms and Geography of the Sepik Basin

Sitting like a giant crouching bird with a dinosaur-like head, immediately to the north of the Australian continent, is the island of New Guinea. Looking at any broad scale map, this avian anomaly seems to be looking to the north-west, towards South East Asia, which is probably appropriate as geologically it has close affinities with the jumble of islands in that general direction, islands which we know collectively today as Indonesia. It was also from that direction that the first humans arrived, as we shall see.



Curiously, that geological affinity does not extend to the biosphere. Geological events in the distant past drew a deep and enduring line in the form of a deep-sea trench between the islands of Bali and Lombok – see *Internet* map below. This ‘moat’ sustained the 35-odd kilometre separation between

the islands even during the last glacial period about 12 - 15,000 years ago when sea levels were approx. 120 metres lower. This division, known as the Wallace Line, largely prevented the intermingling of Asian and Australian fauna and to a lesser extent, flora. ¹

In the context of this narrative however, attention is focused on the human element. Long before the last Ice Age, people with seafaring ability and technology could indeed cross the strait between Bali and Lombok and did so in successive waves over an extended period of time. These migrations were exclusively from west to east, from Asia towards Australia Pacific.



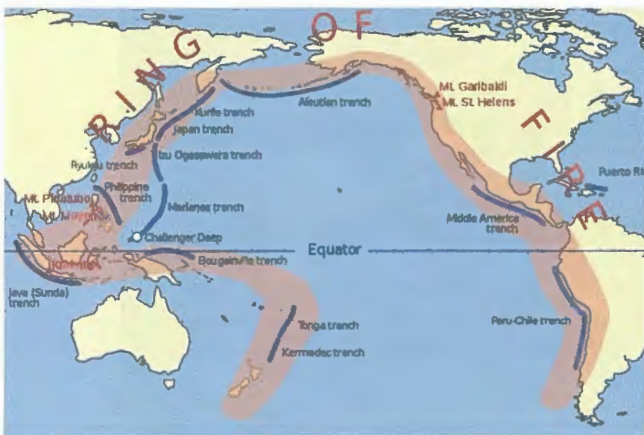
The following chapters will discuss these migrations. Firstly however, in order to understand the dynamics of human migrations and patterns of settlement, it is useful to grasp an understanding of geography and tectonic events, events which shaped the land and the seafloor in this volatile part of the south west Pacific.

At this point though, regrettably politics intrude into this narrative and it is necessary to clarify some terms. As a consequence of an epic subdivision of real estate by European colonial powers in the late 1800's, the 141st meridian of east longitude was arbitrarily selected to divide the former Dutch territory at the western end of the island of New Guinea from British and German territories at the eastern end [meridian identified in both maps above]. Needless to say, the indigenous people were not consulted in this matter. The same boundary remains in place today, dividing the Indonesian-held western section from the independent state of Papua New Guinea to the east [the 141st meridian also forms the border between South Australia and its eastern neighbours Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria]. Consequently, when the terms 'Papua' and 'New Guinea' are employed in this text, they will apply to those respective sections of Papua New Guinea unless otherwise identified. 'Indonesian New Guinea' shall identify the western section, attempting to avoid any ideological bias.

ooo000ooo

Approx. 20 million years ago the existing upland land mass of the island of New Guinea started to assume a form similar to that of today, notwithstanding the fact that Tasmania and New Guinea were still connected to 'Greater Australia', otherwise known as the Sahul Shelf – these three land masses in fact did not separate until about 10,000 years ago. Embracing the modern concepts of continental drift and plate tectonics, in simplistic terms the island of New Guinea represents a land in collision. This landmass has largely evolved as a consequence of convoluted events associated with the interaction of two huge slabs of the earth's crust in motion. From the south, the Australian continental plate was and is moving northwards, at a rate of about 5-6cm per year, coming in contact with the westward moving Pacific plate, amid great geological complexity. The contact zone between these two plates today extends along the north coast of New Guinea and east along the south coast of New Britain.²

The potentially misleading term 'island arc volcanics' is often used in this context. This contact zone is a component of the so-called Ring of Fire, a 40,000km long horse shoe shaped belt of volatility around the east, north and western margins of the Pacific Ocean - above, characterised by frequent earthquake activity and volcanic eruptions. Embedded within this Ring are 452 volcanoes, many active [75% + of the world's volcanoes] - about 90% of the world's earthquakes occur within the Ring, and all but three of the world's 25 largest volcanic eruptions in the last 11,700 years occurred within the Pacific Ring of Fire.³

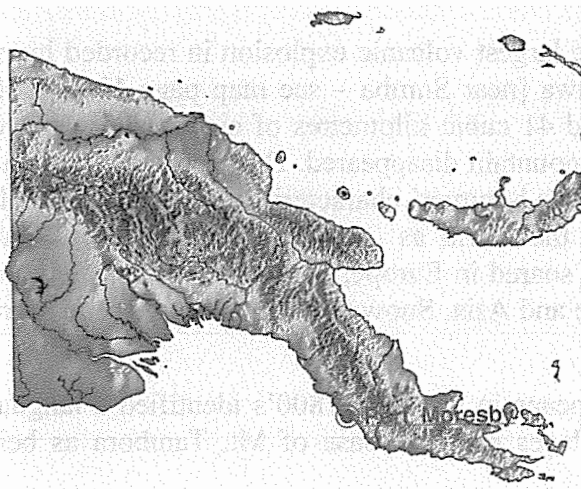


Focusing on our area of interest, the Sepik Basin can be divided into three major geographical components which have been formed as a consequence of the northward thrust of the Australian continental plate, a progression resisted by the Pacific oceanic plate. 1/ ... The south Sepik is characterised by the Central Range [known geologically as the 'New Guinea Mobile Belt'], a major mountain chain extending along the entire spine of the island, in which many peaks rise above 3750

metres, and a few are intermittently snow covered. Of particular note is the Hindenburg Wall south of Telefomin, a limestone massif 50km long with some almost vertical rock faces nearly 1000m high, and the granitic Mt. Wilhelm, the highest peak in Papua New Guinea at 4509m, climbed by this writer in 1962. Puncak Jaya [Carstensz Pyramid] in Indonesian New Guinea rises to 4,884m and is the highest peak in Australasia, comprised of limestone. It is only four degrees or approx. 450km south of the equator. Significant glaciation occurred along the Central Range in the past, and indeed existed on some of the Indonesian New Guinea peaks of the Central Range up until the present time, but with warming temperatures they have virtually disappeared.⁴

On the northern side of this range in New Guinea, deeply dissected vigorous river systems essentially drain northwards into the Sepik River or ... 2/ Sepik Plains, a vast low-lying area consisting of innumerable swamps, gentle flood plains and wetlands with occasional remnant hills protruding as islands. This waterlogged landscape covers about 25,000 sq. kms. This vast depression is interpreted as a down warp or subsidence, a consequence of compression between the two plates in collision, possibly in combination with postglacial sea level rise. Much of the lower section of the modern Sepik drainage was until relatively recently a vast saltwater embayment, progressively infilled by sedimentation from around 6000 years ago [Swadling et al. 1988]. This situation of course influenced the distribution of people and their interaction with their environment, to be discussed later in this narrative. It is noteworthy that the early geographer Behrmann accurately assessed the broader geology of the Sepik Basin during the Kaiserin Augusta Fluss (Sepik River) Expedition of 1912/13, the largest scientific expedition undertaken by the colonial Germans. He also wrote the first definitive description of the geomorphology of New Guinea, a remarkable effort after relatively little fieldwork – German New Guinea scientific expeditions of discovery are described later in this narrative.

Bordering the Sepik Plains to the north are the ... 3/ Torricelli – Bewani – Prince Alexander Ranges, averaging about 20km wide, also stretching semi-continuously along the entire length of the island. Drainage is to the south into the Sepik system via relatively short shallow rivers, as well as northwards into the Bismarck Sea. These ranges, like the Central Range, could be seen as folds on a mat kicked by a passing foot, folds which are perpendicular to the direction of force. They are well fractured by complex fault systems, folds and shear zones, and comprised of a range of sedimentary, intrusive and metamorphosed rocks, mostly geologically young. Some sedimentary formations are over 10km thick. Both ranges are uplifting, and erosion is generally rapid. The Torricelli-Bewani are bordered to the north by a narrow coastal plain, and offshore the shelf drops steeply into water over 1000m deep, a formation known as the New Guinea trench. This subduction zone is the interface where the Pacific plate sea floor is being forced downwards, as the edge of the Indo-Australian plate slides over it.

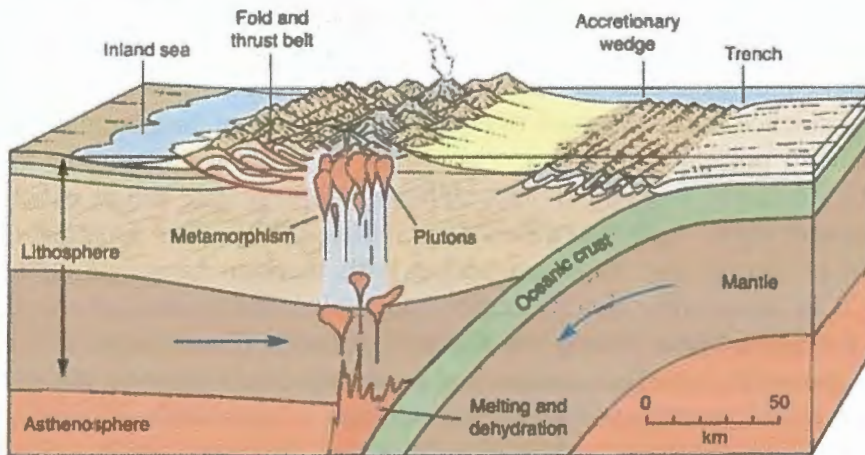


Above - *The Central Range is prominent on this map, extends along the entire spine of mainland Papua New Guinea, with the Sepik Basin separating the range from the coastal Torricelli-Bewani Mountains in the north-west extremity of the map.*

The large-scale evidence of this interaction between plates is told by coral reef formation. The only reefs along the north coast are close inshore. Coral has to live in waters with depths of less than 40 metres so sunlight can promote polyp and algae growth, in turn generating calcium carbonate –

limestone - the basis of all reef structures. Conversely, raised remnant reef formations or terraces from relatively recent times are evident above the present coastline. Geologists estimate that the northern coastline of New Guinea [and some offshore islands] are uplifting at a rate of approx. 3mm per year. In combination with high rainfalls, the overall rate of erosion throughout the region is significant – geological processes are not just confined to the distant past. ⁵

The faults of the Bewani/Torricelli system, are so closely spaced, they are described as imbricate, i.e. having regularly overlapping edges like roof tiles or fish scales, consisting of thin slices of many different contrasting rock units. The faults are invariable steeply dipping - an outcome of this was the dammed rivers and huge landslides which were a legacy of the 1935 earthquake which resulted from a movement in the fault system, with much loss of life. Evidence of the extreme faulting of the Torricelli ranges was witnessed by this writer in 1976 when the construction of the Sepik Highway between Dreikikir and Lumi was stricken with regular overnight vertical slumping of a metre or more of entire sections of newly constructed road works.



In the cross-section sketch⁶ opposite, the Australian plate could be interpreted as progressing from left to right, forcing down the Pacific oceanic crust, or plate, thus forming the New Guinea trench. The 'Fold and Thrust Belt' would be the Torricelli-Bewani Ranges, with the Sepik Plains salt water embayment, or inland sea, in the depression.

ooo000ooo

About 3600km due west of the island of New Guinea, in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra [see map page 1], the volcanic island of Krakatoa exploded on 27th August 1883. In a short space of time, approx. 25 cubic kilometres of material was blasted from the volcano, the detonation was heard over 4,500km away, and ash rose to a height of 50km, causing minor short term global climate changes. A tidal surge was identified as far away as the English Channel. Measurable shock waves circled the Earth several times and many tens of thousands of people died. Java and Sumatra were once joined, and it is surmised that a much larger eruption or eruptions in the mists of prehistory led to the formation of the Sunda Strait.

Much closer to the island of New Guinea, the largest volcanic explosion in recorded human history occurred on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa [near Sumba – see map page 1] when the large Mount Tambora erupted in 1815. An estimated 41 cubic kilometres of ejecta was produced, approx. 10 billion tonnes – the upper 1500m of the mountain disappeared. Dust enveloped much of the planet and there followed 1816, 'The Year Without a Summer' characterized by extreme weather phenomena and crop and food failures throughout the world as unseasonably low temperatures prevailed, leading to further loss of life. Food prices soared in Europe, leading to riots, and cholera and typhus epidemics swept areas of southern Europe and Asia. Snow fell in parts of North America in mid-summer.

At a local cultural level, newly arrived Europeans in the early 1800's identified a language spoken by the 10,000-odd native inhabitants of villages near the base of Mt. Tambora as being

different from other regional languages. Before this phenomenon could be investigated, the volcano exploded and the language and all who spoke it were obliterated.⁷ These two eruptions however struggle to compare with the unimaginable violence of the eruption of Mt. Toba about 74,000 years ago, before the arrival of people in Greater Australia. Located in central northern Sumatra [due west of modern Singapore – see map page 1], the eruption obliterated an area half the size of Tasmania in a blast several orders of magnitude larger than any other eruption in the recent geological past. It has been suggested that volcanic material was blasted beyond the earth's atmosphere into space – today the residual caldera, a lake, is 100km long by 30km wide. Researchers differ on the level of impact, but tangible evidence indicates volcanic ash in places many metres thick, borne by trade winds, covered most of the area between and including India and southern China. South African cave deposits 9000km from the source bear the Toba geochemical fingerprint. It has been estimated that global climatic impacts were still being experienced a thousand years later, a situation which may have threatened the survival of the human species, and many others, at that time.⁸

These extreme events help to underscore the nature of tectonic processes. All of the major eruptions described above were related to the movement of tectonic plates in collision. In our cross-section sketch above, it will be noted that structural weaknesses or faults associated with a subducted plate, allows molten material or magma to rise above this zone of convergence. Pressures increase as this rising molten material comes in contact with ground water, steam is produced and the mix assumes explosive potential. Sometimes a volcano erupts violently, or alternatively lava simply flows out of a vent like a heavy custard – or a combination of both processes. In New Guinea, coastal volcanoes such as Manam, Karkar, Long Island, Volcan, and Lamington have resulted. [When Mt. Lamington erupted in 1951 killing approx. 3500 people and destroying numerous villages, at that time it was the worst natural disaster recorded in the then Territory of Papua New Guinea]. Volcanic processes such as the injection of hydrothermal fluids in some cases facilitated the dissemination of valuable minerals in solution such as gold, silver and copper, as in the case of Lihir in New Ireland, and the Sepik gold field at Yamil east of Maprik in the Prince Alexander Mountains.

As noted, ground disturbances are a common feature in volcanically active regions. Living and working in New Guinea for many years, this writer was witness to many earth tremors, typically minor trembling or jolting of the ground, accompanied by a low rumble. In a rainforest, rustling leaves herald the progression of a tremor which can be heard approaching, passing and retreating. It is not difficult to understand how such events had a significant impact on the indigenous view of their cosmos. Severe earth tremors - earth quakes - occur when contact between elements of tectonic plates grip and then abruptly release under unimaginable pressure. A 'stress fracture' or fault results, often in a parallel series. On the earth's surface, this abrupt movement typically involves damage to man-made infrastructure, displacement and opening of ground fissures and landslides, which in turn potentially cause temporary damming of watercourses and consequent flooding. If the earth quake, or associated events such as a volcanic eruption or a massive subsidence occurs on or beneath the seabed, sudden displacement of immense volumes of water send shock waves radiating outwards. These shock waves carry enormous energy and move very fast through deep water with very little discernible movement on the surface. As the energy encounters a rising seabed, its velocity decreases, water is compressed upwards and unnaturally high levels of water and waves are thrown against the shoreline. The event is known as a tidal wave, or more accurately a tsunami. The not-inconsiderable impact of tsunamis on the human populations of coastal New Guinea over time will be examined shortly.

ooo000ooo

As mentioned above, in the late 1800's the colonial powers of Holland, Germany and Britain divided the island of New Guinea along the 141st meridian of east longitude. This arbitrary north-

south division neatly separated the four major rivers of the island – the Mamberamo and Digal to the west, the Sepik [known to the Germans as the *Kaiserin Augusta* River] and Fly to the east. All drain the Central Range – the Mamberamo and Sepik to the north, the Digal and Fly to the south. Looking at a map, these great rivers almost seem to be a reflection of each other on opposite sides of the border. They roughly form a giant cross, with the fulcrum centred near modern Telefomin – see top map page 1. Our interest is focused on the north-east quadrant of these huge drainage systems, the Sepik, which is the longest river on the island of New Guinea and is the third largest by volume.

The Sepik rises in the Victor Emanuel Range, a component of the central highlands or central range, near the modern administrative centre of Telefomin. Cascading through a rugged system of rapids and gorges, the river leaves the ranges and flows north-westward, briefly entering Indonesian territory before returning to New Guinea. Flowing then in a general north-easterly direction, the river begins meandering across the flat-lying Sepik Basin or Sepik Plains, the huge down-thrust depression described above. Entering the system from the south, from the Central Range, are a series of large rivers including the August, May, Frieda, Leonard Schultze, April, Yuat and Keram. Entering from the north, from the Bewani – Torricelli Ranges, are the shorter and shallower Green, Hordern, North, Yellow, Sanchi, and Screw Rivers. All these rivers will feature in the broader Sepik History narrative.

The Sepik has a total river length of over 1100 kilometres, it drains an area of approx. 78,000



square kilometres, and it finally enters the Bismarck Sea, about 100km east south east of the coastal town of Wewak through a mouth about 1600 metres wide into a small deep delta. A discoloured plume of fresh water extends about 30km out to sea, depending on the season. The river is navigable for about 900km by small shallow draught boats, but only about 500km by vessels drawing 3-4 metres. The deepest section of the river, at approx. 50m, is

probably at the Yambon Gate upstream from Ambunti on the Middle Sepik, where the river is squeezed between rocky outcrops. The flood plain of most of the river is characterized by a slow flow velocity, with a 5-10km wide zone of swamps, meanders, oxbow [billabongs] and other lakes, the largest of which are the Chambri Lakes.

***Above** - The lower Sepik River today, looking east – downstream - towards the active Manam Island volcano just offshore and about 40km east of the mouth of the river.⁹*

The general climate of New Guinea is identified as equatorial – the drainage of the Sepik broadly falls within 3 to 5 degrees south latitude. Unless moderated by altitude, day/night temperatures range between mid-20's to low-30's degrees centigrade, with a uniformly high humidity of around 80% prevailing for the whole year. Annual average rainfall is between about 2000 – 5000mm, heavier to the south along the Central Range. Dramatic short-term water level rises and falls of up to three vertical metres following heavy rain is a common feature of the upper tributaries of the Sepik. The main river inundates adjacent villages during the wet season, sometimes

for months. Although not as accentuated as northern Australia, there are distinct wet and dry seasons, with April identified as the wettest month and August the driest.

Biologically, the Sepik Basin is the largest uncontaminated freshwater wetland system in Papua New Guinea in terms of human impact, and rates highly as a true wilderness in the Asia Pacific region. Virtually all natural ecosystems remain functional, with only minor changes since the arrival of humans. This relatively pristine state is attributable to the absence of sizeable towns and cities, and the absence of large scale extractive industries such as mining and logging, and the absence of large scale land clearing and agriculture. Approx. three quarter of a million people [698,000 in 2011 census] live today in small diverse scattered communities within the East Sepik and Sandaun Provinces, still largely centered on cultural allegiances, with relatively low population densities. Most still live essentially on products from small-scale horticulture, streams, wetlands, the forests and the coastline. Notwithstanding this relatively unspoiled natural environment, issues are emerging for instance in the form of unsustainable logging, the introduction of invasive species, and possible large-scale mining activities and associated infrastructure which threaten the integrity of the region.

Having taken this brief glimpse into the future, we must return to the relatively recent past. The geological origins of New Guinea have been established, and the geography of the region has been examined. Whilst biological elements have been touched upon briefly, it is a subject of such diversity and interest that regrettably space in this narrative does not allow a comprehensive scrutiny. Plants and wildlife had evolved and colonized the slopes, the lowlands, the wetlands and the coastline of New Guinea for millions of years. About 60,000 years ago these potential food sources offered sustenance for the newly-arrived Homo Sapiens. The plants and animals also offered raw material for basic human technologies. They came from the west, these people, to inhabit new lands. This then is the setting – this is where our human History of the Sepik begins ...

ooo000ooo

End Notes Chapter 1

¹ Wikipedia – The Wallace Line

² Paul Tregoning, Herb McQueen, Kurt Lambeck, Russell Jackson, Rod Little, Steve Saunders & Robert Rosa -*Present day Crustal Motion in Papua New Guinea* – Earth Planets Space – May 2000.

³ Wikipedia – Ring of Fire

⁴ Geomorphology of Papua New Guinea Ernst Löffler ANU PRESS 1977

⁵ Geomorphology of Papua New Guinea Ernst Löffler ANU Press 1977

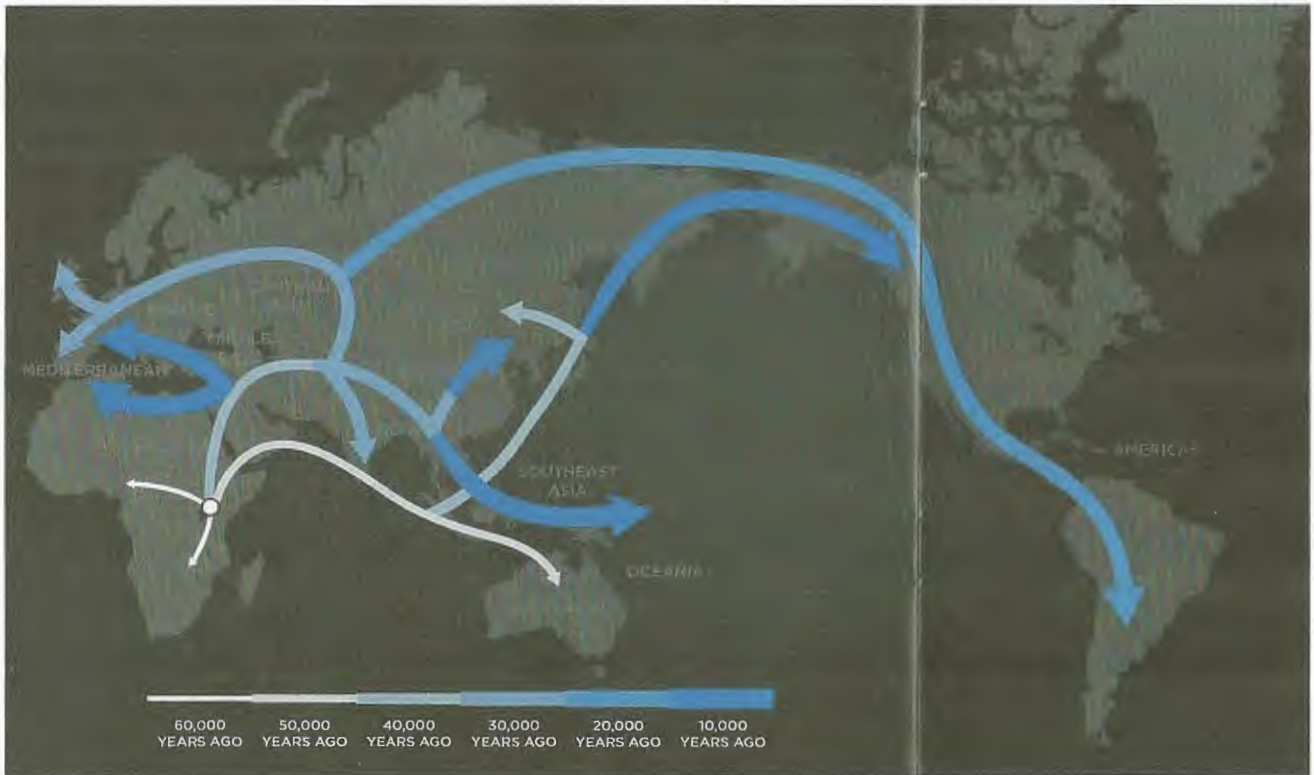
⁶ Internet

⁷ *The Tabora Eruption – Volcanoes and Earthquakes in Indonesia* Jeffrey Hays 2000

⁸ *Toba Catastrophe Theory* – Wikipedia

⁹ Photo Mike Condon PNGAA

Sepik 1 Chapter 2 The arrival of Man 1 – the Papuans¹



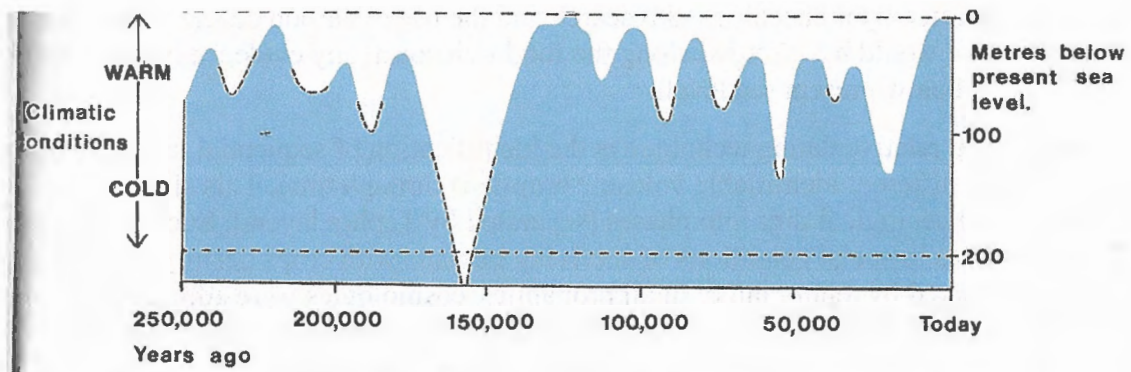
The map above accompanied 2018 DNA test kits. It represents Homo Sapiens originating in Africa and through calibrated lines showing the research indications as to when they populated all parts of the globe. Research is already pushing the listed dates further back – see page 12 timeline.

The map below¹ indicates the earliest migration out of Africa, was to Australia. At that time “Greater Australia”: the Sahul shelf was a very different place to what it is today.



¹ The word “Papuans” is used here to mean the first human settlers of New Guinea, as distinct from meaning the people of the Australian colony [formerly British New Guinea] or Indonesian province of “Papua”

As the world's temperatures become warmer [as at present] sea levels rise. As temperatures become cooler, sea levels fall. The table below shows sea level changes over the last 250,000 years.



When Homo Sapiens arrived in Greater Australia, the sea level was far lower than today, allowing human movement through the Sunda shelf land mass - [South East Asia and Indonesia of today]. The Asian continent was nearly 1,000 miles nearer to Australia and New Guinea than South East Asia's present margin. However up to eight ocean channels, each up to 50 miles wide, remained to be crossed to get to Australia. These crossings may have been achieved on bamboo rafts.²

GREATER AUSTRALIA TIMELINE³

YEARS AGO	EVENT	SETTING
74,000-60,000	Increased burning	A dramatic increase in charcoal throughout Australia. While this may be natural – it may also reflect the arrival of people.
60,000	Settlement of Northern Australia	Artefacts appear for the first time at Malakulananja and Nauwalabila – Arnhem Land
46,000	Hafted axes in N.G.	Axes found on an ancient terrace on the Huon Peninsula, PNG are dated to 46,000 years, but may be as old as 60,000 years. Some axes contain traces of starch and are associated with charred nuts that may be 49,000 years old.
10,000	Regional inundation	Bass Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria are inundated, resulting in the separation of Tasmania and New Guinea from the Greater Australian land mass. Coastal settlement sites of antiquity are now deep under the sea.

NEW GUINEA TIMELINE ADDENDUM.

10,000	Agriculture started	Archaeological evidence from Kuk Swamp Upper Wahgi Valley – Central Highlands.
8,000-3,000	Stone mortars, pestles ornate figures and club heads	Wide spread but origins uncertain, believed to relate to the staple crop taro and associated taro rituals and food preparation
3,300-2,500	Lapita pottery- Austronesian marker [See later chapters]	Lapita pottery originated in New Britain [?] and spread with Austronesian migrations to Mainland New Guinea and throughout the Western Pacific
3,300-2,500	First pigs, dogs and New Guinea pottery	Austronesian introductions also included superior sailing technology, cosmic beliefs, moiety social structure and more
AD 1645 – AD 1790	Sweet potato arrives [Alternate opinions discussed below.]	Central American ipomoea batatas [sweet potato] introduced via Portuguese Moluccas – and the “Ipomoea batatas” revolution begins

The ancestors of the first “Papuan” and the Aborigines migrated to Greater Australia, not New Guinea, as New Guinea did not exist as a separate Island until 10,000 years ago. These first

settlers probably shared common hunting and gathering ways of life. Some of the stone tools from early PNG. Australian and Southeast Asian sites, are certainly similar.⁴

Evidence of the migrations, activities and settlements of these settlers of Greater Australia are gradually being revealed by archaeological research and the use of carbon dating. Given that these newly arrived people would have settled along the food rich coast, any evidence of them would now be by over 100 metres below present sea level.

An important relative dating technique is the identification of sequential layers of tephra [volcanic ash] from different identifiable volcanic eruptions through time. This allows the classification of archaeological digs into phases [separated by Tephra layers]. Such phases no doubt also reflected changes in social conditions of surviving humans with crops destroyed, ditch digging and gardening disrupted by tephra falls². In all probability cosmologies were adjusted to explain the super-natural causes the people of the day attributed to the causes of tephra fall devastation.

ooo000ooo

New Guinea archaeological dates and benchmarks

For some time, the first evidence of human habitation of New Guinea came from Kosipe in the Central Province:

Kosipe [near Mt Albert Edward] Stone tools have been found in volcanic ash probably from Mt. Lamington. Burnt wood found with the tools is 26,000 years old⁵. But then there was a new discovery:

Hafted axe discoveries on the Huon Peninsula – New Guinea – 46,000 years BP. The Huon site is the current evidence of the first human settlement on the Island of New Guinea. The hafted axe blades are the oldest discovered anywhere in the world.⁶

The site of these discoveries was at Bobongara, which was once on a productive and hospitable sea shore. But ongoing tectonic activity has now raised this coast line, so the camp of the shore dwellers now rests on a raised coral terrace about 400 metres above sea level.⁷

Without doubt archaeological research will continue to re-write history with new evidence of ever earlier human arrivals in New Guinea.

ooo000ooo

Insights into PNG's hunter/gatherer past

Human societies forge their cultural life styles by doing the best they can to survive and thrive within both the natural and social environment in which they find themselves.

CSIRO discovered evidence that taro was introduced into the Solomon Islands from New Guinea from about 28,000 years ago⁸, making taro cultivation the earliest crop³ in the world. It also

² A case in point was the cataclysmic eruption of Long Island [Off the Madang coast]. An eruption that produced "Tibito" tephra in the decade or so of AD 1640. Oral histories recall this as a time of darkness which lasted for days. Prevailing winds deposited a 100mm thick layer of ash over some 85,000 square kilometres² of the New Guinea mainland, [including the Kuk swamp]. Professor Peter Lawrence [author of Rot Bilong Kago] illustrated to the writer, the telescoping of time in oral histories: He was told of a Madang/Rai Coast oral history "Just before that old man – [a bystander indicated] was born, volcanic ash covered the gardens –we had nothing to eat so we turned to cannibalism". Time had telescoped from "Just before that old man was born" back to AD 1640+/-

³ This transfer of a useful food plant was presumably classified as "a Pre-Agricultural Activity." Rather than being part of the "Neolithic Revolution"

seems to have introduced the Trans-New Guinea languages from New Guinea east into the Solomon Islands and west into Timor and adjacent areas of Indonesia.

Exactly what differentiated “pre-agricultural activity” from “agriculture” – presumably relates to a time prior to garden tillage, drainage, irrigation and cultivation. With regard to taro and yams, pre-agricultural activity is taken by the writer to related to the collection and storage of tubers for later consumption, just as the current coastal dwellers in Milne Bay remove giant clams from remote reefs and place them in shallow sea waters near the village, to keep them fresh to be consumed when required.

It is generally assumed that early agriculture and the domestication of plants such as bananas, taro and yams initially occurred in the lowlands and subsequently moved to the highlands in the early Holocene.⁴ The reasoning behind this assumption was that it is not clear if these plants could have grown wild in the highlands to be domesticated there.⁹

ooo000ooo

Two contemporary, but very different case studies throw light on PNG’s hunter/gatherer past:

- 1. The time constrained experiences of the Sepik Hill language speakers of the Sepik/Strickland divide – “Hewa¹⁰ country”.** The writer conducted nine patrols into the “Hewa” country between 1966 and 1974 from Oksapmin in the West Sepik, Ambunti in the East Sepik and Lake Kapiago in the Southern Highlands. The patrol purposes varied from initial contact¹¹, to murder investigations¹², to routine census and medical work, to establishing Dr. Hatanaka in her study location and to leading David Attenborough’s BBC/ABC team during the making of the documentary *A Blank on the Map*.

Before Patrol Officer Arthur Marks commenced pacification of the “Hewa” country, by investigating murders in the Om River valley in 1963, the people of the region lived under the following conditions:

- a. They lived in extended family groups called “Rei”, in heavily fortified communal, houses positioned on easily defended ridge tops in the midst of lowland to mid mountain forests.
- b. For defence, forest cover was cleared for a one arrow shot radius around the house.
- c. The limit of their agriculture was to plant sweet potato runners, cassava and bananas in the cleared defensive land.
- d. They moved on once the garden was consumed, and the local environment was depleted of game – to build another fortified dwelling where the forest was bountiful.
- e. The nature of the Sepik/Strickland Divide forest was such that the family group size was limited by the amount of food that could be killed and gathered during daylight hours and still allow all group members sufficient time to return to the safety of their dwelling by nightfall. For this reason, “Rei” size seldom exceeded 28 people.
- f. Such small groups were vulnerable to cannibal raids by Telefol warriors from both Eliptaman [Sepik River headwaters] and Nenatuman [Frieda River headwaters]. Males and elderly women were killed and eaten, young women and girls taken as spouses.¹³
- g. In the 1960s, these forest dwellers were aware of the dense Duna and Huli populations of gardeners to their south, and looked down upon them, as people who could no longer live off their bows and arrows and forest gatherings.

That said, by the 21st century, some “Hewa” communities [such as the Saiyolof] had abandoned hunting and gathering, in favour of the security of large agriculture based

⁴ The Holocene Epoch began 12,000 to 11,500 years BP at the close of the Palaeolithic ice age

sedentary settlements. The Saiyolof now even have their own school. There were three key factors that allowed these things to happen:

- Pacification and the sense of security that brought.
- The dedicated influence of resident Anthropologist – Sachiko Hatanaka
- Population increase facilitated by more intensive food cultivation.

These people are discussed in more detail in Chapter 48 and also in *Oceania Vol 44 No 1* [Sept 1973] *Habitat, Isolation and Subsistence Economy in the Central Range of New Guinea* by Sachiko Hatanaka and Lawrence Bragge.

ooo000ooo

2. The sago and fish subsistence economies of the Middle Sepik. The natural environment of the Middle Sepik region is not conducive to agricultural cultivation due to the extent of seasonal flooding. The limited exception is short dry season cultivation of gardens on the natural raised levees on river banks, between the annual floods. Although sago palms grow in swamps, they do not grow within kilometres of the river in the middle Sepik region because the depths of annual inundation

The Sepik River, its lower tributaries, lagoons and lakes compensate for lack of sago with a vast richness in fish and other water-life. The river people and their neighbours, the sago rich Sepik plains people, developed a complex marketing system which, not only provides both communities with a balanced sago/fish diet, but also supports large, culturally rich populations. Later chapters deal with the Middle Sepik in depth.

A 1930s conflict denied the river community of Kandingei, access to the sago markets of the Sepik plains. This resulted in Sangeremba and Wapi, tribal elders of Chambri sending two leaves of tobacco, a yam, a mami⁵ and a hand of bananas to Kandingei. Their message: "If you do not like these things, you come here." Freely translated this meant: PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO SAGO, EAT GARDEN PRODUCE. BUT GARDEN PRODUCE IS NORMALLY ONLY A SUPPLEMENT TO THE STAPLE – SAGO. IF YOU WANT SAGO – COME HERE.

The outcome was the Kandingei colonisation of sago rich Timbunmeri Island in the Chambri Lakes¹⁴.

ooo000ooo

The Neolithic Revolution.

The *Neolithic Revolution* was the transition of human cultures from a life style of hunting and gathering to one of agricultural cultivation and sedentary settlement¹⁵; sometimes including the domestication of animals. Research indicates that agricultural occurred independently in at least six of the world's regions:

- 11,000 BP** In the Middle East's Fertile Crescent,
- 9,500-9,000 BP** Yangtze and Yellow River basins in China,
- 10,000-6,500 BP** New Guinea,
- 8,000 BP** Mesoamerica,
- 8,000 BP** Northern South America and
- 4,000 BP** Eastern USA.

Archaeological findings at Kuk Swamp [and elsewhere when so indicated].

Archaeological interest of the Kuk Swamp in the Upper Wahgi valley in the Western Highlands was sparked when an Australian student wrote a letter about a stone mortar and other articles discovered while digging a drainage ditch¹⁶ in the Kuk Swamp. Aerial surveys indicated the

⁵ Mami is a species of yam

presence of ancient drainage ditched. The main archaeological field work spanned the years 1972-1977.¹⁷ The archaeological evidence revealed the following:

37,000–31,000 BP Earliest evidence of human activity - dating four occurrences of charcoal.

10,000-6,500 BP First evidence of Agriculture in New Guinea. This broad time span, reflects differences of academic opinion. The archaeological excavation of a drain at Kuk Swamp revealed organic matter dating to 10,000 years BP¹⁸. The alternate opinion was that the drain was a natural feature - not man made, and that the first sound dating of agriculture at Kuk was 6,500 years BP¹⁹.

The Kuk Swamp and the surrounding the upper Wahgi valley has an ideal environment for agriculture – adequate, but not excessive rainfall, mild temperatures, less cloud cover and very fertile soils. The term “drainage” is used here as short hand for water management practices – true drainage through to irrigation systems.²⁰

6,960-6,440 BP Appearance of mounded cultivation – unequivocal evidence of agriculture.²¹

4,500-4,000 BP A wooden spade excavated at Tambul²².

1490-1650 AD A pig tooth found – first evidence of pigs⁶ at Kuk Swamp.²³

1645-1790 AD The arrival of the Sweet Potato – the “Ipomoea batatas revolution”

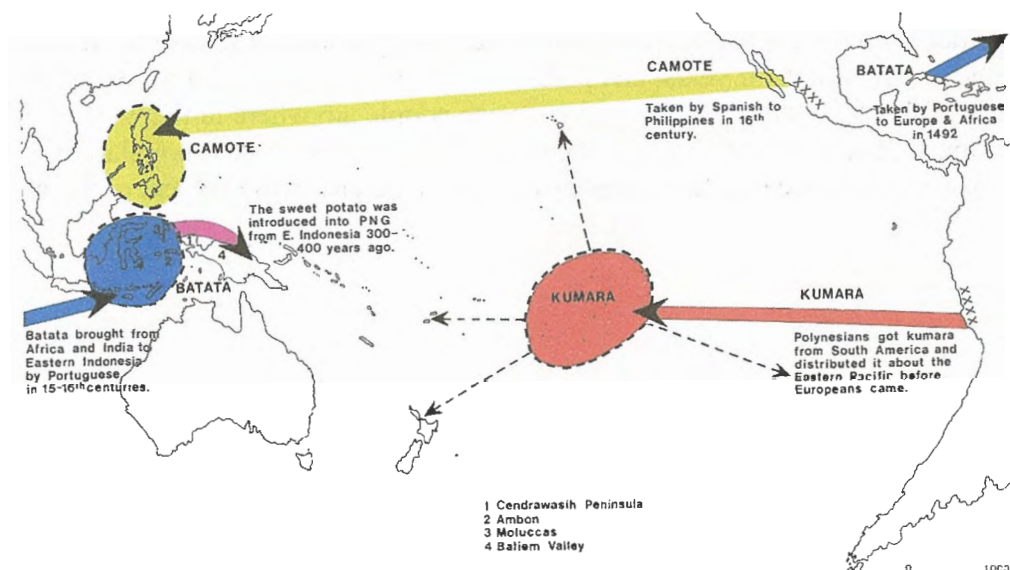
The “Ipomoea batatas revolution”

Sweet Potato [*Ipomoea batatas*] is native to Central and South America. How it was adopted and how its great diversity developed is unclear. There are three separate theories as to how sweet potato managed to get from the Americas to the Islands of the Pacific and New Guinea.²⁴

AD 1100 – 1200 - Kumara theory: Polynesian sailors brought it from South America to Eastern Polynesia. Another opinion - Sweet Potato arrived in Central Polynesia around AD 700.²⁵

AD 1550 +/- Batata theory: Portuguese explorers could have transferred West Indian cultivars to Africa, India and their colony in the Moluccas. This appears to be the theory supported by the Kuk Swamp archaeologists

AD 1522 Camote theory: Spanish Acapulco-Manila galleons. Map of sweet potato distributions.²⁶



⁶ Pigs were introduced to coastal areas of PNG by the Austronesians between from around 3,300 years BP. The Kuk evidence is unlikely to be the first evidence of pigs in the highlands.

Phases 5 and 6 of the Kuk archaeology were separated by the Tabito tephra fall of around AD 1640-1660 [Long Island eruption]. Phase 6 [1660 – 20th century] was a continuation of Phase 5 but with a switch to sweet potato as a subsistence crop.²⁷

The arrival of Sweet potato and its adoption as a subsistence crop in the New Guinea highlands is known as the *Ipomoea batatas* revolution. Sweet potatoes brought high yields and allowed for much more intensive agriculture than did taro. More intensive agriculture led to increased population density.

Taro as a subsistence crop, is slow growing, low yielding and fertility demanding. Taro subsistence was put to the test during the 1981 famine at Bimin in the Oksapmin area of the West Sepik. *Taro, traditionally the no 1 food, has unfortunately not been able to support the present population on the land available* [Darby 1981]. *Those who planted kaukau [Sweet potato] as well as Taro have no problem...*²⁸

Associated with high sweet potato yields in the highlands, was pig rearing and the complex social and economic issues that are associated with pigs in the highlands.

*...some plant geneticists have said that the [Sweet potato] plant must have arrived at a much earlier date [to allow the necessary time for sweet potato species as well as the associated social and economic issues to evolve], perhaps 500 AD. How it could have gotten there at this time remains a mystery.*²⁹ This quote comes with no authoritative source reference, but the writer will not be at all surprised if a future archaeological finding demonstrates an earlier sweet potato arrival date.

ooo000ooo

The success of the Papuan settlement of New Guinea was to be tested around 3,000 years ago, when Austronesian mariners arrived in New Guinea waters. When they arrived in the Philippines and in Indonesia they took control of those places and the original sparse populations of hunter-gatherer disappeared – presumably driven off, killed, infected by new diseases or assimilated by the invaders. Why then, did New Guinea not suffer the same fate?

By contrast with the Philippines and Indonesia, food production in New Guinea had already been established for thousands of years, and parts of New Guinea [particularly the highlands] supported some of the densest populations of stone age people anywhere in the world. The Austronesians enjoyed few advantages in competing with these established populations³⁰ so moved on. The Austronesian influence on New Guinea was profound and is the subject of the next chapter.

End Notes Chapter 2

-
- ¹ P.Swadling Papua New Guinea's Pre-history: Introduction – National Museum & Art Gallery 1981 pages 10 & 11
- ² J.Diamond – Guns Germs and Steel W.W.Norton. 1997 Page 301
- ³ Scott Crane – First Footprints – Allen and Unwin 2013 P viii/ix
- ⁴ P.Sadling 1981 page 12
- ⁵ P.Sadling 1981 page 12
- ⁶ Wikipedia – Neolithic Revolution – page 7
- ⁷ Scott Crane – First Footprints – 2013 page 70
- ⁸ Wikipedia – Neolithic Revolution page 7
- ⁹ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 49
- ¹⁰ "Hewa" is a Huli word meaning lowlander. On the far side of the Southern Highlands "Kewa" means lowlander
- ¹¹ L.Bragge Oksapmin Patrol Report No 1/1966-67 and Ambunti Patrol report No 8/1970-71
- ¹² L.Bragge Koroba Patrol Report No 5/1974-5
- ¹³ L.Bragge Oksapmin Patrol Report No 1/1966-67
- ¹⁴ L.Bragge – Sepik 4 Chapter 8 The Nyaula Colonization of the Chambri Lakes Islands
- ¹⁵ Wikipedia – Neolithic Revolution
- ¹⁶ From the 1950s the Australian Administration sponsored draining of Kuk Swamp for Coffee and later Tea plantations.
- ¹⁷ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 6.
- ¹⁸ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke – Ten Thousand years of cultivation in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea – ANU Press 2017 Page 187
- ¹⁹ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 199
- ²⁰ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 64/65
- ²¹ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 201
- ²² J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 236
- ²³ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 239
- ²⁴ C.Roullier, R Kamboua, J.Paofa, D.McKey and V.Lebot – *On the origin of Sweet Potato [Ipomoea batatas] generic diversity in New Guinea, a secondary centre of diversity.* - Heredity [Edinb] 2013
- ²⁵ Wikipedia – Sweet Potato *Origins Distribution and Diversity*
- ²⁶ P.Swadling 1981 page 46
- ²⁷ J.Golson, P.Swadling, T.Denham, P.Hughes & J.Muke 2017 Page 297
- ²⁸ Education Research Unit [E.R.U.] Occasional Paper No 7 -November 1981 – *Oksapmin – Development and Change.* Page 30
- ²⁹ Periplus travel guide Irian Jaya Page 28
- ³⁰ J.Diamond – Guns Germs and Steel W.W.Norton. 1997 Page 350

Sepik 1 Chapter 3 The arrival in New Guinea of Man 2 – the Austronesians

A brief history of Austronesian origins.

‘Austronesian’ is a word derived from Latin *Australis* ‘southern’ and Greek *Nesos* ‘Island[s]’

Around 8,000 years BP rice and millet were domesticated in China.

Around 7,000 years BP there is evidence a Neolithic presence along China’s eastern seaboard; evidence including polished stone implements, pottery, agricultural tools, bones of domesticated chickens, dogs and pigs.

Around 6,000-5000 years BP Neolithic evidence on Taiwan Island. Taiwan used to be inhabited by only Austronesians – now it is mainly Chinese speaking.¹

It is generally believed there must have been an original proto-Austronesian population with its own homeland, believed to be Taiwan.²

Hawaiin researcher Robert Blust determined the Austronesian language had 10 main trunks, nine of which remained on Taiwan. The 10th split off and moved first to the northern Philippines then elsewhere, ultimately forming three linguistic divisions:

1. Western Malayo-Polynesian – Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Madagascar [Settled from Borneo around 500-700 AD].
2. Central Malayo-Polynesian – Eastern Indonesia.
3. Eastern Malayo-Polynesian - Halmahera-West New Guinea and the Pacific.

Until about 1500AD Austronesian was the widest spread linguistic group on earth, reaching more than halfway around the globe from Madagascar to Easter Island. There are around 1200 Austronesian languages with a total population of 300 million, of which only 2 million are located east of West New Guinea’s Bird’s-head peninsular.³

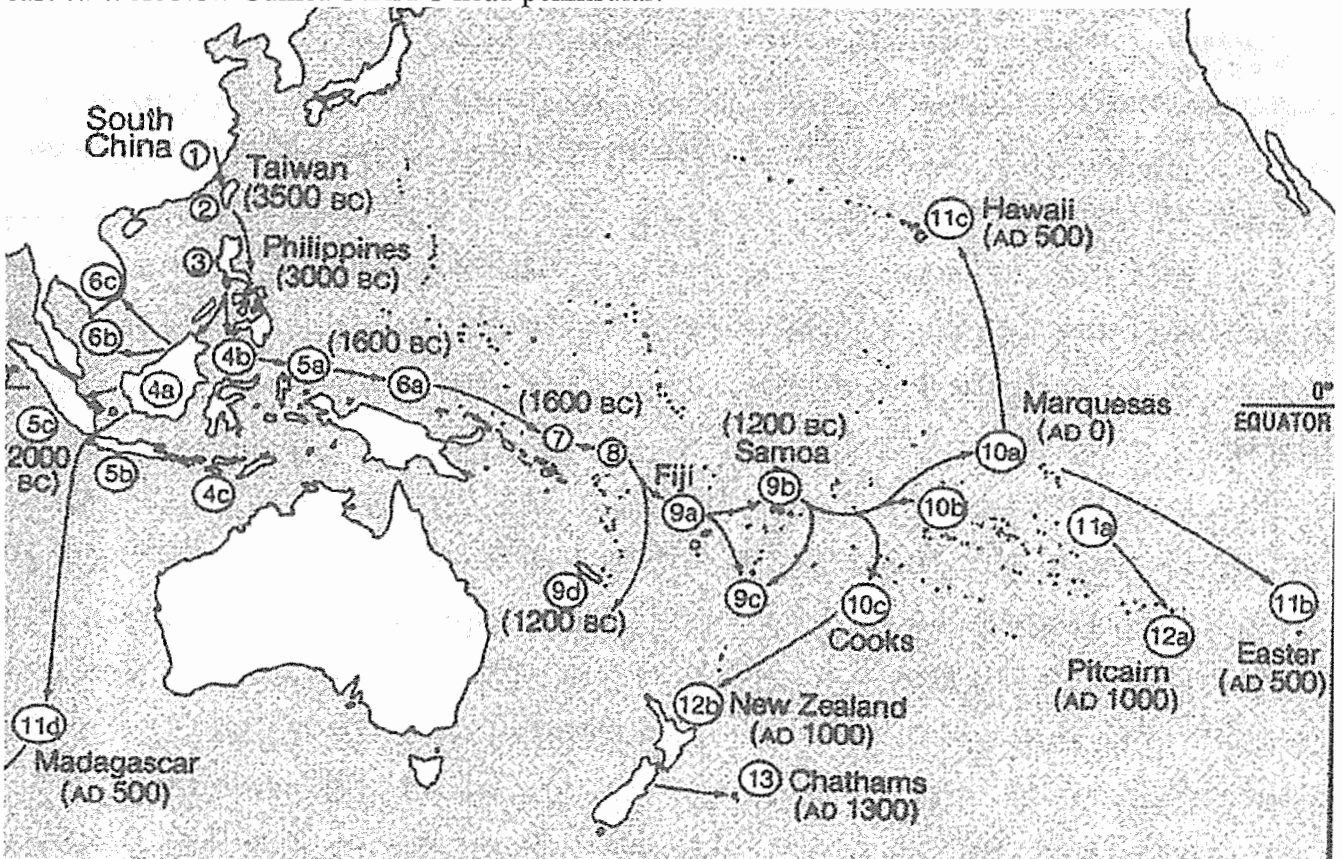


Table of place names where required for the map on the previous page: 4a Borneo, 4b Celebes, 4c Timor around 2,500 BC. 5a Halmahera around 1,600 BC, 5b Sumatra, 5c Java around 2,000 BC, 6a Bismarck Archipelago around 1,600 BC, 6b Malay Peninsula, 6c Vietnam around 1,000 BC, 7 Solomon Archipelago around 1,600 BC, 8. Santa Cruz, 9c Tonga, 9d New Caledonia around 1,200 BC, 10b Society Islands, 10c Cook Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago around 1 AD.

Writer's Note: The realities of Austronesian languages were brought home to the Bragge family in 2008 when my wife Mai, my son Robert and I stayed with friends on Sulawesi Island. Bahasa, the national language of Indonesia was unintelligible to us. Bahasa is a lingua franca, just as Pidgin English is in Papua New Guinea. But when our host family spoke in their own local language – Minahasan, Mai and I were astounded that we, understood many of the words. Mai is Motuan, and Motu, like Minahasan is an Austronesian language⁴.

Most religions of Austronesian peoples had somethings in common:

1. Initiation of youths is done in a headhunting ritual.
 - a. Funerary rituals also involved headhunting, often done to replace the dead person and to ensure prosperity and fertility.
2. Burial beneath the house was common
3. Twins were killed
4. "Double burial" – bones dug up and re-buried with a final burial feast
5. Austronesian speakers believe a person has a soul and a spirit.
6. Austronesians venerate both gods and ancestral spirits.

New Guinea's involvement with Austronesians.

As indicated in Chapter 1 tens of thousands of years ago the ancestors of the Australian Aborigines and of New Guinea's Papuan language speakers arrived in Greater Australia. The Papuans, like the Tasmanian aborigines, eventually found themselves confined to Islands when sea levels rose 10,000 years ago and separated Tasmania and New Guinea from Australia.

Around 3,600 years ago, New Guinea's Bismarck Archipelago was visited by Austronesian navigators, a people whose technology, pottery, religious beliefs, ideas, sailing skills and domesticated pigs, dogs and chickens would change the lives of New Guineans for ever.

So why were the Austronesians able to replace the original inhabitants of the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, but not in New Guinea?

As indicated above the Austronesians had already mastered food production through agriculture and domestic livestock, whereas the indigenes of the of Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia were hunter gatherers. Superiority in all fields resulted in Austronesians replacing the indigenous inhabitants. New Guinea, on the other hand, [as indicated in Chapter 2] had independently developed agriculture, long before the arrival of the Austronesians and the food security agriculture provided allowed the population to grow substantially. The New Guinea highlands supported some of the densest populations of Stone Age people anywhere in the world.

Archaeological evidence shows that PNG mainland sites had Austronesian occupancy both prior to and subsequent to their arrival in Bismarck Archipelago:

2,900-2,500 BP at Caution Bay, where Austronesian language speakers [the Motu and Koita] continue to reside there today.

New "earliest dates" of the Austronesian arrival in New Guinea are continually being set and re-set by carbon dating of archaeological discoveries; these seek to push 1,600 BC to earlier times. EG:

Two sites west of Vanimo [West Sepik Province], Lachitu and Taora have levels dating back to the Pleistocene and Mid-Holocene [Gorecki et al 1991]. Pig was found at Taora from a base deposit dating from 6,120 +/-190 years BP. Pre-Lapita pottery occurred at a level dating from 5,410+/- 90 years BP.⁵

Also, Chapter 4 discusses dates as far back as 8,000 years BP in association with mortars, pestles and related objects, but archaeology is yet to conclusively prove it was Austronesians who transported them to shores of the Sepik inland sea and traded them into the highlands via the Yuat and Ramu Rivers.

Four Key Austronesian Characteristics

1. **Austronesian association with the sea – the Neolithic’s greatest navigators.** The early Austronesian peoples considered the sea as a basic tenant of their lives. They used water craft to facilitate their dispersion to Southeast Asia, Oceania and the Indian Ocean. Boats of different sizes and shapes have been found in every Austronesian culture from Madagascar to Maritime SE Asia to Polynesia.⁶
- ‘2. **Austronesian bilateral descent and social organisation.** The Austronesians brought with them a social organisation distinguished by what was called bilateral or non-unilateral descent – wherein both biological parents are recognised for purposes of affiliation. This contrasts with societies with the unilineal societies of New Guinea and Melanesia, which are mostly patrilineal wherein descent, as in European societies, is recognised through the father [or sometimes the mother, but rarely both].⁷
3. **Austronesian Pottery.** The skills in making pottery did several things for the Austronesians.
 - a. It represented a superior technology which until their arrival was absent in most if not all of the communities they encountered in their voyages of discovery.
 - b. It allowed for superior cooking techniques and presumably water storage for long voyages.
 - c. It provided a commodity of value for trade – e.g. The PNG Motuan [an Austronesian language people, navigators and potters] to conduct annual “Hiri” Trading expeditions which continued into the 20th century to the Gulf of Papua to trade pottery for sago and canoe logs.



Left From Nenumbo village, Reef Islands – south east Solomon Islands
Middle From Aitape area West Sepik Province
Right From Eloaue Island New Ireland Province.

Pottery left durable “markers” as evidence of an Austronesian presence for archaeology to find. Lapita pottery sherds have been found in more than 180 archaeological sites from Aitape all the way east to Fiji Tonga and Samoa.⁸ All three photos below are from P.Swadling – PNG Museum Publication *Papua New Guinea’s Pre-history 1981* Page 66.

Lapita and earlier Austronesian undecorated “Red-slip” pottery. A cursory reading of academic texts might lead to the assume that all Austronesian pottery was in the Lapita style,

and because Lapita is dated from around 3,600 years BP in New Guinea, that was when Austronesians first appeared in New Guinea. Such assumptions are incorrect.

Whereas most early Austronesian pottery in the Philippines and Indonesia was undecorated, pottery in the New Guinea region was finely decorated with geometric designs arranged in parallel bands. In other respects, the pottery preserved the red slip and the vessel forms characteristic of early Austronesian pottery in Indonesia.⁹ Archaeological research will find more and more undecorated red-slip pottery in New Guinea predating the Lapita era.

‘4. Austronesians as Traders. The Hiri is a modern example of Austronesian trade. Coinciding with the arrival of Austronesians in New Guinea, archaeological and documentary evidence records the arrival of New Guinea produce in China and the Middle East. In the days long before European shipping trade between reached the NG region.

Two of the traded items were obsidian and bird of paradise feathers. **Photo- Obsidian and sulphur deposit at Iamalele – Fergusson Island Milne Bay District.**



- **Obsidian.** [volcanic glass] was a valuable commodity during the Neolithic and earlier Stone-ages. Being a stone with the cutting capabilities of broken glass it was a highly valued and widely traded commodity. Obsidian occurs naturally in four regional locations in the Western Pacific: The Admiralty Islands, New Britain, Fergusson Island in Milne Bay Province and in the Banks Islands of Vanuatu.¹⁰
 - a. The chemical composition of obsidian varies from one source to another, so it is that obsidian chips found in Malaysia have been identified as coming from Kutau/ Mt. Boa in the Admiralty Islands in the Lapita period.¹¹ Also at some point in the past, small amounts of Fergusson Island obsidian were transported nearly 1,000 km to the Sepik coast, at dates and under circumstances unknown.¹²
- **Bird of Paradise Plumes.** By 5,000 years ago a chain of trading transactions which allowed products to move from one community to the next linked New Guinea with Asia. Nearly 4,000 years ago products from the Islands off western New Guinea [Bird of Paradise feathers and cloves] were reaching as far as the Middle East¹³. The Bird of Paradise trade spanned ancient times until the early 20th century and is discussed in Sepik 2 Chapter 7.

Long contact between the Austronesian invaders and the local Papuan speaking residents show massive influences on each other's vocabularies,¹⁴... suggesting that the descendants of both groups have been trading, intermarrying and acquiring each other's genes and languages for several thousand years on the north NG coast and its Islands. Presumably, as a result, nothing in the physical

appearance of the Austronesian speaking Sissano people, differentiates them from Papuan language speakers from nearby Aitape coastal villages.¹⁵

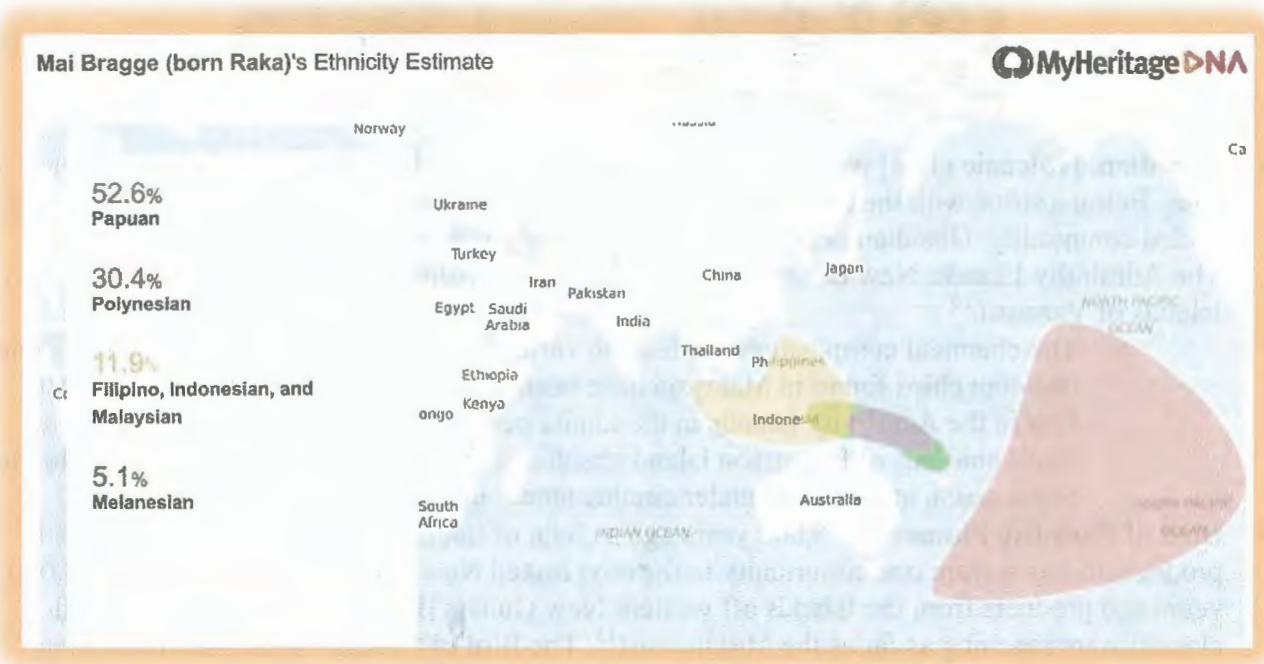
By contrast Austronesians from PNG's Motu region, retain some Asian features.



Papua New Guineans of Austronesian descent.

Above left. The writer's Motuan step-daughter Theresa. Her mother's DNA reflects the course of Austronesian migrations post-Taiwan: Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua, Melanesia and Polynesia

Above centre and right. Students at SDA Mission in 1962 – Austronesians from PNG's Western Islands, 100 km north of the Sepik coast. Such light skinned people of Asiatic appearance, may have resembled the Austronesian settlers of the coasts of the Sepik inland sea thousands of years ago.



Austronesian languages spoken in the Bismarcks and Solomons and north coastal NG are related. Linguistic relationships confirm...that Austronesian languages arrived by way of Halmahera and the Bismarck Archipelago. Around 1600 BC almost simultaneously with their appearance on

Halmahera¹, the hallmarks of the Austronesian expansion - pigs, chickens, dogs, red-slipped pottery and ground adzes of stone and of giant clamshells – appear in the New Guinea region. ¹⁶

Writer’s note: While investigating a land dispute at Avatip village in the Middle/Upper Sepik, I was sceptical about mention of a “Chicken” clan – I assumed that Chickens must have been introduced in colonial times. The Avatip people assured me that they had “always had” chickens. ‘Always’ since the Austronesian invasion anyway.

New Guineans already had polished stone tools [and were] already accomplished sea farers, although not as accomplished as the makers of the Lapita pottery, New Guineans had already colonised the Bismarcks and Solomons, and a trade in obsidian was thriving in the Bismarcks at least 18,000 years before the Austronesians arrived...

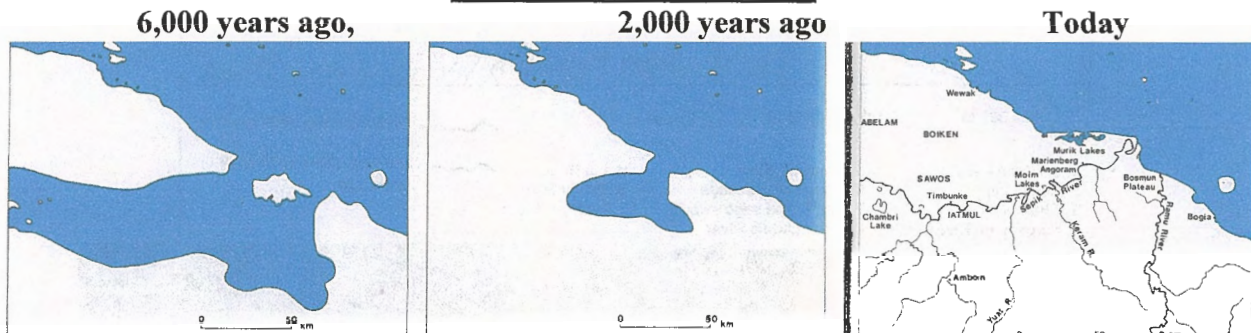
Of the 214+/- Sepik Languages listed by Dr. Laycock in his 1973 publication, only 11 are classed as Austronesian. These 11 areas;

Eastern group: 1a Kairiru, 1b Kaiep, 2 Kis, 3 Wogeo, 4a Manam? 4b Sepa.

Western group: 1a Sera, 1b Sissano. 2 Tumleo, 3a Ali 3b Ulau-Suain.¹⁷

True to Austronesian tradition, all are on the coast; five are on offshore Islands and five are on the Sepik and Madang District coast of the Bismarck Sea. To better understand the arrival and impact of the Austronesians in the Sepik we need to understand where our Neolithic navigators actually found the Sepik coast when they arrived there several thousand years ago. The Bismarck Sea coast was more or less where it is today, and that is where the western group of Austronesian languages – see above, are still located today. The Bismarck coast, then, as it is today, was extremely exposed to the north west monsoon season (May to September). Therefore, the sheltered waters of the former Sepik “inland sea” would have greatly interested them.

The Sepik/Ramu coast line



By 2,000 years ago the coastline was probably located in the vicinity of the current junction of the Yuat and Sepik Rivers. Angoram and Marienberg would have been on the coast... Since that time the shoreline has moved out to its present position. There is little doubt that the Iatmul splitting from the Sawos to occupy the river banks¹⁸ happened around this time. See Map over leaf:

Clamshell adze [Picture overleaf] Found at a depth of three metres when digging a drain at Frieda River airstrip, Upper Sepik. It is 5,000 years old – PNG National Museum, Cat No 87.8. – 27 cm.¹⁹

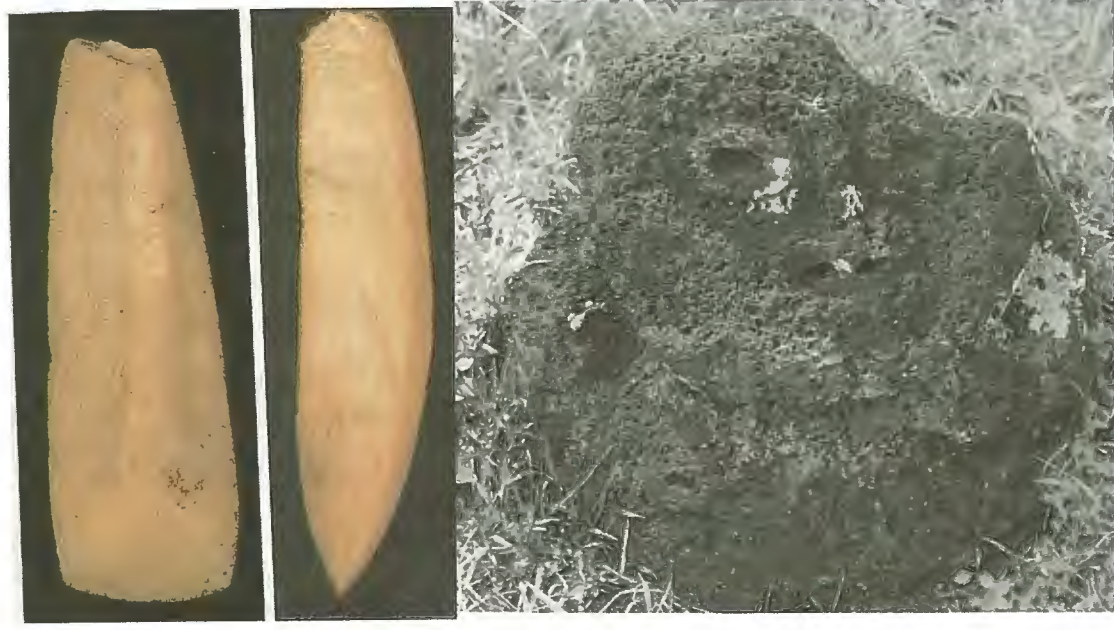
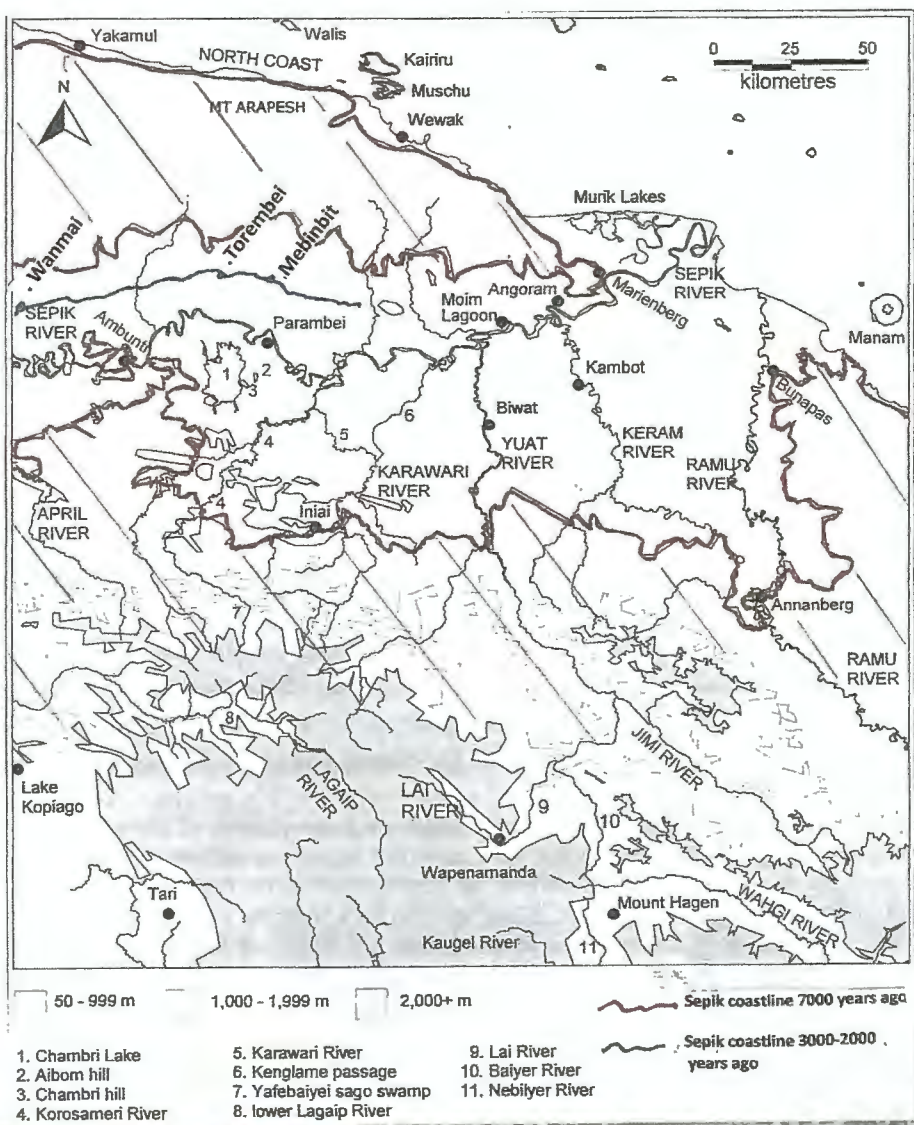
Female statue made from lava². Photographed at Torembei village by the writer. The origin of this figure was not known to the Torembei people. Torembei is an ancient village³. Near this statue is an

¹ Halmahera Island in Indonesia’s North Maluku province – adjacent to the “Bird’s Head.” Of western New Guinea

² This female statue has not been formally classified as Austronesian. The “classification” is the opinion of the writer.

³ Perhaps by coincidence, but probably not, the Ndu place of the creation at Mebinbit, Torembei and the Kwoma place of the creation – Wanmai are on a similar contour north of the Sepik – all would have been on the same or a similar shoreline of the Sepik’s inland sea; raising the likelihood that each was visited and influenced by Austronesian mariners.

earthen mound with stones protruding from it. This is reported to be the site from which the different village communities and different languages dispersed [after the creation at Mebinbit].²⁰



While it is noted above that the “invading” Austronesians failed to displace New Guinea’s indigenous Papuan language speaking population as they had the hunter gatherers of Indonesia and the Philippines, there are strong indications in Sepik mythology that the Austronesians profoundly impacted the indigenous Sepik view of their cosmos.

The writer believes that history has repeated itself in the Sepik. The first instance occurred when Austronesians arrived; to be repeated with European colonialism in the late 19th century.

Firstly, the Austronesians:

1. They were human. They intermarried with the indigenous population, but they looked different.
2. They brought with them new technology and “cargo” that the indigenes craved - pottery⁴.
3. They introduced new livestock – Pigs, dogs and chickens which the indigenes keenly accepted.
4. They interacted with the indigenous population – trading obsidian and bird of paradise feathers.
5. They introduced the “true” religion and social organisation moieties and matriarchal society, and above all they introduced headhunting.
6. Most of them finally departed, presumably leaving the people with some unresolved questions.

History repeated itself: with the arrival in the late 1800s of the Europeans, all six points listed above were equally applicable. For the purposes of this chapter, points 1,3 and 4 are adequately covered in the text above.

Point 2 Pottery: It is generally accepted that the Austronesians introduced pottery, and the skills in making it, to the Sepik and to Papua New Guinea generally. There are currently Sepik pottery industries in many locations, including: Kwoma/Nukuma/Mayo, Koiwat/ Kamangauwi, Aibom, Dimiri/Marawat/Yaul, Abelam/Wosera, Tumleo Island, Vanimo/Warimo, the Marienberg Hills, Wewak inland and elsewhere. There are also areas such as Keram River and the Porapora area where pottery was once made, but where manufacture is no longer in evidence.

Point 4 Relations with neighbouring Non-Austronesians. The writer suggests PNG may have an existing model of the interaction that might be expected when strangers with wonderful new desirable technology [pottery] arrive in the vicinity of a pre-existing Non-Austronesian population. The model is that of the Motu [Austronesian] interaction with Koita [non-Austronesian] people on the Papuan coast..

It has become conventional to describe the Austronesian-language-speaking Motu historically as maritime oriented, preferring to build houses on or near the shoreline, with Motu women specialising in making clay pots that the men traded by sea voyages along the coast. In contrast the non-Austronesian Koita people are commonly described as gardeners and hunters, inhabiting the coastal plains...

In 1950, a study of local blood types could not distinguish between the two [Groves 1958]. The pre-colonial alliance of the Motu and Koita had fused their sociality and ontology to a degree that early European descriptions could not distinguish between the two.²¹

After the coastal villages of the pre-contact Motu became consolidated, a number of Koita groups became allied with...Hanuabada, Tanobada, Tatana, Vabukori and Pari [all Motu villages]...friendly relations were maintained between the two peoples, though the Motu regarded the Koita as being prone to sorcery [Oram 1981].²²

The writer believes that similar relations existed between Austronesian and non-Austronesian peoples on the coast line of the Sepik inland sea thousands of years ago, with Austronesian trading

⁴ In addition to pottery, mortars pestles bird figures and similar objects were imported and traded via the Ramu and Yuat rivers into the highlands. It is yet to be established whether these traders were Austronesians [see next chapter]

settlements located adjacent to where the Ramu and Yuat Rivers entered the inland sea, and probably in the region of the present-day Middle Sepik. Apart from introducing pottery and probably trading it, there was an extensive trade in stone mortars and pestles, involving an unidentified “archaic civilisation”, which will eventually be proven to be Austronesian See Chapter 4. Also, Sepik 2 Chapter 7 describes the bird of paradise trade, going back thousands of years.

Who, but the Austronesian would have handled this trade in plumes, taking it a step further – Highlanders trading plumes for mortars and pestles?

The Motu/Koita model is on-going where as ancient Sepik Austronesian/Non-Austronesian relationship ended thousands of years ago when the Austronesians departed See point 6.

Point 5 The “true” religion and Matriarchal influences: The Austronesians brought with them beliefs in the Earth Mother and the Sky Father and a social organisation that reflected matriarchal influences; Sepik mythology contains reflections of both as is discussed in Chapter 17

Sawos and Iatmul Haus Tambarans and the significance of women Kemen of Yentchan explained:

All Sawos and Iatmul haus tambarans have women’s names. Women and the ground [earth] are basic things of importance and so a woman is [also] depicted on the mast...The carved female figure with legs splayed open...The masts [one at each end of the haus tambaran] are what supports the thatched ends [or spires] of the haus tambaran. If the spires are very high, up in the wind then the haus tambaran will have more power...The individual women depicted on the masts vary from place to place. They are named after ancestresses if the leading families of the haus tambaran...If you see a haus tambaran anywhere called Nangarambi, the masts will always be called Gumbandau and Kembendau. (Niamei and Niamei respectively). These are female ancestors of the Wengwanja clan.²³

Headhunting was fundamental to both Austronesian and Middle Sepik religion. This discussion is resumed in Chapter 13

Point 6 The Austronesian departure: The Austronesian presence in the Sepik follows the proven Austronesian preference for residence in coastal areas or on off shore Islands. While we have no proven evidence as to why the Austronesians left the region of the “Sepik inland sea”, two obvious answer would seem to be that their preferred coast environment left them, by drying up and they moved on in pursuit of the coast environment they preferred. Secondly, unlike the Philippines, and Indonesia, New Guinea already had agriculture, so that advantage, which the Austronesians exploited elsewhere, was not available to them. They also had traditions of great exploratory and trading voyages – to seek and find whatever else is out there.

Concluding comments: The tendency described above for Iatmul society to reverse any matriarchal influences that may have been the residue of an ancient Austronesian presence in the Sepik, resulted in Iatmul headhunting society becoming extremely patriarchal. The existence of Iatmul’s Naven sex role reversal ceremonies therefore come firstly as a surprise, and then, perhaps as recognition of the need for some sort of social pressure valve to prevent Iatmul society self-destructing.

Naven ceremonies are performed when the child of a man’s sister performs a significant act for the first time and the occasion is taken to celebrate it. The child’s mother’s brothers dress themselves in the filthiest of widow’s garments and when so arrayed he or they are referred to as “nyame” [Niamei] [“Mother”]...considerable ingenuity went into this consuming...creating an effect of utter decrepitude...Two such “mothers” hobble about the village using as walking sticks short shafted paddles as women use, looking for their child and from time to time in high pitched, cracked voices they enquired where the boy had gone. The boy in question, during the performance, probably

either left the village or hidden himself...in order to avoid seeing his mother's brothers shaming themselves on his behalf and entertaining the village on-lookers in the process²⁴

End Notes Chapter 3

-
- ¹ Baldick J. *Ancient Religions of the Austronesian World* – I.B.Tauris, London 2013. Pages 2-5
- ² Baldick J. 2013. Page 2
- ³ Baldick J. 2013. Pages 4-5
- ⁴ Wikipedia – Motu language
- ⁵ Ward H Goodenough – *Pre-historic settlement of the Pacific* – American Philosophical Society 1995 page 24
- ⁶ Peter Bell, James J Fox, and Darrell Tryon. Chapter 1 page 2
- ⁷ David Pickell – ed Kal Muller 1996 P28
- ⁸ John Edward Terrell & Esther M Schechter – *Deciphering the Lapita Code: Aitape Ceramic Sources and Late Survival of the 'Lapita Face'* – *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 17:1 2007 Page 61
- ⁹ Diamond 1997 P 347
- ¹⁰ Mark Gilitko, Matthew Schauer & John Edward Terrell - *Obsidian Acquisition on the Sepik Coast of PNG during the last two Millennia.* – University of Otago – *Studies in archaeology* No 2
- ¹¹ Mark Gilitko et al page 44
- ¹² Mark Gilitko et al page 55
- ¹³ Pamela Swadling *Plumes from Paradise PNG National Museum in Association with Robert Brown and Associates (Qld) Pty Ltd* 1996 Page 15.
- ¹⁴ Diamond 1997 P 348
- ¹⁵ Diamond 1997 P 347
- ¹⁶ Diamond 1997 P 349
- ¹⁷ J.C.Laycock ANU 1973 Page 4
- ¹⁸ Swadling P *The Sepik Ramu – a PNG Museum Publication* 1988 page 14 & 15
- ¹⁹ Swadling P 1988 page 19 & 20
- ²⁰ Bragge L.W. *Ambunti patrol report 13/1972-3 – Burui Kunai and Sepik Plains.* Appendix G page 16
- ²¹ Michael Goddard – *The Motu-Koita: a cultural and social history in Archaeological Research at Caution Bay, PNG* – Oxuniprint Oxford. 2016 Page 27
- ²² Michael Goddard 2016 page 29
- ²³ Bragge L.W. *Ambunti patrol report 5/1973-4 – Main River, Burui Kunai and Chambri Lakes.* Appendix B page 13 & 14
- ²⁴ Bateson G *Naven* Stanford University Press, California 1958 Pages 12 & 13.

Sepik 1. Attachment to Chapter 3 An oral history of Austronesian migration and settlement.

Writer's Note: After two years of excitement in the Telefomin sub district¹ I was married on new years day 1968 and found myself and wife Beverley posted to Bolubolu patrol post on Goodenough Island², in the beautiful Milne Bay District. Bolubolu is at the opposite end of PNG from the Sepik. Goodenough Island is spectacularly within sight of the PNG mainland coast; impossible to miss by the Austronesian navigators as they made their way south eastward along the PNG coastline to explore Pacific Ocean beyond.



I was delighted to discover that the administration interpreter at Bolubolu, Lawrence Iaubihi, was a man after my own heart; he was not only very interested in oral histories, he was well respected by the Islanders and he was thorough and reliable in everything he did.

As I recorded the oral histories with Lawrence, the full significance of one story in particular, did not occur to me until years later when Anthropologist Jurg Schmid [Sepik 1 Chapter 17], alerted me to moiety social structures.

ooo000ooo

Source of that story: Lawrence heard this story from an old man called Hiviweto/ Toinaga who lived at Kalimatabutabu village, Goodenough Island. The story had been passed down in Hiviweto's family for many generations, of which he was able to recite the names of the tellers back to his great-great-great grandfather Mabo. The story:

Before, there were no people on Goodenough Island. Some people came from the New Guinea direction [the north west] and came to Baniara¹ where they stayed. They caught a big fish...and did not tell their friends. There was a big fight over this and the people left Baniara and sailed south east to very distant islands.

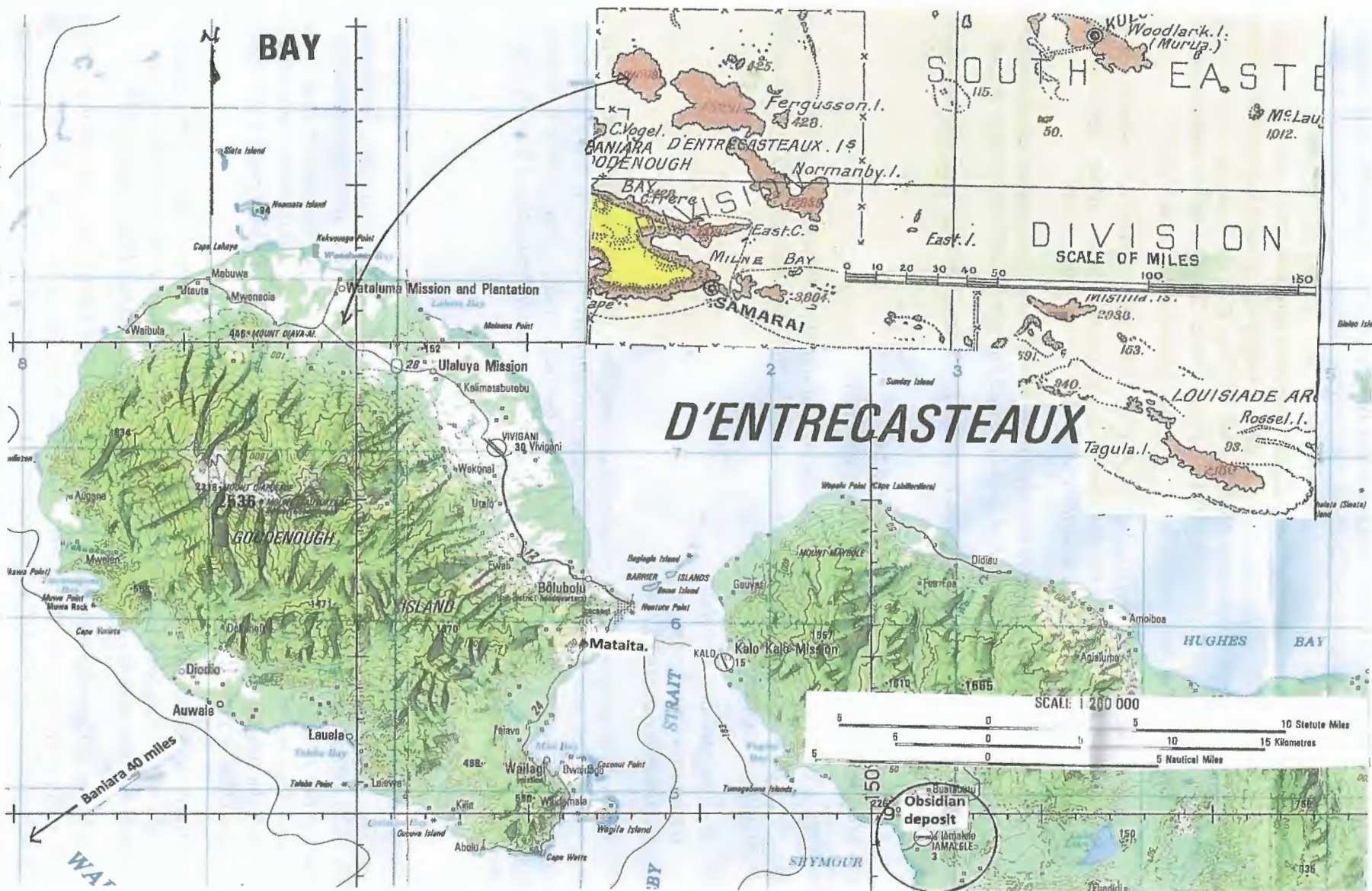
Finally, they turned back and sailed north west and landed at Sudest Island² [also known as Tagula], [See map overleaf] before continuing on to land at Iabalavfia near Maiatia and went to make a village on Gauyaba hill behind the site of the present Bolubolu Patrol Post. They named that area Bolubolu.

Later the population grew and spread and spread to Belebele, Nuatutu to the present patrol post site and to the Barrier Islands and the land, which at that time joined the Barrier islands to Nuatutu point.

¹ Baniara is a small Island which is close to the Papuan coast, some 40 miles south west of Goodenough Isl.

² Sudest [also known as Tagula] is in the Calvados Chain of Islands, far to the south east as indicated on the map overleaf

Then there was a big fight among the people on the Island. The main leaders were a man called



Manabutu and a giant woman called Vinetaune. Vinetaune won and Manabutu was killed. Vinetaune then terrified the people to such an extent that they ran away to the mountains in the centre of the Island, to Lavegu [Mapamoiva -on South west Fergusson Island] and to Tauwala [In Milne Bay] A man called Yolele, his dog Kafuyoei, and his pregnant daughter, ran to hide at a place called Afueia near Faiava on Goodenough Island. The daughter had twin sons who grew up to be strong men. They prepared black-palm spears and a canoe. They paddled out of Mud Bay and around Nuatutu point, landing at the site of the present Bolubolu wharf. They took their spears and went to seek the giant woman Vinetaune, on the hill Gauyaba where she lived. They found her and a battle developed. They threw their spears at her, but she broke them and chased the two men away

They ran until they reached a place there they had left a spear called Bwlugaluga, which means 'two points'. The twins argued as to which of them would use the spear. The stronger man took the spear and stabbed Vinetaune in the eyes and the giant woman died.

The news travelled and people returned from Lavegu and Tauwala and settled all over the Island. It was these people who gave rise to the present population of Goodenough Island.

Some apparent subsequent developments: *From the legendary fighting two group names emerged from Goodenough's Bwaidoga language:*

Bunebune, which means white dove, and,
Magisubo or Manabutu which means sea hawk.

About 90% of the population of Goodenough Island regard themselves as belonging to either the Bunebune or Magisubo groups, which appear to be moieties. The other 10% of the population is made up of three additional groups:

Binama meaning Hornbill
Kwita meaning Parrot
Bwoibwoio meaning Crow

These three groups are not completely distinct from Bunebune and Magisubo. In ceremonies, Binama aligns itself with Bunebune and the other two align with Magisubo. Until about the 1920s, Bunebune men could not marry Bunebune women, but had to marry from outside that group [exogamy], but this has since ceased to apply. Also, some traditional taboos have ceased to apply, these were prohibitions on eating the following:

Tuleia meaning water fowl
Siebakula meaning a type of beetle, and
Bolomini a large type of sugar cane

There had also been a prohibition on going to a place called Waluyogu. The breaking of any one of these taboos was believed to cause blindness, or the prevention of being able to eat. The mere mention of any of these forbidden names traditionally resulted in the necessity to stay in-doors for three days. This was a kind of self-discipline. The mention of one of these names was usually done in anger with the intention of making the other party feel sorry for what they caused the individual to inflict upon him or herself.

These taboos, which applied equally to both moieties, are no longer in force today [1968]. But [as of 1968] the moieties continue to play an important part in the social lives of the Goodenough Island people, as they are the groups which organise three major feasts:

#1 Abutu *The most important of the feasts³. The last one was held at Mataita in May 1968 and the writer was invited to attend and did so. This feast was arranged by Bunebune. Its function was to allow all disputes and disagreements to be aired and settled. This took the form of a*

traditional forum and compensation mechanism designed to avoid fighting between groups – an in particular between Bunebune and Magisubo.

If Magisubo arranged an Abutu feast, the procedure would be to invite Bunebune people from all over the Island to attend. A platform constructed about 12 feet above the ground would have food piled high upon it. Today the food consists of mainly yams and pig meat, but traditionally also included human flesh.

After various speeches of introduction, a Magisubo man would announce that he was returning an outstanding debt that he owed to so and so, a Bunebune man. This would be the signal for someone to step forward with raised fist to shout about his claim. After all such debts were settled, if there was any food left over, it would be distributed, and in this way create new debts for later settlement in return feasts.

A statement such as “Here is a leg of pig for the weak Bunebune people of Mataita. They never did and never will amount to more than the strength of Magisubo children but eat this Magisubo pork and see if you can at least put on an appearance of being men” would be in character. Typically, Bunebune tempers would flare. But the leg of pork would be accepted.

Such Abutu ceremonies are held every few years at various places throughout Goodenough Island. Sometimes during the ceremony, a day will be allocated to Bunebune to be hosts and the next day for Magisubo to be hosts.

*#2 & 3 **Fakili and Modawa ceremonies** rely for their success on a system of trust and good will. If Bunebune stages the feast it is called **Modawa**, and if the feast is staged by Magisubo, it is called **Fakili**.*

In the case of the Modawa, the Bunebune are waited upon hand and foot by the Magisubo who must provide carry and serve food and do all the work, while the Bunebune sit back and enjoy themselves. This will be followed by a Fakili feast sometime in the future, in which the roles will be reversed. Groups of both Magisubo and Bunebune from all over the Island take part in such feasts every year or two.

At all festivities Bunebune and Magisubo head-dressed are similar, but face paint decorations vary; Bunebune wear red face paint with black trimmings, while Magisubo wear black face paint with white trimmings.

ooo000ooo

Writers Notes continued:

1. It was only after I discovered that Sepik oral histories go back thousands of years to the time of the Sepik Inland Sea, that I realised that Hiviweto’s story possibly dates back to the same era and faithfully describes Austronesian migrations and the settlement by Austronesians of Goodenough Island.
2. This story may shed new light on the Austronesian settlement of, and ultimate departure from the middle Sepik from at least three perspectives:
 - a. The Austronesian migrations were not simply one-way traffic out into the Pacific, some migrations also came back, as in the case of Hiviwetos’ story. It may follow then that the Austronesian presence in the Sepik Inland Sea was transitory with navigators and traders going and coming. Their focus may well have been on trading and discovery rather than permanent settlement.
 - b. The D’Entrecasteaux Islands were probably of interest to them because of the vast obsidian deposit at Iamalele, as circled on the map and page 2 above – A photo of part of this deposit appears Chapter 3 page 19. Also, the trade in mortars and pestles into the

highlands⁴, from the inland sea and the Ramu and Yuat rivers was in all probability in exchange for bird of paradise feathers, another highly sought-after trade item.

- c. The myth concerning the giant woman Vinetaune, may have some parallels with the Sepik myths concerning the removal of residual Austronesian influences. I.E. the taking of leadership and ceremonial powers from women.

After all, the indigenous Goodenough Islanders of the 20th and 21st centuries, are of patrilineal descent and no longer take part in great ocean voyages, where as the eastern half of adjacent Fergusson Island and most of the other Island populations in Milne Bay District continue to follow Austronesian values, in that they are of matrilineal descent and maintain a maritime focus on great ocean voyages to facilitate the Kula trade.

End Notes Attachment 3

¹ Several Chapters in Sepik 4

² Wikipedia: The archipelago was first sighted by the French mariner Joseph Antoine Bruni d' Entrecasteaux in 1792^[6] but remained unexplored until 1874 when Captain [John Moresby](#), commanding [HMS Basilisk](#), landed on the westernmost island and named it after a British naval colleague, Commodore [James Graham Goodenough](#).

³ These feasts are written up in Michael Young's *Fighting with Food* -Cambridge University Press 1971

⁴ See Sepik 1 Chapter 4

Sepik 1 Chapter 4 Tracking New Guinea's now vanished "archaic civilization"

In the early months of 1962, the writer was a 19-year-old Cadet Patrol Officer commencing his second year of employment in the Eastern Highlands District¹. It was while stationed at Chuave, and later at Gumine in the Kundiawa sub district that I became aware of an array of pre-historic stone objects that the Chimbu people were keen to sell.

The objects consisted of a huge variety of things; marine fossils, club heads, mortars, pestles as well as occasional bird figures. I learned these stones were regarded as sacred by the Chimbu people and that traditional rituals were conducted in association with them, I learned that recently, the Catholic Mission had been urging the people to rid themselves of these "pagan/satanic" objects. Hence their willingness to sell. I became a fascinated buyer and quickly accumulated a large collection, part of which is displayed below.



1962: The writer displaying the reverse of a mortar from the Dirima Catholic Mission collection, Dirima, Marigl valley a few miles upstream of Gumine Patrol Post, Kundiawa sub district. **More of the Bragge collection overleaf.**

¹ The Eastern Highlands included the Kundiawa sub district which later became the Chimbu District and later Province.



The object at the left is cricket ball sized and weighs 1115 grams. As it is metal I originally assumed it to be a cannon ball, possibly traded up from the Gulf of Papua coast. It was analysed at Melbourne university as being a meteor. The metal was found to be a blend of metals.

The Obsidian blade is approx. 150 mm in length. The third object is a portion of the bill of a saw shark. I deduced in 1962 was that the Chimbu elders and their ancestors regarded anything that was “different” as sacred ancestral religious objects and passed them down through time.

I acquired a copy of *The Children of the Sun -a study in the early history of civilisation* by W.J.Perry, printed in London 1923. This book was published nearly a decade before Jim Taylor and the Leahy Brothers were credited¹ with discovering huge population of the New Guinea Highlands. W.J.Perry’s book pursues the theme of an ***archaic civilization*** that once existed and mysteriously vanished. Among the civilization’s attributes Perry included:

- The carving of stone images.
- The dual system – moiety social structure
- The sun cult
- The great mother goddess and mother-right.²

Perry also noted that...*Recently Mr. Chinnery² has published a paper enumerating all the known discoveries of antiquities in British New Guinea and the neighbouring parts of German New Guinea. His catalogue is as follows: "The objects are 'sacred' stones, standing stones, stone circles; shells with incised ornamentation consisting of concentric circles, spiral scrolls and human face representations; fragments of sacred pottery; stone carvings of birds (with snake-like head), human and animal figures; pestles and mortars of granite, lava and other stone, in various shapes, some of them carved; perforated quartz implements in various forms, some of which have been converted into stone-headed clubs, and implements of obsidian and other stone not used by existing races."*³

Back then, for me, the writings of W.J.Perry were an "Oh Wow!" experience; they verified my collection as containing "sacred" objects, linked with a mysterious *archaic civilization*. I was hungry to learn more.

For what purpose might mortars and pestles have originally been used?

In 1962 the original use of mortars and pestles seemed to me to be a mystery – No grain crops were grown in the Highlands; nothing requiring to be ground into flour.

The conclusion I reached was that for some reason they had been needed for some process related to the salt manufacture at Igindi in the Tua River gorge³ near Gumini patrol post. To my limited understanding, the distribution of these objects coincided with the area in which the salt was traded. Also, the salt was produced in cakes – did it require grinding?

In retrospect, all good thinking, but way off track. I was thinking in a 20th century time frame whereas I needed to step back some thousands of years to a time when taro, not sweet potato was the staple crop and the coastline was much closer to the Highlands in the form of the Sepik inland sea, which lapped the very foothills of the central divide.

More recent scientific research has provided some important answers:

...Stone mortars have an impressively large regional distribution stretching roughly from West Papua to at least Bougainville, with the greatest concentrations in mainland Papua New Guinea, New Britain and New Ireland [see distribution map overleaf].

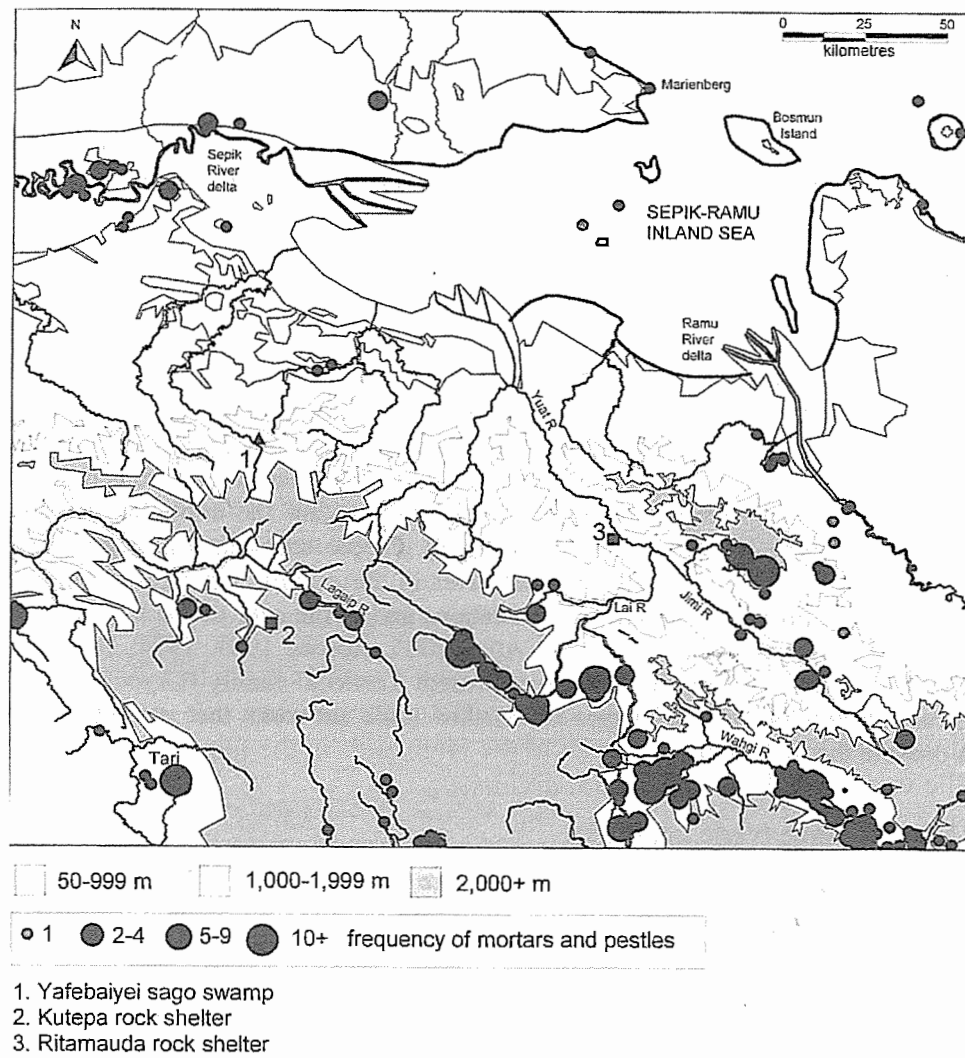
They occur in coastal and highland settings and are found both on the New Guinea mainland and surrounding Islands, but they are restricted to lands suitable for the widespread growing of taro as a staple crop, but not those lands used primarily for yams, sago or bananas. Swadling therefore suggested they may have been used in garden magic and other rituals which involved making taro puddings [Swadling 2004; Swadling & Hyde 2005]. The wide-scale manufacture of these artefacts, made from various types of hard stone, suggests that many... cultural groups shared notions about their functions and meanings⁴



² Mr Chinnery was then Government Anthropologist in Papua

³ See Sepik 4 Chapter 26 for a description of the salt manufacturing process

The mortar pictured on the previous page appears to support the taro theory, with what is taken to be a taro leaf inscribed on its underside.⁵



This inland sea made it possible to voyage from what would be named - the Bismarck Sea right to the foot of the Central Divide. Different styles of stone mortars and pestles, and their distribution during the time of the inland sea, provide an indication during the mid-Holocene of links between the highlands and the coast...Such artefacts have been dated in the highlands from 8,000 to 3,000 years ago.⁶

Was there a link between this apparent trade from the coast into the highlands and Perry's archaic civilization? and were they in fact the Austronesians? While this seems probable to the writer, where is the scientific proof. Unfortunately, knowledge of pre-history in the period directly before Lapita pottery, *we as yet know almost nothing...The archaeological record is, for the present, mute, and I imagine that it will take the work of several more generations of archaeologists and historical anthropologists to even begin to draw back this veil of time.*⁷

Another fact which does not help the assumed linkage between the Austronesians, Perry's **archaic civilization**, and the huge number mortars, pestles and related items discovered in the highlands is the fact that there are no Austronesian languages spoken in the highlands.⁸ We know much more in 2018 than we did when the writer first became intrigued with the ancient stone objects

he collected in 1962. I suspect that as future archaeological research draws back the veil of time, it will ask even more questions than those that currently confront our understanding of pre-history.

Would we, as thinking people, have it any other way?

ooo000ooo

End Notes Chapter 4

¹ In Sepik 2 Chapter 42 we noted that prospector Bill Macgregor was who entered the Highlands via the Yuat River from the Sepik in 1929/30 was probably the first European to visit the highlands

² W.J.Perry – *The Children of the Sun* – Methuen & Co Ltd London 1923 Page 406

³ W.J.Perry 1923 page 29

⁴ R.Torrence and P. Swadling *Social networks and the spread of Lapita* P 604

⁵ From the Bragge collection which is donated to James Cook University size – 130mm x 130mm x 55 mm

⁶ P.Swadling – *The impact of a dynamic environmental past on trade routes and distributions* Pages 142-145

⁷ Kirch 2000: 83.

⁸ Personal communication from JCU Linguist Alexandra Aikhenvald

Sepik 1 Chapter 5 The Anthropology of Religion

Writer's note: In previous chapters we discussed the arrival of Austronesian peoples in New Guinea and their influence on the Papuan residents there, before their onward movement to populate the Pacific. As it happens, the best case-study on traditional religions also relates to the Austronesian /Polynesian people: a serendipitous insight into the faith and beliefs that drove these incredible people on their voyages of discovery.

ooo000ooo

In interviewing Sepik elders, it became very clear to me that they recognize the concept of religion and that their lives and the lives of their ancestors were guided by faith in powerful beliefs associated rituals and expected codes of behaviour. Gregory Bateson made the point that the understanding of a traditional religion can only happen with a complete understanding of the total social context of the community whose religion is under scrutiny. He explained:

If it were possible to present the whole of a culture, stressing every aspect exactly as it is stressed in the culture itself, no single aspect would appear bizarre or strange or arbitrary to the reader, but rather the details would appear natural and reasonable as they do to the natives who live all their lives within the culture.¹

I am aware that in writing about religion I may offend people who fear that their sacred beliefs will become bruised or trampled upon. "Religion" as it is being discussed here is a fundamental part of **any and every** society, not just Christian, Islamic or other main stream religious societies. Other societies, like Christianity offer common belief, faith, comfort in the promise of an afterlife, a basis for the ethics and mores of the society in question, togetherness, brotherly love, wellbeing and much more.

So, what is the fundamental role of religion in [any] society? Anthropologist Professor Peter Lawrence, who lectured other patrol officers and me at the Australian School of Pacific Administration, [ASOPA] Sydney, during the 1963 Patrol Officer's in-service course, suggested religion is *that which explains everything that society does not know from scientific means*. Such a definition fits well with the suggestion that "religion" at its foundation implies the "supernatural".

"Supernatural" according to the Oxford dictionary is defined as "*events, forces or powers that cannot be explained by science or the laws of nature.*"

I believe that such a definition also shows why religions vary across different societies. Different social backgrounds and social evolutions will mean different social knowledge and different *scientific means* which leaves that society's "supernatural" unexplained.

Martin Luther indirectly reflected upon the conflict between "faith" and "scientific reason" in such a definition of religion when he said:

Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but more frequently than not struggles against the Divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God.²

Professor Sachiko Hatanaka, referred me Sir Peter Henry Buck's [Te Rangi Hiroa] Anthropology of religion³, upon which I have drawn heavily in this chapter.

ooo000ooo

CASE STUDY – AUSTRONESIAN RELIGION

Part 1 Man created his own gods.

To understand the origins of the spiritual gods, it is necessary to discuss the origins of temporal leaders.⁴ The chiefs inherited their rank and authority by direct succession by primogeniture in the male line. Hereditary chiefs led ocean voyages of kinfolk in search of new lands which when settled, the chief divided the land among family members. If the party was large he created lesser chiefs.

The cosmos of such peoples included the ocean environment, knowledge of the seasons, navigation by the stars, annual lunar cycle, seasonal winds and the tradition of sailing in quest of new lands.

The people looked to their chief for guidance – justified as chiefs were born to lead and exercise authority with wisdom. Crops brought in the canoes were planted – coconut, breadfruit, banana, plantain, cassava, taro, sweet potato and yam. Domestic animals such as pig, dog, and fowl were bred to increase the food supply

The population grew and descent groups would be named after ancestors of the original family. Marriages were arranged to further cement the blood ties. A pre-fix such as Ati or Ngati was used before a proper name, thus the descendants of Awa or Tane became the tribes of Ati-awa or Ngati-tane. Blood descent from an eponymous⁵ [an important named person/a central figure] ancestor was common.

As population grew family groups budded off from the main body and sought cultivatable lands further away from the original focus. The sub groups also grew and they selected an eponymous ancestor from whom that sub group was descended. So, the tribe split into a number of sub tribes each with its own name, territory, and ruling chiefs.

The original family group usually lived in the original settlement area. Tradition and sentiment grew up around the earlier places and a richer heritage of history was associated with the senior family in the tribe. The original sub tribe was senior and retained the original designation – those who moved took new names. Their chiefs were senior to sub tribe chiefs. Each sub tribe managed its local affairs, but matters of policy were decided in conference with the tribal chief of *Ariki*

Chiefs apportioned the land and received rent in the form of produce. In some cases, chiefs rendered fealty⁶ in recognition of the grant of the original land charter, with population growth and social development specialist skills – expert knowledge and as this evolution happened social accretions grew up around the chief. High chiefs were invested with *Mana* and *Tapu* (Taboo). *Mana* – Power and Prestige – increased power of a growing tribe was symbolized in the person of the High Chief. *Tapu* – the sanctity⁷ of his person was also derived from his high descent and the awe and respect that accompany increased power.

The status of the chief was enhanced by religious observances carried out at his birth, installation and social occasions during his life and in relation to his death. After death the spirit of the chief and commoners pass to the spirit land – a mysterious place situated near the setting sun, where the cradle of the race was to be found. Sometimes they return in dreams, and so was sown the seed that grew into the belief in Immortality.

The Creation of Gods.

Religion has been defined as a system of faith and worship...Supreme faith in the chief - revering them to a point of worship by prostrating one-self, kneeling etc. These observances approached worship but the chief as a living man. Chief was near to divinity⁸ but he was not a god.

Religion as defined above is incomplete. It is rounded out by including a super-human controlling power that comes from beyond man himself. To become a God - man must pass through the portals of death to spiritual immortality. Chiefs recognized there were some things that are beyond human power: Fertility of food plants, movements of fish, assured success in war etc. Western civilization in recent times has solved many problems by means of applied science. In the stone-age aid was sought from some supernatural controlling power.⁹

The Christian concept of immortality is selfish. The soul of a person who has acquired merit in the world is rewarded with immortality in another world and remains there. Polynesian spirits may return to this world...it seems natural that illustrious ancestors might be called upon to resolve problems that are beyond the power of man...And so the Polynesians created their gods.

Deification¹⁰ Religion starts with the deification of the ancestors which was done by a psychic establishing communication with an ancestral spirit by means of invocations and offerings. He became the medium and the spirit would take possession and enter his body and use the medium's voice to announce his presence.

Spiritualism¹¹ In traditional society the ancestral spirit becomes a god who conferred benefits upon his worshippers, and the medium became a priest of high standing. But there exist two fields in which the spirits from the other world is not for the public good (1) Sorcery and (2) Disease Demons.

(1) **Sorcery** There are good and evil spirits. An evil-minded person may conjure back an evil spirit to kill his enemies or the enemies of people who pay him. Association with the evil spirit makes the person who commands it a sorcerer – both despised and feared. In western society there was a belief in witches and sorcerers until recent times.

(2) **Disease Demons** Departure from normal health was believed to be caused by disease demons; evil spirits from the other world. But there has to be a reason for attack – usually an infringement of one of many taboos associated with the family with which the spirit is associated. Cure is to identify the demon and to ask the family responsible to remove it – by exorcism e.g. involving a toy canoe which sails away with the spirit. In recent times some disease demons gained the status of minor gods with mediums now seen as minor priests. (e.g. Glassman in Sissano).

Gods The deification of ancestral spirit to family God status worshipped by family members with the medium as priest. With conquests in war and absorption of the conquered, a family god could become a tribal god as the god's *mana* increased. The logic behind **Polytheism**¹² is that one being could not possibly be expert in all fields, so it is natural to create different gods to preside over the different aspects of life. Early Polynesians considered their gods to be superior to the single Christian god, with capacity for the human in need to get attention.

The priesthood. As the family god gained power so did the medium and he became a tribal priest and then a high priest of great power¹³. Such positions became hereditary in the male line. He transmitted the correct rituals and observances that developed through the generations and became a scholar versed in the mythology of his culture, responsible for making additions to the expanding mythology. He built up taboos around his god and himself. He made known what the god needed directly or through interpreting omens.

The Temple. A place was needed for the correct observances could be carried out in the appropriate manner. A vertical stone or post often served – in a place imbued with taboo. Elsewhere more developed structures – raised stone platforms *ahu* and a paved court *marae* sufficient for multiple priests and chiefly worshippers.

Material Representations (A great variety) EG a whale's tooth kept by the priest and only unwrapped from bark cloth and brought from the religious structure when the god's assistance was needed. Others such as those of Easter Island and yet others requiring red feathers

Animate Representations Man through time has read omens and portends in the movements of birds and living things. Various animals and birds are associated with various gods which manifest themselves through them. There is generally a story or myth creating some connection between the deified ancestor and the animal that became incarnate.¹⁴ Although individual worshippers could interpret some signs, it was the priests who were the official; interpreters of the meanings of omens.

Offerings Temporal chiefs were given presents of food and material things, so were gods, who in recognition of the gifts were amicably disposed towards their followers. The chiefs ate what was given whereas the offerings to the gods were purely symbolic. The offering was also related to reciprocity – a catch was shared with chief, kinfolk and gods. In NZ the first fish caught on a closed ground was released back into the sea as an offering to the local god of fish. In some bases religious zeal did not obscure common sense – pig bristles would suffice. In others the priesthood demanded the best for their god and once the god had partaken, the food was rendered taboo and could not be eaten by anyone outside the priesthood. The priests interpreted matters in terms of their own human needs.

Human offerings an offering of the first person slain in a battle was made to the god to ensure success in future military campaigns. In NZ the heart would be cut out by the priest with the party and hold it on high as an offering. A lock of the victim's hair would be taken back to the shrine. In Mangaia as ritual developed a victim would be selected from a conquered tribe and killed as a special offering for the temple installation for the new dictator over the conquered Island. Where cannibalism was practiced the flesh would be eaten by the priests.

Reference has been made to *human offerings* rather than *human sacrifices*. Sacrifice should involve a certain amount of acquiescence on the part of the person who formed the offering. The persons involved were unwilling and ran away if they could until the ceremony was over. Some priests and chiefs offered themselves in order to insure victory. Greater love hath no man that this...to give his own life for his tribe

Temple furnishings with the growth in religious ritual, houses were built on the hitherto open court to accommodate priests and their assistants during temple ceremonies. These temples were not in constant use. There was also a house for the material images of the gods and raised wooden platforms were built to hold the pigs and offerings to the gods and subsequently to the priests. Throughout Polynesia there was a diversity of temple furnishings.

Ritual (again great variety) Words used in the incantations have become archaic and the meanings of the words are sometimes difficult to translate. Despite this they were believed to be effective because there was magic in the words that provided supernatural assistance. Any mistake in the words or their sequence in a chant was regarded as an ill-omen for the reciting priest... death in some form of other as punishment from the gods for a broken ritual.

Interim Summary No 1

Man realized from dreams perhaps that there was a spiritual essence or soul that was freed from its material envelope thereby evolved the concept of immortality. The souls lived on in the spirit world

of Hawaiki and their descendants called upon them for assistance in the problems of this life. The need for continuity of assistance led to the deification of certain ancestors as gods. The gods had the supernatural powers that the living desired but could not possess. Belief in that power allowed man to accomplish many things he might not have otherwise attempted. As with other religions, with faith they were able to move the mountains of doubt and fear...to explore the vastness of the Pacific Ocean.

Part 2 The Gods create man

Introduction: The older gods which may be considered as major gods are shared by many islands. Minor gods are more recent and are localized.

The cultural centre of Polynesia - The Society Islands are the centre of the triangle NZ – Hawaii – Easter Isl. The major gods are recognized everywhere except to the west of the centre – Samoa and Tonga.

The major gods: Tane, Rongo, Tu and Tangaroa It is believed that these were navigating ancestors who guided their voyages during the latter part of the eastward movement through Micronesia to the Society Islands. Ra'iatea was populated for some centuries before dispersal took place. This allowed ample time for deification. The temple there *Taputapu-atea* is a famous large stone structure. Historical evidence tells that wars took place between the gods; between the descendants who created them.

The Growth of Theology as *Taputapu-atea* temple grew in fame so did the prestige of the priests associated with it. They formed a seminary where “The priests gathered together the warp of myth and weft of history into the textile of theology”¹⁵ The gods they created took part in the creation of the sky dome, the earth foundation beneath it and the things that grew on land in in water. Claims of precedence among advocates of the gods were settled by making them members of the one family with the same father & mother. The gods were given departments – Tane was given forestry, birds trees insects – before a tree was felled Tane had to be placated. Tu was given war. Rongo – horticulture, food and as a plentiful supply can only be achieved in peacetime Rongo was also the god of peace. Tangaroa got marine – deep sea voyages and fishermen

The Parents of the Gods No ordinary persons could be the parents of gods, so the priests turned to metaphysics¹⁶ The male parent was *Atea* the personification of space which lies above the surface of the seas and land. The female parent was *Papa* the personification of the earth stratum and the land symbolism sky father and earth mother; a concept which occurs back in Indonesia, whence the Polynesians came. Again, it occurs everywhere except in the west – Samoa and Tonga.

In order to carry out the theme of giving birth to gods, the human method of reproduction was followed. The sky-father was materialized as a male who originally embraced the Earth-mother and remained in close touch with her. Their children – Tane, Rongo, Tu, Tangaroa and others were born and lay between them in a circumscribed world of darkness. Stories vary – the children wanted light and space – Tane pushed the sky and earth apart.

The Era of Darkness the Theology contains a vague period preceding the Earth Mother and Sky Father, which began with Chaos and Darkness. Darkness is followed by various stages of light in which the varying stages are personified in an ordered sequence of evolution and recited in chants as a genealogy an ordering from darkness which is dead to light which is living – light that sets us free. The period of darkness and eventual light culminate in the Sky-father and the Earth-mother who give birth to the gods.

Origin of Island Groups. Land as personified by the Earth-Mother was a symbol of Land in general. The earth mother could not be the mother of gods as well as land. Samoa and Tonga were

created by the god Tangaroa who threw down rocks into the sea and they became Islands, others say the Islands were floating about and the gods attached to the bed of the sea.

The Creation of Man. Theology had created the gods, the stage was set for the creation of man. The material side of man, through physical birth through a female, but that the rank and power should be inherited through the male. The first person was therefore female. The gods were male and one of them supplied the male element. That was the basis of the story that was carried to the islands. Stories vary with the earth mother being modelled from clay generally agreed that man was born of a woman fashioned from earth and that the father was a god.

War Among the Gods. The first disagreement was before the earth and the sky separated. It was between Tane and Whiro. Whiro was defeated and remained in the darkness, which he preferred in the underworld. Tahiti stories tell how Oro, the son of Tangaroa defeated Tane in Tahiti. This was the followers of these gods, not the gods themselves. Many Tahitians left for the Cook Islands rather than submit to their conquerors. The great gods were equal, but different Island groups have a tendency to exalt one over the others, thus Tangaroa was exalted in the Society and Cook Islands, Tane in NZ and Hawaii, Rongo in Mangaia and Tu in Mangareva. Sometimes mythology was altered to fit the circumstances. The struggle among the gods for greater prestige was merely a reflection of what took place among their human followers.

Later elaboration in Ra'iatea After the family of gods radiated from *Taputapu-atea* with the colonizing ships further elaborations took place at that centre of religious teachings. Tangaroa gained ascendancy from mere god among equals to the status of Creator and the tale changed thus:

“Ta'aroa, the Creator, was self-begotten...no father and no mother. He was in a shell in endless darkness. At long last Ta'aroa cracked the shell and hatched himself. The inner shell became the rock and earth. The outer shell he made into the dome of the sky. He created man and women, rock and soil. Then he created Tu the great craftsman. Trees and food plants grew...

The promotion of Tangaroa as the creator did not do away with the worship of the other gods. He was merely supreme among many.

Monotheism. ¹⁷

NZ, probably in the *Wairarapa* district like the religious seminary at *Taputapu-atea* created a creator and called him Io. Like Tangaroa Io had no parents but simply came into being. He was made responsible for the existing pattern of religion. Two more skies were added to the older count of ten. Io took up residence on the 12th and topmost level. Messengers maintained communication between Io and the major gods. Io was regarded as the source of all knowledge. The cult of Io seems to have been confined to the high priesthood and caused minimal disruption. The religion of the people remained Polytheistic

The Tuamotuans also had a creator – called Kio. The myths seem to have nothing in common with the Maori Io except that the religion of the people remained polytheistic.

It seems Polynesian religion was always polytheistic and individual priests have at times elevated one god above the others.

Interim Summary No 2.

In a simple stage of social development man created the gods. The technique of deification continued until the advent of Christianity. There was affinity between eponymous ancestors whose names were used to denote tribes and sub tribes. The major gods and tribal ancestors were earlier in time and recognized over a wider area. With the passing of time and the growth of an intellectual and

imaginative priesthood some of the deified ancestors who led the voyages into central Polynesia were given greater prestige by changing a human parentage to a supernatural origin in order to fit with the re-constructed theology – the Sky father and the Earth Mother. Additional prestige was given to these gods reversals which made the Gods the creator on Man.

The section of the case study above related to Sepik Book 1 – from the creation to 1885. The section below relates to Sepik Book 2 – The waves of change and Book 4 – Coming to grips with the future

Part 3 The Death of the Gods.

. The first contact with the outside world brought metal tools and loom woven cloth to a stone-age people. Polynesians wanted these superior goods at any cost to satisfied the new need that had been created. Then came the missionaries with a new religion. They came to convert the heathen and they brought goods to use and to trade. It was the material goods the Polynesians wanted, not the promise of life after death. If joining the new religion would get them the material goods, then join. They deserted their old gods. It was not as difficult as it may seem. Defeat in war was often attributed to the lack of power of the war god. Sometimes gods would be replaced. Chief Pomare of Tahiti after defeat in war took an interest in the Christian God in the hope that god would give him better success. At the same time, he refused to abandon his old gods.

Mangaian gods (Cook Islands). The national god of Mangaia was Rongo, a son of the Sky Father and Earth Mother. Rituals to Rongo were conducted in two temples, one containing a stone statue of Rongo. Human sacrifices were offered to Rongo on occasion. Each tribe had its own tribal god – 13 of them each represented in wooden images that were kept in a special god house. They were wrapped in bark cloth and tended by a keeper who fed each of them taro every evening. There were stone god images as well.

Priests. There were two highly ranked hereditary priests to Rongo. A third priest was responsible for distributing food on ceremonial occasions. Each of the tribes had their tribal priest – the medium between the tribal group and their god.

As father and mother usually came from different tribes they had different gods. The cutting of the umbilical cord became ceremonial with a declaration by a priest as to which god the child would be given/dedicated.

Advent of Missionaries. 1823 After roughly rejecting native LMS missionary's dysentery broke out on Mangaia and it was attributed to the visitors God. Other missionaries landed the following year and fear of disease saw them protected them and allowed them to preach. In time locals who were aligned with some tribal factions against others were converted and the national god house was burned down. The faction who aligned with the Missionaries homed that the Christian god would be powerful enough to keep them in power. The wrapped images were unwrapped and exposed to view thereby desecrating them.

Cultural Revolution. The replacement of Rongo by Jehovah impacted not only the local religion but also the organization of society that were revolutionary.

Religious changes Human sacrifice could no longer be made to Rongo. Without the human sacrifice the correct ceremonies for installing a new government could not be conducted on the Inland and shore temples. [note the parallel with head hunting] The peace drums could not be sounded. The High priest positions ceased to function. The third priest – distributor of food was shorn of its religious significance. Christian prayers replaced fish god worship as the canoes went out.

The Islanders learned that Jehovah was a jealous god who required “Thou shalt serve no other god but me”. The ancient offices that had been inherited from illustrious ancestors were swept away. Churches were built replaced the open temples Prayers and hymns replaced the chants and incantations of the old religion, which were no longer taught and so were soon forgotten. The bible was translated into Rarotongan dialect. Myths legends and traditions ceased to be important and those that survived are often distorted to conform with Biblical stories.

Social changes

There were battles between the converted and the unconverted. On the Christian side was chief Numangatini regarded as King of Mangaia. In the old culture the order was 1. Tribal priests 2. High Priests. 3. Military Dictator. 4. District and Sub District Chiefs.

In the new society, the order was 1. White Missionary. 2. Three native pastors. 3. King. 4. District and Sub District chiefs

Old Marriage custom – chief could have more than one wife including his wife’s sister. It was appropriate to marry a brother’s widow in order to keep her children with deceased’s family. Marriage was by mutual agreement between families – not a religious matter.

New Marriage custom – religious ceremony in church one wife only – those with more than one, were ordered to choose one and sent the others home refusal = ostracized & excommunicated. “The church as guided by the white missionaries appear to have regarded the ancient customs as relics of heathenism and therefore to be abolished.”

Code of Laws.

Traditional taboos were abolished and new Taboos enforced. A curfew of 8 pm was set to curb clandestine sexual activity – set fines were imposed for a number of offenses. Dance and song was forbidden as it reflected evil. Police were employed to detect lawbreakers and judges to impose fines. The fines received were divided into three – equal parts for the judge, the king and the police. The skills then were not to be caught – if caught, fine was paid without any sense of moral delinquency. Women masked their beautiful features by wearing “Mother Hubbards” to be in accord with the missionary sense of decency.

Traders came, slept with local girls without marriage, introduced cards and alcohol. Missionaries amended the laws to include gambling and drinking, so the Islanders were burdened not only with their own failings but with the failings of civilization. The New Zealand Government rule, in parts of Polynesia, commenced in 1900. NZ rule was found to be more reasonable than mission rule.

Final Summary.

As an anthropologist Sir Henry Buck saw religion as an essential part of the culture of any people. “I have a firm belief that the things a man has created with his mind and worshiped in the spirit are as real to him as the things he has made with his hands...The belief in the supernatural and in the immortality of the soul must be accepted as real facts that have led to actions and results. I am not concerned as to whether the supernatural and immortality can be proven or disproven scientifically...the belief in immortality is a living, vital fact that had brought and still brings comfort and happiness to large masses of people.”

Religion needs no scientific proof, for it is based on faith. Faith to those who have it is a vivid reality. The introduced Christian religion had evolved in a different cultural setting on the other side of the world. It included its own cultural values, and the Polynesian values that centuries of practice and faith had established locally were condemned as “heathen practices”.

End Notes Chapter 5

-
- ¹ G.Bateson – Naven – Stanford University Press – second edition 1958 P 1
- ² <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/14223.htm>.
- ³ P.H. Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) - Anthropology & Religion – Yale University Press 1939.
- ⁴ Temporal/Temporality is a term often used in philosophy in talking about the way time is a linear progression of past, present, and future.
- ⁵ Eponymous – an important named person/a central figure.
- ⁶ Fealty - the obligation or the engagement to be faithful to a lord.
- ⁷ Sanctity - holiness of life and character /godliness/the quality or state of being holy or sacred.
- ⁸ Divinity - the state of things that come from a supernatural power or deity, such as God, and are therefore regarded as sacred and holy.
- ⁹ The words of this paragraph come very close to reflecting Professor Lawrence' simple definition of Religion.
- ¹⁰ Deification - The act or process of deifying/The condition of being deified/ One that embodies the qualities of a god.
- ¹¹ Spiritualism - is the concept of an ultimate or an alleged immaterial reality ; an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his/her being
- ¹² Polytheism - the belief of multiple deities also usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses, along with their own mythologies and rituals.
- ¹³ The most common examples of this in modern times are the status and regional support 22acquired by Cargo Cult leaders.
- ¹⁴ Incarnate - embodied in flesh; given a bodily, especially a human, form:
E.G. a *devil incarnate*.
- ¹⁵ P.H.Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa), Vikings of the Sunrise (New York 1938) P87.
- ¹⁶ Metaphysics - a branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world.
- ¹⁷ Monotheism – the belief in one god or the oneness of God.

Sepik 1 Chapter 6 Of Cultural and Religious Borrowings

Part 1 : An overview of beliefs in Sepik traditional religions

As we learned from the previous chapter, traditional religions develop from the events and histories of ancestors who, upon their deaths, took on the status of god figures – as Sir Henry Buck put it¹, man created his own gods.

The development of traditional religious practices did not occur simultaneously. They were, and are, learned in a combination of ways through education concerning the mores and cultural values that developed through time in individual societies as they identified ways of explaining, coming to terms with, and drawing strength from that which cannot be explained from within the knowledge of that society. Examples of the unexplained include phenomena in the natural world, death, sorcery, magic in its many forms, spells, omens, and in the post-contact period, cargo cult beliefs, all of which form parts of what is encompassed by traditional religions.

Given that scientific and historic knowledge varies from society to society, so too does that which cannot be explained from within the knowledge of that society. It follows then that religious beliefs, values and associated rituals vary from religion to religion. Religious borrowings between societies is dealt with in detail in Part 2 below.

[1] About death and contexts concerning the worship of the spirits of the dead.



Above left - Upper April River. Painted skull and shell valuables in a limestone burial cave

Above Centre - A burial cave ledge near Terauwi in the upper Green River area, with an ossuary of human bones and a woven cane cuirass [body armour] signifying that its owner had been a great warrior and may need his armour for battles in the afterlife.

Above right - Upper April River area. The skull of a recently dead Biami elder in a strategically placed stick and leaf shelter, so he could oversee his tribal lands.

ooo000ooo

Pre-contact Sepik societies¹ regarded their communities as consisting of three sets of people; the living, the dead and the as yet unborn. This trilogy was also critical to both the social groupings of the people [loosely called the clan] and the ‘clan lands’.

A Clan is defined as ... an exogamous social group whose members regard themselves as being related to each other, usually from fictional descent from a common ancestor. Clans may be patrilineal or matrilineal, and the two sometime co-exist in the same community²

The clan is a constant entity through which people pass in continuous cycles from birth, life and death. It is not surprising therefore that the concept of reincarnation is important in some Sepik societies.

Clan land is communally owned by the clan members and is passed down from the past for the living to sustain themselves with the necessities of life, and to hold in trust for unborn clan members. The history, myths and beliefs concerning clan land are inextricably tied to the clan itself – it, and the physical features on it are regarded as the sacred home of the spirits of the clan’s dead, with powers to protect the living and cure their ills. Clan members felt and feel an obligation to defend their clan’s land with their lives if it becomes threatened. This defence is more than just protecting land as an asset – it is the defence of the clan itself, its spiritual identity and the right of clan members to exist.

In Sepik societies, the spirits of the dead are regarded as being present with the living at all times in the community. Deceased persons were traditionally buried inside or under residential buildings, or in the floor of *haus tambarans*, as District officer Townsend found during his exploratory patrol through the Sepik Plains in 1934 [Sepik 2 Chapter 40]. The spirits of the dead were respected and worshipped by the living who valued their wisdom in guiding the daily activities of the living, through the medium of dreams. Images of clan ancestors, clan totems and legendary warriors were passed down through the ages. Some carved figures such as *Magisaun* and *Tangweiyabinjua* became Sepik gods [Sepik 1 Chapter 27].

Key spirit figures known along the Sepik River as *Tambarans* are known by the coastal Sissano people as *Paraks*. The function of the *Parak*, the guardian spirit of each clan, was to *...regulate reciprocal relations and to ensure egalitarianism by the use of rewards and punishments. A person may be made ill by the Parak, for not following the rules ... Sissano [also] had traditional healers who combined their knowledge of the curative power of certain plants with ritual. Traditional healers claimed their curative powers came from their clan Parak³.*

Not all aspects of traditional religion were beneficial. Human remains needed to be protected by clan members because if an enemy clan or individual gained access to an important person’s remains, powerful supernatural forces of sorcery could be unleashed against living clan members.

[Part 2] Staple Foods

Staple food sources of Sepik communities are also the subjects of traditional religious mythology and ritual practices. The Middle Sepik communities have a balanced staple diet of sago and fish. The Sawos cult hero *Mai’imp* created the sago [Sepik 1 Chapter 18] and sacred ‘tanged axes’ are

¹ It could be considered presumptuous to make empirical statements about cultural aspects of Sepik prehistory. However it is reasonable to infer that which prevailed in the past by observing the present, and drawing conclusions based on credible parameters. This process applies throughout this chapter.

used in rituals that were performed to ensure seasonal return of the fish to the rivers, lakes and lagoons⁴. Critical to the balanced sago/fish trade is also the subject of religious mythology [Sepik 1 Chapter 18].

Some Sepik communities such as the Kwoma and Abelam rely upon a staple diet of yams. Sepik 4 Chapter 45 describes a cultural revival in Kwoma villages near Ambunti. These include a Nokwi ceremony, the third in a sequence of fertility ceremonies concerning yams. Each of the three ceremonies involved Kwoma art. The first, the Yena ceremony, involved Yena masks of both wood and pottery manufacture, as well as human skulls. The second ceremony involved Minja masks, and the third involved female statues of Nokwi the mythical ancestress who acquired the original yams which she caught in her fish net.

The Mianmin in the Telefomin sub-district rely upon taro as their staple crop. Sepik 4 Chapter 38 describes the writer's 1966 investigation patrol into the murders of ten Mianmin people, originating from a religious breach when a woman peered into a village haus tambaran, a sacred place where women were forbidden. This breach in turn resulted in the failure of the taro crop² and starvation for the villagers. The Oksapmin of the Telefomin sub-district rely upon the sweet potato as their staple crop. Sepik 1 Chapter 34 tells the story of the 'Min'³ people's god figure – the old woman ancestress Afek who allocated staple foods to each of the 'Min' tribes.

[3] About human fertility, marriage customs and procreation in Sepik societies.

In the Middle Sepik, traditionally a man was not eligible to marry until he was initiated, and to qualify for initiation he had first to have taken a human head, procurable only through conflict with outside tribes. The custom of headhunting therefore became a fundamental part of Middle Sepik tradition [headhunting is the subject of Sepik 1 Chapter 13].

Girls and women were, and are, seen in Sepik societies as assets, in that they perform household, hearth and garden duties, they give birth to the next generation and in their mature old age, they are the community midwives and family nurturers and carers. Not surprisingly then, marriage arrangements traditionally involved economic transactions between the exogamous unit into which the bride was born, and the one into which she married. Sepik brides cannot marry within her own birth clan, as the rules of exogamy classify all the clan's young men as her 'brothers'. She must marry into a different clan, and the children to whom she gives birth will belong to her husband's clan, not her own. Under normal circumstances, the off-springs will inherit land and other rights from their father, not their mother⁴.

In matrilineal societies⁵, the man goes to live with his wife's clan and the children belong to her clan, not his. The children's inheritance comes from the mother's brother, not the father. Whilst this is difficult for Western society readers to understand, it makes sense – the mother, her brother and the mother's children all belong to the mother's clan. Where it is practiced, the tradition of Sister Exchange as a marriage mechanism become complicated in cases where divorce eventuates, because there are two marriages involved. If one of the two couples want divorce, what happens to the marriage? If the second marriage remains intact, how is compensation arranged, for either or both

² The crop failure was not due to supernatural action, but because the people involved believed they were doomed, and as a result, ceased tending their gardens and the protective pig fences which surrounded them

³ 'Min' is a suffix meaning 'people' as in Telefomin, Atbalmin, Mianmin, Oksapmin etc.

⁴ In some circumstances, upon the death of her husband the widow may return to her birth clan. If her children accompany her, they may or may not be granted land rights there. It often happens in the Middle Sepik that widows are required to marry her dead husbands brother in order to keep her children within the clan into which they were born.

couples? Partly as a result of the complexity of sister exchange ceremonies, some Sepik societies are abandoning sister exchange in favour of Bride Price payments.

Bride price was traditionally paid in shell valuables and pigs. In more recent post-contact times, it tends to be paid in cash. A record is always kept of the amount paid so, in the event of a divorce, the correct amount can be repaid. In older bride price payments, there was confusion with alternative currencies, e.g. two pounds six shillings could be converted into shell money. In such an instance, a counting mechanism applied – as there were 20 shillings in a pound, this transferred into 46 units of shell money.

Traditionally, in the coastal Sissano villages, some bodies of the dead were smoked and mummified in the family houses. The fluid that dropped from the bodies during mummification was collected and fed to children with their sago, in order to make them tall and strong. It was said that having consumed this fluid, the village girls grew tall and strong before developing breasts. By contract, since this practice ceased, village observers note that girls now develop breasts at an earlier age, and before they grow tall and strong⁶. Similar ‘ritual cannibalism’ occurred when a powerful enemy leader or warrior was killed and his body recovered. He was eaten in order that his strength was transferred to those who consumed his flesh⁷.

Rituals involving primogeniture infanticide

As discussed in Sepik 4 Chapter 33, in 1964 this writer investigated reports that mothers in Green River’s Nagu census division murdered their first-born child at birth. This was reportedly done as Nagu mythology indicated that young mothers did not know how to make the first child – it was sort of a trial run. Whilst the investigation produced strong evidence that the custom existed, sufficient evidence was not found to bring any specific mothers to trial. As a result of this writer’s report, anthropologist Rosemary Oxeer visited the Nagu area in late 1964 and subsequently told the writer that she had not been able to spend sufficient time there to reach any firm conclusions.

The assumed reality for the Nagu people was that primogeniture infanticide had been sufficiently exposed during the 1964 patrols, that the Nagu people, and any others practicing the custom, would know better than to continue it. Also, all future patrols to that and adjacent areas would, as Townsend did in his quest to end head hunting, be on the lookout for evidence and lay wilful murder charges in the event that evidence was found. No such charges are known to have eventuated, but as the Nagu region is remote and seldom visited, anything was possible.

ooo000ooo

Part 2 : Religious Borrowings

It is reasonable to suggest that all people have some level of interest in religious beliefs and the mysteries of the supernatural, even if no firm beliefs are held. Most of us, even those who hold firm beliefs, have the potential to revise their belief systems and possibly subscribe to another doctrine. The focus and development of religion of any Sepik tribal group was probably influenced by the available food supply, their relationship with surrounding groups, and military elements which may have been constantly changing. This writer’s research suggest that there were three sets of circumstances in which religious reviews and conversions probably occurred during the Sepik pre-history era :-

[1] The evolution from hunter-gather to sedentary lifestyles

The Sepik Hill language speakers reside in two adjacent areas of the Sepik District, generally in a broad belt south of Ambunti on the middle section of the river, south to the Central Range; the Strickland / Sepik Divide, and the Hunstein Mountains. This writer extensively patrolled both areas during 1966/67 [Sepik 4 Chapters 37 and 42] and in 1970 / 74 [Ambunti Patrol report 11a/1973/74].

There was a significant variation in the traditional religious lives of these separate Sepik Hill communities. In 1966 those who lived in the Strickland / Sepik divide area were little removed from a hunter/gather lifestyle, and while they worshipped their ancestral spirits, they moved residence so often, as indicated above, they placed ancestral skulls in caves, on rock ledges and in gardens, but they did not have haus tambarans. The related Hunstein Mountain communities to the north by contrast lived in sedentary villages, whilst maintaining a more-or-less hunter gather lifestyle. This writer observed three differences between the Strickland / Sepik Divide and the Hunstein Mountains Sepik Hill language people :-

1. **Sago subsistence** in the Hunstein mountain communities gave them better food security than their kin in the mountains to the south. The Strickland / Sepik people by contrast did occasionally harvest sago in remote mountain swamp patches, but the environment was not conducive to large scale sago production.
2. **Absence of a constant threat of warfare.** Unlike the Strickland / Sepik Divide people, the Hunstein Mountain people were not under constant threat of cannibal and spouse seeking raids from their neighbours, in the latter case from the Telefomin people
3. **The traditional religion** of the Hunstein people appeared to be more advanced than that of their southern kin.

It seems to this writer that these three factors are inter-dependant. The Hunstein people were able to settle into sedentary villages because they had a secure food supply and they were not kept constantly on the move by raids from Telefomin wife seeking cannibals.

Other sedentary villages like theirs, not far to the north of their Hunstein Mountain domain, had haus tambarans and religious beliefs which included head hunting up until about 1940. It is not difficult to see how these religious concepts could be borrowed and adapted into their village life. Also, without the need to constantly clear new land, build new fortified dwellings and avoid or fight Telefomin raiders, the Hunstein people had more time available for religious and artistic endeavours, than did their southern kinfolk.

The Haus Tambaran – the church of the people and its priesthood

As noted in Sepik 1 Chapter 13, Sepik haus tambarans were and are the physical manifestation of Sepik traditional religions. Sepik haus tambarans vary greatly, but in their most advanced forms, among the Iatmul and Sawos for instance, the sculpture and the art work is the equivalent of the Bible or Koran, as the gods, the spirits and the clan totems are all on display. The men of the haus tambarans are arranged into age classes, the most senior of which are effectively the priests. Sacred knowledge and the highest level of interpretation of the haus tambaran's visual representation of traditional religion rests with the elders, the priests.

Headhunting: Bisis, and Mari language groups share a legend, which explains how headhunting originated at Milae village and then spread to the Bisis Mari and Bahinemo language groups, but not to the related Bitara and Saniyo languages, which happen to be further from the

Iatmul languages, which are the presumed source of the head hunting ritual in the Sepik. The legend is pieced together as follows;

Three ancestral brothers originated on a mountain called Batali. They were Kamamu the Milae ancestor, Wahikwa, the Kamasiut ancestor and Ambarandimi the Garamambu ancestor. They were not real ancestors, but spirits.

They came to Kamon creek where they met their uncle, who has been making a fish trap. They left him and continue on, but Ambarandimi lied to Kamamu and Wahikwa saying "You two go ahead, I was to go and shit." The other two went and Ambarandini watched them go, then he went back to his uncle, whose name we do not know, but he was from Milae. Ambarandimi held his throat and cut his head off and put it in his bilum.

Ambarandimi followed the other two and met them on the track...the blood dripped from the bilum onto his leg, and the others asked "What is this?" He replied it was a leach bite...they looked in the bilum and saw the head and exclaimed "What! I think you have killed our uncle!" ...They started to beat Ambarandimi. This is the basic reason for the Milae Garamambu fights down through the ages.

After beating him with sticks, they felt sorry, as they were brothers. They called out to the village, and people there started playing the garamut with the headhunting beat. They reached the village and held a ceremony and then they slept.

Next morning, they held a big singsing and an old woman called Endafis [their mother] cooked the head... She would not drink the soup or eat any of the meat as it was her brother's head. The others ate the meat. They painted the skull with red paint and put two wild lemons into the eye sockets. They put the skull on the end of a spear to dry. Then the three brothers and their mother slept.

Two other ancestors, Wudito and Dokworokwa heard the garamuts and in the morning they took their bamboo hook and hooked the mountains to them, and so they came to Maiwan, where the mother and brothers lived, and saw them sleeping. They saw the skull and stole it and went back to their place Wudito.

That afternoon at Maiwan the people aroused themselves and searched for the head, but to no avail... Then at about 6pm they heard the garamuts at Wudito playing. Next dawn, they took a bamboo hook Wudito to them. They took their spears, and the three brothers pushed Wudito and Dokworokwa around. They did not fight in earnest, as they were all [classificatory] brothers

...They sat, and the three demanded "Right! You two brothers prepare some payment [compensation] now!" ...payment in shell money, kinas and torimbums [Green snail shells] was made. Then they ate betelnut together three said "We will leave you now. You can keep this man's head." They returned to Maiwan.

Wudito and Dokworokwa continued their singsing...and the spirits of Big Mari heard the garamuts. These spirits were Gwamogwa and his sister Dipianbol...The same thing as happened at Maiwan happened again. The Wudito brothers slept and the Big Mari spirits stole the head. Later Wudito heard the Big Mari garamuts...

They [The Wudito brothers] came to the place and Wudito told Dokworokwa "We will just push them around a bit" ...but Dokworokwa took a garamut drum stick and hit Gwamogwa over the head with it, until he had only half a head left. He is now a stone with only half a head. Wudito and Dokworokwa took the skull and returned home...and continued their singsing...

Another man called Babiowa came and stole the head and took it back to his place Daptitu at Big Mari. The brothers got up and searched for the head. They waited for the sound of the garamuts, but no sound came.

A pigeon landed in a breadfruit tree and warbled “Um Daptitu gangolma. Daptitu gangolma...” The brothers heard this and went to Daptitu, where they found a clay saucer with new banana leaf wrapped object inside it. They unwrapped the banana leaf and found the head which they brought back to Wudito. That is the end of the story.

Qn. Is that the reason for head hunting? **Ans.** Yes.

Writer’s note: There is much more to the story, but not on the headhunting theme. For EG Dokwprokwa killed Wudito and all involved turned to stone.

ooo000ooo

Kamasiut was a Hunstein Mountain village of special interest. The Kamasiut appear in three chapters in three separate eras :-

Sepik 2 Chapter 38 - The Kamasiut attack on Patrol Officer McCarthy’s 1930 patrol.

Sepik 3 Chapter 22 - Violence erupts around Kamasiut lands mid-1942 to April 1943 – Kamasiut were annihilated by their neighbours with the collapse of the rule of law during the Japanese occupation.

Sepik 4 Chapter 44 [page 9] - This writer investigated a report that Kamasiut survivors still lived on the Kamasiut lands and again threatened the Garamambu community. No evidence of Kamasiut survivors was found.

Descriptions of the Kamasiut from the 1930’s and 1940’s seem to indicate they were in a transitional stage between hunter-gather and sedentary lifestyles. See Sepik 1 Chapter 49.

[2] The influence of Austronesian migrants

Sepik 1 Chapters 3 & 4 describe the limited historical facts that are known of the Austronesian migrants of Asian origins who influenced the residents of both the Sepik coasts and the Sepik inland sea thousands of years ago. Given that the Austronesians introduced pigs, dogs, chickens, pottery, betel-nut and superior sailing and maritime navigation skills to the Sepik residents, their arrival and impact must have been revolutionary. It must have also happened that the apparent arrival of these ‘superior beings’ brought with them the ‘true’ religion to which the resident Papuans must have converted ...Some surviving evidence of this conversion is found in Sepik 1 Chapters 3 *The Arrival of Man – the Austronesians*, Chapter 17 *Ndu Social Structure and Reflections of an Austronesian Past*,

[3] The exercise of hegemony over less powerful communities

Colonization of New Guinea generally and in the Sepik in particular was not limited to that of the Dutch, German, English and Australian settlers. As described later, some Sepik indigenous communities such as the Iatmul, the Swagup, the Manambu, the Telefomin and the Mianmin either annihilated or exerted hegemony over weaker Sepik groups and effectively colonized their lands. Survivors of such annihilations, particularly the breeding females, were absorbed into the victorious tribes, and, in order to survive there they needed to comply with the rituals and beliefs of their new village community.

Post Script - The post-contact era, as described in Sepik Volumes 2, 3 & 4 describe a fourth and fifth set of circumstances, in which religious reviews and conversions occurred. These were :-

[4] The arrival of Christianity, and,

[5] Cargo Cult beliefs.

End Notes Chapter 6

¹ P.H. Buck [Te Rangi Hiroa] *The Anthropology of Religion* – Yale University Press 1939 Chapter 1

² R Piddington – *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* – Oliver & Boyd, London 1960 p. 146

iii C. Haiveta – *Health Care in Maindron* – Sepik Heritage – Letkehaus et al Carolina University Press 1990 p. 441-44

iv L. Bragge – The Bragge Collection [unpublished] – p. 20 documentation of Item 47

v Matrilineal societies may have existed in the Sepik during the times of the Austronesian migrations [Sepik 1 Chapter vi

vi Brother B. Zieba – *Tsunami in the Land of Magic* – 2005 p.?

vii L. Bragge Sepik 1 Chapter 17 [unpublished]

viii The Sky Father and the Earth Mother

Sepik 1 Attachment 2 – Traditional Adaptations to Accommodate Western Influences

This attachment covers similar topics and beliefs which are described in Sepik 4 Chapter 59 and should be read in conjunction with it.

When we were created, this place was water. A little ground showed above the water and two men were created. Little brother was your [European] ancestor and big brother was my [New Guinean] ancestor. Big brother became angry with little brother and you went with the ground. The ground you took with you was Australia. Pieces of ground broke away and made the various other countries. When you went, you took with you, our language – English. Big brother was left with many languages and words came up here, while you spoke only English. Now you have come back and make it hard for us.

Look at my skin. I am of the black earth and you are of the white earth. We are the same, but we have changed a little. You went and you learned quickly, and now you have come back to teach big brother, but I do not learn quickly... One man made us both. Six ancestors were created here: Dambwi, Kwonji, Magisaun, then two big ancestors Biatnimbuk and Berangi. [and the 6th – Mai'imp?].

Now the two you call Adam and Eve, we call the man Kambubu and the woman Kambalagwan. They were wrong and had the six children. They shot Mai'imp and he died. The woman's anger was aroused over the death of Mai'imp. He died here at Yogoseli and became the sago we eat.

Before there was no hard work. The man with the store had everything. Then the clouds went up and came back down and the ground became strong. Two trees grew – Lima and Wani, they grew, but they did not reach the clouds, then they fell and became the crocodiles and fish and the water life [Limanaui].

Then one tree, Manga grew right up. But they were not trees at all. Umanaui and Manga were men, Wani Umanaui were men and all the trees came up and the forests formed. The ground became firm and we are here now. Black and White came from the same source. The woman lay down and made a hole and the water went in and the children were born. Do you have a different story?

Little brother left after trouble with women. A spear was used to mark her vagina. Big brother saw the mark and said "I think little brother has taken my wife. He had intercourse with her and marked her vagina". He speared little brother and threw him down a hole and planted a post on top of him. But little brother was not dead. He spat betel nut and big brother thought it was blood. Little brother dug a tunnel. Big brother thought he was dead, but little brother sent a message, as if by wireless "Mi stap" – [I am here]. Big Brother was surprised to find him alive. Little brother came out of the ground. The brothers were both very ashamed and little brother went. The sea went out and the ground broke as I have said white ground drifted away. You can see we, PNG do not have plenty of ground left here. We are the same – the rope [Umbilical] cord is the same [indicated by pointing to the navel] We call the rope Aranjimeri. The origins of dogs was at Urat [Dreikikir area] They had two ancestors who came from a hole in the ground. We can talk more later, I have a rope in the house with ten talks on it, then ten talks more. The talks are good and talk of following the work [presumably the Ten Commandments]. Ten talks are bad and were the talks of Adam and Eve. It is Adam and Eves talks we hold and we are mad and we die.²

[Such "ropes" are knotted cords known as "Kirugu 1" in the Yatmul language. They have knots of various sizes which represent historic events and the order of their occurrence.]

Was your ancestor a white woman and mine a black woman? No! It was the white ground and black ground. Sago is the same when you wash it. There is white sago and black sago. Yams and Mamis are the same – black and white, and now we eat them as food. We are the same. One man made us all. You call him God. We call him... I will speak softly so the youths cannot hear what I say ...Ameto, and the woman Metagwa. They had no heads, but they had the four winds Mogaribo [north indicated], Kambogori [south indicated], Wolimanga [east indicated] and Salio [west indicated]

The sun up there has a man on it. He is Yigonguma. When the world is lost, this man will come down. Near dawn when the moon comes up the stars are bright. They are two eyes, these eyes will come out and come down and strike the earth and the earth will be lost. Then a new earth will be formed. Some earth now is in short supply and other earth is infertile and useless.

The two brothers could not read or write. They went and through strong effort learned to read and write. Big brother tried different things as pencils, but became tired and threw the pencils away, and ran headlong without knowledge. Now you have come back and many of our children can read and write. But I will die illiterate.

The ten bad talks make us fight and live badly, and become mad and die. The law came and the fighting stopped and we learned of the ten good talks. The good talks say speak the truth and make amends for your wrongs. The other talks go against the ten good talks. They cause lack of law, lack of wind, so there can be no strength. But you have come back and it is like daytime with the sun above – your anger is finished, but we are still angry.

We are the same, we have one ancestor. We both have eggs and stick [testicles and penis] put it inside and water [sperm] comes, mix it, birth, life, walk about.

That is the story of the origins of the earth. The mountains rose and the areas that lay down [lowlands] were land and swamps – [the lowlands] are Berangi, the mountains are Biatnimbuk. But soon it will all be finished and fertile land and a single language will evolve; it will be a good time. Now we experience the bad time. The wasps stung our mouths and we speak plenty of languages. There is a fire down below Manum. [Manum is the active volcano off the mouth of the Sepik River]. The water is held back by two big stones. There is red water and blue water and salt water. We are on an Island in the water. Knowledge went around us. Everywhere gained knowledge and we stayed on our island without knowledge. We are lost...The sun comes up for you, and when it goes down, it is for me 2

Suat and Kaman were the originators of the sago/fish trade [as told in Chapter 19]. One woman had two daughters. One gave rise to you people [Europeans] and the other gave rise to me . [New Guineans]. Now I have black women and you have white women. The woman Suat went with you and the woman Kaman stayed with me. Now you live well with your women but I throw my women around. 3

Mai'imp [his story is told in Chapter 18]. The current informant goes on to say... He [Mai'imp] was the son of Kwonji and he was going to provide all the secrets [another reference to PNG being left without knowledge – in this case referring to cargo cult]. The ancestors gathered and killed him and [as a result] food became in short supply. But food became plentiful again because of the strengths of Suat and Kaman.3

With Mai'imp dead, [Suat and Kaman] cried and cried because there was no good food. They cut down trees and limbum and washed it, but no food formed. Then two Europeans came and asked them "Why are you working so hard?" "We are seeking food. We do not have any good food." They said.

"I am sorry. Look at me. I did not go away completely. Yes! It is me Mai'imp. I have left my

old body." He [or they?] then had intercourse with them. They put the limbum container [used for making sago] between their legs and the semen went into it from their vaginas, with the sago they had washed with their hands, and the sago formed up as strong food. They looked around and the Europeans were gone...I think that is why you are white, as you are. You have already died and come back to life. 4

ooo000ooo

Jama's creation ancestress Anvik made foods of all kinds; yams, mamis, pigs, cassowaries, snakes, insects etc. She made a hole in the ground with no entrance to the surface. She did not look after this hole and trouble came in the hole and the surface caved in and the food in the hole came outside and we found this food...

The other hole has not broken. It was the hole she made for us black people, and the things came out. The other hole which is still unrevealed has other things in it...we do not know just what. We think it is iron and other things you have in Australia. We will find out when the hole breaks and we will learn to make the things therein. So far, we have received only the yams and mamis etc. 5

ooo000ooo

End Notes

- 1 Jurg Wassmann – Sepik Heritage 1990 – page. 32.
- 2 Kwonji of Burui – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 166-168
- 3 Kwonji of Burui – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 173
- 4 Kwonji of Burui – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 174
- 5 Kontrak Nowab of Jama – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 200

Chapter 7 The nature of pre-contact land tenure.

In the context of the history of the Sepik as told in Sepik 1 – 5, the people’s relationship with their land is of fundamental importance. It is necessary, therefore, to record in this chapter, a base line comprehension of pre-contact land tenure, against which to examine colonial land acquisitions.

“Each piece of ground, each useful tree in the forest, the fish in each stream, etc. etc. has a proprietor...”¹ – so said Nicholas Mikloucho-Maclay, a Russian explorer, ethnologist, anthropologist and biologist who became famous as the first scientist to settle among and study people who had never seen a European between 1871 to 1883. He lived among the people of Astrolabe Bay, in what became New Guinea’s Madang District.

All land is, and all improvements on the land, are owned - was the crux of the training the writer received as a field officer of the Department of District Services and Native Affairs - concerning PNG traditional land tenure.

The best description the writer heard of the relationship between the indigenous people of PNG and the land upon which they live, was:

“We receive our land from our ancestors, we use it to sustain ourselves, and we keep it in trust for the unborn generations to come.”²

Not a single metre of “unowned land” was ever found in the writer’s petroleum industry experience of supervising the cutting across hundreds of kilometres of seismic lines on PNG tribal lands. There were two checks and balances in doing this.

1. Landowners were employed to clear the seismic lines – as soon as an, otherwise invisible boundary was reached, the next group of landowners would be waiting, demanding that their men replace the current line cutting crew to work on their land.
2. Compensation claims were recorded and paid for damage to the forest and gardens caused during line cutting – these invariable reflected boundaries which corresponded to 1 above.

ooo000ooo

Traditional PNG land tenure not only reflects that “tribal” land is communally owned, but that “ownership” rests with three separate entities; the spirits of the dead ancestors, the living and the as yet unborn. The land is static, whereas the land ownership is in continual transition as the communal owners pass from birth, through life and into death. Not surprisingly there are also beliefs in reincarnation³, so communal landownership may be seen as an on-going cycle.

In the writer’s experience, it became obvious that land tenure cannot be studied in isolation from every other aspect of indigenous life, particularly that of traditional religion.

Descriptions of traditional religion typically commence with a creation myth; in the case of the Iatmul and Sawos peoples, of the earth appearing from the sea and man emerging from a hole from mother earth. Then follows myths about the creation and distribution of the world’s languages, the creation of sago or some traditional subsistence crop, and other ancient happenings and ancestral migrations, which come down to the known and more recent pre-history¹ stories of how the group in question came to claim the land in question.

To the ear of inexperienced western listeners such renditions of tribal beliefs are both confusing and revealing.

¹ Pre-history in this sense is used to mean prior to first contact with the outside world.

Confusing - as they to raise mental barriers to acceptance of the credibility of what is being said. This is because in PNG society the spirits of the dead reside among the living and communicate freely with them, guiding them even through mundane daily tasks. People are also acutely watchful over their own and their family members' activities and behaviour in order not to offend others, as acts of sorcery can take on the role of the "village policeman;" pulling wayward villagers into line. The inexperienced western listener is likely to dismiss the such tales of tribal beliefs as mere "native superstition".

Revealing - as such issues provide a rare insight into what is not only real to our informants, but also of great day to day importance to them.

To express this in a different way, a western listener, raised in a Christian environment, even if not a practicing Christian himself, will subconsciously experience thinking-patterns based upon Christian principles concerning right and wrong. New Guineans also subconsciously reflect traditional values and beliefs. For example, my very well educated and sophisticated Motuan wife, Mai, pays very close attention to her dreams and analyses them for any omens they may contain. She is acutely conscious of, and concerned about dreams that involve deceased relatives.

ooo000ooo

The combined consideration of membership of one's indigenous social group² and land tenure.

In PNG, it is difficult to consider the individual in isolation from his or her clan or group membership and from the land usage rights that automatically flow from that membership. In a subsistence economy, this combination of land entitlement through group membership can mean the difference between life and death³. Also, group membership involves the individual in an intricate web of entitlements and obligations – not the least of which, is for men, to be initiated as a warrior obliged to fight to the death, if need be, in defence of his group and its land. In Middle Sepik societies, initiation also traditionally entitled the individual to marry and produce the next generation for his group – to use and defend group's land into the future.

The concept of universal traditional land tenure principles and "traditional land law"

Given that PNG is said to have 850 languages, each with customary variations, the identification of universal land tenure principles and anything that might be considered to be universal traditional land law would seem to be an impossible task, but some valid generalisations or principles emerge:

#1 The "Papa bilong Giraun" [the original landowner] Principle.

The original settlers of Wongamusen villages, such as Swagup, Kubkain, Chenapian and Tauri, in the Upper Sepik, within living memory invited far flung groups to come and reside with them on the Sepik River. Each such invitee possessed a war canoe and used it in the fight in support of the village and its territorial land claims. Each such invitee formed a residential ward in the village and an association with one of the villages haus tambarans. The "papa bilong giraun" provided each invitee with usufructuary, but not proprietary land rights.⁴

² Until recently, I would have written "descent group" in place of "indigenous social group", but around 1980, three anthropologists reported the main landowning and socio-political group in the Telefomin sub district and the adjacent areas, the social grouping known as the Miit, although involving descent, was not primarily a descent group, but an entity that drew its membership from, among other sources, spouses and children captured in the course of tribal raids and also random invitations to people join and thereby increase the numerical and military strength of the Miit.

³ A Lands Titles Commission decision in 1996 deprived the Imawe Kewa clan on the Kikori River of land rights. The frustrated Imawe Kewa leader demanded "What do you expect us to do now? Just go away and die?"

Professor Lawrence Goldman explained the principle thus “No matter how long a hotel guest lives in the hotel, he never acquires ownership of the hotel itself.”⁵

#2 Ownership of specific features, but lack of clarity of the boundaries in between.

The wandering ancestors in ancient times, planted sago stands for their own use and for the use of future generations. The ownership of the sago stand is known and remembered, as might be a hillock upon which an ancestor of “group A” once established a village. Equally the ancestor’s descendants would know that a nearby hillock and sago stands were established by the ancestors of “group B”. While the ownership of identified features was known, there was usually no clearly identified boundary between the properties of A and B because there was no need for them.

Should circumstances change, and there became a need for a specific boundary [in the case of a seismic line cutting crew for example], the boundary was usually located where the ancestral sphere of influence of each group ended. Occasionally when group spheres overlapped an area of disputed land would be revealed.

#3 Issues of land ownership in cases of marriage and adoption.

Apart the previous page’s discussion of Telefomin’s “Miit” socio-political groupings, probably the most important group in relation to land tenure is the descent group – the clan or the lineage. In patrilineal descent groups, by birth, girls and boys are entitled to access the group’s land, but the descent group, by its very nature, involves exogamy. Males and females born into the group are actual or classificatory brothers and sisters - meaning no marriage within the group. Patrilineal descent groups typically require patrilocal residence patterns. “Patrilocal” means that when the girl marries she leaves her own group and goes to live with her husband’s group, where she uses his land. Her birth rights to the land of her birth now become dormant.

She will probably live her life away from home and never again use her birth right lands. But in the case of a divorce, she may be free to return home and again use her group’s land. If she brings any of her children with her, they are usually allowed to stay and use their mother’s land during her life time, but, as by birth they belong to their father’s clan and not their mother’s, upon her death they would usually be expected to return to their father’s group land where they have clan membership land rights. Also in many groups, including the Middle Sepik, a widow may be expected to marry her deceased husband’s brother, in order that her children remain on the land to which they have birthrights

The reverse applies in matrilineal societies, where matrilineal residence sees the husband go to live on his wife’s group’s land. Among today’s Sepik communities there are no matrilineal communities, but some evidence that there once may have been. The Austronesian migrations discussed in Chapter 3 were of people claiming matrilineal descent.

#3.1 Adoption.

In the writer’s experience, there appears to be no universal rules concerning land and other rights of an adopted child. Much seems to depend upon from where,⁴ and the circumstances under which, the child was adopted, the gender⁵ of the child and the standing of the adoptee as an adult in the community.

⁴ Typically, the adoption may be from relatives from within the descent group, in which case birth rights are usually not affected,

⁵ If female her capacity to draw a large bride price may be a factor, but then kin folk from her community of birth may exercise their own claims on her bride wealth

#4. Traditional land transfers.

Although stories of acquisition of land by conquest abound in mythology and legends - conquests during living memory are less common, but, do reveal facts that might have once been familiar, but which have been lost in the mists of time. The first three examples relate to land claimed in conquest by Telefomin and Mianmin people who raided far and wide, killing and eating enemy men and capturing their women and girls as spouses. #4.5 also demonstrates, in extreme circumstances, that land could be bought and sold.

#4.1 The conquest of Nuwepmin lands by Unamo - upper Frieda River.

A large area of vacant land east of the Nenatamun [Telefomin origin] village of Unamo was traversed by the writer's Oksapmin patrol No 1/1966-67 in 1966 [See Sepik 4 Chapter 37.] This land was explained as having once belonged to the Nuwepmin people, who were wiped out by Unamo, who now claimed their lands. Although some Nuwepmin survivors still lived as refugees in other remote communities, the conquest was regarded as a valid claim on the Nuwepmin lands.

#4.2 The conquest of Suwana [an Owinginga group] lands by the Hotmin – Upper May River.

As described in Sepik 4 Chapter 24, in 1959 Hotmin raiders killed and ate the Suwana men and abducted the Suwana women⁶. The Hotmin claimed the Suwana lands by right of conquest. This claim was disallowed by ADO Telefomin. He explained that as the raid happened after Hotmin had been contacted by the Administration and the introduction of Western law.

#4.3 The conquest of the Owinginga of the Saniap River area by the Usage Mianmin.

What was significant in this conquest was that the Mianmin acquired access to the Owinginga stone adze quarry on the Saniap River. The quarry was thereafter, used by both Owinginga and Mianmin, each carefully checking that the other was absent before they quarried stone. The Mianmin although victorious over the Owinginga still honoured the Owinginga spirits for the blades they acquired.⁶

#4.4 The annihilation of the Kamasiut, yet no one claimed their lands [1970s]

The Kamasiut lands are located in the eastern extremity of the Hunstein Mountains, south of Ambunti station. The only contact the Kamasiut had with the administration was when they attacked J.K.McCarthy's patrol in 1930 while he was investigating Kamasiut murders of Garamambu people. [See Sepik 2 Chapter 43].

During the Japanese occupation of the Sepik, all neighbours of the Kamasiut conducted repeated raids, annihilating the Kamasiut, apart from a few survivors who were absorbed into neighbouring villages. [See Sepik 3 Chapter 22]

In October 1971 Garamambu people reported to the writer, at Ambunti, that they believed Kamasiut survivors had bred up numbers and were again a threat. I led Ambunti patrol No 6/1971-72 into fringe villages of the Kamasiut lands, but could not find evidence to justify an expensive patrol into the Kamasiut heartland. This decision proved to be correct – nothing has since been heard of the Kamasiut.

It was clear that Kamasiut's former neighbours - Garamambu, Yerikai, Mari, Namu, Yigei, Milae, and Changriman greatly feared their memories of the war-like Kamasiut. None of them

⁶ One of the captured women was lame and could not keep up with the triumphant returning raiders, so she too was killed and eaten

claimed to have recently visited the Kamasiut lands, and as late as 1971 no one claimed ownership of those lands.

#4.5 Korogo acquisition of land rights from enemy Parembei.

In the early years of the 20th Century the Nyaula Iatmul community known as Korogo was expelled as undesirables from the mother village Nyauarengai. With only death behind them, they ventured down-stream on the Sepik River into enemy Parembei territory, where they were confronted by Parembei warriors. As described in Sepik 2 Chapter 22, the Korogos threw themselves upon the mercy of their enemies and rather than being slaughtered, and were allowed to settle on Parembei land. The price the Korogos paid was to present their teenage girls in marriage to Parembei men. The following considerations are relevant to this situation:

1. Given that the Parembei Iatmul and the Nyaula Iatmul were traditional enemies – Korogo, although of Nyaula descent, was now a Nyaula enemy, so an alliance with Korogo could be beneficial to Parembei.
2. Beyond the immediate issue of sexual lust for these Korogo girls, the off-spring of their Parembei marriages, because of patrilineal descent, would contribute to, the as yet, unborn Parembei generations.
 - a. Fear of future sorcery would be a restraint to taking of the girls by force after the slaughter unwanted members of the Korogo community. Iatmul and Sawos examples⁷ clearly differentiate them in this regard from the Telefomin and Mianmin cannibal/spouse seeking raiders.

ooo000ooo

Pre-contact “Ownerless” land or “Waste and Vacant”⁷ land and what constituted “ownership”

Were the unclaimed Kamasiut lands discussed in #4.4 above “Ownerless”? This example could be an important indicator of similar lands of unknown annihilated communities, whose lands had not claimed by the annihilators for any possible number of reasons. The writer believes the Kamasiut lands could not be classified as “Ownerless”. If the annihilators and former neighbours of the Kamasiut were asked if the land was now “ownerless”, they would respond “No – it is Kamasiut land.” – the spirits of the dead Kamasiut would be regarded as still resident there. Fear of such war-like enemy spirits may well have been a reason in why the land had not been claimed.

What constituted pre-contact land tenure?

Setting aside, for simplicity sake, the differentiation between *proprietary and usufructuary* rights as discussed in #1 above land “ownership” is best regarded as the exercise of a wide range of “rights” – The right to build a house, to make a garden, to catch fish, to cut sago and endless list of others. These rights vary depending upon who wishes to exercise which right, where and when.

Generally land is not regarded as “property” it was simply there, a resource to be used by the living and kept in trust for the unborn generations to come. “Ownership” came into high focus when the living generation was asked by newly-arrived colonial entities to sell land; how could this be possible once the rights of the dead ancestors and the unborn generations were considered.

No adequate account can be given concerning the land tenure of any community without carrying out a detailed anthropological survey of the culture involved⁸ That survey would then need

⁷ British New Guinea Land, and subsequent Papuan and PNG land legislation makes reference to Waste and Vacant lands, which, as they had no customary owners, were declared to be the property of the Crown. Such lands equated to what German New Guinea referred to as “Ownerless” lands.

to be transposed from the current post-contact era to a re-construction of what the pre-contact era land tenure must have been.

A key to this difficult re-construction is the need for recognition that colonial land acquisition demand converted land from simply something you use during your life time and -pass on the next generation. Land had become an economic asset, whereas it was rarely, if ever seen as such before the Europeans came...Land ceased to be viewed as living space and becomes property.⁹

End Notes Chapter 7

¹ Geenop, 1944 P 164, as quoted by P.G.Sack – Between Two Laws – ANU Press 1973 Page 124

² Personal communication from Tony Power, former Community Affairs Manager of Chevron Niugini

³ Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 – Kolion of Nogosop Page 254

⁴ Bragge L.W, Ambunti Patrol report 11a/1973-4 Wongamusen division Appendix M page 20

⁵ Personal communication with Lawrence Goldman

⁶ D.Gardiner – LWB note to himself - correct the wording and enter the reference when it is re-located

⁷ See Sepik 2 Chapter 29 – Japandai girls were captured and hidden during the massacre, then killed by others who guarded against future sorcery, and Sepik 3 Chapter 39 Gauimeri allowed two young women go free having decided he would risk their sorcery for killing 26 of their fellows.

⁸ I Hogbin ed. Anthropology in Papua New Guinea Melbourne University Press 1973 P 107

⁹ P.G.Sack – Between two Laws ANU Press 1973 Page 25

*Pages 62-64 Not missing
- an error in numbering,*

Chapter 8. The illumination of Sepik ancient timelines by modern science.

In my recording and writing Sepik tribal history I encountered a large gap in historic timelines between documented global events such as the ice ages and the eruptions of volcanoes such as Toba [74,000 years ago] and Krakatoa [on 26/27th August 1883], on one hand, and human memory based oral histories of old Sepik men I interviewed in the 1970s, on the other.

The answer to this quandary appeared to rest with **radiocarbon dating** also known as **carbon dating** or **carbon-14 dating**, is a method of determining the age of objects.

Radiocarbon dating methodology was developed by Willard Libby in the late 1940s and soon became a standard tool for archaeologists. The radiocarbon dating method is based on the fact that radiocarbon is constantly being created in the atmosphere by interaction of cosmic rays with atmospheric nitrogen. The resulting radiocarbon combines with atmospheric oxygen to form radioactive carbon dioxide, which is incorporated into plants by photosynthesis; animals acquire carbon by eating the plants.

When the animal or plant dies, it stops exchanging carbon with its environment, and from that point onwards the amount of carbon it contains begins to decrease as the carbon undergoes radioactive decay. Measuring the amount of carbon in a sample from a dead plant or animal such as a piece of wood or a fragment of bone provides information that can be used to calculate when the animal or plant died. The older a sample is, the less carbon there is to be detected...the oldest dates that can be reliably measured by this process date to around 50,000 years ago, although special preparation methods occasionally permit accurate analysis of older samples.¹

Unfortunately, for my purposes, radiocarbon dating has several drawbacks:

1. It relies upon organic matter, which is not always present in relation to historic items that need to be dated.
 - a. Except in remarkable circumstances of preservation, the necessary ingredient – organic matter, particularly wood, has a limited life; it decays. Decay, is of course the process upon which the radio carbon dating science is based.
2. Radiocarbon technology is not commonly available for public use.
3. It is presumably both expensive and time-consuming.

Then I experienced an “Ah-Ha!” revelation when I read the de Young Museum two volume publication featuring the Jolika collection, which radiocarbon dated hundreds of pieces of early Sepik art. The revelation came in two parts: the first being the magnificence of the art itself – as shown in the following pages, and the second being that it allows an transition of understanding from a pre-literate the Melanesian view of history to a modern Western understanding of it.

ooo000ooo

The Jolika Collection: The magnificent Jolika collection, now displayed in the de Young Museum in San Francisco, not only comprises master pieces of Sepik Art, but also radio carbon dating of most items. Below are selected items with captions that detail provenance.

Marcia and John Friede carefully assembled the Jolika collection piece by piece from different sources. Each item was chosen for its high aesthetic value and because each is an authentic example of New Guinea art that represents ritual life before it was irreversible changed by contact with the outside world. The Jolika collection was built by choosing the best objects from collections brought out of New Guinea over the last 130 years. This ensured the creation of a stunning historical array that documents the earliest and most traditional art objects available.

Of necessity, this collection differs from that of a typical anthropologist for two reasons:

1. The Friedes wanted to build a collection of uniformly high aesthetic value, whereas typical field collections are always uneven in their quality.
2. In 1965 PNG passed the National Cultural Property [preservation] Ordinance¹. This legislation was aimed at preserving old and important cultural artefacts and made it illegal to have made the Jolika collection by this means alone.

Almost every piece in the collection comes from some older collection and was collected to fit with the rest in a coherent way. By showcasing at the de Young Museum, the Friedes are trying to let their collection have the same impact on the American public in the 21st Century as the Newton's² exhibitions had in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s²...Of the hundreds of items in the Jolika collection selected older pieces and their documented provenance, are displayed on pages 67 to 83.

What is Sepik art? The term *art* which means so much in the Western World, is traditionally unknown in New Guinea.³ The basis of primitive art is religion. It renders the divine or supernatural visible thereby enabling man to live in close contact with it, and be secure, virile, fertile and a successful gardener and hunter. Hence its images are found not only on ritualistic or ceremonial objects, but also on more ordinary, everyday ones, such as house posts and gables, weapons, implements and even jewellery.⁴

Sepik visual art is inextricably linked to other forms of art. In ceremonial contexts, carvings and paintings play their roles along with music, dance and oratory. Such extra-visual elements strengthen the supernatural dimension of the art. In music, the voices of the ancestors, or other supernatural beings represented in masks and figures, are heard⁵.

Our ability to trace linkages between these early radiocarbon-dated masterpieces, and more recent oral history is not as simple as it seems. The Sepik people of both recent and ancient times were more than Melanesian Da Vincis and Michelangelos; they were very active head hunting warriors. Art was created to perform similar functions as did, and do, the images of the Virgin Mary in Christian Churches. Perhaps the best Christian comparison would be the European soldiers going to war in the Holy Lands during the Crusades; pious, but violent men confident in their conviction that they were undertaking the will of the Lord.

Headhunting was a fundamental part of Middle Sepik religion, and statues of great warriors of the past, such as Magisaun of Kandingei, embodied that warrior's spirit. Before a head hunting raid was conducted, homage payments of food and valuables were laid at the feet of the statue and the spirit was consulted. Would the raid succeed? Were there omens the warriors needed to consider before going into battle? Responses from the warrior spirit were received in the form of dreams.

There is nothing to suggest that the elder's memories of a bloody, turbulent and violent recent past, were other than an unbroken extension of inter-tribal warfare, intrigue and massacres extending down through the ages from ancient times.

This discussion is continued on Page 84

¹ Both Papua and New Guinea had previous cultural legislation in the form of Antiquities Ordinances.

² Douglas and Kathleen Newton. Douglas was the curator of the New York Museum of Primitive Art.



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
94	Two headed object	Kopar – Sepik Rv mouth	1480-1670 AD 95.4%	The use of the object is unknown – From Philip Goldman collection London,, Alain Schoffel collection, Tours, France. - 31 cm
121	Figure in the form of a giant paddle	Keram Rv, Lower Sepik	1450-1640 AD 95.4%	This is a spirit figure in the form of a giant canoe paddle. It may be missing an extension to the shaft and a second reptilian figure. It appears to be playing a sort of flute. Its eyes ears and facial structure resemble the ancient mask from Masendenai [item 262]. Collected by Ben Birillo on the Kiram Rv 1960s – 219 cm
184	Trumpet	Indabu [Parembai Istmul]	1430-1630 95.4%	The trumpet was said to have been kept in Parembai village before it came to Indabu. The classic curvilinear carving on the trumpet, when viewed from the side becomes a column of ancestor spirit faces.



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
135	Male Figure	Middle Yuat River	1280-1400 AD 95.4%	Probably collected by German traders in the 1880s...after which it entered the Koniglichen Museum fur Volkerkunde. Berlin; Arthur Speyer Collection, Eltville, Germany, Ralph Nash Collection, London. This figure may have been the predecessor to the large Biwat figure in the Beyeler collection in Basel. The Beyeler figure collected in 1955 by Dadi Wirz – 173 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
136	Female child figure	Middle Yuat River	1490-1670 AD 93.7%	This is a spirit child playing an ocarina. – 52.4 cm
153	Female suspension hook	Nyaurengai [Nyaula Iatmul]	1330-1470 AD 95.4%	The pectoral carvings below the breasts incorporate deep perforations, which are found on other early Iatmul and Sawos carvings... This hook is said to have been the consort of Magisaun, the male hook figure portraying an important cultural hero. Douglas Newton believed this item and certain other early Iatmul figures actually originated with the Sawos people, which he believed were the progenitors of the Iatmul people. The discovery that this figure is over 500 years old suggests there is still much to learn about ancient Sepik origins and migration patterns - 105.8 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
173	Mask Fragment	Kandingei [Nyaula Iatmul]	1410-1670 AD 95.4%	From Philip Goldman collection. This mask fragment was collected in Kandingei in 1969, along with the mask carved to replace it. The replacement has a similar iconography but lacks the expressiveness of its predecessor. The mask is probably an ancient version of the highly secret wagan mask. If so it may represent <i>Kara-mbanga</i> the great creator ancestor- cultural hero; one of the principle spirit beings of the Iatmul. In crocodile form he first set his feet on the mud and created the dry land. 18 CM



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
180	Drum with male figure	Mindimbit [Parembei Iatmul]	1490-1670 AD 93.5%	Collected by Walter Behrmann probably in 1912-13. Koniglichen Museun fur Volkerkunde. Berlin; Arthur Speyer Collection, Eltville, Germany, Ralph Nash Collection, London. The drum is made from garamut or Miamba wood, the region's hardest. The drum takes the form of a hand drum or Kundu but is much too heavy for that purpose. An interesting aspect of the iconography is that the made figure is shown about to copulate with a vagina below his penis on the drum. 105 m
232	Female suspension hook	Sawos people	1410-1500 AD 93.6%	This carving has extraordinary presence and aggressive power. 92 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
188	Lime Tube Finial	Probably Kaulagu people West Iatmul	1490-1660 AD 95.4%	Lewis Carre collection Paris, Max Itizkovitz collection Paris. 41.1 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
206	Pigment dish Two views	Iatmul people	1480-1660 AD	Bela Heim collection Budapest/Paris. The Janus images of symbolised are exceptional. In fact, each Janus image seems to consist of a fish head and a human head [carved on the near side of the fish head] reflecting the merging of spirits with animals as is frequently encountered in Iatmul mythology. 26 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
230	Open work spirit board Malu	Sawos people	1480-1650 AD 95.4%	<p>Pierre Loeb collection, Paris.</p> <p>The long-nosed face at the top of the board represents the sago beetle <i>palanggun</i>. The nose appears to terminate in a pair of bird wings. In the centre, a pair of conventionalised birds, probably hornbills, swirl around each other. This element is common to Malu boards, but the exquisitely carved jungle fowl represented in profile below may be unique. A bird seemingly lying on its neck is above the hornbill pair. There are also two small birds in the centre between that bird and the face. The board with two suspension posts near the bottom. Newton in his monograph on these objects...that the Malu Boards were originally a cult object. "A rack from which captured heads were hung, functionally akin to the Kerewa <i>agibe</i>. 172 cm</p>
234	Cult Figure	Torembei	1480-1650 AD 95.4%	<p>This is a male figure which terminates below in an animal head. There is a suspension hole in the back. It is a companion piece to item 233 - 55.6 CM</p>



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
233	Cult hook [samban]	Sawos people	1450-1650 AD 95.4%	Walter Randel collection, New York. The female figure probably represents the Sawos version of the creator mother figure <i>Sotkaman-Agwi</i> . The two carved hornbills at her sides would represent her <i>Ganju</i> -bird twins, and the sinuous form below, her crocodile snake child. Davis and Davis 1974: 29... suggests the three small heads at the bottom may be yams or other phallic symbols representing <i>Betman-Gambi</i> , who was resurrected by and became the husband of <i>Sotkaman-Agwi</i> . The objects customarily suspended from cult hooks would be shell valuables, funerary artefacts and other ritual items. The rigid attitude of the figure is typical of Sawos sculpture [Newton 1979: 324.] 95 cm.

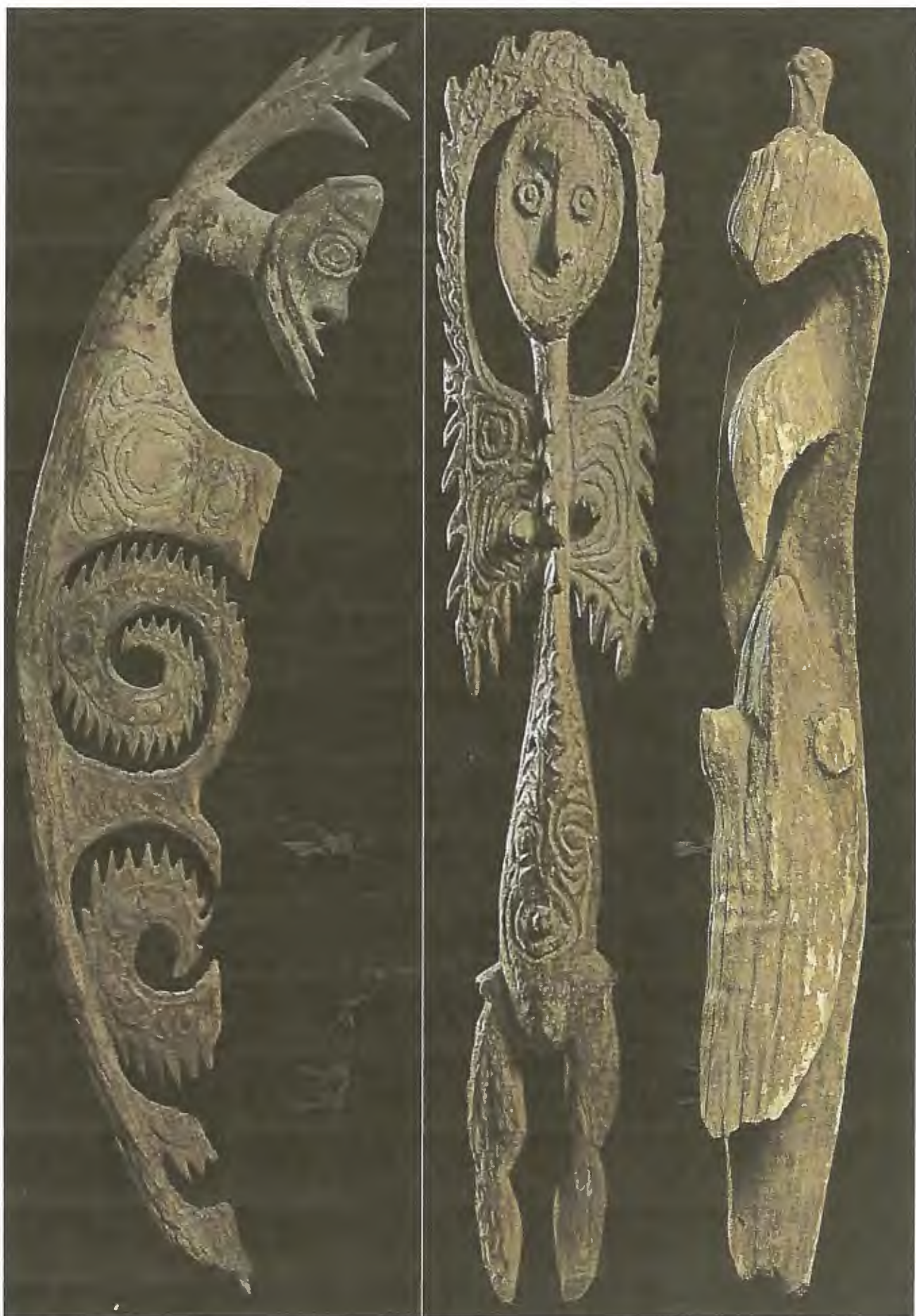


Torembei
 (human hair,
 12 inches)

Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
237	Drum [Kundu]	Sawos people	1420-1620 AD 95.4%	Ernest Heinrich collection Bad Canstadt, Stuttgart. The drum combines a stylised face and cockatoo above, with exceptionally deep carved curvilinear designs below. It also has Sawos stacked disc eyes – 63.5 cm
244	Mask/Helmet	Torembei	1480-1660 AD 95.4%	This object was displayed in a shrine in the ceremonial house interior of one of the Torembei hamlets, accompanied by items 243 and 245 – similar but of younger ages - 32 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
268	Bird/Human head on shaft <i>Koanggingge</i> [Mother of the Men's House]	Upper Karawari Rv between Wogumeri & Nai hamlets – <i>Ewa</i> people	1480-1650 AD 95.4%	<p>This is the only version of this type of carving I have seen with a double image... It is an example of the “Mother of the Men’s House”, the most important sacred carving of the Ewa people. In every men’s house one of these carvings is impaled into the leafy rear wall.</p> <p>As leader of the spirits and mythical ancestors depicted in other wooden carvings, the Mother would lead them in a search for the souls of animals to hunt. These and other Ewa carvings were placed in caves after the individual owners died. The protection that the caves provided explains the extreme age of some of the figures.</p> <p>According to Douglas Newton, the Yimam [Yimar] people, whom he refers to as the “Karawari” had originally come from Sumariap, a village of the Ewa to the south. This would explain the evolution of the Karawari style, which changes as one approaches the Sepik, relative to its ancient origins among the Ewa.</p> <p>38.3 cm</p>



Notes for the three objects on the previous page.

Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
269	Male figure Aripa	Upper Karawari Rv between Wogumeri & Nai hamlets – <i>Ewa</i> people	1480-1670 AD 95.4%	<p>Philip Goldman collection, London, William Rubin collection New York.</p> <p>A fascinating aspect of Ewa carving is that most of the male and female figures, both called <i>Aripa</i>, are totally different in concept. The male <i>aripa</i> is generally conceived laterally and possesses one leg. The females are conceived frontally and have two legs...</p> <p>This exceptionally carved male figure probably played a crucial role in hunting and its magic. Particularly in terms of its strongly curved and dentated interior parts. It relates to Kaufmann 2003, figures 24,29 & 35. This motif is interpreted as the “heart hung complex, <i>yamali</i>” Like all the Ewa carvings in the collection, it was preserved in caves for hundreds of years. 174.3 cm</p>
270	Female figure Aripa	Upper Karawari Rv between Wogumeri & Nai hamlets – <i>Ewa</i> people	1440-1640 AD 95.4%	<p>Douglas Newton collection, New York.</p> <p>This exquisite female <i>aripa</i> has an energy and youthful posture I have not seen in any other example. The care and refinement shown in its details may be fully appreciated by comparison with another figure now in Basel... These female figures are thought to represent mythical mothers “of the hunted game or meat.” [Haberland 1974: 375]. They are probably consulted prior to hunting expeditions.</p> <p>The present figure was obtained by Newton in pieces and carefully reconstructed with no additions. 106.7 cm</p>
271	Fragment of cult object <i>Dunegatsir</i>	Upper Karawari Rv near Danyig [Dainik] village. Yimam or – <i>Ewa</i> people	1450-1650 AD 95.4%	<p>R.Christensen collection, Madang PNG.</p> <p>This fragment does not appear to be part of any of the recognised Ewa object types, and perhaps, therefore a Yimam provenance is more likely. To some extent it shows a resemblance to two figures from Danyig. Anthony Meyer [personal communication] identified this piece as an archaic version of a <i>dunegatsir</i> cult object. He said they represent spirits that help hunters. 80 cm</p>



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
279	Female cult hook	Kaningara, Blackwater	1520-1810 AD 95.4%. [although of a post 1500 date, this item is included here because of its relationship with item 281	<p>The people who owned this carving and item 281 moved from the Blackwater to Tambanum after their homes were destroyed by bombing during World War 2. The damage caused to both carvings occurred during the bombing.</p> <p>This monumental figure with fully articulated vertebrae on its back and a sophisticated mixture of concave and convex forms is one of the most exceptional works of art from the Sepik valley. 146.7 cm</p>



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
281	Male/female cult hook	Kaningara, Blackwater	1450-1640 AD 95.4%	<p>This suspension hook appears to portray the primordial mythical ancestral couple copulating and creating the people of the world. Originally, below the horizontal hook structure at the bottom there were small human figures, which may have represented the emergence of mankind. They were destroyed during the bombing, but the leg structure of one of them is still visible.</p> <p>The couple is portrayed as praying mantises, with heads exactly identical to those of living insects. This is a terrifying aspect. After copulating the female praying mantis may kill and eat her male companion. Whatever the case, one cannot escape the impression that the woman, rendered much larger than the man is the dominant partner in this copulation scene. 82.3 cm</p>
291	Spirit figure	Abelam people	1490-1810 AD 95.4%	<p>S. and J. Onzea collection Brussels.</p> <p>This figure is decorated with carvings of a Melo shell necklace and trochus shell arm bands. 71.2 cm</p>



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
286	Mask, Garea or Gra	Gahom Bahinemo people	1320-1450 AD 95.4 %	Philip Goldman collection London This exceptional mask is a manifestation of a bush spirit. Such masks are identified with older men. The hooks are probably the heads of hornbills, birds that “nest in places belonging to bush spirits” [Newton 1971:20] 75 cm
287	Mask	Gahom Bahinemo people	1410-1630 AD 95.4%	Douglas Newton collection New York This mask is one of very few naturalistic masks of the Bahinemo to survive. Newton 1971: 20 states these masks have a relationship to figures from the Upper Karawari region, but perhaps even more with the rare masks of the Yimam. 57.3 cm
357	Shield	Yellow River, probably Namie people	1490-1670 AD 93.7%	Walter Randel collection New York Despite its scare and arrow holes, this ancient war shield retains its haunting image of a primordial spirit face. Unfortunately, no specific information is known about its origins. The pattern on the shield, although not exactly identical, related to that on a shield collected by the Kaiserine Augusta Expedition [1912-13] and now at the Linden Museum, Stuttgart. 135 cm



Item No	Description	Origin	C-14 dating & probability	Notes
262	Mask	Masandamai [Masendenai] on the Kenglame River.	650-780 AD 95.4%	<p>Sepik grasslands approx. 20km south of the Sepik Rv, west of the Yuat Rv and close to the Karawari Rv Laycock [1965: 195] states that the <i>ndu</i> language originated in the foothills of the Karawari river, which is in the vicinity of Masendenai</p> <p>The mask may represent the face of a spirit ancestor or mythological giant held in the embrace of a flying fox, an animal which symbolised parenting and loving care as well as sexual fertility. There is also a sun sign [the disc shaped motif on the forehead] and bird heads at the sides, which may symbolise the emergence of new life at the time of the creation. On the back, the body of the flying fox is fully articulated and there is also a frog, which often represents fertility – 65 cm tall</p>

Discussion continued from page 2

What can these pieces tell us about the lives of ancient Sepik peoples? As the material culture, [Sepik art] tends to be both complex and diverse, it follows that the immaterial culture, religious beliefs, rituals, myths and legends] that the art represents, is also complex and diverse.

Radiocarbon dating adds a further dimension; Sepik art and the traditional religious beliefs it represents, go far back, with 95.4% probability to 650-780 AD; according to the analysis of item 262 [previous page]. This single example prompts the questions: *how many other ancient items are out there to push this date further back? And what of the time spans of artefacts that did not survive the tyranny of tribal warfare, tropical weather and decay?*

Overview: The provenance documentation with each of artefacts shown above usually shows a combination of three elements involved in the collection of Sepik art:

1. When and how the object was collected, what it was traditionally used for, and, through time, in whose collection it has been represented.

The reality for modern collectors of Sepik art is that nearly every important, genuine piece, has long since been collected, and now resides in a museum or private collection. Any “newly discovered ancient object” requires close scrutiny as it is almost certainly a forgery produced by a latter-day Sepik “Leonardo.”

2. The aesthetic merits and radiocarbon dating of the object.
3. If available, useful historic contexts contributed by experts like Douglas Newton, Don Laycock, Anthony Meyer, Christian Kaufmann and others.

ooo000ooo

A review of the provenance of some specific items.

Item 262 The writer believes this item shows religious evidence going back to far earlier times than 650 AD. The sun motif on the forehead of the carving suggests the Sky father and Earth Mother myth of the Austronesian people who arrived in the Sepik region according to radio carbon evidence as early as *6,120 +/-190 years BP* as documented in Chapter 3, but probably as earlier as 8,000 years BP, with the arrival of mortars and pestles as suggested in Chapter 4.

The evolution of the Ndu language family appears to provide the religious linkage between the Austronesian migrations and the time frame to 650 AD, with their mythology and moiety structure based upon the sun [Niaui] and the earth mother [Niamei]. More on this in chapter 9.

Laycock [1965: 195] states that the ndu language originated in the foothills of the Karawari river, which is in the vicinity of Masendenai. This statement is taken to support what Jurg Wassmann questioned in *The Nyaura Concepts of Space and Time* whether there was a connection between the “mental migrations” of ancient times, as disclosed in mythology, and the actual history of Nyaula settlement⁶. In Chapter 46 this point is argued in the positive, based upon more recent Wogamush evidence of the gathering of wide-spread clans to form river-based settlements. The *Ndu*, migration from the Karawari foothills to a Sepik River bank village, is taken to be one such ancient migration, remembered from Ndu mythology.

The isolated ancient village Masendenai. The writer visited Masendenai, almost by accident, while travelling from Amboin patrol post down the Karawari River to Angoram. The river was in flood and the canoe driver suggested taking a short cut by crossing the flooded right bank of the Karawari, and then proceeding through the flooded Kenglame River wet lands via Masendenai to join the Sepik River below Tambanum village.

Masendenai proved to be a small place of over-grown and derelict appearance. Most of the people were absent, and sadly, I was unaware of the historic importance of the place. During my visit, I purchased of an unusual stone axe blade, which was also an obvious phallic object. This blade, of basalt, is unusually heavy, with a thick, circular cross-section and pubic hair attached to the opposite end from the blade. I was told it was very old, but to record detailed provenance I would have had to stayed for at least one night awaiting the return of key elders from their scattered sago camps, and regrettably, I did not have the time.

There were no carvings at Masendenai that attracted my attention – Item 262 and any others of its type had long-since been acquired for overseas collectors.

ooo000ooo

Item 153 This suspension hook has a personal name, Tangweiyabinjua. The writer, in his role as Assistant District Commissioner at Ambunti, sought to intervene when this object was collected in 1972. Details concerning Tangweiyabinjua and Magisaun are recorded in Chapter 19. At the suggestion of the Pacific curator of the Australian National Museum, I sent a copy of the 1972 information to curator of the de Young museum in San Francisco. In gratitude, a copy of the de Young two volumes set of books on the Jolika collection was sent to me.

Item 268 “Mother of the men’s house”. As discussed in chapter 15, all Middle Sepik house tambarans are “female”. This is understood by the writer as yet another reflection of lingering Austronesian matrilineal influence in modern Sepik society.

ooo000ooo

Until reading the de Young museum’s volumes on the Jolika collection, my understanding of Sepik history was based largely upon the oral history recording I made with Sepik elders. As oral history relies upon the memory of the story teller, including his memory of stories he heard from long deceased story tellers of previous generations. The oral histories tell not only of known and remembered tribal conflicts in the times of fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers, but also of great events, realities and occurrences of the ancient past. For instance, the Ndu story [Chapter 8] states how in the beginning of time there was only water. This is clearly an ancient memory of the Sepik “inland sea” of thousands of years ago.

Not surprisingly, without a feature of oral histories is the telescoping of time, for instance a volcanic eruption that occurred *just before that old man was born*, proved to be the 1640 eruption of Long Island.⁷

Another aspect of oral histories which runs contrary to western historical understandings is the impression created that nothing ever changed except in abrupt revolutionary steps. For example – before and after the introduction of the sweet potato, or before and after the introduction of Christianity, the first experience steel axes or firearms. From a western perspective, the Melanesian understanding of history lacks an evolutionary understanding. For instance, westerners appreciate the historic evolution from stone axe – to bronze age – to iron age and beyond, whereas the Melanesian perception of the wonder of a sharp steel axe, assumes it was created as a finished product. This then prompts a question, *how come the white-man’s ancestors had such things and our ancestors didn’t?*

As a western historian trying to understand Sepik pre-history primarily from the base of oral history, I found myself with firm and reliable stepping stones which took me back into pre-history only as far as perhaps 1800 AD, being four or five ascending generations from informants who were born on average around 1900 AD.

What the radiocarbon dates of the Jolika collection achieved for this historian, was to extend the firm and reliable stepping stones back into pre-history from 1800 AD, as far 670 AD. While the history on either side of the stepping stone pathway remains unclear, the view ahead looks promising.

From there, the ancient past is closer and clearer, like islands on the horizon...The Iatmul migration from the Sepik Plains to Suapmeri on the Sepik River...The Sepik inland sea...The wondrous trade items and technology of the navigators from the west; the Austronesians, and whatever further wonders radiocarbon dating will reveal in the future.

ooo000ooo

End Notes Chapter 8

¹ This is a layman's simplification of the Wikipedia definition of Radiocarbon dating.

² New Guinea Art – Masterpieces from the Jolika Collection of Maria and John Friede Fine Art Museum of San Francisco 2005

³ Dirk Schmidt – Major themes in New Guinea Art. In New Guinea Art – Masterpieces from the Jolika Collection of Maria and John Friede. Fine Art Museum of San Francisco 2005 page 31

⁴ Helen Dennett et al, South China Printing Co 1988 Page 1.

⁵ Dirk Schmidt 2005 page 36

⁶ J. Wassmann – in Sepik Heritage – 1990 Letkehaus et al. Carolina University Press Page 24

⁷ Personal communication with the late Professor Peter Lawrence of an oral history recording he made on Madang's Rai Coast during the late 1950s.

Sepik 1 Chapter 9 Of human and cultural reincarnation, the psychology of endurance and the immortality of stone.

Writer's note: Indigenous Sepik people see the world from a completely different perspective from that of people of western upbringing. To Sepik people, life and death are far more interconnected than they are for westerners. They see a cycle of people - the as yet unborn, the living and the dead, each with rights to clan membership and access to ancestral tribal environments, which the living and the spirits of the dead hold in trust for the unborn.

And, it is even a closer unity than that! The living, live with, and communicate with the spirits of the dead on a daily basis. In some Sepik societies, the concept of reincarnation is also important. In my recording of interviews, these concepts were not directly spelt out by any individual informant; rather, they became evident from my interpretation of a range of things that were said by various informants over time. This chapter seeks to capture both what was said and my interpretations – alternate interpretations may be more revealing than my own.

ooo000ooo

Of Human Reincarnation.

Gregory Bateson explained...*in spite of the patrilineal system the child is linked in some ways to its mother's clan. This premise may be recognized, symbolically expressed, in the native theory of gestation. It is supposed that the bones of the child are a product of the father's semen, while the flesh and blood [somewhat less important] are provided by the mother's menstrual blood...* The child is given two sets of names. *one set are the names of the totemic ancestors of the father's clan, while the other set are the names of the totemic ancestors of the mother's clan...in the patrilineal theory of reincarnation the child is concretely¹ stated to be a reincarnation of the father's father, while his identity with the ancestors of his mother's clan is only symbolically expressed in ritual and ceremonial behaviour.¹*

A man's own generation, his paternal grandfather's generation, and his paternal grandfather's grandfather's generation, are grouped together as one "mbapma" [literally "line"], and in contrast to this, his father's and his son's generations are of the opposite mbapma. I have already mentioned that the theories of reincarnation are linked up with this alternation and I need only add here that a man may address his father's father either as nggwail [grandfather] or as nyamun [elder brother].²

A problem of naming an illegitimate child. In the Iatmul village of Aibom, such a problem was encountered during the 4/12/1973 annual census revision. This helps to emphasise Gregory Bateson's words and emphasises the problem of the child's future reincarnation.

An extremely embarrassed young lady was asked by the writer in the course of census revision, what was her baby's name. She most reluctantly called a name, which caused immediate uproar among the gathered Aibom people who demanded to know who gave the baby that name. Later the Aibom elders explained to me.

If a name is called out...without reference to the clan's big men, and you give a name belonging to another family, there will be trouble. That is why the naming of children is done in public, at the census, in front of everybody, so other families can hear the name and know it is of the correct family. The other families also see the clan elder has allocated the name and it is not just thought up, or a meaningless name.³

¹ Bateson's emphasis not the writer's

A Sawos view of Reincarnation.

You can feel your skin, it is warm. When it goes cold and the light (sight) goes from your eyes you are dead. Later a new child will replace this man who is now dead. Are you following me? Our mothers have children in varying numbers. When they have replaced all the outstanding dead, they have no more children. This is the belief of Niauinimber [moiety].

The sun is the father and the moon is the mother. You can say you are not father's replacement, if for instance your father is still alive. But where do you get the eyes or the light? It is your grandfather who gave you his eyes and his light. He⁴ continues to reappear with new births, we are all his descendants. This is how he arranged it; the father dies and the child takes his place. The book says 'Jesus'. It was not Jesus, it was Mai'impdimi.⁵

ooo000ooo

Hypothesis reincarnation beliefs in Sepik societies have their origins in Austronesian religion.

This hypothesis is mentioned here as a possible topic for further research. Both Iatmul and Sawos cultures are mentioned here in association with reincarnation are both Ndu cultures, with linkages to Austronesian ancestry [Chapters 3 and 17]. Other Austronesian cultures such as the Trobriand Islanders, traditionally did not link pregnancy with sexual intercourse⁶, they regarded pregnancy with the reincarnation of dead ancestors.⁷

ooo000ooo

Of Cultural and Geo-physical Reincarnation [A Sawos perspective].

Now the Sepik flows to hide at Manam (volcanic island off the mouth of the Sepik River. The indicated river flow is west to east). Who is hiding at Manam? When Manam goes all the current and tide water will shoot back towards Ambunti [east to west]. All the places Aibom and Chambri and Ambunti will be covered. Then this man [Mai'imp] will come back. The ground will become short and few children will be born. Our families and clans will come to an end and the ground will be short. (i.e. little land will exist, as at the time of the creation).

We will sleep with our women and the children will come, then one day a woman will give birth to a child which will have formed teeth at birth and it will have hair. Children will be born the size of babies, but with fully developed breasts. Then the children will finish.

Then we will start over again; it is not long off now. Everything is changing now. Soon Mai'imp will return. Soon we will see a baby with teeth and that will be a sign (of his impending return).

All the stones and mountains have gone a long way from us. We are [in] a very low place in the middle; we are at the bottom of the hole⁸ ... The mountains have gone a long way off to fence off the salt water from coming back here. Later the mountains will break down and the sea will flood back in on us. Manam (Island) has not much time to go. It is already broken, but there is still some of it still there. It has its back to the Sepik at present, but when it turns to look at the Sepik, the tide will turn when Manam turns.⁹

An alternate version – Burui of the Sawos culture.

The sun up there has a man on it, he is Yogonduma. When the world is lost, he will come down. Near dawn, when the moon comes up, the stars are very bright. These stars are two eyes. These eyes will come out and will come down and strike the earth and the earth will be lost and a new earth will be formed¹⁰.

ooo000ooo

The psychology of endurance and the immortality of stone.

Stone does not rot, everything else rots – coconuts, trees, us. If stone exists, stories can exist also. Why does stone not rot? Whose skin is it? I think the white man knows this? The stone stands up, who broke it before and stood them up around the places.¹¹ It is the skin of Mai'imp. Mai'imp lives forever. He would not die, [originally] there was no death.¹²

ooo000ooo

This brief insight Iatmul and Sawos perceptions of mythology's perception of cosmic issues, is important as it links descriptions from Chapter 7, particularly that of informant Gwolai of Tego, concerning the formation of the land, with descriptions from Chapter 13 concerning the placement of stone monoliths on top of human remains to make the earth firm and stable, rather than spongy. This latter description is used to explain the origins of Sepik headhunting.

End Notes Chapter 9

¹ G.Bateson Naven 2nd Edition 1958. Stanford University Press pages 42-43

² G.Bateson 1958 Page 244.

³ L.W.Bragge Sepik Research volume 19 Page 317

⁴ Meaning Mai'imp. Niaui moiety beliefs are that there was only one death in the beginning and that was the death of Mai'imp.

⁵ Informant Kolion of Nogosop – Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 pages 253-254. Niaui is one of the two moieties, the Sky father moiety. The suffix Nimber means group or enclosure, in this context meaning moiety.

⁶ R.F.Fortune The Sorcerers of Dobu – Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd London 1963 edition Page P 239

⁷ J.Baldick – Ancient Religions of the Austronesian world; from Australasia to Taiwan. Publisher I.B.Tauris 2013.

⁸ The repeated reference to “the bottom of the hole” refers to Mebinbit, the place of the creation from where man emerged from a hole in the earth. The original birth from the Earth Mother and the Sky or Sun father.

⁹ Kolion again. – Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 255

¹⁰ Informant Kwonji of Burui - Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 167

¹¹ This refers to the monoliths that stand around the haus tambarans.

¹² Kolion again. – Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 256

Sepik 1 Chapter 10 Sepik Religion, Initiation, Age Class, Female Skin Cutting and Moiety social structures.

Sepik Religious life; *The supernatural world consists of two main components. The most immediate contains the spirits living in set places, in the water earth and bush, which often appear in human or animal form or cause such manifestations as eddies in the river, storms and such like. The second contains the ancestors who are all necessarily creators – at a great remove – of the world itself, more recently of the living generations, in a continuous chain. These two groups are not mutually exclusive: thus, the creative ancestors in some instances eventually become place spirits...*

Nearly all mythology describes the origins of various elements of the world and can be divided into two categories. The first was exemplary: they describe the creation of various artefacts [slit gong, ceremonial houses] and their use, by cultural heroes, who then taught mankind the necessary procedures which should be followed.

The second group on the other hand, is expository: the creation of natural events is described, but there is no overt compulsion on mankind to imitate or re-enact the procedures...

A man's right to participate in ritual was determined by horizontal divisions, between contemporaries, into initiatory moieties; by vertical divisions, through the course of his life into age grades; finally, by his personal qualities of fertility and aggressiveness expressed in fatherhood and success in head hunting.¹

Another view of Sepik Religious life: *As in many other societies on the Sepik River...the focus of Avatip religion is a men's cult, in which men are initiated during the course of their lives into a series of grades...the harsh initiation rituals may serve the psychological function of countering men's dependence upon women, a necessary part in...male development in a situation of chronic war. By inculcating into boys, the warlike psychological dispositions for them to grow up into aggressive fighters, a cult promotes the military effectiveness of the community in the struggle for survival against its enemies. There are two basic simplifications of social reality made in the men's ritual.*

1. *the village is portrayed as a sharply bounded and unified social universe.*
2. *the village is portrayed as having no relationship with the outside world...except perpetual war²*

ooo000ooo

The difficult transition from uninitiated to Initiated. ... *“training the boys to violence was considered essential, but this necessarily started from the assumption that the will to kill had to be induced by cultural practice...One cultural practice by which the Abelam induced this was for a group of boys to be assembled by an older man and made to kill an unarmed refugee in their own village. This seemed to have been regarded by the Abelam themselves as quite a deliberate atrocity and afterwards the boys ‘were expected to be horrified by what they had done’.”³ This training encourages the production of individuals unencumbered by a sense of accountability to others⁴.*

ooo000ooo

Separate aspects of Sepik religion discussed in this chapter are heavily inter-related and fuse into each other to form a cultural whole. In order to write this, “Initiation” is selected as an appropriate point to break into that “whole”. Related topics of Haus Tambarans, headhunting, cannibalism, land tenure and sorcery are touched upon here and expanded upon in later chapters.

Part 1 – Initiations.

When you are born you come out of your mother's belly after being carried around in there. You have some of her blood, and so you do not have a man's strength to carry heavy loads, or to fight or to walk up big mountains. So, it is necessary to remove the mother's blood [by initiation]. After initiation the body generates its own men's blood and the body will become fat and strong – full strength.⁵

Gregory Bateson explained this as follows: *...in the native theory of gestation it is supposed that the bones of the child are the product of the father's sperm, while the flesh and blood [somewhat less important] are provided by the mother's menstrual blood.⁶*

Iatmul initiations in 1933, 1961 and 1973 are described in detail, with photos in Sepik 4 Chapter 51. These descriptions provide the evidence I can find to reflect pre-contact initiations, so there is no need for duplication here. In other Ndu origin communities there were variations in Initiation procedures.

Manambu Initiations. In Avatip village of the Manambu language group, initiations had not been conducted for many years before the 1970s when I interviewed elders there. The elders said:

They used to cut about 60 or 70 of us at a time...They called out to Malu, Yambon and Yau'umbak to send their boys down as well. We were given no preparation of the skin as the Waskuks do with nettles. When the time came, our fathers would come and say "Tomorrow we will cut you. Now we will singsing until the dawn. We will not eat and neither will you." Our fathers said "I cannot cut my own son's skin, because I will feel sorry for him and not make a proper job of it." He would get someone else to do it and he would watch and wipe the blood away.

They laid us down on canoe planks¹ and some of us they stood up against posts. They cut us with bamboo knives...when the knives became blunt they became blunt, they took new ones. They wiped the blood away as they cut us. If the blood fell down, it would smell...when the cutting was being done we had our eyes closed tight so we did not see. Also, most of the cutting was done on our backs, so we could not see...

At the end of our months in the enclosure came the time for us to run the gauntlet. Two lines of men awaited us. They had sticks to hit our backs and stinging nettles to hit our chests. There was about forty men. At the head of the line was a man playing a drum and two men at the other end playing drums, and we had to move slowly down the line of men to the beat of the drums. We had to carry a stick in the crook of our arms as we went and the men beat us as we went.

Strong men went the whole distance, young men who were not so strong fled half way through. The beating was severe. At the end of it we went back to the houses with our mothers and sisters...some of us coughed up blood. If a mother ran into the line to help her son, she too would be beaten. All of the females were seeing us for the first time in months when we took this beating.⁷

By comparison, as mentioned in Sepik 4 Chapter 51, the running of the gauntlet in Iatmul initiations was at the beginning of the initiation, with the novices, with the support of their young initiated sponsors, breaking their way into the haus tambaran enclosure in order to be initiated.

A fuller description of the of three Manambu initiation rituals is provided Simon Harrison.

The first stage of male initiation was a ritual in which all the novices in the village were scarified on their backs, shoulders and thighs. This ritual lasted for several months as the boys remained in seclusion of one of the cult houses while their cuts healed. During this period the initiators revealed to them the sacred flutes and showed the initiates how to play them...The women and uninitiated

¹ Timber "planks" salvaged from broken canoes

were told that their sounds were the voices of spirits called *Ndakwul Wapi*...It was these spirits, so the women and children were told that gored the boys causing their scars. The ritual belonged to *Nggala'angkw* and promoted the fertility of the main fish lagoons and fish in general.

The second stage of initiation is the yam festival ritual...The ritual belongs to Wuluwi-Nyawew, which celebrated the harvest of the gardens.

The third and last stage A man reached it in his early middle age, in a ritual called Ndumwi...an alternative initiation into the third stage was a ritual called Maiyir, which was last performed in the 1920s⁸

Clement of Namangoa, a Sawos village said of male initiation:

Male initiation was in the same markings as Sepik men [meaning Iatmul]. We stopped doing male initiation after some died. When I was young they stopped... The Germans came after the initiations stopped.² Because we no longer do initiations we are rubbish³ men

A general discussion among elders at Garamambu [a non-Ndu community] in 1972 explained:

We ceased male and female skin cutting in the early to mid-1950s... We have not forgotten about initiation and we will start it again...The male initiation scars [were similar to those of the Iatmul]. They extended down over the buttocks to the thighs⁹

Douglas Newton adds further detail.

The initiation of young men varied slightly in form between the two villages [Yerikai and Garamambu]. It was accompanied in Garamambu by the scarification, while in Yerikai it was accompanied by payments in pigs, coconuts and other food, and the ceremonial thrashing of initiates as in the Hunstein Mountains. Moreover, the Garamambu played bullroarers and the percussion planks during the initiation, while the Yerikai blew through bamboo tubes into water filled pits. For the ceremony, the Monggwuni masks [long narrow masks] were laid on the slit gongs' carved ends, with shell ornaments trailing from them to the ground. The Bonauwi [wooden masks in the shape of human heads] were put inside the bellies of the slit gongs.

One man sat astride each slit gong concealing the Monggwuni with a great bunch of draeaena or other leaves, while behind him another man beat the slit gong with a single beater with jugated [joined] hands. As the novice was ushered up to the slit gong, the seated man said "Here is the Monggwuni" and raised the bunch of leaves, exposing it. The initiates were then shown the flutes. Seclusion of the initiates followed, lasting the time it took to grow a ceremonially planted banana tree.¹⁰

ooo000ooo

Douglas Newton's investigations into Initiation in Bahinemo, Nggala, Wogamush, Kwoma and Nukuma cultures.

Douglas' book *Crocodile and Cassowary* [1971] is the source of information in this section.

Initiation among the Bahinemo [Hunstein Mountains people]: *...the boys remained in seclusion for an indeterminate period. Their diet was limited to pig and fish, [but not the heads] and sago. They were not permitted to touch the food but picked it up with cane tongs. They were painted all over with red ochre. The tips of their noses were pierced for the insertion the claws of sago beetles, the Bahinemo wear as ornaments.*

After a couple of weeks, the boys were taken to a stream for the first coat of red ochre [the "mark" of the sacred objects] to be washed off. They were rubbed with nettle on the foreheads,

² I marked the interview with the word "Doubtful" Clements apparently did not look that old to me.

³ Meaning poor quality specimens or generally lacking quality

chest, elbows, and knees and were re-painted with red ochre to promote their growth. The ceremony concluded with the beating of slit gongs at night.¹¹

Initiation among the Nggala [Swagup]...the novices [niyinggabiya] were led by the hand by their sponsors, previously initiated young men [yei nun], to Amuwasi ceremonial house, which had been which had been enclosed by a fence [yei]. Here their own father's fed them blood from their own penes, and ginger with earth still adhering to it [cleaned ginger would be without virtue]. The boys were then seated in the lower story of the ceremonial house, between the slit gongs and the angle of the eaves, which they faced; their legs stretched out before them and their heads lowered as they sat in silence. In front of the slit gongs the sponsors stood in a row, their legs well apart and their arms crossed over each other.

The senior men [baba lu] then had to break through this cordon in a ceremonial trial of strength to reach the novices; on doing this they applied nettles to both novices and sponsors. [at the end of initiation, the novices paid their sponsors for their defence]. The novices then had their penes incised, and leaves thrust into them. Following this they were given instruction by the older men about the sacred musical instruments, paid for this, and were shown them,

A later part of the initiation was an invocation to the ceremonial mound Wurrwuknauwi. This took place at dusk. The account of the ceremony and its purpose is somewhat obscure, but apparently all surrounded the mound, and the old men who were experts in the appropriate songs called its name and sang it, as a result the mound itself "turned" the faces of the novices, so that they became "different and new" – presumably meaning the faces of young men, rather than small boys.

The period of seclusion in the ceremonial house lasted about a month. The sponsors [namba nua "people mothers"] supplied them with food; but a prohibition on their eating eel, tortoise and codfish came into force and lasted for the rest of their days. The older men might leave the initiatory enclosure to visit their houses, but like the others involved in the initiatory ceremony, observed a ban on all sexual activities.

At the end of the seclusion period the boys were given woven arm bands, leg bands, brassards⁴ and shell ornaments; they were painted red and paraded through the village. Hence forth they could wear various types of penis covers, including basketry or bamboo tubes and flying fox wings. They were also presented by their sponsors with spears, and raiding expeditions took place shortly after.¹²

Initiation among the Wogamas [Wogamush]...The first episode of a boy's entry into ceremonial life took place at the onset of puberty; both the ceremony and the initiates to it were called Tumbul. At this time the father drew blood from his own penis and mixed it with ginger. The father and son then stood facing each other, the man placing his feet over the boys and rapidly vibrating them. While doing this he first held the ginger mixture to the boy's navel, then placed it into his mouth to eat. Afterwards the father presented the boy with a basketry penis cover he had woven over a wooden form [Schultze-Jena 1914, fig. 15]. The ceremony took place outside the fence of the ceremonial house, though the boy could not enter the house itself. No food restrictions were involved, but the Tumbul was thereafter not allowed to accept taro and sugarcane from women.

Young men of marriageable age were initiated in the ceremony called Lol and became [collectively] Lol'iyen. The ceremonial house was fenced, and a large fire was built inside this to scare the women who were told the boys were to be burnt in it. The boys themselves were laid out by their mother's brothers, gripping their arms and holding taro leaves over their eyes, who escorted the boys one at a time up the ladder to the second story of the ceremonial house. As the boys entered

⁴ Brassard – a band worn on the wrist

a special rhythm [yensoa yi'tam] was beaten on the slit gongs. Inside the house were the "fathers" [yi'tam]. At the novice's entrance, a man on either side of the door clasped nettles to his cheeks, and he was then walked about the room while nettles were rubbed into his joints stomach and back.

Apparently, the mother's brothers made some formal defence of the boys, which entitled them to be called "mothers" [Yuksul]. The boys were led through a barrier, dividing the front half of the house from the back, and more nettles were applied to his body. The boy's sponsor rubbed his penis with it; this was incised with a bamboo sliver twice and a grass straw was inserted twice. Each time, the second flow of blood was rubbed into his body to promote growth. Finally, one of the initiators, with a boar tusk in either hand, made a vertical slash down either side of the boy's torso; he was then hurled down the ladder of the ceremonial house. Later the wounds were dressed with oil. The nettles with which the novices were rubbed were burnt under the posts of the ceremonial house. Their cuts, called yambagwarak were considered to be the elder brother of the slit gongs; the women were later told they were made by the spirits embodied in the ocarinas.

The boys were kept inside the ceremonial house enclosure for five days; during this period, they were formally shown the sacred musical instruments. They were then decorated with a [yellow?] pigment made from a red fruit and dressed with ornaments including a conus shell ring hung at the throat, and pyrographed bamboo penis covers [Kelm 2: 160]. The sponsors paraded them around the village and they went to their own houses for a meal. After this they returned to the ceremonial house for a further period of seclusion.

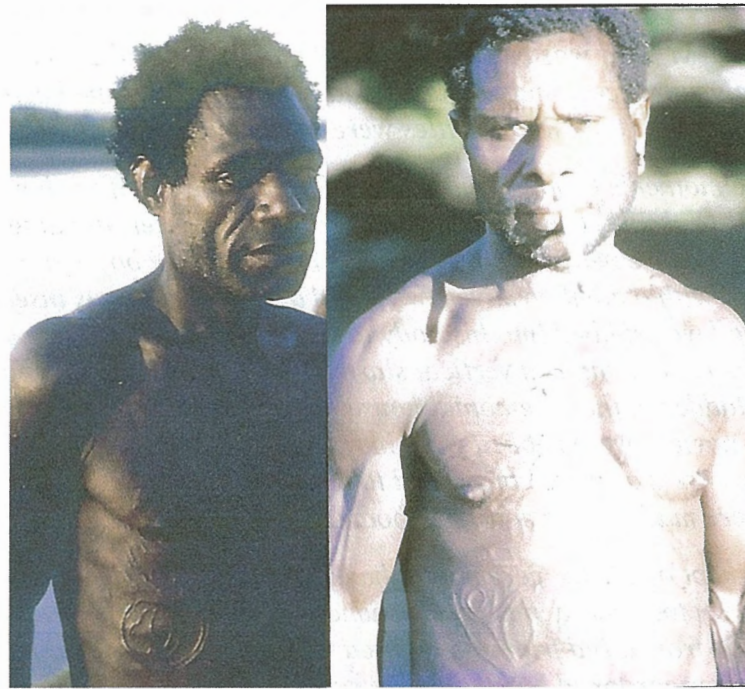
When the Lol finally came out of conclusion, they could marry. They observed several prohibitions on several types of food: Taro [which was forbidden for three years only], mango, kapok, sugarcane, crocodile, egret and a "black bird". These lasted until the man's first child was old enough to skin a mango and ceremonially fed it to his father; afterwards, similarly feeding the other prohibited foods to his father in turn.¹³

Initiation among the Kwoma and Nukuma. The Kwoma [Kwo-ma "mountain men"¹⁴] live on the hills behind Ambunti station. The Nukuma ["headwaters men"¹⁵] live in the swamp country immediately to the north west of the Kwoma. The two groups consider themselves separate, but related. The ceremonial life of the Kwoma and Nukuma include both age grade ceremonies and communal ceremonies timed to coincide with stages of yam cultivation and harvesting. Whiting⁵ and Reed, describe four age grade initiations, the earliest and most important being at puberty.

In one of these [hande sukwia] the novice's tongues were scraped with a rough leaf and their penes were incised, this taking place in a stream to carry the blood away. At this time, they are given bamboo phallocrypt and are scarified on the breasts [The writer observed the scarification on the stomach as per the pictures below].

There was a ceremonial display of the boys in the ceremonial house to the women who admired the phallocrypts and "chose husbands" [i.e. arrangements for marriages were made]. The boys were then secluded for some months, and then eventually let out by married men wearing light wood head ornaments [ma:nggala] There was then a dance, accompanied by sexual license within the bounds of incest prohibitions. Shortly thereafter the phallocrypts were removed and put onto palm tree sprouts, which broke them as they grew.¹⁶

⁵ J.W.M. Whiting *Becoming a Kwoma* – London, Oxford University Press 1941



Ooo000ooo

Part 3 – Age Classes

Age classes represent a ranking of Sepik males, not unlike that of the military. In the middle Sepik, the capacity of an individual to pass to a higher age class is achieved through different stages of initiation and acquiring of increasingly important sacred knowledge. As in the military, at lower classes, the age of the individual is the key qualification for advancement, which involves the initiation large numbers of youths. In higher classes, with fewer individual contenders, proven ability and personal power and merit are the key qualifications.

The Age Class system among village men was found to be clearly defined. The classifications in the different cultural groups [encountered during my various middle Sepik patrols of the 1970s] were:

Iatmul [Parembai dialect] Informant Kemen of Yenchan

<i>Junior</i>	<i>Gorisipma</i>	<i>Uninitiated youths</i>
<i>Middle</i>	<i>Kambaral</i>	<i>Initiated warrior class</i>
<i>Senior</i>	<i>Bandi or Bariambandi</i>	<i>Elders.</i>

Two additional senior age classes also exist – Bombunku and Setiali, which is also pronounced Ositali. The differences between the three senior age classes was inadequately explained as follows;

The Bandiarmbandi must sit on either side of the fire and the Bombunku and Ositali sit near the Orator's chair. They have the job of looking after the chair. This leads to the deduction that Bandiarambandi are of the Gumbungeigo division of that particular house while Bombunku and Ositali are of the Damangeigo division.

Aibom. [Parembai dialect of Iatmul] Informant Councillor and elders

The pottery makers of Aibom spoke their own language until a short period before contact with the outside world, when, mainly through the influx of Iatmul wives, their old language was lost and they began to speak Iatmul. The Aibom councillor and other informants described their age classes as follows:

Junior ⁶	Sambailambandi	Warrior class
Senior	Nyamalalabandi	Elders, leaders, decision makers.

Lukluk Island [Nyaula dialect of Iatmul] Informant Paul Banji of Lukluk.

Junior	Matniangu	Male children uninitiated
Middle	Jambwinimba	Initiated males with body hair
Senior	Abutundu	Old big men [Elders of importance]

Bisis language group – Chambri lakes Informant Councillor Maribika of Mensuat.

Junior	Yomsamol	Dumu	Uninitiated
		Lagomo	Newly Initiated
Middle	Wasendobnok	Nimanaiol	Middle aged men – Initiated
Senior	Yotosadbobnok]	Nimakukol	Ancient elders
		Nimasengi ol	Old big men [Elders of importance]

Clearly, something was lost in translation with this informant, but that is perhaps understandable...*The last initiation at Mensuat was in the late 1940s.*

Mari language group – Chambri Lakes Informant Tami of Karabio hamlet.

Junior	Yanam	Children uninitiates [Nietis – girls, Mayana – Boys]
Middle	Wiaga	All initiated males below senior rank
Senior No 1	Mweita	Big men – active elders, leaders
Senior No 2	Mwakaka	Ancient men who stay in-doors, story-telling leaders.

Garamambu Informant ex-Police Corporal Gigio

	Anip	Children
Junior	Nubanalani p	Uninitiated youths
Middle	Labinanip	Initiated men – youth to middle aged
Senior	Lisintabup	Elders, leaders.

Chambri Informant – ex-Luluai Wapi.

Junior	Mabugam	Uninitiated youth
Middle	Kiam	Initiated warriors up to middle age
Senior	Arambandi	Elders, big men, leaders.

ooo000ooo

The clearest illustration of differences between age classes is in the Iatmul, when the age class of the young initiates [Kambaral and Jambwinimba – depending upon dialect] break into the enclosure surrounding the haus tambaran [leading the uninitiated in to be initiated] and are burned and beaten by the elder age class [Bandiarabandi and Abutundu].

The distinction between age classes is also evident in the seating arrangements as well as in strength of voice [influence] in discussions.

The strength of leadership in the senior age class depends upon where the leader is located – his leadership was/is stronger if he is within his own haus tambaran and allowed to sit in the Damagego section. This also placed him in line for individual leadership of the men of his haus tambaran.

⁶ No name was provided for uninitiated males

Part 4 – Female Skin Cutting

There is considerable variation in oral histories on this subject, especially, whether there is female initiation, as Clements/Watnumbuk of Namangoa – a Sawos village would have it] or just “beautification” as Iatmul and Mensuat informants would have it. Clements said:

All young women are initiated, we watch for breasts to form and then at the first period, we initiate them. At the first period, the father tells the initiated girls to make a fence around his house. At dawn the next day the daughter is taken outside and laid down on a limbum bed that had been built. The initiation is done on that. Girls generally want their skin to be cut. We cut her back first and then her stomach.

Personal observation: I have also seen scars on girl’s upper arms and shoulders at Mensuat.

A father cannot cut his own daughter, if he did her blood would go in his eyes, so the father gets another man to do it.

The cuts are made and the blood is wiped away, the cuts were then washed and treated with tree oil. The girl was then kept in the house to allow the cuts to heal. While the daughter was healing in the house, the house was kept fenced. The parents brought food for her, which they pass through a small window in the fence.

The reason for female initiation is to clean away the blood of her parents. When her cuts are healed she is free to go outside and seek a husband. A girl who has been initiated will grow fat and strong, as would her children.¹⁷

Female Skin cutting for beautification 1. This is the subject of Sepik 4 Chapter 52. The system as described was that affluent families would commission the girl’s mother’s brother to cut her skin in exchange for a substantial payment. Just a few girls had their skin cut, and those who did were identified in the community as having prosperous parents. I asked whether such girls were more sought after as spouses but received no clear indication either way. Discussion notes taken at Garamambu added information:

The situation appears to be the same in all its aspects as noted at Mensuat – body decoration – rich parents pay mother’s brother [to do the cutting] the notes also indicate that the person upon whom the girl lay while being cut was also paid. This person is the mother’s sister, known as Kantiri⁷. It is against tradition for a person other than this relative to do this.

It is most important that the payment be prepared before the cutting is done. The payment seems to be of more importance than the cutting itself. This was explained by saying that if the payment was not good or large, the cuts would not leave beautiful scars.

"I inferred from this that some magic to do with healing would not work and the scars would not be good – not because of poor craftsmanship, but because of poor payment.

Another variation from the Mensuat example, was that the cuts were started across the small of the back, then up the ribs to the outside of the shoulders. The stomach and breasts were not cut.¹⁸

Female Skin cutting for beautification 2. Sepik 4 Chapter 45 describes a cultural revival among the Kwoma people. The revived customs included the beautification of girl’s stomachs by skin cutting. The process described the application of nettles to the area to be cut, supposedly to anaesthetise it. The nettles were also said to make the skin go hard, thereby providing a better “canvas” for the artist’s blade.

⁷ Kantiri or Kandere – JJ Murphy’s Pidgin English translates as *Maternal uncle and nephews and nieces of the same*

Below: A Kwoma girl's stomach seen in 1973. The scarification obscures her navel.



Part 5 – Moiety Social Structure.

Middle Sepik moieties appear to have played a more active role in day to day affairs in the pre-contact period concerning initiation.

There is also an interesting confusion when this “more active role” is expressed in the English language, with overlapping meaning between the translation of “Sun” and “Son”. As learned in earlier chapters Niamei, the earth mother came first, then followed by the Sky father – Niaui reflective of the values male, youth and light [The sun], and by implication – youth is the son of the mother Niamei.

It was stated at Lukluk and elsewhere that the mother/child relationship between Niamei and Niaui was exercised in warfare and other pursuits. Niaui scouted the ground [ahead], while Niamei was the rear guard. After the fight, it was Niamei who set fire to the houses and haus tambaran of the attacked village – Fire being a totem of the Niamei moiety. [While] statements are not clear, they indicate a military organisation [as once being among the moiety functions] in relation to warfare.

ooo000ooo

Simon Harrison's *The Mask of War 1993*, provides a clear picture of the Manambu “near-moiety” structure and links it with other critically important religious issues of fertility and the subsistence economy. The writer believes this Manambu example may also reflect the former nature of the Iatmul moieties to which, through the Iatmul/Manambu mutual Ndu origins, they are related;

The sixteen sub clans at Avatip are arranged in three exogamous groups

Wuluwi-Nyawé – 7 sub clans

Nggala'angkw – 7 sub clans

Nambul-Sambelap – 2 sub clans

Between them, the Wuluwi-Nyawé – and Nggala'angkw “own” all the rituals of male initiation and the cosmic powers associated with these rituals¹⁹.

As indicated earlier in this chapter Nggala'angkw's involvement in the first stage of Manambu initiation helps ensure the fertility fish stocks, while Wuluwi-Nyawé's involvement in the second stage ensures the fertility of the yam crops. The stability of the staple diet of fish and yams is thereby protected by involvement in Manambu men's cult rituals.

ooo000ooo

Apparently unrelated to the above are the Telefol Moieties – Taro and Arrow. The writer's only personal knowledge of these came from observing two fireplaces in each of the Telefolip and Unamo haus tambarans: The Taro and the Arrow fire places. Anthropologist Dan Jorgensen provided additional information:

The main thing about the Telefol moieties is that they only include men and are the organizational basis for much of the ritual and initiation system. They are not, therefore, moieties in the most usual sense - they are not based on kinship, and do not regulate marriage. This is consistent with many other aspects of the men's cult, which I have argued created a distinct realm of purely masculine activity that was divorced from kinship (cf. discussion of male 'ritual parents' in my article on men's and women's models of conception in Mankind 1983). Such ritual moieties (or dual organizational forms) that are distinct from and cross-cut kinship moieties are relatively common in PNG. In my dissertation I mention some of these, including Abelam, Arapesh, Iatmul, Banaro, and Marind. (I have since found indications of a similar organizational duality in Gogodala.)

At a more abstract level, the Telefol system is based upon a dualistic logic separating life-giving (or nurturing) from life-taking - Taro | Arrow || gardening | hunting || white | red etc. I see traditional Telefol culture as based upon the juggling of these two sets of values, and the focus of many of their taboos is to maintain the distinction between the two. This is then also the logic which insisted that people could not eat pigs they fed (nor the pigs that were suckled by such pigs), as well as many other rules.²⁰

While there is no evidence of a linkage between Telefol and Middle Sepik Moieties, Mr Jorgenson noted that the Telefol and Gogodala moieties are both of the Red and the White. The only apparent linkage between Gogodala and Telefol is the Fly River, with the former near the river mouth and the latter in its extreme headwaters.

End Notes Chapter 10

¹ D.Newton Crocodile and Cassowary. Museum of Primitive Arts New York 1971. Pages 10 and 11.

² S.Harrison – The mask of war – Manchester University Press 1993 pages 75-76

³ A.Forge 1990: 168 as quotes by S.Harrison 1993: 25.

⁴ S.Harrison 1993: 76-77.

⁵ Informant - Ex Constable Managun of Nyaurengai – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 306

⁶ Gregory Bateson – Naven, Stanford University Press 1958 edition Pages 42-43

⁷ Elders of Avatip - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 pages 45/46

⁸ S.Harrison 1993: 26.

⁹ Elders of Garamambu – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 378

¹⁰ D.Newton 1971 Page 15.

¹¹ D.Newton 1971 Page 21

¹² D.Newton 1971 Page 35

¹³ D.Newton 1971 Page 52-53

¹⁴ D.Newton 1971 Page 82

¹⁵ D.Newton 1971 Page 82

¹⁶ D.Newton 1971 Page 83

¹⁷ Informant Clements Watnumbuk of Namangoa – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 157

¹⁸ Elders of Garamambu – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 378

¹⁹ S.Harrison 1993: 77

²⁰ Personal communication with Dan Jorgensen June 2018

Sepik 1 Chapter 11 – Haus Tambarans - the churches of the people

Writer's note: The topic of haus tambarans is too large for one chapter, so the narrative is in the present chapter and the photos are in the next...The information in italics in this chapter is quoted from the writers Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix B.

ooo000ooo

Haus Tambaran or Haus Boi?

The haus tambaran[s] were and are the central feature and most important buildings in any village in the middle Sepik. Now, as in the past, this is the heart of village culture, religion and everyday affairs.

The terms “Haus Tambaran” and “Haus Boi” refer to the same building. The people consider it a haus boi and refer to it as such for most of the year. The building becomes a haus tambaran on ceremonial occasions when the building is surrounded by a tall fence or enclosure of timber and fronds, which prevents physical or visual access.

During the haus boi status women are allowed to enter the building for some purposes... Bateson's book Naven [1936] mentions women going into the haus boi when given some degree of licence by the “naven¹” ceremony.

The restrictions during the “haus tambaran” status, extend beyond the “Haus” itself to the whole village – which is obliged to remain silent, and women and uninitiated boys are not allowed in the enclosure. [in the middle Sepik] penalties for breaches...entail the killing of livestock, the destruction food gardens and fruit trees. In some instances, during times of initiation, anyone caught will have their skin cut there and then in the marks of initiation.

Elsewhere in the Sepik penalties are even more severe. Sepik 4 Chapter 38 describes a murder investigation in the West Mianmin restricted area. A total of ten murders stemmed from a woman peering into a haus tambaran in 1966.

Status of women with middle Sepik haus tambarans.

The taboos on women and on sexual relations to do with the haus tambarans and ceremonial matters, seems to have its foundation in versions of a story found throughout the middle Sepik. The story has it that in the beginning women found and made the tambaran objects and controlled the haus tambarans. The situation described a situation in which the present rules were completely reversed. This went so far in the YambiYambi version that the women had the facial and body hair.

Writer's note: These myths are reviewed and interpreted in Sepik 1 Chapter 10. Each myth then tells how men took control the haus tambarans, and all ritual and ceremonial functions to the total exclusion of women. It also seems to this writer that the division between in the sexes in the middle Sepik goes beyond just “exclusion.” There appears to also be a level subliminal reserve, or even fear of women, which I attribute to three things.

1. Much is made of the mythology that men took the haus tambaran's and ceremonial life from women. Do Sepik men harbour some level of residual concern over this? *Councillor Kemen of Yenchan claims that all [middle Sepik] haus tambarans have female names¹.* The writer has not seen either verification, or a rationalisation of this.
2. There is concern among Sepik men about the sorcery powers of women. This was the rationalisation for the torture, rape and murder of 26 Sawos women during World War 2. The

¹ Naven ceremonies involve displays of sex role reversals in which the mother dresses and struts around as the father would and the father presents himself as a weary old lady. These ceremonies are held when a child of the marriage achieves a first – such as bring home a first catch of fish.

amazing outcome was that this terrible war crime went unpunished. The perpetrator – Gauimeri of Yamuk, lived to tell the writer about it in the 1970s. He was apparently considered by the Sepik people to have rectified a problem that the pre-war Australian administration had failed to address. See Sepik 3 Chapter 39.

3. *Female blood is...something to beware of. Menstruation is regarded as dirty, and menstrual blood is to be avoided by men [as it is harmful to them]*²

A Ranking system of haus tambarans. This is a variable factor from group to group. It has two aspects

1. *Ranking of different haus tambarans within a village or a group of villages.*
2. *Lesser houses associated with a single haus tambaran.*

#1. Ranking system. *Haus Tambarans are of varying importance. The first established [in any community] is usually the most important; probably much the same as cathedrals in major cities. For example, in Parembei Nambaraman [Namburaman according to Douglas Newton] is first ranking and Pai'ambit is second with Andimbit third.*

The story goes that in earlier generations a Nambaraman man killed a Pai'imbit man [he caught] stealing tobacco. [As a result] a group of Pai'ambit men left Parembei and set up Yenchan village and a new haus tambaran called Nangarambi. Nangarambi remains under the influence of the Pai'ambit pig totem and the Pai'ambit tambaran.

Councillor Kemen of Yenchan explains it thus.

Our haus tambaran Nangarambi and Parembei's Pai'ambit are both of the pig totem. That is the basis of the Yenchan/Parembei dispute. Now Pai'ambit is the big brother and Nangarambi is the small brother. The situation is that the...haus tambarans at Parembei have plenty of power and all the lesser haus tambarans such as Nangarambi are [also] of the larger totem, and so are held within the power of the big brother and go out to fight under the umbrella of the power of Pai'ambit. There have [also] been fights between Pai'ambit and Nangarambi.

Ooo000ooo

Similarly, at Garamambu, the village is divided into "No 1 banis²" [Garamambu 'big place'] with Dengaraman haus tambaran, no 2 banis [Wolipian hamlet] with Meraman haus tambaran, and No 3 Banis [Nawei hamlet] with Womburaman haus tambaran... Womburaman has no tambaran of its own and relies upon the Dengaraman tambaran.

Investigation of the recent fragmentation of Garamambu...showed the fragmentation had been along haus tambaran lines.

Ooo000ooo

Similarly of the three haus tambarans at Kanganaman the haus tambaran Kosimbi came from Parembei, when the Kanganaman people migrated from Parembei after an internal conflict.

#2. Lesser houses associated with a single haus tambaran. *Informant Councillor Kemen of Yenchan; In the past there was a system of three haus tambarans, now we have only one...The three were:*

Borei *Used by the Gorisipma age class in learning and preparation for initiation into the Kambaral age class.*

Tiga *the haus tambaran of the Kambaral age class who learn and prepare to enter the Bandiarambandi age class.*

² "Banis" – the pidgin word for fence or enclosure. The meaning here is residential ward.

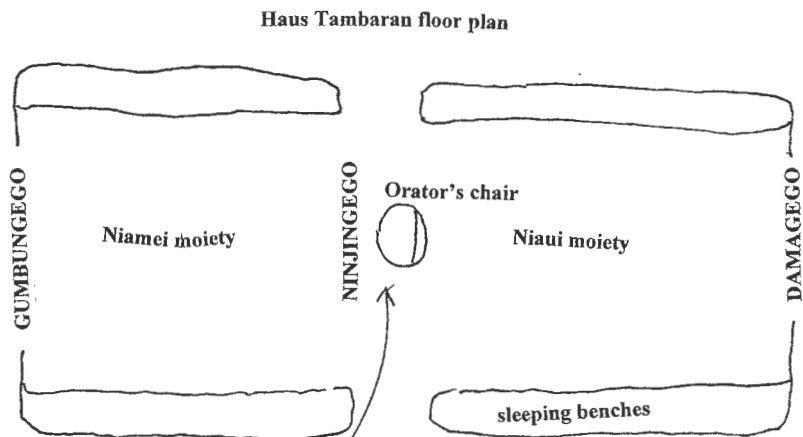
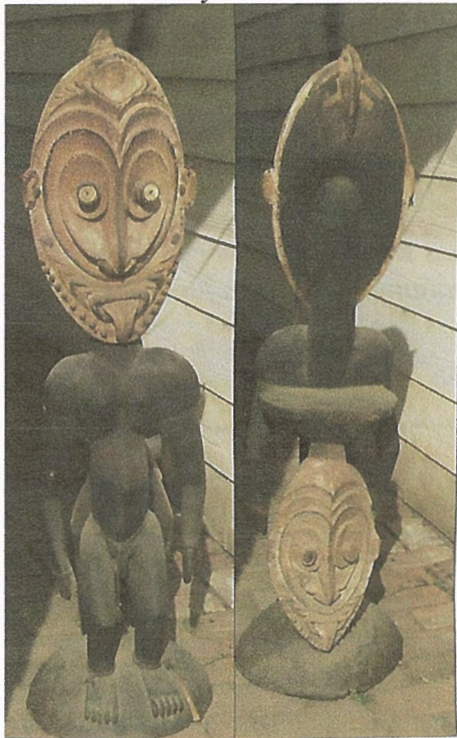
Gego the main haus tambaran, which is inhabited by the Bandiarambandi age class and contains all sacred items. At Yenchan, Nangarambi haus tambaran is of Gego status. Small shelters with no decorations and often no walls, made up the other two.

Ooo000ooo

At Chambri these classes of houses associated with a haus tambaran are recognised under the following names respectively: Yibantobaro, Pambagampinenkur and Iruaman. Informant – Ex Luluai Wapi notes that all three are still in use, but that Pambagampinenkur is in fact a “middle house” in which married females live. This is at variance with Yenchan’s Tiga. “Tiga” was not encountered elsewhere.

Haus Tambaran divisions based on the Orator’s Chair The floor plan of a typical middle Sepik haus tambaran is as shown in the sketch below. In the very centre of the ground floor area, the orator’s chair is positioned. As shown the chair has a face side and a bench side.

Middle Sepik haus tambarans are “owned” or “bossed” by either a clan of one of the moieties, or by the Moiety itself. EG the haus tambaran Kosimbi at Kanganaman is of the Weingwanda clan of the Niamei moiety, whereas Dengaraman haus tambaran at Garamambu is on the Niaui moiety.



The “Owner” or “Boss” of the haus tambaran controls the orator’s chair, and that section of the haus tambaran the chair faces is called Damagego [literally face side or face house]. This of the section is occupied by the eligible men of the “Bosses” clan or moiety. All others in that haus tambaran belong to the Gumbungego [back or stern side.]

If a Weingwanda man went to another village which had a haus tambaran called Kosimbi, he would be eligible to enter the Damagego sector and be given food, shelter and all the rights of the Weingwanda clansmen of the village. Korogo informants also explained that the sleeping benches are also allocated to specific clans within each moiety.

All villages visited agreed with the above, but all mentioned a third sector called Ninjingeio [the middle]. In the Ninjingeio sector the bandiarambandi age class of both Gumbungego and Damagego sit by their respective fires and talk or beat the orator’s chair as need be. The outer ends

of the haus tambaran are occupied by the Kambaral age class of the respective Damagego and Gumbungego ends.

The Kambaral warriors, subservient to the elders and sat with an ear to the ninjinge go fires.

How does Damagego and Gumbungego fit with the Niamei/Niaui moiety division?

Following my research at Yenchan I was convinced that the Niaui moiety occupied the eastern end [to the extent the narrow river bank levee on the winding river course allowed 'east – west' real estate] of the haus tambaran, as this was the end where the sun rose – reflecting male, youth and light as Niaui values. Niamei moiety occupied the western end where darkness came when the day "died" – reflecting female, darkness and death as Niamei values.

My patrol proceeded and new information came to my notice. At Garamambu [a Non-Ndu community] Informant Gigio told me: *Dengaraman haus tambaran of the Wamp moiety [Wamp being the Garamambu equivalent of Niaui], the east end of the haus tambaran was the Damagego end.*

Mereman haus tambran of the Sinameri moiety [Siunameri being the Garamambu equivalent of Niamei, the western end was the Damagego end.

I realise that this is becoming complex, but, in short, the Garamambu information was consistent with what I learned at Yenchan.

However, Paul Banji, a close friend and reliable informant, of Lukluk Island – a Nyaula Iatmul colony in the Chambri lakes told me: *The Nyaula Iatmul system is that Niamei always occupies the eastern end [and in Niamei controlled haus tambarans] the eastern end is always the Damagego end. Niaui is always at the western end at the subservient Gumbungego end. When told of what Garamambu informant said, Paul responded "that is because they do not understand".*

It suffices to say that the system is similar throughout but has variations from culture to culture in some aspects and further research would clarify the situation and reasons for it.

"Consecration" of a haus tambaran.

The haus tambaran was and continues to be, the church of the people³. The religion centred around headhunting, which in turn was inter-related with the attainment of "black face paint" [the mark of a warrior who had killed] and initiation.

It was traditionally necessary when building a haus tambaran to kill people [to go into the main post holes] and [depending upon availability] for the "masts" of the haus tambaran.

Variations existed, but basically the body went into the main post hole and the main post went in on top of it. Sometimes this was a living person, sometimes just a head and sometimes a headless body. Live persons were attached [tied] to the mast and when the mast was hoisted into position, a youth desirous of obtaining the right to wear black paint would climb onto the roof of the haus tambaran and draw blood on the victim, before cutting his or her bonds and allowing the unfortunate person to fall 30 to 50 feet onto the spears below.

These killings gave power to the haus tambaran, as did later heads taken in raids. This is no [doubt the source of the power of the larger established haus tambarans such as Dengaraman at Garamambu and Nambaraman at Parembei.]

The haus tambaran "masts"

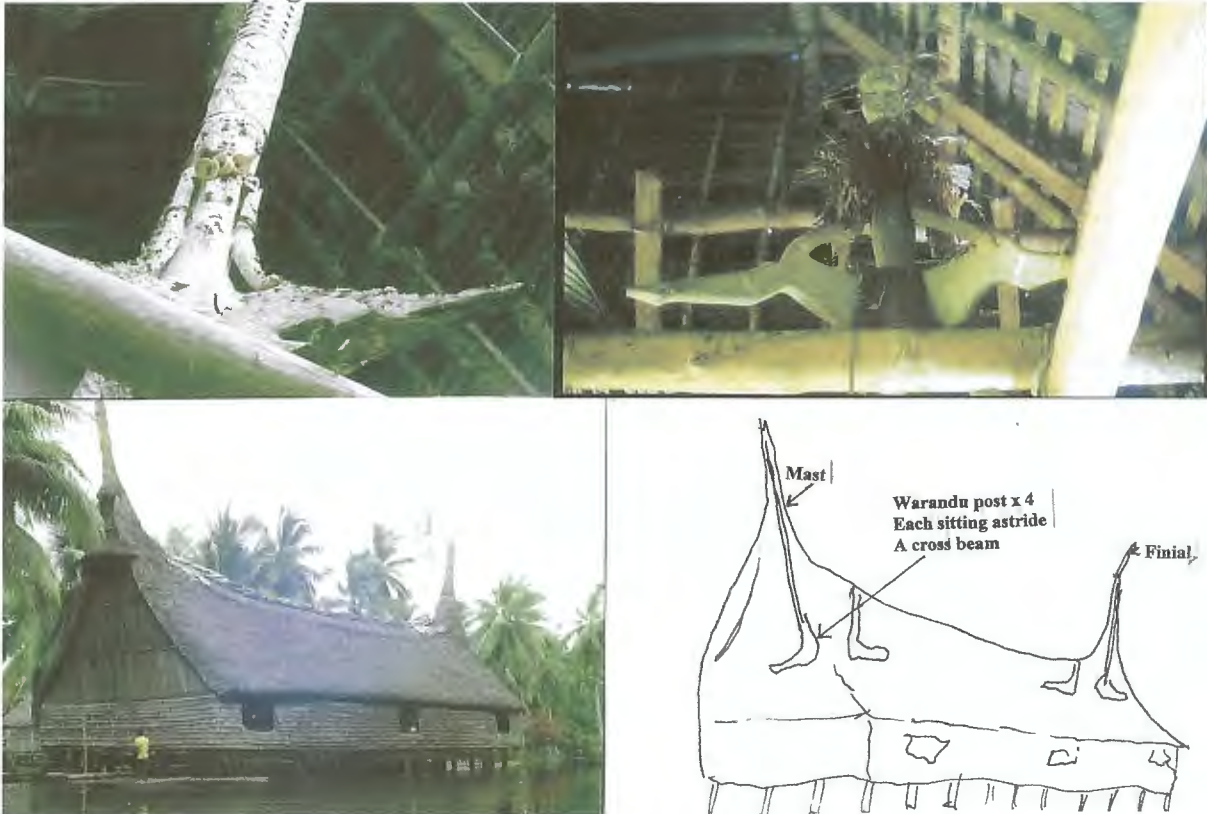
Large haus tambarans have four "masts" – two at each end. The inner masts with a carved woman, legs spread, looking inwards and straddling a beam. The head of this mast supports the

³ At least as far as the traditional religion is/was concerned.

weight of the roof, assisted the central posts. These two inner masts are called *Warandu* in Parembei dialect [“*Wanan*” to carry].

The outer masts are called *Tupmiwabi*. The twin peaks of the roof are built around the top of these, and on top of each sits the carves eagle on a woman’s head [finial], which itself depicts a *Iatmul* myth.

See Photos on next page



Orator’s Chairs

*Orator’s chairs were found in all Iatmul haus tambarans [and some Sawos haus tambarans]. All groups visited during Ambunti patrol no 5/1973-74 claim to have had orator’s chairs in the past. Garamambu’s orator’s chairs had no face on them.*³

*The function of the chair is to facilitate debate and to reach decisions, and also to stir up courage and anger sufficient to carry out the deed decided upon. This arousing of feelings is attributed to the power of the chair and/or the tambaran which is aroused by the “fighting of the tanget...An elder would stand and strike the seat of the orator’s chair with croton leaves as he spoke and made his point. This was apparently done loudly, and in a way to arouse feelings. When one speaker had finished he would lay the croton leaves on the chair, and another man would take his place with fresh croton leaves. It is stated that crotons “for” and “against” were counted if the decision was in doubt.*⁴

The significance of “fighting tanget.” Informant Waliaba of Kaminimbit.

The men before going on a raid would have a singsing and make magic. It was through these means that the chair gets its power. The chair is not a man, so it cannot talk, but it can communicate

⁴ The writer doubts the accuracy of this “for and against” comment, believing it is a flow on adaptation of Local Government procedures of the modern era.

with men through men's dreams. The chair can also shake and make movement to communicate with men. What causes the movement? It is the tambaran [devil] within the chair.

The main purpose of this is if some of the men are uncertain, or afraid, the beating of the tanget will give them confidence. Men will slap the tanget down and chant "We are not afraid. We will go and kill them. We have done it before, and we will succeed this time." Then another man will take up a tanget and beat the chair.

Mr. Tomlinson's comment in patrol report No 11/1969-70 that Parembai still maintains a headhunting mentality is regarded as accurate. In disputes...a penalty against the other party to the dispute, be it a fine or gaol time, is regarded as a win or a "head"; one up on the others. This is subject to payback as has been seen in events concerning the Kambunka family at Yenchan and Gau's family at Parembai.

End Notes Chapter 11

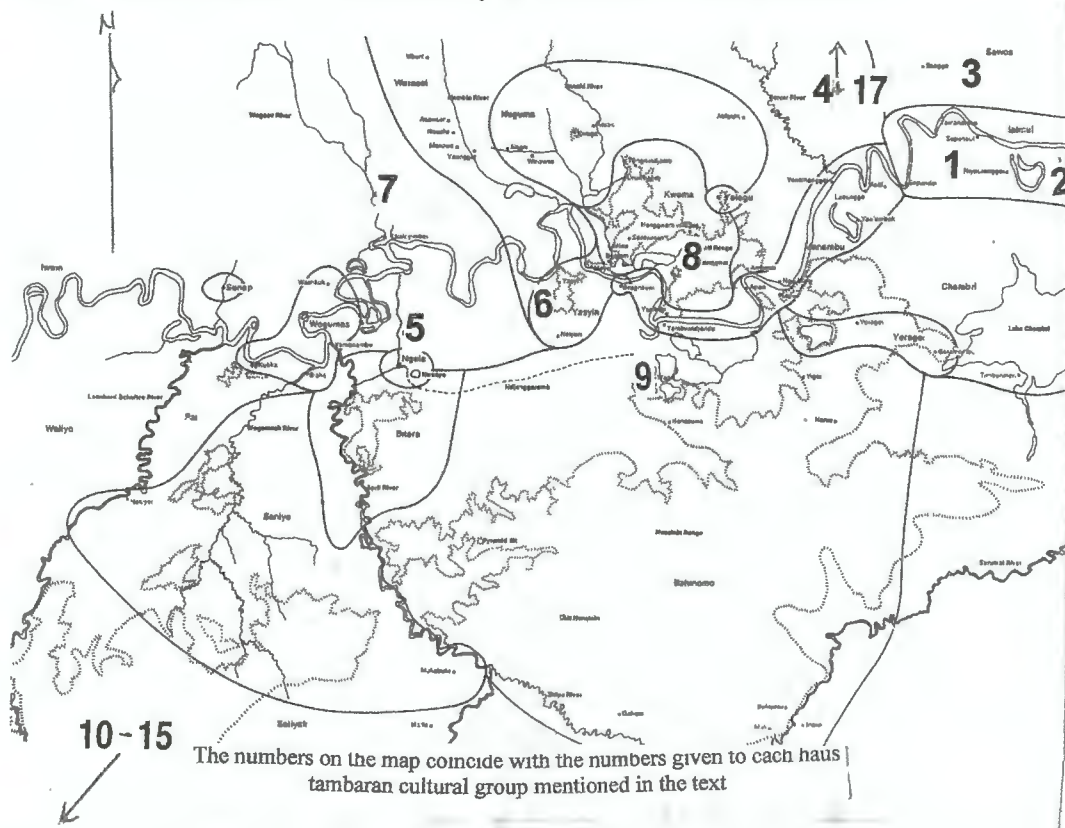
¹ Bragge L.W. Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix A page 9

² Bragge L.W. Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix A page 8

³ Informant Dumondi of Garamambu

Sepik 1 Chapter 12 Sepik Haus Tambarans.

This chapter needs to be read in conjunction with Chapter 11. Numbers on the map below show where the haus tambarans, mentioned by numbers in the text are located.



This map has been borrowed and adapted from Douglas Newton's *Crocodile and Cassowary*¹

Ndu language family Haus Tambarans [numbers 1-5]

#1Nyaula dialect Iatmul [Korogo village 1970]



#2 Parembei dialect Iatmul Parembei village



Photo taken from National Geographic Vol No 144 [July to December 1973 page 379. Depicted is a Wakan figure dancing Parembei village's Haus Tambaran avenue, with a Haus Tambaran visible in the background.

#2 Parembei dialect Iatmul Yenchan village -Photo taken during the 1973 flood.



#2 Parembei dialect Iatmul Kanganaman village



3 Sawos Haus Tambarans. Photos taken 1970-1974

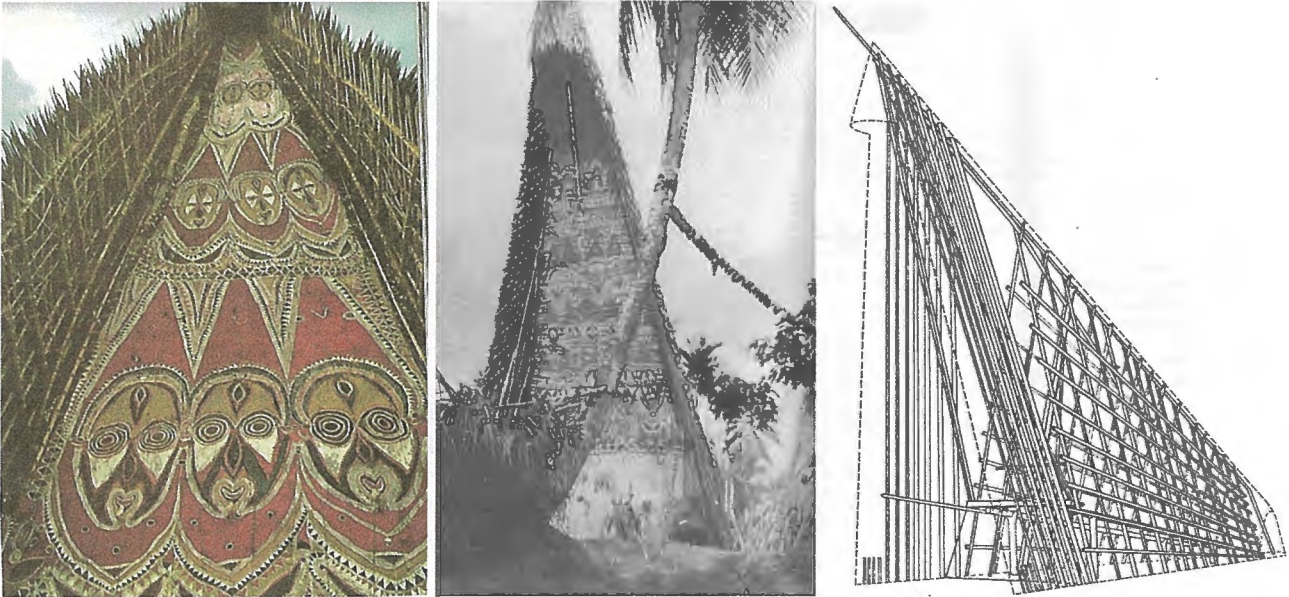


The top four photos were taken in various Sawos villages in the Sepik Plains and Burui Kunai census divisions. Unfortunately, the writer did not list the village names pertaining to each photograph.

Bottom left. As with Iatmul villages, in the distant past stone monoliths were acquired from Aibom and Chambri Island and transported to the otherwise stoneless Sepik River and Sepik Plains area for ritual purposes connected with headhunting.

Bottom right. As with Iatmul villages, most Sawos haus tambarans are located in a central avenue, which is kept clear of rubbish, with the grass being regularly cut. The avenues are bounded by mounds of earth, upon which coconuts are planted. In Iatmul villages, these mounds are usually the only soil visible during the annual floods

#4. Abelam Haus Tambarans.



Above left Abelam Haus Tambaran. Photo from Vol 144 July-December 1973 page 361

Above centre Abelam. Photo from J.K.McCarthy. Patrol into Yesterday 1963 page 69.

Above right. Structural plan of an Abelam haus tambaran. Dr. B.Hauser Schaublin in Sepik Heritage 1991 page 475.

Abelam haus tambarans, known locally as *karambo*, can be up to 25 metres tall.²

Evidence of migratory direction and cultural borrowing from house tambaran designs.

In her *In the Swamps and on the Hills: Traditional Settlement Patterns and House Structures in the Middle Sepik*, Dr. Hauser Schaublin argues:

...whereas settlement patterns vary with the environment, house structures show a continuity greater than any other cultural trait except language...Abelam ceremonial houses are related in structure to the Sawos and Iatmul ceremonial houses...The Abelam korambo has evolved from a house on piles with a saddle roof that had two almost identical sides [front and back]...As the Abelam moved northwards from the Sepik Plains to the hills, they adapted to a new much dryer environment, than in swampy plains, it was no longer necessary to build houses on piles...³

#17 Arapesh Haus Tambarans – Dreikikir area. Dr Hauser-Schaublin continues:

The Ilahita haus tambaran has only the superstructure and not the internal structure of the Abelam korambo...these hints indicate that the haus tambaran of the Iahita Arapesh was imported from the Abelam; thus, the shape is similar but the basic structure is missing.⁴

The writer was not stationed in neither the Abelam [Maprik] nor the Arapesh area [Dreikikir], and therefore has no firsthand knowledge of, or photos of Abelam or Arapesh haus tambarans.

#5 Nggala [Swagup] haus tambarans.

The earliest memories of the Nggala people as to their origin, are recorded in Sepik 1 Chapter 30. The evidence, that the Nggala are of Ndu origins is documented in Sepik 4 Chapter 9. Dr. Behrmann's map of the 1912-13 Sepik expedition shows "Kala" in the same position as "Swagup" is still located today. It seems that the village has been there for a very long time.

Chapter 39 mentioned above found that Swagup [The name I shall use in this chapter rather than Nggala] village consisted of three residential wards, each with its own haus tambaran; Wolbi

ward with haus tambaran Kokombauwi [Photograph below], Dogoshua ward with haus tambaran Amuwasi and Nggraiyo ward with haus tambaran Kaukauwul.

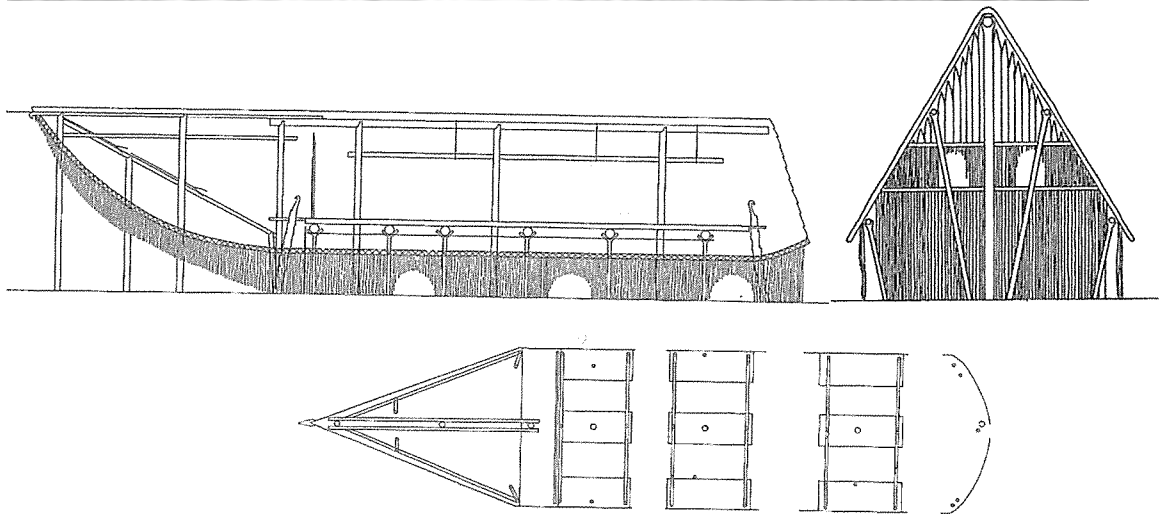


Photo and plans taken from Douglas Newton's Crocodile and Cassowary 1971 pages 38,39 & 41.

Yessan/Mayo, Kwoma, Nukuma [Numbers -6-8]

#6 Nukuma haus tambaran – Alakai village.



Photo taken by the writer in 1974 during Ambunti patrol No 11a1973-74. Alakai village is of the Nukuma cultural, but due to geographical remoteness, is part of the Wongamusen census division.

#7. Yessan- Mayo haus tambaran – Yessan village.

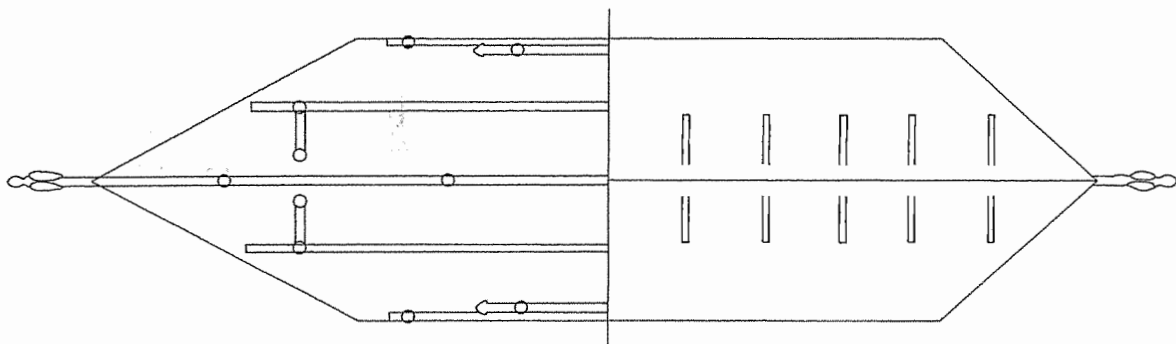
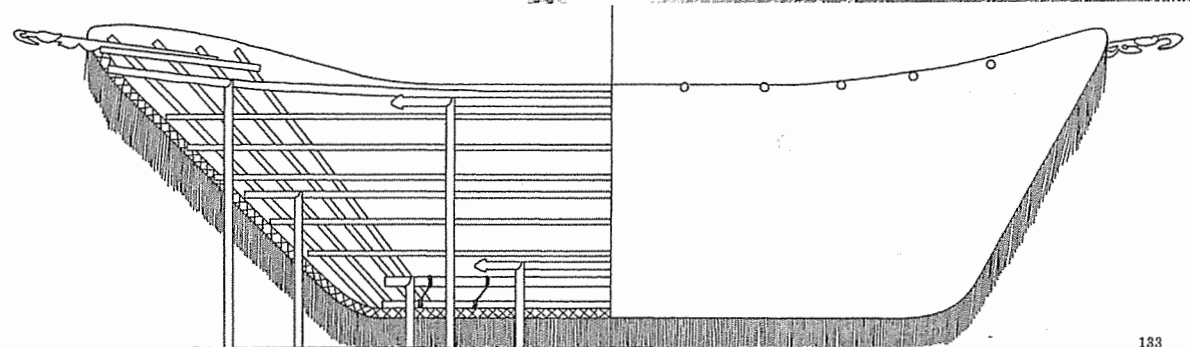
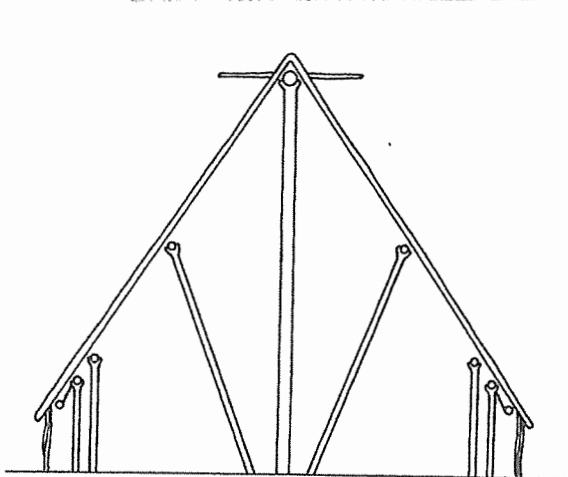
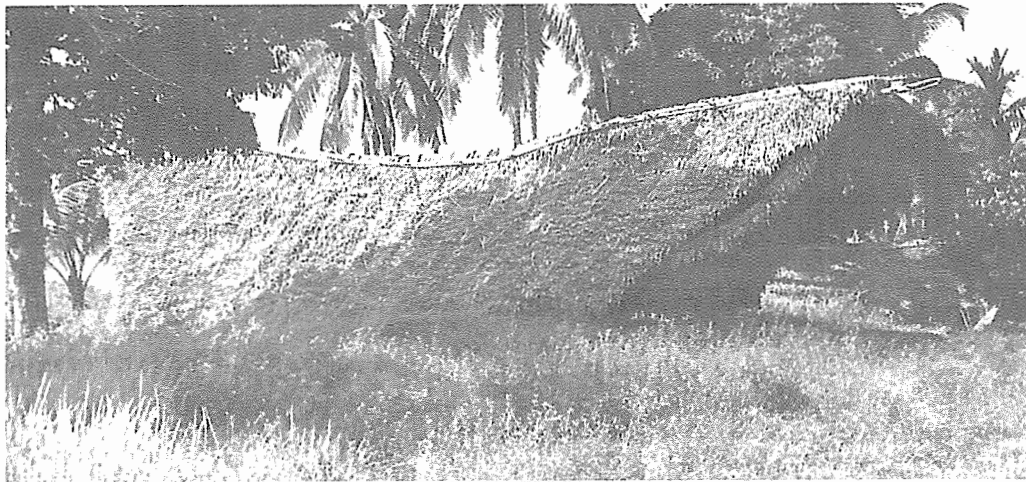


Photo and plans taken from Douglas Newton's Crocodile and Cassowary 1971 pages 90 – 92.

#8 Kwoma Haus Tambarans – Melawei village



Kwoma haus tambaran – Bangwis village. The shape and design of the Bangwis haus tambaran is the same as that of Melawei. The following photos are of the Bangwis ceiling in bark paintings:



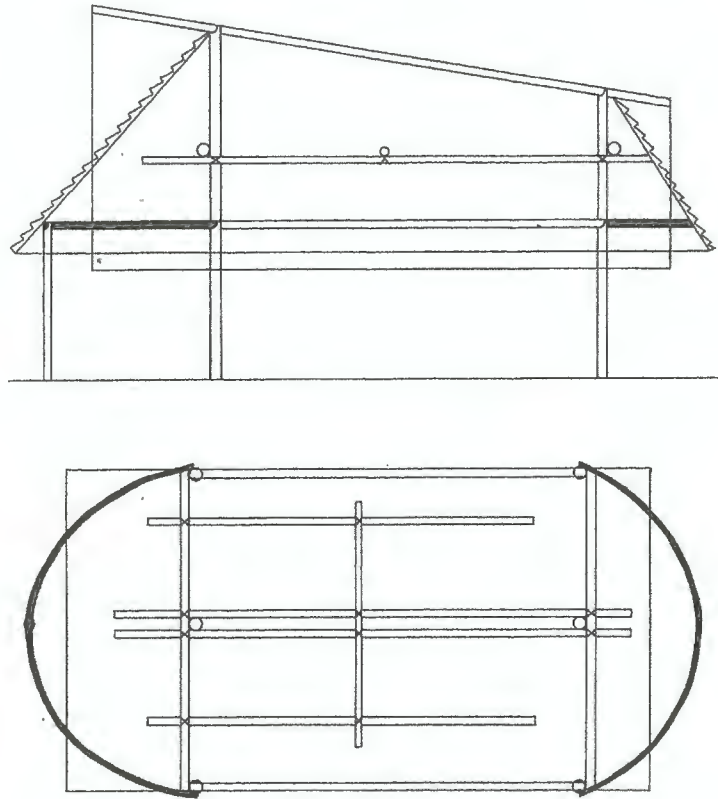
Kwoma Haus Tambarans -Ambunti Court House.

The Ambunti Court House was commissioned by the writer and built in 1972. It was officially opened by his honour Supreme Court Judge Clarkson. The primary carver and architect involved was the honourable Nauwi Sauinambi MP. Nauwi informed Justice Clarkson that it would not be necessary to put people on oath in this court house, as Nauwi had placed “something” in the main post holes, that would inflict dire consequences upon anyone who gave false evidence.

In accordance with tradition, the elders added cane rings to a chain hanging from the ridge pole. Each elder, typically sniggered to himself in memory of the event, which might have been the taking of a head or the seduction of some comely wench. No young men attempted to add links to the chain, as they knew the elders, would laugh and demand, “What did you ever do to warrant this?”



#9 Bahinemo haus Tambarans – Wagu village. No Photograph available. House plans taken from Douglas Newton’s *Crocodile and Cassowary* 1971 Page 22.



“Min” Haus Tambarans. [10-15”

10 Telefomin Haus Tambaran. The story of Afek, the ancestress of the “Min” peoples, tells how she created the Haus Tambaran at Telefolip. See Sepik 1 Chapter 34 for the story of Afek. Telefolip was the “Mecca” of all Min people, [including the Telefomin, Atbalmin, Mianmin, Oksapmin, Nenataman and others] in that it was created by Afek, and her relics were kept there.



The inner walls of the haus tambaran are lined with thousands of pig jaws, which testify to the many feasts that were consumed over the millennia. The haus tambaran has two fire places one for each moiety – The Arrow and the Taro. **Below**; Wall cladding, thousands of pig jaws.



11. Unamo Haus Tambaran at Nenataman – Frieda River Headwaters below left



12 Bolivip Haus Tambaran. Above right.

The Bolivip haus tambaran photo was taken by Assistant Resident Magistrate Ivan Champion during their 1926/27 failed attempt to cross from the Fly headwaters to the Sepik headwaters.

He wrote:

I noticed at one end of the village, a house about 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. The entrance was closed by flat boards on which some effort had been made to paint a design in red and blue pigment, but this had been exposed to the weather so long that I was unable to see what it represented. The carriers started to put up their fly, near the house, but they were stopped and asked to select another site...I went to the Chief and pointed to the house with a questioning look. He appeared very solemn, looked to see if the women were watching, then leaned over and whispered "Amawk, Amauk."

"Amawk?" I asked

"Amawk!" he whispered again and indicated that the men fore-gathered there with great feasting on taro, and then, putting his closed fists to his mouth, he blew through them and explained that they left the feast blowing some sort of horn or conch shell – what it was I do not know – and then went to fight the Faiwol people.

I moved towards the house, round which were planted many shrubs and asked him to show me, but he shook his head and some other, too came up and shook their heads, so I did not press it as it possibly contained the relics of former battles, and I had no desire to become one of its relics myself⁵.

#13 Oksapmin Haus Tambarans.



Photos taken by the writer during Oksapmin Patrol No 1/1966-67.

While on patrol in the Tekin valley at Oksapmin in 1966, I heard of a haus tambaran in a remote area close to the Tekin River itself. I asked to see it and after some reluctance, the local Luluai agreed to take me there and show it to me, on condition that I alone went with him, leaving the remainder of the patrol party behind.

The haus tambaran, which I noted was similar to the one Ivan Champion photographed at Bolivip in 1926, but on a smaller scale, was in very derelict condition. The Luluai explained that the building would be allowed to completely collapse, before being re-built. Of the skulls observed, I was told that these were of respected elders, not the victims of warfare. On the other side of the floor area were two stone headed clubs. Such clubs were not in common usage at Oksapmin in the 1960s.

14 Atbalmin haus tambarans – Unanklimin village.

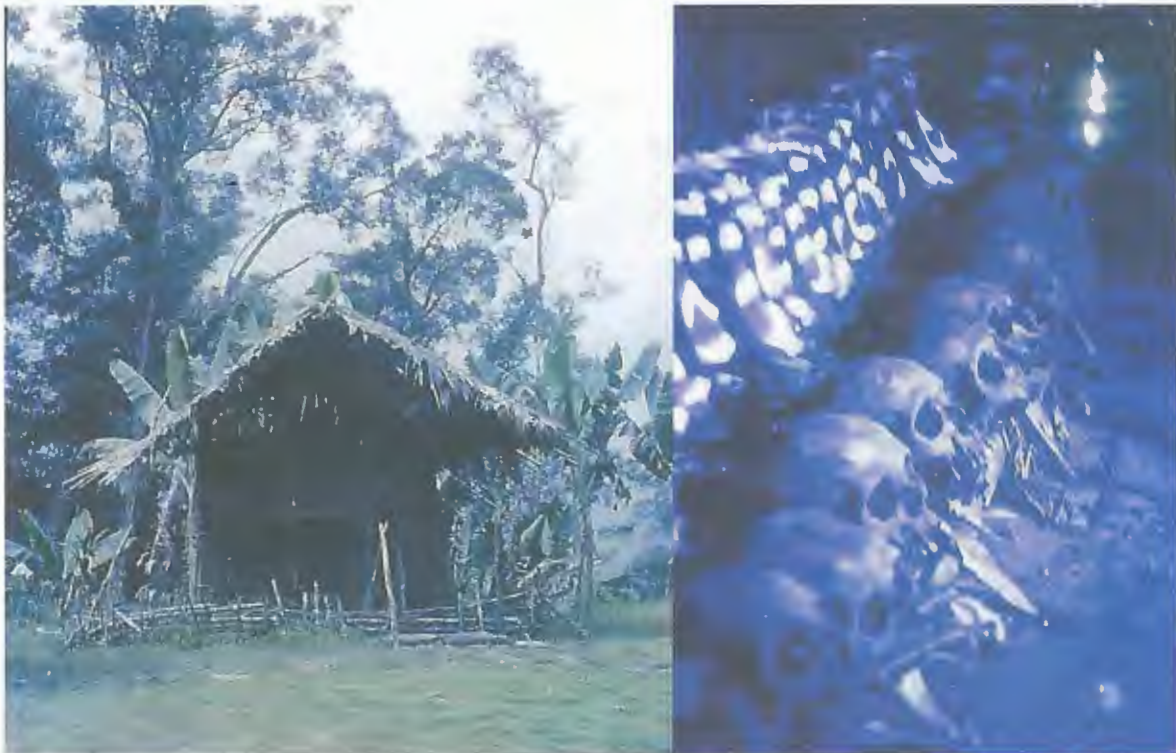


Photos Taken during Telefomin Patrol no 1 1967-68: Unanklimin people standing in front of the Unanklimin haus tambaran. The door of the haus tambaran was the broken war shield.

Following the 1956 Mianmin raid on Atblmin in which 18 people were murdered and eaten [Sepik 4 Chapter 19], Atbalmin warriors decided to raid Mianmin. At the Mianmin settlement of Ivikmin, the local fight leader took their shield and broke it in half with his foot and sent them back the way they had come. Atbalmin was never a match for Mianmin in warfare.

This shield is part of the Bragge collection donated to James Cook University Cairns.

#15 Mianmin haus tambarans.





Photos: All taken during Telefomin patrol No 3/1966-67. As the patrol was in the West Mianmin Restricted area and was focussed on security and murder arrests, these photos were taken in passing and people were not available to be interviewed on topics of anthropological interest.

Previous page photo at left – haus tambaran at Fiarimin – Aki tributary of the August River. Mianmin haus tambarans are surprisingly small.

Previous page photo at right – Inside the Fiarimin haus tambaran. The painted objects along the wall are the breast bones of Cassowaries. The skulls are assumed to be those of respected Fiarimin elders.

Current Page photo – In the forest, perhaps 2 kilometres north of the Urapmin dance house this cluster of stones was found. It appears to be a shrine, but as we were in hot pursuit of murderers, there was neither time, nor informants available for research.

#16 Chambri lakes haus tambarans – Wombun village.



#17 Arapesh Haus Tambarans. [See comments re Arapesh haus tambarans under #2 above - Abelam.

ooo000ooo

From the earliest times of contact with the outside world, the Sepik traditional religions and their “churches” - the haus tambarans were under extreme pressures of change. The arrival of Christian missionaries sought to establish Christianity on a clear slate. To do this they sought to end the old “pagan” and “satanic” ways, by destroying sacred objects and burning down of haus tambarans - the churches of the people.

The administration also played its part in changing traditional religion. While recognising traditional customs which were not repugnant to statute law, as the “common law” of New Guinea, they enforced Statute law where local customs were found to be repugnant. In the 1920s and 1930s there was a drive to bring an end to headhunting, by first warning the people, as in the case of the Japandai massacre of 1923 [Sepik 2 Chapters 26 & 27], and then by a process of arrests, criminal convictions in the Supreme Court, death sentences and public hangings [Sepik 2 Chapter 32].

Far from eliminating traditional religion, the invasive policies of the missions and the administration set traditional religion on new pathways. Traditional religion adapted itself to meet the on going needs of Sepik societies. Heads could no longer be taken, so initiations and marriages found ways to continue without the necessary killing, that the taking of a head entailed.

But the arrival of the outsiders and their new ways, also raised critical questions for which the Sepik’s traditional views of their cosmos had no answers. Traditional religion stepped in to provide new “messiahs”, beliefs and the faith for Sepik spirituality to continue in the form of cargo cults, which are examined in detail in Sepik 2 and 4].

In conclusion, I regret to acknowledge, that if in 1970 I had been aware that I would be writing this chapter in 2018, my research back then would have captured vital information that is now irretrievably lost; my Sepik elder friends would have been disappointed. The winds of change that have blown since first contact have steadily increased ever since. Against this kaleidoscopic background the documentation in this chapter, leaves a record, such as the elders sought to allow future generations know what they knew, or at least part thereof.

End notes Chapter 12

¹ Douglas Newton – Crocodile and Cassowary. Museum of Primitive Art, New York 1971 inside cover.

² B.Hauser Schaublin – Sepik Heritage 1991 page 475

³ B.Hauser Schaublin – Sepik Heritage 1991 page 476

⁴ B.Hauser Schaublin – Sepik Heritage 1991 page 476

⁵ I.F.Champion. Across New Guinea – From the Fly to the Sepik. Lansdowne Press 1966 edition Page 66.

Sepik 1 Chapter 13. Headhunting.

As indicated in Chapter 9. The writer believes headhunting was introduced into the Middle Sepik as part of an ancient religious practice when Austronesians settled the coasts of the Sepik inland sea. Julian Baldrick's "Ancient Religions of the Austronesian world" noted that – *Headhunting appears to have taken place originally for religious reasons in all three language groups*¹:

1. Western Malayo-Polynesia – consisting of Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Madagascar.
2. Central Malayo-Polynesia – consisting Eastern Indonesia, and
3. Eastern Malayo – Polynesia – consisting of Southern Halmahera, West New Guinea, and Oceania [the Pacific]

In Philippines and North Borneo it was done to obtain the spirits of the victims and thus ensure the general prosperity, and to give the community strength. Similarly, heads were taken to promote fertility in Eastern Indonesia. Initiation of youths was done in a headhunting ritual.²

As it seems headhunting customs went where-ever Austronesians went, it is difficult not to conclude that headhunting was not introduced by them into New Guinea generally and the Sepik in particular.

Headhunting and remodelling of features in clay.



Remodelled skull – Photo from Heinz Kelm's Kunst vom Sepik Vol No 1 Plates 242 & 243.³



Previous page A cooking pot - 500mm wide by 230mm deep of Aibom manufacture used at Jiginimbu [Torembei] in the Sepik Plains pre-war for the preparation of heads for over modelling with clay. This item was acquired in January 1973 during Ambunti patrol No 13/1972-73 for the Bragge collection.

The function of the pot was for boiling heads...Incisions were made in a cross on the top of the skull and the action of boiling eventually allowed the flesh of the scalp to be peeled off, leaving the fresh skull. A length of prickles of a cane plant was then pushed into the hole at the base of the skull to drag the brains out. The skull was then dried and over modelled with clay, with cowrie shells for eyes and the victim's hair embedded into the clay of the clay of the scalp. Earthen colours were then used to paint the face.⁴

The preparation of heads for remodelling with clay, varied from place to place. At Nyaurengai informants stated:

The heads were left to rot and then they were modelled with clay and shells. Then they were fitted into a Timbucan [doll figure] and a celebratory singing was held. [hambog hamamas long em]



Above: *A mbwatanggwi figure. Kanganaman – a portrait skull of a dead man...is set up as the head of a doll and prodigiously ornamented. The ceremony is an initiatory secret but is also said to promote the prosperity and fertility of the village. The dance takes place at night behind a screen of totemic banana leaves. The men lift the dolls by the poles on which they were constructed, raising them high above the screen so the women, standing in the audience, see the figures as Jack-in-the-boxes.⁵*

The Nyaurengai informants continue their story. *Then the heads were hung in the windows of the haus tambaran and ordinary houses, so later when relatives of the deceased came, they could see them¹. Later again a hole was dug and the heads were thrown into it. Skulls were not kept for ever⁶.*

Oral history on the mythical origins of headhunting – Ndu language family communities

Nogosop village – Sawos language

Before, we [our ancestors] only killed them, but then [the ancestors] started cutting the heads off, and cooking the meat off, then and modelling the skulls with clay and tree oil and making the faces. They used to measure the length of the nose of the original head with a stick, to get it right when re-modelling. [In the preparation of the skulls] They put them in the sun to dry and held a singsing and abused the skulls verbally. They did not eat the bodies of the men they had killed.⁷

Gaikarobi Village – Sawos language.

We traded for stone, as we had no stone of our own. Some of the stones were the big monoliths. When we went and fought and took heads, we dug holes and planted the stones, each on top of a head. This was done at 12 pm at night so no one could see it happen. This made us and the place also, strong.⁸

Nyaurengai Village – Nyaurengai dialect of Iatmul language.

Biatnumbuk was the father of...three ancestors...Gambanga was eldest, Baimaligumban was second and Walindambwi was third...These three ancestors started headhunting. They tried to make the ground strong after the place was established, but they did not succeed. They killed pigs and tried them with a party, but the ground did not become strong. Then they brought men from other places [and presumably killed them], they spread the blood, but the ground did not become strong – it was still spongy [malumalu].

Then they killed a man called Sondambwi and took away his skin and smoked his meat, and the ground became strong. Now...at Nyaurengai we have strong ground. The ground no longer shakes. They took Sondambwi's head and his blood made the ground strong.

This also caused the first fighting. There was no cannibalism. The heads were all that was taken and placed on the hills [raised mounds] around the haus tambarans. Before the raids, the ancestors would consult Saun [Cult hero/Tambaran Magisaun] and give him shell wealth. [Then] Saun would say "I will go first and fight these men and then I will bring them and then you can kill them". So, in our way, we sent him ahead to open the way for us. After the return of the raiders pigs and kinas would be given to Saun.⁹

Malu village – Manambu language

We were head hunters. We would take the heads of men only and put them into the haus tambaran. Next morning, we put the heads onto poles under the ficus tree and left the flesh to rot so we could get the skulls. Some of them we modelled over with clay to represent our own ancestors, others we just left. Women's heads were of no value.¹⁰

Avatip village – Manambu language [Mother village of Malu]

Heads were used in Haus Tambaran post holes. Successful headhunting meant the people were 'Sharp', and their haus tambarans, powerful and would last [endure]. Good head hunting goes hand in hand with successful warfare and the pushing enemy groups far away from Asiti [Avatip's ancestral village]. The head in the post hole gave power to the men to go and fight.

¹ The writer does not understand how relatives from enemy villages might visit the village and see the victim's heads.

When heads were taken they were allowed to rot down to the skull, and the skull was placed in the haus tambaran. A man was allowed to put one tassel on his lime gourd stick for each head he had taken. Black paint can only be used after a man has killed.¹¹

Swagup village – Ngalla or Gala language group.

Extensive interviews with Swagup elders, as documented in Sepik 1 Chapter 31 and Sepik 4 Chapters 9 and 18 establish that Swagup people were head hunters. Apparently nowhere in these interviews did I ask about the origins of the headhunting custom at Swagup.

Yelogu and Biananambu.

Both these communities are small, apparent remnant bush groups of Ndu language family. Little is known of their history or whether their pre-contact past included the custom of head hunting.

Abelam and Boiken.

The writer was not stationed in either the Abelam or Boiken tribal areas. Research indicated that both had a head hunting past:

Abelam: Margaret Mead in her “Sex and Temperament in three Primitive Societies” described the Abelam as a *gay artistic head hunting people*.¹²

Boiken: *The Yangoru Boiken, a horticultural people...borne head hunters...*¹³

ooo000ooo

Oral history on the origins of headhunting – non-Ndu language family communities

Yambiyambi village – Bisis language southern Chambri lakes

Kaiapun was my ancestor. He came down to the big place [ancestral village] Luguturu. He was by himself, then the calf on his leg swelled. The swelling proved to be a pregnancy and a female child was born from his leg. Her name was Siningamango. Kaiapun looked after her until she was a woman. There was just the two of them.

When Kaiapun killed meat he beat his garamut. Then he heard other men at the Garamambu mountain known as Yimbnagwan. Two men, Wandan and Bambwan were having singsing...they had killed a pig, but the black paint would not stick to their faces. Similarly with cassowary, the paint did not stick...They thought about this and they killed their uncle [Mother's brother]Asapariwan.

After killing Asapariwan they took his body to the channel and covered it with grass. The two men lived with their old mother Elos. They told their mother “Tomorrow morning, go down and block the channel and put your fish baskets in. There are plenty of catfish and big-mouth in the channel. She heard their talk and took her baskets down, and the two followed her.

She blocked the channel and put her baskets in. The two men went into the water, telling her they would fright the fish into the baskets. They pushed the man's body into her basket. They came out of the water and told their mother “lift your basket”

They stood on either side holding their spears. She lifted the mouth of the basket and saw the soles of the dead man's feet. “Why have you two lied to me? You have killed your uncle Asapariwan.” She did not say any more. [They said] “Do not cry, you go ahead and ready the garamut” They paid her with wealth so she would not worry. The two men started their singsing and they sang for a week...They placed the man's head in a basket and attached it to the top of the inner mast of the haus tambaran.

Kaiapun heard their singsing. He took his weapons and went to investigate...The two men had gone to wash, leaving their mother. Kaiapun met the mother to climb a tree to get daka [mustard] for him. He watched as she went higher and higher picking daka...He then climbed the

mast of the haus tambaran and took the head, putting it in his bilum... He climbed down and ran away.

The old woman climbed down and beat the garamut...the men came running asking what was wrong. The old woman said "Sorry, a man came and took the head and went..." The two men followed Kaiapun to their mountain Bugumari. Kaiapun had arrived there and started his singsing. They [the two men] threw their spears at the haus tambaran and called Kaiapun. Kaiapun called "My friends, easy – do not spear me" [thereby] he stopped their attack. He paid compensation in coconut shells and a garamut...they pulled the garamut behind them as they went.

Kaiapun continued his singsing. An ancestor of the Mari people, Wudito, came as he too had heard the Garamut. So he came to see his friend Kaiapun. Wudito asked "Why are you singing?" [Kaiapun replied] "Because I have killed a pig." Wudito looked around and he saw the head, he said nothing...

In the morning Wudito said to Kaiapun "We'll go and cut sago" Kaiapun's child was there and Kaiapun said to her to come down to help them. The two men went ahead and Wudito took a stone axe and was cutting a sago palm. He told Kaiapun where to stand...he had already measured where he expected the sago palm to fall...The sago fell, hitting and killing Kaiapun.

Wudito then went and on the way he met Singsingamango, on her way down. Wudito said "You go down he is there scraping the sago." Wudito went and took the head back to his own place at Mari. The place was called Wudito, the same as his own name.

Writer's note. This myth continues for pages – Singsingamango found her father's body and after four days of smoking it Kaiapun came back to life. Their camp was visited by Wudito and the spear Kaiapun threw at him missed. While the myth has deep meaning, there is no other mention of headhunting.¹⁴

Milae village – Mari? Language? Chambri lakes.

Three ancestral spirits got up [originated] at the mountain called Bitabi. They were Kamamu, the Milae ancestral spirit, Wahikwa, the Kamasiut ancestral spirit, and Ambrandimi the Garamambu ancestral spirit. They were not true ancestors, but ancestral spirits.

They came to Kamon creek, where they met their uncle, who had been making a fish trap. They left him and continued on, but then Ambrandimi lied to his brothers...saying "You go ahead, I want to shit." The two went and Ambrandimi watched them go, and then he went back to his uncle...who was also from Milae...He held the uncle by the throat and then cut his head off and put it in his bilum. He followed his brothers and caught up with them on the track.

...The blood dripped down onto his leg and they asked "what is this?" "A leach bite" [he replied.]They did not believe him...They looked into his bilum and saw the human head there. "What! I think you have killed our uncle!" ...and they started to beat Ambrandimi. This is the basic reason for the Garamambu-Milae fights through the ages.

After they had beaten him with sticks, the two were sorry for their brother...They called out to their village and [people from] the village replied and then played the garamut with the head hunting beat...

Then two ancestors Wudito² and Dokworokwa heard the garamut, and at dawn they took their bamboo hook and hooked the mountains to them and came up to Maiwan where the mother and

² "Wudito" should perhaps be "Wuditok" The "K" being almost silent.

three sons lived. They saw the four of them sleeping and they saw the head of a man. They did not speak but stole the head of the man and took it back to their place Wudito.

In the afternoon the people at Maiwan got up and searched for the head... Then about 6 pm they heard the garamut at Wudito. Next dawn they took their bamboo hook and hooked Wudito [to bring it closer] The three took their weapons. The two [Wudito and Dokworokwa] were pushed, but there was no real earnest fighting as they were all brothers. Then they say and the three said "Right you two prepare some [compensation] payment now" ... They took shell money – Kinas. Torimum, rings etc and showed the three "Oh yes, that is real payment" They said.

They all sat and ate betelnut

Writer's note. This is a very long myth. The three brothers left the head with Wudito and Dokworokwa and they continued their singsing, which was heard by the spirits Gwamogwa, a male and Dipiambol [Gwamogwa's sister] at Big Mari. When the Big Mari spirits arrived Wudito and Dokworokwa were asleep and the Big Mari spirits stole the head.

They knew where the head had been taken when they heard the garamuts sounding from Gwarowi. Wudito told Dokworokwa to limit aggression when they went to Gwarowi, but he did not heed this, he took a garamut drum stick and struck Gwamogwa over the head with it until there was only half a head left. He is now a stone with only half a head...

Wudito and Dokworokwa continued their singsing, than a man called Bibiowa stole the head. They waited to hear the garaamut, but no garamut sounded. A pigeon came and landed in a breadfruit tree and told them to go to Daptitu where they found a saucepan with a leaf over it. Inside was the head. They took the head back to Wudito.

Yerikai village – Yerikai language

Writer's note. The scene for the origins of headhunting is set in a myth concerning the mythical relations between Kwoma³ and Yerikai. A Yerikai woman called Kolobwi was sunk into the water by spirits. An eagle called Barawes had a haus tambaran under the water. The people there ties the woman to a post. Bawawes made a spell that put the people to sleep. Barawes freed Kolobwi and lived with a house he placed in the top of an erima tree. Kolobwi had twin boys Wanten and Bambwan, and they finally climbed down from the erima tree.

...after leaving the erima tree Kolobwi said to go and get heads. The brothers went out and killed a pig and brought its head back, but their mother said "No! that I just food." They did the same with a cassowary and again their mother said "That is just food. Go out and kill something with a skin like mine." They went out and killed a man and brought his head back to their mother and asked "Is this right?". She looked at the face and said "Oh! You have killed my cousin" In our language "cousin" is "Awai", so the headhunting singsing is called Awai. She sent them out to get heads as training for fighting. That was the start of headhunting and fighting.¹⁵

Begapuke village - Sanio language – Middle April River.

Q. Head hunting and/or Cannibalism?

A. Neither were done here. Our ancestors within living memory did not. But in the distant past they used to eat human meat.¹⁶

Oum village – Iwam language – Wongamusen area of upper Sepik.

Q. Head hunting and/or Cannibalism?

³ This legend is discussed in more detail in Chapter 21

*A. Our people did neither. The people we killed were just left where they were killed. We used to cut the chests open, cut the stomach out and break the head. This made sure the people were dead.*¹⁷

Lower May River villages – Iwam language group.

Sepik 4 Chapter 16 describes the Yellow River massacre by May River people. Heads were taken in this raid, although apart from inflicting death upon an enemy, A higher importance upon cannibalism, than on head hunting.

ooo000ooo

Conclusion.

Head hunting was clearly wide spread throughout the Sepik. The documentation in this chapter should not be read as indicating that the only peoples mentioned here traditionally took heads or why heads were taken.

Although six of the eight listed Ndu language family are documented here as formally being head hunters, the other two language groups – Yelogu and Biananumbu cannot be categorised either way, as so little is known of their history or origins.

Of the non-Ndu speaking peoples, the mythology clearly links the Chambri Lakes groups Yambiyambi, Milae, Kamasiut, Mari and Garamambu. Unlike the Ndu groups these non-Ndu people made no reference to head hunting being required to make spongy land firm. The consistent theme in their mythology is the murder and beheading of a close relative; horror expressed by other family members and the theft of the head by related Chambri Lakes cultural groups...

Upon hearing these myths, the writer asked whether this how head hunting started and was assured that it was. The repeated theft of the head represents the spread of the head hunting custom.

End Note Chapter 13

¹ Baldick J. Ancient Religions of the Austronesian World-I.B.Tauris London 2013 Page 175-180

² Baldick J. 2013 Page 184

³ H. Kelm - Kunst vom Sepik Vol 1 – Herausgegeben vom Museum fur Volkerkunde 1966 item 262/3

⁴ Informant Local Government Councillor Yapi of Torembai – as recorded in the provenance volume for Bragge collection.

⁵ G.Bateson Naven – Stanford University Press 1958 edition Plate XXVII

⁶ Informants Nans, Jacob and Mathias of Nyauengai – interview documented in Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol18 pages 271/2

⁷ Kolion of Nogosop – Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 page 258

⁸ Gwolai of Gaikarobi - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 page 265

⁹ Nans, Jacob and Mathias of Nyauengai - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 page 271-272

¹⁰ Lisindu of Malu - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 page 39

¹¹ Elders of Avatip [1970] - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 406

¹² R.Scaglione – Abalam: Giant Yams and cycles of sex, warfare and ritual – Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1993

¹³ P.Roscoe – Social signalling and organisation of small societies. Published on line 2009

¹⁴ Siga of Yambiyambi - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 354-361

¹⁵ Maimban and Wani of Yerikai - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 301

¹⁶ Luluai Taburu of Begapuke - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 406

¹⁷ Councillor Yenak and others of Oum - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 492

Sepik 1 Chapter 14 Cannibalism

Writer's note: - Cannibalism is a notoriously difficult topic to research because it typically ceased to happen very soon after Western observers come in contact with communities that practiced it. The community then tends to deny doing it and to disassociate themselves with the practice because they quickly become aware that the newly arrived outsiders consider cannibalism to be a barbaric, revolting, repugnant and unacceptable practice. The tyranny of time and prejudice can easily generate beliefs that cannibalism never happened.

In Telefomin for example, PO Des Clifton Basset, who opened the station in 1948, after being in the area for over a year, wrote on 16th December 1949 :-

...Until two or three months ago the people here have said that their enemies ate their victims, but have always denied that they have ever done the same themselves...During the last three months...men here have admitted that the people of this area do eat human flesh... The fighting men carry victims back to the village where the bodies are cut into pieces and cooked in stones the same way as pig is cooked...the feast is partaken of only by women and children of both sexes.¹

Even this admission was less than the whole truth as disclosed below.

ooo000ooo

In this chapter I seek to achieve four things:-

1. Assess the authoritative academic work on the subject of cannibalism: *The Anthropology of Cannibalism* ed. L.R.Goldman to confirm that cannibalism is recognised by academia and that the hypothesis of William Ahens that there is no evidence to suggest cannibalism ever existed, is proven to be incorrect
2. Identify Goldman's categories of cannibalism.
3. Seek to apply this categorisation to Sepik cannibalism and associated references
4. Generate conclusions as to where, in the Sepik, cannibalism was or was not practiced, and some reasons why.

The Anthropology of Cannibalism Ed. L.R.Goldman

This work commences by looking at American Anthropologist William Arens' 1979 publication *The Man Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (the custom of eating human flesh).

Arens' primary hypothesis is that despite claims by explorers and anthropologists since the 15th century, there is no firm, substantiable evidence of the socially accepted practice of cannibalism anywhere in the world, at any time in history.²

Daniel Carleton Gajdusek won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1976 for his research into the disease kuru in the Fore tribal area of the Okapa sub district, Eastern Highlands of PNG. His research connected the spread of the disease with the practice of funerary cannibalism. Arens challenged these findings on cannibalism, claiming that the stories presented as evidence of Fore cannibalism often contradicted each other.³

ooo000ooo

Don Gardner, in his 1999 paper *Anthropophagy, Myth, and the subtle ways of Ethnocentrism*⁴, discusses the Mianmin [Telefomin sub district] stated in part :- ‘Uniformly the men I questioned said they had no qualms whatever about eating dead Atbalmins or Abaus. They asked me why on earth they should leave “good meat” lying around, if at great risk, they had gone to the trouble of travelling considerable distances in order to kill their enemies. “It was not as if they were our friends or relatives” a man told me “No, Atbalmins are our game”⁵’

Writer’s Note :- Mianmin cannibalism is also described in Sepik Book 2 Chapter 46: *The Taylor and Black Hagen Sepik Patrol 1938-39* and Sepik Book 4 Chapters 19: *The Mianmin raid on Atbalmin 1956*, Chapter 24: *The Suwana Massacre 1959*.

ooo000ooo

Thomas M. Ernst wrote the following of the Onabasulu of the Southern Highlands [Koroba sub district] in 1999 :-

‘That anthropophagous⁶ practices occurred among all groups between the Strickland River plains and the Hegigio [Upper Kikori] is not in doubt. In general terms, both the practice and context were very much the same throughout the region. These included the following features:

1. *In all locations, the victims of anthropophagous activity included - and most usually were – accused and executed sorcerers or witches.*
2. *There was no specific “ritual” surrounding the acts themselves. The bodies were prepared as was pig or other large game, except that the intestines were discarded.*
3. *Kin persons were never consumed. The necessary distance in relationship appears to be equivalent to that for marriage (as was the case for Onabasulu people).*
4. *There was no set of explicit beliefs that characteristics of the consumed person were acquired through cannibalistic consumption.⁷*

ooo000ooo

Kerry M. Zubrinich in quoting Father G. Zegwaard, an early missionary in the Asmat area of Indonesian New Guinea:

‘It may be mentioned in passing that the Asmat have associated headhunting with cannibalism. I had many an opportunity to observe this, but this exposition may make it clear that cannibalism is not the objective of headhunting (as far as the Asmat are concerned) but only a subsidiary part of it [Zegwaard 1959: 1020].⁸ Taking a head was fundamental to the male initiation ceremony of the central Asmat... The ceremony involved not only the eating of the flesh of the victim but also the initiate sitting on the men’s house in front of the fire with the smoked skull between his legs close to his genitals.⁹’

The writers - Gardner, Ernst and Zubrinich quoted above, establish conclusively that cannibalism existed in New Guinea as a socially acceptable practice until at least 1971 as the court case *The Crown v Noboi/Bosai*, and in 1977 in the Warapu case described below.

ooo000ooo

Goldman's Three Categories of Cannibalism.

A. Survival Cannibalism in starvation situations. The case of the South American athletes stranded in the Andes for 70 days in 1972 following their plane crash are a clear example.

B. Exo-cannibalism: the consumption of outsiders. These are typically enemies killed in war. Such cannibalism is often associated with head hunting.

C. Endo-cannibalism: consumption of the flesh of a member of one's own insider group. This is usually associated with ideologies about the recycling and regeneration of the life-essence.

Writer's Note :- I have expanded this three part categorisation to include:

D. Exo-cannibalism: primarily as a food source

E. Exo-cannibalism: primarily as a ritual function

F. Exo-cannibalism: insufficient information to categorise as D or E.

G. Traditional anti-cannibalism beliefs and responses

Writer's Note continued :- The interview material from which most of the following cannibalism notations are derived did not seek in-depth details on cannibalism beyond whether it was practiced or not; it was a side issue to the purpose of the interviews.

Where a group such as the Eismala [see **D. #5** - below] openly acknowledged being cannibals I have included them in **D.** rather than **E.**, but I acknowledge that **F.** would be the allocation of a more cautious approach, given the lack of corroboration.

Ooo000ooo

A. Survival Cannibalism

The writer has not encountered any instance of survival cannibalism among the indigenous population of the Sepik. Survival cannibalism was clearly a feature of the occupying Japanese forces after their supply lines were cut during World War 2. There are many reports of Japanese soldiers eating dead native people and Australian servicemen. That does not relate to the present study except in cases where it resulted in significant outcomes for the indigenous population - item **B.** below is the only instance I have of this:

B. Murder of a mother and cannibalism of her child. [Ambunti sub district]

A Japanese patrol was attacked by warriors of an unknown village far upstream of Yessan, and being unable to identify the village of the attackers, the Japanese took out their reprisal on the Wogamush village of Kombuliap, which is now known as Yambanumbu. A woman called Namguliap and her child were captured and killed. The child's body was cut up, cooked and eaten by the Japanese. The village including the haus tambaran, Nau'rurahunium was burned to the ground and sacred objects stolen by the natives accompanying the Japanese. [See Sepik Book 3 Chapter 51.] The sum of these actions was seen as a punishment upon Wogamush - for something that Wogamush did not do. The cannibalism of the child was regarded as particularly abhorrent as the Wogamush

were not cannibals. Prior to this incident Wogamush was described thus by Wogamush informant Nesio :-

The three Wogamush settlements Kumti [Biaga], Kombuliap [Yambanumbu] and Kutbug [Waskuk] consisted of five wards, each with its own haus tambaran. Three of the wards had three clans each, the fourth ward had six clans and the fifth ward had four clans.¹⁰ Nesio's description continues:

After the Japanese attack, the population of Wogamush broke up and migrated back to their ancestral clan lands in and around the April River. The village site of Kumti was not re-occupied. The old ward structure was not re-established after the war. By the mid-1970s there was only two Wogamush haus tambarans – Nulihium [presumably Nau'rurihunium] at Yambanumbu and Daiek at Biaga.¹¹

Ooo000ooo

D. Exo-cannibalism: primarily as a food source.

Writer's note :- There is an implied but unproven link between the events described in this section and exclusively food-source cannibalism. The absence of any mention or evidence of ritual cannibalism does not automatically exclude it from the eating of human flesh or body parts. I would suggest that among such warrior societies as the Mianmin, there would certainly have been some importance placed upon the "blooding" of newly initiated warriors.

The relative importance of "ritual" verses "food" remains unclear, and perhaps the deciding view concerning the Mianmin as expressed below by the neighbouring Baktaman, and that concerning the Iwam as expressed by neighbouring the Oum should be noted - in both cases the view came down in favour of food cannibalism.

D. #1 The Yellow River Massacre of August 1956: [Ambunti sub district] An extract of ADO M.Brightwell's investigation report: [Sepik Book 4 Chapter 16 has full details].

The massacre being completed, the Iwams were most anxious to be off as they were afraid that more Yellow River men might appear or that talk might go up and they might be overtaken on their way home by a Yellow River force. The bodies of 18 victims and the heads of two others were quickly bundled into the Iwam canoes and two canoes belonging to the Yellow River people and the Iwam hurriedly departed at speed. They pulled [paddled] without ceasing until they entered the May River and arrived at Wanimoi village about 5 pm.

They went to the Wangap men's house and the bodies were lined on the ground outside – the village drums were sounded and the villagers who felt so inclined inspected the bodies of the victims. The heads were removed from the bodies and the bodies were carved up and distributed to all the villagers who later consumed their portions. The heads were taken up into the men's house and cooked. Sacred flutes were blown and a general singsing took place in the men's house. The flesh from the heads was later consumed by the men and the whole show finished at dawn.¹²

D. #2 The Mianmin Cannibals [Telefomin sub district] The Mianmin raided in every direction [Atbalmin to the south, Abau to the north-west, Suwana to the north-east and others]. They

were credited with killing and eating Telefomin speakers from Eliptamin as reported by PO J.R.Rogers in March 1949 :-

The Ilaptamuns [Eliptamins] are...continuously harassed by their neighbours the Mianmins. The Mianmins live five days walk away to the north. They are very much afraid of the Mianmin and with good reason. In the last 11 years [time based on the period since the Hagen-Sepik patrol visited the area] the Mianmins have killed 138 men women and children from this area...The last attack was in Mid-December 1948.¹³

While Mr Rogers makes no mention of cannibalism, it is safe to assume it happened based on Mr.H.West's report on his own Mianmin patrol of 1950.

A large number of Mianmin warriors attacked U-Artigin [Iuatigin] while all the men were away hunting and only one woman and four children were in the village. Together with the pigs the woman and two male children were killed, bisected and the segments distributed ...the entrails were left in the centre of the village, which was looted and burnt. The girl and a male child were carried off, but as the boy could not be quieted, he too was killed and his body cut into sections and his entrails left in the centre of the track...on the third day the human flesh was roasted and eaten.¹⁴

D. #3 The Telefomin Cannibals - as discussed in Sepik Book 4 Chapter 37. With the pacification of the immediate Telefomin area, Telefomin warriors raided secretly into the unexplored country of the Om and the upper Leonard Schultze River areas until 1963 when Oksapmin patrol No 7/1962-63, led by PO Arthur Marks, investigated murders in the Om River area. As of that date the evidence indicates that Telefomin raiding ceased. The following description shows such similarities to Mianmin cannibal tactics that the writer feels Telefomin belong in the **D.** category. The following story was told by Saiuro/Wakiau of Setiali on the Upper Leonard Schulte River in 1972

The Telefomin people used to eat people... They killed one man just past where the airstrip is [now]. They cut his legs off and took them away. They killed one woman down at the far end of the [present] airstrip and took her legs away to eat.¹⁵

D. #4 The influence of Miit social structure on raiding, female abduction and cannibalism.

The "Min" people of the Telefomin subdistrict, northern parts of the Western Province and adjacent areas of the Indonesian province of Papua have a unique social structure, which was discovered and defined by three anthropologists in the early 1980s: Dan Jorgensen [Telefomin], Don Gardner [Mianmin] and, Barbara Jones [Faiwolmin]. As Dan Jorgensen explains :-

I adopted the term [Miit] in preference to the more usual "clan" or "lineage" since the way people talked about miit – and their behaviour – indicated that using "clan" or "lineage" would distort the situation and sow confusion. This was in line with a number of theoretical ideas...relating to the failure of many "clan" or "lineage" based models to explain how things worked in several PNG societies. Using the term [miit] also established a link – clearly present in local thought – between miit as a category of people and miit as a tale (often laden with power) and miit as "kind" or "type" and miit as origin or source or root.¹⁶

It is the writers understanding that, unlike clans and similar social structures, elements of miit are not defined by lines of descent. A high percentage of Mianmin [and presumably, in former times, Telefomin] female spouses were obtained by abduction during enemy raids in which men and others not serviceable as spouses were killed and eaten.

Another feature of miit structure was/is that people are invited in to make the miit bigger and stronger. The desired expansion of miit territory is associated with “strength”.

Whereas the Telefomin and Mianmin abducted females and children and killed and ate the men, one could argue - cannibalism aside - did not all raiding parties everywhere grab young females as spoils for the victors? The answer in the Middle Sepik was “No”. Men feared women who were taken in such a way, as they were expected to later take revenge by sorcery¹⁷. Gauimeri freed two condemned accused female sorcerers and said *They will have families later. I will risk their sorcery.*¹⁸

Also during the Japandai massacre of 1923, Garu Jam of Yambon said :-

*We took no prisoners. Some men thought about taking children to raise as their own, or young girls and women to take as wives. But they feared...if they did...later when they grew up they would know their place and go back and leave the Yambons. Plenty of men caught such people and hid them. But others found them and they were killed.*¹⁹

Other groups did take captured females as wives - see **D. #7** on the next page

D. #5 The Eismala – Maimai area [in what is now the Nuku sub district] and adjacent **Amaki**. [Ambunti sub district].

Dreikikir Patrol Report no 1/1951-2 describes an investigation into tribal warfare in the then uncontrolled Maimai area. The report states in part :-

*It was reported to the patrol at Wandembangi village that the people of Amagi [Amaki] village in the Wan area had killed and eaten a number of people from Wandembangi village. Only recently these people moved to their present site to escape the raids from the Amagi group. Police on this station also report that cannibalism is practiced throughout most of the area. This officer was told by the Eismala that the Yilui people did not eat human flesh but that they [Eismala] did and so did the rest of the area. This practice finishes at Eismala apparently - from Yilui [to the west and beyond] it is not practiced.*²⁰

D. #6 The “Birua” – May River hinterland.

Patrol Officer John McIntyre in 1962 when posted to May River patrol post, quickly determined the big picture of the tribal groups in the May River area. In the May River headwaters he identified the Mianmin - along the main May River he identified the Iwam. The third group for want of a better collective name, he named the Birua [enemy] as they were the enemy of both Mianmin and Iwam. They lived in small communities in individual defensively located communal houses. McIntyre’s May River patrol report No 3/1962/63 noted that the Birua themselves at that time did not know the extent of their language group. PO Tony Pitt’s May River patrol report No 4/1963-64 further divided the “Birua” into five language groups – Warumoi, Waniabu, Naukwi,

Arai, and Saniap. This patrol accompanied by ADO Brian McCabe, made 13 arrests of Naukwi/Amasu men and later thirteen more Amasu men. They had killed were three Warumoi women – by the names of Onai, Kabiai and Senu, and Onai's daughter Imso. One woman was eaten.²¹ Also see **E.#4 below for more detail**

Of this patrol and these arrests Sepik expert Bill Brown noted *The 20 men were committed for trial, but were never tried. They were repatriated to their villages by [Tony] Plumber.*²²

Concerning Birua cannibalism McIntyre noted:

*The Birua claim to eat only Mianmin and Iwam dead.*²³

D. #7 Mari Headhunting and Cannibalism – Mari language of Chambri Lakes hinterland Ambunti sub district.

*We did not kill women or take women's heads where we could avoid it. Women are productive and should not be killed. Some of our people liked human meat and some did not like it. The whole body was eaten, not just special parts. This was in our father's time and earlier.*²⁴

D. #8 Kamasiut and Bahinemo language group cannibalism – Hunstein mountains Ambunti Sub District.

The Kamasiut were annihilated in 1943. It is not known what language they spoke. Luluai Waburuba and Tultul Gumali of Milae and their families went to the Kamasiut settlement of Naliba on the south-west side of Mt. Maiwan. They were concerned for the safety of the Kamasiut people who were subjected to raids from the Bahenimo speakers of the Hunstein Mountains. The Milae party was attacked by the Kamasiut. The Tultul and his wife were able to escape back to Milae. The Luluai was later found alive but injured but his wife Soa and female infant Bamatu were killed with arrows and eaten.

Milae sent ginger to Mari [ginger is the fight totem and in this sense an invitation to fight] and revenge was taken by killing a Kamasiut male elder, a woman and a young girl. Milae again attempted to take the Kamasiut to safety, but they refused. There were successive Bahinemo [Yigei, Wagu and Namu groups] and Garamambu raids which annihilated the Kamasiut. The victims of the Behinemo raids and those of the Garamambu raids were beheaded and eaten. The victims were listed by name, sex and age group. They numbered 19 in all.²⁵

ooo000ooo

E. Exo-cannibalism: primarily as a ritual function

E. #1 Ritual Cannibalism – Bimin and Kuskusmin – [Telefomin sub district.]

Writer's Note :- The Bimin-Kuskusmin who live one day's walk south of Oksapmin patrol post were studied by Athropologist Fitz Poole who documented them as being ritual cannibals. Immediately south of the Bimin-Kuskusmin are the culturally related Baktaman, who were studied By Professor Bathe.²⁶

*Bimin-Kuskusmin reject the view that any parts of human bodies can become “food” in any ordinary sense. They do acknowledge however, that the restricted consumption or certain parts of certain persons, by particular social others in special contexts and in a prescribed manner, is of major ritual importance. And the complex symbolism that marks these contexts, beliefs and acts is densely articulated with other realms of Bimin-Kuskusmin cultural construction and social action.*²⁷

*Many Bimin-Kuskusmin men and women I interviewed and who admitted to socially proper cannibalistic practices acknowledged considerable ambivalence, horror and disgust at their own actions (F.J.P.Poole 1983:9)*²⁸

Concerning the Baktaman :-

Frederick Bathe's (1975) '*Religion and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*'... discusses Baktaman cannibalism, which occurs after the successful slaying of enemies, in both secular feasts and certain ritual contexts. Bathe notes that “cannibalism is an extension of the war against the enemy and is done in anger and lust for revenge” (1975: 152)...Bathe finds it relevant that some people reported that they were unable to eat human flesh and vomited when they tried it... he goes on to suggest that the Baktaman were not really enthusiastic cannibals. (153-154).²⁹

E. #2 Cannibalism, a test for sorcery – Warasai [Ambunti sub district]

During Ambunti patrol 7/1955-56 in May 1956 on the third Administration visit to most of the Numau Ablatak villages, patrol officer Denys Faithful while at Ambuken village heard a report that in about February 1956 some Ablatak villagers had joined with Warasai people in eating a man. The reports were made from afar and seemed unreliable. Investigation revealed that in time gone by, these villages had a sort of “litmus test” or counter-sorcery which reportedly originated around Maimai and was adopted by the Numau Ablatak people.

The system was that when a man died of what were thought to be of sorcery causes, all the people [males] whom it was considered might want to do harm to the deceased, were assembled near the deceased's bier [platform upon which the deceased is lain]. There one of the assembled men was required to cut back the skin from under the deceased's arm or the top of the upper thigh above the knee joint. The muscle flesh from under the peeled back skin was cut out; the amount cut out was determined by the number of men who are to take the test.

The removed portion of flesh was then given to another who makes soup of it. The flesh is cut into small portions and mixed with coconut meat and native salt and then cooked. The men were then required to eat the mixture. The idea being that whoever became ill afterwards was the sorcerer who acted against the deceased. Any person or persons upon being named to take part in the test and who refused to do so were regarded as major suspects. The deaths of women and children were never the subject of this test and women and children were not required to take part.

The custom had been dropped many years ago with the introduction of the administration. But on the death, some three months before, of a Warasai man called Waniambu, when it was suggested he died of sorcery, it was decided to re-introduce the test to determine who had made the sorcery. A guilty person upon consuming the human soup was expected to become violently ill or

die. Two accused men of Marua [Yaunget] were very determined that the test should be made; one cut the body and the other made the soup.

As the investigation proceeded the people were indignant that they were being accused of behaving like pigs or dogs, but in due course they all admitted the details and eight were convicted³⁰ [presumably of sorcery based on confessional statements]. The medical evidence actually indicated Waniambu died of dysentery³¹ – this would not have ruled out sorcery in local eyes - the question would be “*Yes, but who caused the dysentery?*”

E. #3 Beglam³² – Kwoma area [Ambunti sub District] – sucking a human bone to show his sorcery not responsible for death.

The following is a portion of a court deposition on 14th November 1965 :-

...then Omananj came into the men's house. He was carrying a bone in his hand and a lime gourd and he was dipping the bone into the lime and sucking it...he said “You people have accused me of making poison [sorcery] to kill the child, so I took this bone [from her remains] and am eating it. This will show you I had nothing to do with the girl's death.”³³

Omananj was subsequently charged with interfering with a human corpse.

E. #4 “Birua” groups Asuwi and Naukwi verses “Birua” group Wanimoi – [Ambunti sub district] July 1964

Writer's Note: The “Birua” [Pidgin word for “enemy”] were introduced in **D. #6** above

The killing and later eating of one of the victims was a complicated pay back. The people of Mumuvura [a hamlet of Asuwi] had an outstanding killing to settle with Naukwi. Naukwi had an outstanding killing to settle with Asuwi and Wanimoi. To cancel out the killings between Naukwi and Asuwa, the two communities joined forces to attack a Wanimoi village. The raiding party went around looking for an unprotected Wanimoi settlement. It is noted that the attackers did not know the names of the victims and some did not know the name of the settlement, which was Amiufa.

The people killed were: women - Onai, Kabiai and Senu and a female child of Onai called Imso. One woman's body was taken away and eaten.

There were a number of men in the party between 18 and 22 years of age. Each member of the raiding party fired arrows into the victims. The child was held by Woimau, the leader, while each man in turn stabbed her with a cassowary bone dagger, again suggesting a ritual.

A singsing followed attended by both groups. All the men who ate flesh shaved their heads. The size and part of the flesh eaten depended upon the eater's importance. Woimau was given the largest portion from the buttocks, others had smaller portions from the hands and arms. The body itself was given to Didipas, [a Naukwi community] who took no part in the raid.³⁴

E. #5 Wogamush ritual cannibalism. [Ambunti sub district]

While Bitara elders denied that the Wogamush people [of whom they are part] were cannibals, there was one instance reported from ancient times after a major clash against Swagup,

which according to Nesio of Wogamush, was in his great grandfather's time, Wogamush annihilated the population of the hitherto unknown Sanokwion/Budul ward; a 4th ward of Swagup village. The fight took place on a sand bank known as Baliaul between Yambunumbu and Swagup.

The Swagups were annihilated except one wounded man ... *who they brought to their canoes and nailed his hands to the canoe sides with spear points. They brought him back to Kumti and tied him up at their singsing place. When the required days of the singsing were over the Eagle ginger [apparently the war leader] took the man and with a bamboo knife opened up his chest. The man was still alive and yelling. They cut his liver into pieces which were handed to the warriors who ate it raw while the victim was alive. He died when they cut the second liver [i.e. the lungs]. They then ate the whole body of this man.*³⁵

E. #6 Ritual cannibalism of the Souli Moganai leader Olu by Kwoma. [Ambunti sub district]

A people known as Souli Moganai by the Manambu people of Malu and Avatip of the Sepik River people and Kompong Nggala by the Kwoma people of the Waskuk Hills, lived on the top of Mt. Ambunti. The Kompong Nggala leader was Olu who was captured after being wounded in the leg by an arrow and he was brought to the haus tambaran Wambun and tied to the first post. They prepared sago and food in preparation for killing Olu.

*The women would make their sago and when they came back they would dance and sing in anticipation. Then in the morning they killed Olu and cut him up. All his meat went into the saucepans. His intestines were taken to a fast flowing stream and they were washed out and brought back. Grated coconut was put into them and they were tied off like sausages. Hundreds of people ate part of Olu.*³⁶

The story of cannibalism concerning Olu is completed by Nauwi Sauinambi of Bangwis :-

*Olu was the only one who ate men as meat. We [the Kwoma people] only ate the meat of Olu himself so we could get his strength.*³⁷

E. #7 Swagup ritual cannibalism of a Kouiemi victim. [Ambunti sub district]

After a complex sequence of killings and counter killings between Swagup and Kouiemi, a Kouiemi big man called Sibiauwi was killed ... *and when looking at the body one of the Swagups said "Sorry, a good pig." The Swagup leader said "That is so, alright we will take him back and eat him". They carried him back, singing and samsaming [war dance] as they came. The body they tied in a standing position to a post in the haus tambaran. At dawn next day, two brothers burned the body to remove all the hair, like we singe pigs before we cook them. It was law that there could be no other fires that night.*

They cut the cane and the body was placed on a large garamut called Sibiando and there they cut him up for smoking. He was cut into small pieces. His insides were cleaned out and coconut was scraped and filled into the intestines until it was tight like a car tyre. The men kept on singing. The meat was smoked for two days and it was eaten on the third. They ate for two days. As a child my father ate some of the meat. He was the last of that group to die. [meaning that age class]

Now, we have not eaten human meat. It is not like pig that we can eat it at will. There is a very big law about this [traditional law forbidding cannibalism]. It is a very old story, but we still follow the rule that it sets.³⁸

E. #8 Yamuk – smoked human meat consumed during initiation. [Ambunti sub district]

Writer's Note :- The "Middle Sepik" is populated primarily by two language groups, the Sawos to which the Yamuk people belong, and the Iatmul. The Sawos are plains people and the Iatmul, immediately to the south live along the Sepik River as well as some Islands in the Chambri Lakes. Both the Sawos and Iatmul belong to the Ndu family of languages as does the Manambu language which is mentioned immediately below. Informant Wolion of Yamuk explained Yambuk's limited involvement with cannibalism as follows :-

At the time of initiations after the skin is cut the fathers would break up the meat very fine and put not much of it together with ginger [the fight totem] and prepare it in sago and give it to the initiates. This causes the youth's stomach to turn and gives the strength to fight. If an enemy comes into the village the youth will want to fight and kill. This is what the fathers did to us. Now there is a taboo and we do not do that now.

[Back then] we stored the meat in bamboos. We also fed it to people at the time of singsings. We did not eat it like pig or any other food, it was ceremonial. At the time of eating this meat people from other villages did not come here because they would have been speared, and we would not go there either. Now we just cut skin at initiations, we cannot get human meat to eat.³⁹

E. #9 Avatip ritual cannibalism. Ambunti sub district.

Writer's note :- The Avatip, Yamuk and the Nyaula/Iatmul people all speak Ndu languages and from the evidence presented here, their limited traditional involvement with cannibalism also seems similar :-

We were not cannibals. If a strong man was killed a man would smoke the meat and hide it and later he would give it to the village youths to eat, saying it was pig meat. They [the youths] get the man's great strength and resolve in a fight. The youths who are to eat the meat are not allowed to see the dead man's body from which the meat is cut. It was only our fathers who ate this. We did not eat it.⁴⁰

E. #10 Nyaula initiation – human bone scrapings Ambunti Sub District.

Writer's Note :- The following is an extract from notes of an initiation the writer attended in late November 1973 at Nyauengai. The extract is in the future tense as it was explained before a 2am activity I was not to personally observe :-

At about 2am the dancers select a low coconut palm and a man with a human bone dagger will climb the palm and stab a coconut with the dagger. He will twist the dagger until the nut comes free and then he will pass the nut down between his legs to a man below him on the palm trunk and so on until the nut reaches the ground. There might be five or six men on the trunk of the palm. They will all then go to the house that the big men have marked for the novices to stay in. The coconut is then placed in dish in the house.

In the dish they will scrape human meat, human bone and the ashes from spears which were used before and had killed men. All these scrapings would go down into the coconut water in the dish. Ginger nodules would then be scraped into the dish.

The novices stay at the rear. The line of dancers stand with legs astride and men will crawl through their legs. The dish will then be on the ground before the line of men forming the leg tunnel. On the side will be a man with sago. On the other side will be a man with coconut and there will be another man with nettles. As the men come through the tunnel at first their heads will be slapped with nettles, then the coconut man will put coconut into each man's mouth and the sago man will put sago into his mouth and they will all eat from the dish.

The novices will follow and go through this process. The process continues until all the dancers have partaken. Then the female relatives of the novices are allowed to finish the coconut, the dish concoction and the sago⁴¹. The dancers then go back to the haus tambaran. The novices do not go, they stay and sleep.⁴²

Interpretation: This represents re-birth of the novices into the male cult. The skin cutting which comes later removes the mother's blood with which the boys were born, allowing them to become men.

Writer's note continued: Given that the human scrapings were taken from an ancient ancestor and had been used in many previous initiations, the writer decided not to raise the legal aspects of interference with human remains.

E. #11 Yerikai headhunting and cannibalism Ambunti sub district.

Writer's Note :- There are two villages in the Yerikai language group – Yerikai and Garamambu. Their lands are adjacent to Manambu and Nyaula/Iatmul in the area of Mt. Garamambu on the western side of the Chambri Lakes. Informants Maimban and Wani of Yerikai said the following of Yerikai headhunting and cannibalism:

A warrior kills and cuts off the head of his enemy and carries it proudly under his arm with the blood dripping down his ribs and stomach. If he meets another enemy he holds up the head for the enemy to see and take fright. The warrior then grasps the head's hair between his teeth to free his hands to kill the enemy and takes a second head. The heads are burned inside the doorway of the haus tambaran to remove all hair. The flesh of the nose cheeks mouth and chin are cut away. The remainder of the head is then boiled for an hour or so and the flesh peeled downwards from the skull and is eaten by all the village except young boys and girls. The women are told that the tambaran has already eaten the nose cheeks and mouth. The older women tell the others not to ask questions – the tambaran has already eaten its share. The meat of the body is not eaten. Bodies are left to rot where they fall.⁴³

E. #12 Warapu ritual cannibalism – the initiation of Sanguma sorcerers. Aitape.

While serving as ADC Aitape the writer spent nearly all of 1977 investigating a series of ritual murders and body mutilations in the Sissano Lagoon region of the West Sepik Province north coast. This investigation is covered in full in Sepik Book 4 Chapter 57.

The mutilation on male victims included a large piece of flesh having been removed from under a flap of skin on the buttocks. On female victims a large piece of flesh was removed from the

top of the thigh. The investigation learned that the meat was taken as an ingredient in a potion consumed by trainee sanguma sorcerers during their initiation. The meat had to be “pure” and not contaminated by urine. A male cannot urinate on his buttock and a woman cannot urinate on the top of her thigh. Added protection of the purity of the meat was achieved by carefully removing it from under the skin which had been peeled back.

The initiation supposedly provided the sorcerer with the capacity to be invisible and to remove vital organs from a victim without breaking the skin.

After a year of investigation without solving the mystery of the Warapu murders, I concluded that there must be some link between this ritual cannibalism and the fact that Sissano/Warapu region appears to have always been subject to regular tectonic calamities. My conclusion was that the people believe:

An extremely powerful deity lives on or under the Warapu/Sissano lands or in the Sissano Lagoon; a deity which periodically wreaks Armageddon-like havoc upon the Warapu people and lands, as was done through history and more recently in 1907, 1935 and 1998, unless it receives annual sacrifices from within the Warapu community. The Warapu community apparently accepts this brutal loss of loved ones as part of the religious ritual requirement of placating the hunger of the deity and as a necessary part of the price of their cosmic existence.⁴⁴

ooo000ooo

F. Exo-cannibalism: insufficient information to categorise as D. or E.

F. #1 Begapuke memories of cannibalism. April River Ambunti sub district

Writer’s Note :- The Begapuke of the middle reaches of the April River is the most easterly of the Sanio language communities whose tribal lands are located in the Wogamush [Sio] and Leonard Schultze River areas. The Luluai of Begapuke provided the writer with the following rather confusing statement in 1972 :-

Neither head hunting nor cannibalism was done here. Our ancestors through living memory did not. But in the distant past we used to eat human meat.⁴⁵

F. #2 Moli cannibalism Ambunti sub district.

Writer’s Note :- The Moli people are members of the Bahenimo language group of the Hunstein Mountains west of the Chambri Lakes. The Moli informants said:

Human meat was eaten with sago in our grandfather’s time, but not in our father’s time.

ooo000ooo

G. Traditional Anti-cannibalism beliefs:

G. #1 The Hewa of the Strickland Sepik Divide – Koroba sub district with closely related peoples in the Telefomin sub district of West Sepik and Ambunti sub district East Sepik.

L.B.Steadman’s study of the Hewa people *Neighbours & Killers – Hewa Beliefs* of 1971 noted that of 80 Hewa murders that he researched, 42 were women and of these 78% were women accused of witchcraft.

The Hewa witch "Pisai" – are characterised by any unusual behaviour, particularly incest. Pisai eat humans either openly or surreptitiously leaving no marks on the skin.

It is the class of people who receive least animal protein who are most often accused of being cannibal witches.⁴⁶

Since alleged witches are punished by death, not many people would want to procure their meat supply in a fashion – that if discovered – would entail a similar punishment. Thus, on one hand, the witchcraft idiom will actually inhibit the desire to satisfy meat hunger by cannibalism, no matter how hungry the people are. On the other hand, people will tend to behave in such a way that they are not likely to be accused of being a witch, i.e. they will not show their greed, in particular for meat. The women, who are the most likely to be most hungry for meat as they receive the least – will not readily complain against the taboo system nor readily express their meat hunger. Thus, the punishment for alleged witches secures the stability of the taboo system which, in turn, maintains the conditions which foster fear of cannibal witches.⁴⁷

G. #2 Headhunting but not cannibalism – Chambri Ambunti sub district

Writer's Note :- Chambri Island is located in the centre of the Chambri Lakes. It was also central to Sepik trade as the islanders made and traded stone axe blades from the rock of which the Island consists. Concerning cannibalism, Mingin of Chambri explained :-

No [we were not cannibals]. We cooked their heads as we cook pig. We have a taboo against eating human meat. We cooked the heads⁴⁸ with the brains still in the skulls and the ancestors got these out with a stick of cane prickles through the hole at the base of the skull.⁴⁹

G. #3 Nigiru [Bahinimo language group]– April River – Ambunti sub district *We here head hunters but not cannibals.⁵⁰*

G. #4 Oum 1 & 2 – No headhunting or cannibalism. – Ambunti sub district.

Councillor Yenak Yenak of Oum stated :-

Our people did neither [headhunting nor cannibalism]. The people we killed were just left where they were killed. We used to cut the chest and stomach open and break the head to make sure they were dead. The Mowi and other Iwam groups further up the May River were cannibals. Humans were their meat. We were revolted with the idea of eating human meat.⁵¹

G. #5 Sio [Sanio language] headhunting and cannibalism? Ambunti sub district *We have no stories of this.⁵²*

ooo000ooo

Cannibalism and the Law.

People may be surprised to know that cannibalism is not a criminal offence in Papua New Guinea, or under the Queensland Criminal Code. When someone is killed and eaten in PNG, the killing is a crime which is usually dealt with under the wilful murder, murder or manslaughter provisions of the Queensland Criminal Code as adopted in either Papua or New Guinea. The actual cannibalism is not an offence as such. If a prosecution is made, it is under provisions relating to interfering with a human corpse.

In the celebrated 1971-2 PNG case of the Crown v Noboi/Bosai the defendant was charged under Section 241(b) with “*Inappropriately or indecently interfering with, or offering any indignity to a dead human body or human remains*”. The facts of the case showed that the defendant had cooked and eaten parts of a corpse of a man from another village.

Justice Prentice acquitted the accused holding that :-

Concepts of decency and propriety (and obscenity) appear in many places in the ordinances of Papua New Guinea Having regard to the multifarious customs, languages, dress, beliefs, degrees of civilization and social organization among the people who live in remote wildernesses, somewhere Europeans have walked on only a few occasions, one cannot conceive that the legislation would have intended to impose uniform standards of decency and propriety on all the peoples of the country. In assessing propriety and decency of behaviour in relation to corpses in the Gabusi area, I shall endeavour to apply the standards as far as I can ascertain them, of a reasonable primitive Gabusi villager...in early 1971...The funerary customs of the people of Papua New Guinea have been and in many cases remain bizarre in the extreme. These are matters of notoriety. Can it be said that the Government of Papua in 1902 by adoption of the Queensland Criminal Code, and in particular [this section], was intending to make so many varied pious, ritual, strength seeking practices, indecent or improper? I cannot find so (at [PNGLR 271])

Justice Prentice found that in the circumstances the behaviour of the accused was “normal and reasonable” [Weisbrot 1982;80-81]⁵³

What emerged from the case was a set of general literal understandings of cannibalism in the appropriate context rather than attitudes that had been established in Western thought established by Montaigne in his essay “*On Cannibalism in the 16th Century.*”⁵⁴

ooo000ooo

Conclusions:

Most of the information provided in the 28 Sepik cannibalism notations above originated in discussions with Sepik elders between 1970 and 1974, all of whom would now be long dead. The information they provided is probably unique as the passing of time and modern prejudice against cannibalism will have wiped this knowledge from the oral histories of most Sepik communities.

The writer draws the following conclusions from the information presented :-

1. Understanding of the often repeated diversity and complexity of links between headhunting, cannibalism and sorcery are of critical importance in working towards a full cultural appreciation, and are explored further in Sepik Book 1 Chapters 13 *The Haus Tambaran*, #14 *Headhunting and Initiations*, and #15 *Sorcery*.
2. The huge diversity of opinion on cannibalism between Sepik cultures is, in itself, a topic worthy of further study. This diversity is noted between (D.) cultures such as the Mianmin and Iwam who ate human meat as food and regarded their victims as game in the same way they regarded wild pigs, and (E.) the Bimin-Kuskusmin and Baktaman people who were “not enthusiastic” ritual cannibals, who were appalled by the activities of group (D.), and group (C.) which included the Hewa, who in their opposition to real or surmised cannibal witches had one of the highest murder rates, particularly of accused women, of any PNG community.

3. A look at where **D.**, **E.** and **F.** cannibalism occurred leads to the tentative conclusion that cannibalism was restricted to smaller, often remote communities around the fringes of the Ndu language areas of the “Middle Sepik”, where evidence of cannibalism is generally missing. Here is a parallel with the New Guinea central highlands where the highlanders are generally cannibalism-free, and great fear was held of the cannibal sorcerers groups of the highland fringe such as the Foe and the Fasu of the Lake Kutubu area.

In Sepik Book 1 Chapter 26 it is argued that the larger Iatmul and Sawos villages, in ancient times resulted from migrations of diverse smaller communities which may have been cannibalistic, but acculturated when absorbed, and that evidence such as **E. 8, 9** and **10** may reflect customary activity carried over from former days.

Unlike the Asmat in Dutch New Guinea where missionaries such as Father G. Zegwaard were allowed into un-controlled areas and were able to observe and document cannibalism and other customs first hand, the Australian administration through its restricted areas and earlier “uncontrolled areas” legislation, generally limited access to such areas to the kiaps, the officers of the Department of District Services and Native Affairs.

Early Catholic Mission research from Aitape did provide some excellent material on Sepik linguistics, but concerning traditional customary activity, the Church’s approach was to burn the haus tambarans and to try to eradicate traditional customs and replace them with Christianity. The Catholics considered the practice of cannibalism, in all its forms, abhorrent.

End Notes Chapter 14

¹ Clifton-Bassett D. Correspondence to DO Wewak NATIVE CUSTOMS – CANNIBALISM Ref 14/1 16th December 1949 – Bragge ref Vol 8 item 266.

² Wikipedia – The man-eating myth + Arens

³ Wikipedia – Daniel Carleton Gajdusek.

⁴ Don Gardner’s paper in *The Anthropology of Cannibalism*- ed by Laurence Goldman –Bergin & Garvey 1999

⁵ Gardner D in Goldman L.R. ed. ‘*The Anthropology of Cannibalism*’. Bergin and Garvey Westport, Connecticut. London 1999 Page 30.

⁶ To feed on human flesh

⁷ Ernst. Thomas M. in Goldman L.R. ed. ‘*The Anthropology of Cannibalism*’. Bergin and Garvey Westport, Connecticut . London 1999 Page 146-7.

⁸ Zubrinich K.M. in Goldman L.R. ed. ‘*The Anthropology of Cannibalism*’. Bergin and Garvey Westport, Connecticut . London 1999 Page 125.

⁹ Zubrinich K.M in Goldman L.R. ed. 1999 Page 133-5

¹⁰ Nesio of Wogamush – Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Pages 450 & 464

¹¹ Nesio of Wogamush – Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 465

¹² Brightwell M. Report of Investigation of massacre of [29] Yellow River people – August 1956. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 20 page 63.

¹³ Rogers J.R. Telefomin patrol report No 2/1948-9 Bragge Research Vol 14 item No 444

¹⁴ Sinclair J. ‘Kiap’ Pacific Publications 1981 p 141

¹⁵ See Sepik 1 Chapter 12 *Sepik stone axe manufacture and stone age trade*

¹⁶ Personal email communication with Dan Jorgensen July 2nd 2014

¹⁷ Middle Sepik cosmology tells that at the time when men took over the ritual life of the communities from women, that one woman escaped the killing of the woman and took with her the power of sorcery, which they believe has been passed down through female lines to the present day. See Sepik 1 Chapter 9.

-
- ¹⁸ Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 Pages 246 - 448
- ¹⁹ Letkehaus et al – Sepik Heritage. Carolina Academic Press 1990 page 42
- ²⁰ Martin J.D Dreikikir patrol report No 1/1951-52 [for full details see Sepik 4 Chapter 10]. Patrol report is filed as item 571 in Reference Volume 18.
- ²¹ Tony Pitt – May River patrol 4/1963-4 – In Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 20 Page 166
- ²² 2018 personal communication from Bill Brown
- ²³ McIntyre J. May River patrol report 4/1962-3. Bragge Sepik Research Volume 20 Page 163
- ²⁴ Tami of Mari. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 368.
- ²⁵ Yamili, a lone Kamasiut survivor, then an old lady and Yanau, former Tultul of Milae . Bragge Sepik research notes Vol 19 page 371. Also see Sepik 3 chapter 22 for the demise of the Kamasiut in detail.
- ²⁶ Bathe F. 'Religion and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea'. 197
- ²⁷ Sanday P.R. (1986) 'Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System'. Cambridge University Press.
- ²⁸ Cerroni-Long ED. 'Anthropological Theory in North America' – Bergin & Garvey Connecticut 1999.
- ²⁹ Goldman L.R – The Anthropology of Cannibalism - (Gardner quoting Bathe). Page 30
- ³⁰ Faithful D. Ambunti patrol report No 7/1955-56 – Numau Ablatak area. As listed in Bragge Sepik Research Notes vol 20 Page 84
- ³¹ Faithful D. Ambunti patrol report No 7/1955-56 – Numau Ablatak area. As listed in Bragge Sepik Research Notes vol 20 Page 84
- ³² Beglam of the Kwoma language is located on the Sanchi River about many kilometres downstream of the linguistically related Ablatak and Warasai – communities. It appears they also monitor sorcery the same way
- ³³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 20 page 215 – extracts from Ambunti District Court Register – charge interference with a human corpse.
- ³⁴ MacCabe B. ADO and Pitt A, PO - May River patrol No 4/ 1963-64 to the Arai River. Bragge Sepik Research volume 20 Page 166
- ³⁵ Nesi of Wogamush. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 467
- ³⁶ Kurump/Kalapaj of Waskuk [Melawei] in Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 421. A detailed history of the Souli Moganai/Kompong Ngalla can be found in Sepik 1 Chapter 40
- ³⁷ Nauwi Sauinambi of Bangwis. In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 68
- ³⁸ Councillor Biko of Swagup. In Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 page 434. The ancient history of Swagup and Kaiembi is covered in Sepik 1 Chapters 39 and 41.
- ³⁹ Wolion of Yamuk – in Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 237
- ⁴⁰ Unnamed Avatip elders 1970 – in Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 42
- ⁴¹ The involvement of female relatives surprises me.
- ⁴² Win of Kandingei – in Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 pages 304-5
- ⁴³ Maimban and Wani of Yerikai – in Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 296-
- ⁴⁴ Concluding paragraph to Sepik 4 Chapter 65
- ⁴⁵ Luluai of Begapuke and some elders. In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 406
- ⁴⁶ The Hewa lifestyle at that time was not far removed from hunter gatherer status with people living off their bows and arrows and forest products. Agriculture was limited to the defensive clearing around their fortified communal houses. Hewa women were married as young as eight to ten years old.
- ⁴⁷ Steadman L.B. 'Neighbours and Killers' 1971 - In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 6 as a research addendum to Koroba Patrol report No 5/1974-75
- ⁴⁸ This cooking was the standard way of removing flesh and brains from the skull, using Aibom saucepans. Just because it was cooked did not imply that the flesh was eaten.
- ⁴⁹ Mingin and Councillor of Chambri - In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 324
- ⁵⁰ Kikori of Nigiru. In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 420
- ⁵¹ Yenak Yenak of Oum In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 492
- ⁵² Wabi of Sio - In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 471

⁵³ Quoted from Goldman L.R. 'The Anthropology of Cannibalism' Bergin & Garvey Connecticut 1999.P 145

⁵⁴ Goldman L.R. 1999.P 144

Sepik 1 Chapter 15 Sepik Sorcery, Magic and more in the context of Magico-Religious beliefs.

As we learned in Chapter 5, religion evolves from mankind's interaction with all aspects of the environment within which he lives, and through that interaction "man creates his own gods"¹. Given the Sepik region's complexity of language/cultural groups it becomes clear that there are a great number of differing environments and diverse human interactions, therewith, the people of the Sepik have an infinite multitude of religious beliefs.

That said, Douglas Newton pointed out that the Sepik's supernatural world consists primarily of two main components; living spirits in set places within their local environments, such as eddies in flowing water, and the spirits of their ancestors.² Chapter 11 explores the Sepik involvement through ritual, in male and female initiation, the churches of the people, [i.e. the haus tambarans], the age class system, and some gender issues. Chapters 13 and 14 touches upon the rituals involved in headhunting and cannibalism respectively. Within these combined contexts, the current chapter explores the role of sorcery and magic in Sepik societies. First some definitions:

Super-natural [Religion] [Taylor 1871] defined religion as the *belief in spiritual beings*.

The Anthropology of Religion does not possess a fixed and universally definition...[religion] is extremely difficult to delimit and define. Even Taylor's simple definition has been questioned, since it is not always clear whether a given phenomenon is believed to by spiritual or natural.³

In consultation with Professor Peter Lawrence⁴ the writer accepted that religion is *that which explains all that cannot be explained from within the scientific knowledge of the society in question*. It follows that religious beliefs vary from society to society depending upon the relative levels of scientific knowledge of each.

Elsewhere Professor Lawrence stated *To understand how religion operates within the cosmic order, it must be examined from two points of view: Firstly it can explain and validate the origins and existence of the cosmic order, the physical environment, the economic system and the socio-political system by recounting in a series of myths, the creative activities of a number of spirit beings and totems...Secondly religion gives man the assurance that he can control, regulate and manipulate the cosmic order by means of ritual.*⁵

Sorcery [and Witchcraft¹] [Evans Pritchard 1937] defined witchcraft as the inherent power to harm other persons by supernatural means.

Witchcraft and sorcery may also be regarded as mechanisms of social control and for the resolution of social tensions and conflicts.⁶ The writer's experience of this was for sorcery to be regarded as the "Village policeman" – An individual who committed an act in contravention of village mores, was usually under pressure to compensate his victim, or otherwise rectify his wrong; failure to do so usually resulted in an expectation of sorcery consequences for the perpetrator.

Magic -Alternate definitions [Taylor 1871] magic is a form of primitive science, with the function of explaining the nature and cause of phenomena which humans observe. [Frazer 1890] magic is a three-stage development of human thought from magic - through religion - to science. Magic, Frazer argued was based on the false association of ideas. [Malinowski 1948], disagreed with both Taylor and Frazer. He said magic was resorted to in societies with low levels of technological development, when the technology in question did not permit people to manage the outcome of their action.⁷

"**Black Magic**" is alternative title for sorcery or witchcraft that causes death.

¹ While agreeing there are minor difference between sorcery and witchcraft Evans Pritchard defined them as the same.

Western Understanding of beliefs in sorcery and magic – are often summed up as “native or old-fashioned” superstition, such summings-up loses sight of European history: it was not many generations ago in Europe that witches were burned at the stake². In Britain there were successive Acts of parliament - Witchcraft Acts – 1563, 1604 and 1735. The 1735 Act was finally repealed by the Fraudulent Medium’s Act of 1951.⁸

It could be argued that in line with Malinowski’s definition above, that increased knowledge and technology developed in Europe since the 14th century has eliminated fear or witchcraft and sorcery – relegating it to the realm of harmless old-fashioned superstition.

A Sepik informant explained to the writer: *Sorcery works against us because the people who make the sorcery are our own. They know of our origins and can use this and their power to kill us. Sorcery will not work against you [i.e. Europeans] because we do not know of your origins.*⁹

Freely interpreted: Sepik people are vulnerable to sorcery as their knowledge of and subliminal beliefs in their supernatural world. Such Sepik beliefs equate to the foundation of westerner’s subliminal differentiation between what is right and what is wrong, a religious belief, even in non-church goers in the old testament’s ten commandments.

ooo000ooo

In the time before colonialism brought the Sepik into contact with the outside world, and continuing into the 21st century, “sorcery and magic” covers an infinite range of beliefs. These include from the ability to cause sickness and to kill by supernatural means, to causing natural disasters such as earth-quakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal-waves and floods, to issues of human and horticultural fertility¹⁰, to safety during ocean voyages¹¹ to hunting and fishing, to beneficial medical beliefs, treatments and cures.

In the writer’s experience there is no area of traditional life that not associated in some way with sorcery or magic. To a large extent this continues to be so in the daily lives of Papuans and New Guineans in the 21st century Take love magic and rain-making as examples:

Love Magic.

Love magic [works] by way of a spell, a man gains power over a woman’s spirit, causing her to desire him helplessly. Women are outraged if they believe themselves to be be-spelled...during my [Simon Harrison] field work some girls brought legal action for sorcery against some boys who had boasted they had be-spelled them with love magic.

*Men can magically cause women to desire them, but women have no such power over men. It is unthinkable, men say, to allow women to use love magic, because it would allow women’s spirits to dominate their own: a woman’s spirit may indeed become infatuated with a man, but the reverse is impossible or disgraceful. Women’s spirits are weaker and must remain so; men are autonomous and women dependent, men act and women are acted upon.*¹²

In the writer’s experience, Motuan girls in the 21st century, expressed concern about going to the Milne Bay Province, for fear of the reputed strength of the love magic of Milne Bay men.

Rain making.

During the Sepik River floods of 1973, the following was reported.

² On a visit to Bratislava, the writer learned that the burning of witches was conducted outside the city walls because such burnings were a fire hazard to the city itself, and in a city of believers who would claim that such a burning of the city was not caused by the carrying of a spark by the witch’s own vengeful spirit.

The Angoram Local Government Council sent an official communication to the Gwai Local Government Council on 13th February 1973 complaining about the [Gwai – middle Sepik] villages making singsings to cause the flood. The Angoram Council asked that the singsings cease as the flood was causing damage and loss of livestock.

Inquiries locally revealed denials by the people. The Anthropologists in the area however, state that at least two such singsings took place to their knowledge. The first was at Kanganaman at the request of Yenchan and the second was at Yenchan itself. One faction at Yenchan wanted a moderate flood through Yenchan, as this would be a disastrous flood in lower [lying] Parembei. Other factions at Yenchan opposed this.

Kanganaman, for its own requirements, wants the flood to stay at the present levels for some time to allow building materials and canoe logs to be floated into the village area.¹³

ooo000ooo

Sepik sorcery.

Sorcery aimed at harming or killing a targeted human being, took two separate forms, the pidgin works for each are Poison and Sanguma.

“Poison” Contrary to what the word suggests, this form of sorcery is usually not about toxic substances. Rather, it involves the outcomes of spells - similar to the Australian Aboriginal “pointing of the bone.”. The sorcerer obtains something that is closely associated with the intended victim. This might be a discarded cigarette butt or food scrap, or, in today's world, the underside of under-ware that has been in contact with genitalia and anus.

The selected personal item is placed by the sorcerer, with herbs and ginger and spells are cast over them. The items are then wrapped together. The life of the intended victim is then believed to be in the hands of whoever possesses the be-spelled bundle. Throughout the Sepik there must be an infinite array of such items. The writer has experience of these from Kwoma and Wosera.

Photo: - From the Bragge collection – a Kwoma sorcery jar. 250mm tall



In the Kwoma area, the writer was informed that the be-spelled items are placed in a sorcery jar. The death of the person can be caused by smashing the jar, throwing it in the fire or submerging it in water. Such jars are rare, this was the only specimen the writer saw in his four years association with Kwoma people.

In the Wosera area, the be-spelled items were secured in a clay tablet, bound with cane. The tablets that the writer saw, were about the size and shape of an English food item known as a pastry.¹⁴

ooo000ooo

In “poison” sorcery cases, the intended victim often [usually?] is made aware that sorcery was being made against him or her. The removal of the underside of one’s underpants for example would leave a Sepik person in no doubt as to why that was done. Once a person became aware they were under threat of sorcery there were two courses of action open:

1. Rectify the problem that caused the sorcery and seek forgiveness and release from the spell.
2. Commission a more powerful sorcerer to negate the spell, and perhaps enact revenge

ooo000ooo

“Sanguma”. Sanguma sorcery typically involves physical violence, usually an attack from behind rendering the victim unconscious. The attacker[s] then insert sharp objects such as sago needles or slivers of bone [and lengths of steel wire were used in modern times] between the ribs of the victim. To prevent the wounds leaving tell-tale scabs a stone was sometimes used to pummel the skin to cause bruises rather than scabs.

Typically, the victim regained consciousness and was told by his attackers that he had three days to live. He would be left to struggle to his home, and in his efforts in so doing, would dislodge the inserted objects which would circulate among his inner organs, puncturing them. Death resulted after about three days.

From this description, the crime committed would seem to be wilful physical assault, causing death, rather than sorcery. There are however, many super-natural aspects to sanguma as discussed below:

Sanguma 1 – Aitape west coastal areas and hinterland: The writer spent most of 1977 investigating a sequence of Sanguma murders in the Warapu and Sissano hinterland areas, west of Aitape [See Sepik 4 Chapter 57]

The murders investigated in 1977 were believed to reflect pre-contact sanguma practices which included;

- Annual training of Sanguma novices. The training reportedly involved:
 - Killing a victim in order to obtain “pure” human flesh to be consumed in potion by the novices. On male victims, the skin of the buttock was peeled back and the flesh was taken from under it¹⁵. On female victims the flesh was taken from under the skin on the top of the thigh. The relative areas were chosen as a man cannot urinate on his buttock and a woman cannot urinate on the top of her thigh. Meat taken in this manner was considered pure or untainted.
 - The training, including partaking of the potion, was said to make the sanguma man capable of both invisibility and flight.
 - Everything to do with the 1977 sanguma murder involved extreme community fear and secrecy in the Warapu/ Sissano and hinterland communities. For instance, Chris Haiveta was able to learn only that:

*Sanguma is acknowledged to exist, although it is reputed to be practiced by inland people whose services are utilized by Sissano who need them. Their role is said to be similar to the poison-man's. Although Sanguma is said to be more deadly and effective.*¹⁶

- Sanguma sorcery was said to come from Sissano hinterland areas particularly along the Piori River, and the Utai area south of the Bewani mountains, and also the Lumi area. Sanguma sorcery is such a feared and secretive matter that traditionally and currently is probably far wider spread than as indicated here.

Sanguma 2 – Telefomin area - 1953.

On 14th July [1953] it was reported that a native woman of Telefolin village had been the victim of a type of local sorcery known as "Beet" ...a small circular wound in the woman's side was claimed to have been caused by the insertion of a bone needle, which is always connected with this particular form of sorcery...the woman gave the names of her four attackers [who were arrested] ...

On the... 16th July N.M.O.³ Suau made a small incision above the puncture and withdrew a sharpened of bone... [Although] the woman's wound reacted favourably to treatment...she died on the 26th.

A second case of this type of sorcery...A native reported to the writer that he had been ambushed by 10 men who performed a ritual connected with the sorcery 'beet.' ...a sharpened piece of bone was removed from the lower abdomen...after having made an incision...¹⁷

These two Telefomin cases are reported here as sanguma related, purely on the basis of the similarity of the insertion of sharp objects. Nothing more is known about "beet" sorcery. Certainly, during the writer's time in Telefomin, no knowledge of sorcery cases came to his attention.

Apparent changes in some Sepik sorcery practices through time.

The benefit of post contact knowledge revealed there was apparently less killing by sorcery practiced in the Sepik [and elsewhere] before contact with the outside world. This was because overt killing was not restrained then, by the of imposition of western law.

Sepik informants are adamant that when headhunting was stopped by the public hanging of offenders, the killing continued, but instead of being overt, it became covert – through sorcery practices. This, its consequences are discussed in detail in Sepik 3, Chapter 39 – Issues of sorcery.

End Notes Chapter 15

¹ Peter Henry Buck – Anthropology and Religion – Yale University Press 1939 Page 1

² Douglas Newton – Crocodile and Cassowary – Museum of Primitive Art New York 1971 Page 10 -11

³ Charlotte Seymour-Smith – Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology – Macmillan Reference Books 1986 Page 242-243

⁴ Personal communication in Sydney in 1963

⁵ P.Lawrence – Religion and Magic – in Anthropology in Papua New Guinea – Melbourne University Press 1973. pages 207-208

⁶ Charlotte Seymour-Smith – 1986 Page 289

⁷ Charlotte Seymour-Smith – 1986 Page 175

⁸ Internet.

⁹ Nonguru/Kemerabi of Japandai – In Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 82

¹⁰ See Malinowski's Coral Gardens and their Magic – Indiana University Press 1965 edition.

¹¹ See Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific E.P.Dutton and Co Inc New York 1961 edition XVII Magic and Kula.

¹² S.Harrison – The Mask of War - Manchester University Press 1993 page 122

¹³ L.W.Bragge ADC – Ambunti Patrol Report no 13/1972-73 – Situation report No 1

³ N.M.O. Native Medical Orderly

¹⁴ Personal observation, while sitting as District Court magistrate in sorcery cases at Pagwi

¹⁵ An autopsy was conducted by Dr Regis of Raihu hospital which commented on flesh missing from under a flap of skin.
The report is presumably still in the Aitape district files.

¹⁶ C.Haiveta – Health care in Maindron – in Letkehaus et al ed Sepik Heritage, Carolina University Press 1990 Page 444

¹⁷ L.T.Nolan, Officer in charge Telefomin File TEL.14. 20th August 1953 to the District Commissioner Wewak “Report on Sorcery cases. Item no 271. Bragge Reference Volume 8.

Sepik 1. Chapter 16. The Creation Myths of the NDU and Ancient Migrations to populate the Ndu world.

As with most ancient stories, the creation myth of the Ndu language family consists of fragments of oral history together with evidence of environmental factors, in this case, the long-gone Sepik inland sea, and visiting mariners who came from the west long ago. The mariners brought with them wonderful new things including the ability to make pottery, the introduction of pigs, dogs chickens and betelnut. And then they too were gone, but they left their mark.

When were the Austronesians in residence on the shores of the Sepik inland sea? The PNG Museum provenance of the Austronesian clam shell axe found at Frieda River [Pages 22/23 above] dates it as 5,000 years BP and Chapter 4 dates the “archaic civilisation”, which traded mortars, pestles and related items from the shore of the inland sea via the Yuat and Ramu Rivers into the highlands, at between 8,000 and 3,000 years BP. While archaeological proof remains to be found, the “archaic civilisation” was almost certainly Austronesian.

Clearly there is much left for future archaeology to tell us about the Austronesian presence in the Sepik, but based on these dates, not only did an Austronesians presence date from long ago, it may also have been of several thousand years duration. Also, given that the Austronesians were maritime navigators and traders, their presence in the Sepik may have been sporadic, as determined the supply of trade items such as bird of paradise feathers on one hand and mortars and pestles on the other.

ooo000ooo

Ancestral stories of ancient times of the Middle Sepik can be summarised as follows: *Before creation there was water everywhere*¹. This statement is clearly a reference to the Sepik embayment or “inland sea” which existed thousands of years ago.

Then a crocodile appeared and split in two, its lower jaw becoming the earth and its upper jaw becoming the sky. This cleavage explains the subsequent division of society into earth and sky moieties.

Having introduced an oral history memory of the inland sea, we now have mention of the Austronesian religious belief in the earth mother and the sky father, which suggests three things:

- Sepik oral histories indicate an ancient memory of an Austronesian presence on the shores of the inland sea, of thousands of years ago.
- The creation, according to the Ndu myth appears to be borrowed from the Austronesian myth of the Sky Father and Earth Mother.
- As the Ndu also use the Austronesian social structure of moieties Niamei – the Earth Mother and Niaiui, the Sun, it seems likely that the Ndu were at the least, strongly influenced by Austronesian beliefs, or were descended from Austronesians ancestors.

Given that the Austronesians apparently moved on [as argued below] when their favoured inland sea oceanic environment, silted up, it seems probable they left behind devout Austronesian religious believers among the Sepik people, just as there are devout Sepik Christians. today.

ooo000ooo

The creation myth version 2. There are many versions of this myth. Yapi of Torembei [A Sawos speaking community] told it as follows:

...There was no ground, there was only water. There was only one man, and he had nothing at all. He appeared without cause between the clouds and the water. He saw something drifting on the water and wondered what it was. He took a piece of cloth material, which we call

harrakain, and threw it down, and as it came down it turned into a pigeon. The pigeon landed on what the man had seen – it was land. This is the story of origin...

We use the word God, but in fact he was a big man and he gave rise to food and all things. His name was Ambusuatgu. [most other versions of the myth do not include this God figure and have mankind's creation as their emergence from the hole]

The first man [Ambusuatgu] and the pigeon gave the land to a man who made a devil woman. He made her out of a piece of his own bone at Torembei [an apparent borrowing from the Bible] He decided to make her different from himself. He also made a man the same way. They lived at Mebinbit. At that place there was a small hole in the ground, which was made by the pigeon. They lived in this hole in the ground.²

In common with Yapi's version, most renditions of the Ndu creation myth involve the first earth emerging from beneath a world of water, and a hole in that earth from which the first humans emerged. This can be interpreted as mother earth giving birth to the human race.

The creation myth version 3. Gwolai of Tego [A Nyaula Iatmul speaking community] told the myth³ from the perspective of the people who originally settled the river; apparently describing the inland sea at a later stage of its siltation when Gwolai's ancestors settled it..

There was no ground in the Sepik before. There was ground at Timbunke, which was an extension of Mebinbit, and Mebinbit was at Gaikaroki [See Maps 1 & 2]. Up at Marui, there was solid ground¹ also. Between Marui and Timbunke, there was no land, just water. [Then] land appeared at Suimbo², Suapmeri, Kararau and Timbunke³

After Timbunke, land appeared at Yamali – the place of Mindimbit and Angriman. Later, after a long time when pitpit⁴ and trees, the people inhabited the land. Parembei ground then appeared. Each of these pieces of high ground extended themselves.

And later there was so much land that the Sepik began to take a clear course and became a river, instead of being just a mass of water. There is a story that just two men pulled the Sepik and brought it to the sea, and slowly the land dried and was drained and the set [established] land, lake and swamp areas of today were established.

Now, the Sepik is a river, and it changes course now and then making new lakes etc. We do not know the names of these two men who made the Sepik go to the coast.

ooo000ooo

Dr. Wassmann's version of the creation myth continues: *Then the first pair of brothers came into existence. From them sprang other sets of brothers by repeated issue. These sets of brothers were the founders of the present clan associations. The first brother of the pair is the founder is the founder of the first clan group of the association, the second brother, that of the second clan group. Their sons and grandsons formed the numerous individual clans one or two generations later.*

¹ As told in Sepik 4, following world war 2, the ADO posted to Angoram recognised the Iatmul people as the group of most in need of Administration attention. He therefore selected Marui as the place to establish a government station in 1946, as Marui was the only Sepik River bank land in the Iatmul area which did not flood. Unfortunately for his plans, Father Puff had acquired the Marui land for the Catholic Mission in 1933, and when the missionaries finally did return they claimed their land. The administration was forced to abandon Marui and in 1949 re-established Ambunti as the sub district HQ. In 1964 Pagwi patrol post was established on the flood prone Sepik River bank immediately adjacent to Marui Mission, as a centre from which the Iatmul could be administered.

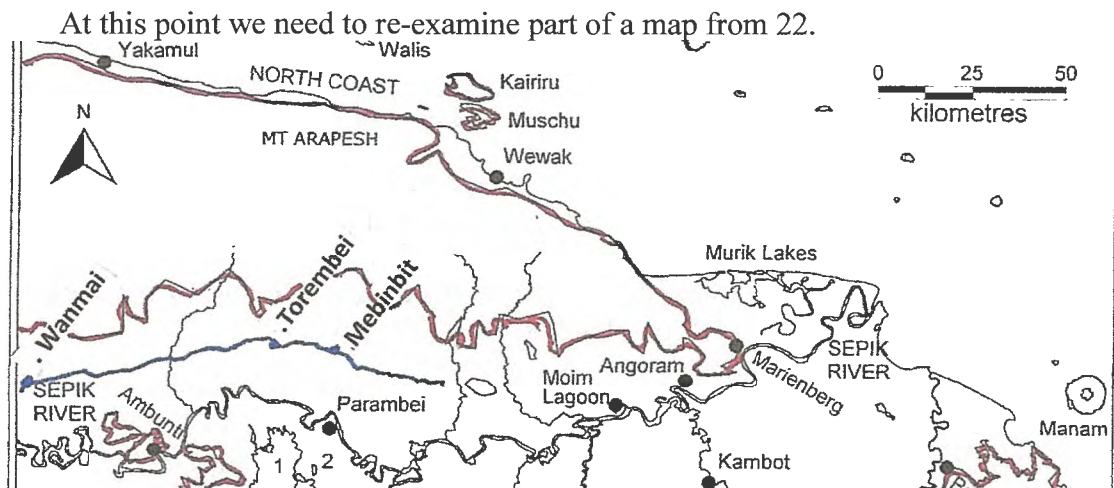
² Suimbo is in the area where Nyauarengai was later established.

³ This second mention of Timbunke, presumably means an increase in the land area exposed there.

⁴ Cane grass, a related species to sugarcane.

The locale of these events is an area to the north of the Middle Sepik near the village of Gaikarobi, [a location known as Mebinbit]. In the beginning all the ancient people were gathered there. ⁴

ooo000ooo



The Brown line indicates the approximate position of the Sepik Inland Sea 7,000 years BP. At that time, the sea would have extended as far west as the approximate present junction of the May and Sepik Rivers.

The Blue line indicates a probable later shoreline as the inland sea was reduced by the on-going uplift caused by the convergence of the Australian and Pacific crustal plates. Three places of importance in Sepik pre-history would have been on, or close to that shoreline: Wanmai; the place of the creation according to Kwoma mythology, Torembei, the site where the lava statue – photo on page 23 was discovered, and Mebinbit, the Ndu place of the creation.

This suggests that around the same time, something happened in three ancient Sepik communities to influence their cosmologies. Could it have been contact with visiting people with more advanced material wealth and spirituality?

The continued uplift caused rivers to cut into the land giving sediment yields. This sediment has, over time changed the Sepik/Ramu inland sea from a home of deep water organisms to a freshwater flood plain.

During the more recent Ice Ages, the shoreline advanced and retreated as the sea level rose and fell... It is only since the sea level ceased rising 6,000 years ago that extensive flood plains and back swamps have formed. 6,000 years ago, it is likely that the inland sea extended as far west as Ambunti. There would have been numerous islands in the inland sea including Aibom, Chambri and the Bosman plateau. ⁵

Current estimates suggest that sedimentation from the Sepik River advanced the coastline eastwards by 5 kilometres per century... These changes probably explain the emergence of the Ndu language family... The slow disappearance of the marine world and its replacement by a young flood plain, would have required any group formerly occupying the beaches and exploiting the lagoonal systems to seek new livelihoods. This may explain the initial northern movement of the Ndu group. ⁶ Of the eight Ndu languages, this initial northern movement involved the Abelam and Boiken languages.

The progressive silting was no doubt also responsible for ocean-oriented Austronesian people's departure from what became the middle Sepik. By 2,000 years BP the shoreline was

probably in the vicinity of the present junction of the Yuat and Sepik Rivers, Angoram and Marienberg would have been on the coast, and the Murik Lakes would not yet have existed⁷.

Clearly, as the Yuat/Sepik junction is well downstream of Tambunam, the most easterly of the Iatmul villages, the coast line, by 2,000 years BP was well clear of the region that became known as the Middle Sepik.

Although the exact location of the Ndu place of the creation [Mebinbit] is unknown, it is believed to be within the tribal lands of the Sawos language group. To some extent the elders of the Sawos villages of Nogosop and Gaikarobi regard themselves as Mebinbit's custodians.

Little is known of the origins of the Sawos language peoples, but in order to develop six separate dialects, it seems safe to assume the language has existed for a very long time. Elders from Sawos [Nogosop village] and Iatmul [Kanganaman village] also speak of other villages that existed in the area in ancient times, but after Mebinbit. They were Sororogwi, Laming, Gripma and Walima. All that is remembered of them are vague oral histories as outlined below:

Sororogwi; was north of the Kanganaman of today. *Our ancestors were at Laming, inside the Gaikarobi area. Two ancestors went outside [to the Sepik], when it was still the dark times [i.e. – in ancient times]. Two families, Sui and Walpum stayed at Gaikarobi. Two brothers, Kembiam and Wenguanjap went to Sororogwi. Water flooded Sororogwi but left nearby Tego high and dry, so Kembiam went to Tego. The other survivors of the flood went to Mebinbit.*⁸

Gripma and Walima: *Both Nogosop and Gaikarobi lived at a place called Gripma but left there because of over population and settled on their present village sites probably five generations ago [i.e. five generations before 1972/3. This time estimate is believed to reflect a telescoping of time from a much earlier period] ...In the time before memory there was a place called Walima to the north of Gaikarobi, we fought them until they became extinct.*⁹

The Sawos/Iatmul split; settlement of the Sepik River banks and the Sepik Plains.

As the shoreline retreated eastwards Sawos people migrated to the newly emerged banks of the Sepik River at a place called Suapmeri [Also spelt Sotmeri] which was located on the bend of the Sepik River, immediately upstream of where Parembei is marked on the map on Page 69. At some stage the language of the Sawos settlers of the Sepik River changed and became known as Iatmul, which, with the passing of time, developed three dialects **Woliagwi** – The eastern or downstream dialect **Parembei** – Central dialect and **Nyaula [Nyaura]** – The western or upstream dialect.

*This, [indicating Suapmeri] was the first village [on the Sepik River] between Ambunti and the sea...The second was Kararau [a Woliagwi dialect village].*¹⁰

*The ground where Parembei is now is called Kowibunauwi. Kararau had children on that ground – Kararau is the mother and Parembei is the child.*¹¹

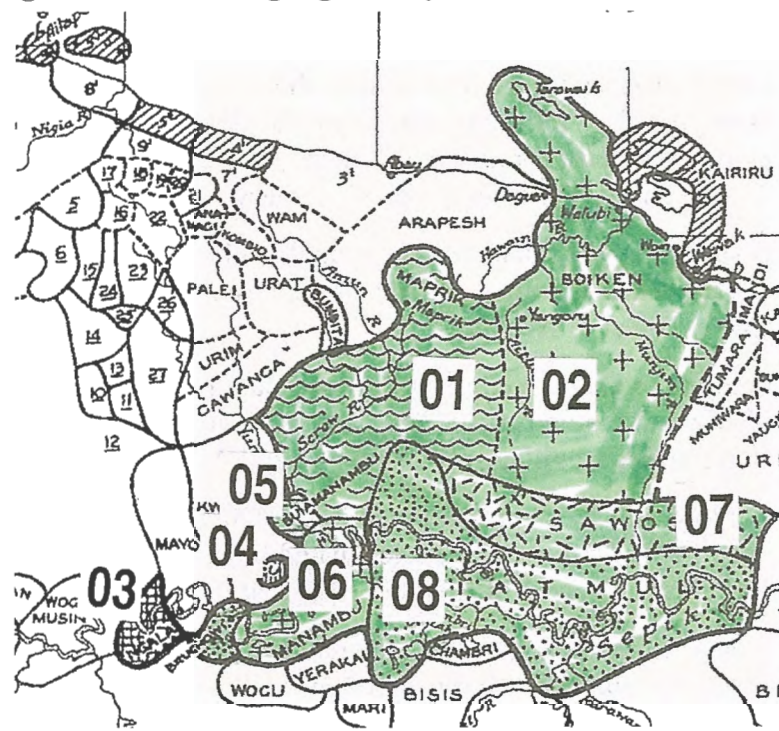
The settlement of Nyaurengai. *happened like this. Our market for sago was with Yamuk [a Sawos speaking community]. The Sepik [environment] had no sago so we had to trade with the bush people. But Yamuk came and attacked Suapmeri... We were no longer able to trade there as many of their people were dead and the living were not well disposed towards us. [So] the people of the haus tambaran Wambun broke away and went to stay at Kandingei.*¹² [From where, presumably they could again trade for sago.]

At the time of the Iatmul settlement of the Sepik River banks the land was spongy. *The ancestors tried without success, to make the ground strong after Nyaurengai was established. They killed pigs and made a party, but the ground did not become strong. Then*

they brought men from other places and they spread their blood but the ground remained spongy.

Then they killed a man called SONDAMBWI. They took away his skin and smoked his meat and the ground became strong, it no longer shook. They took Sondambwi's head and his blood made the ground strong. This was the start of headhunting¹³, which is the subject of a later chapter.

The eight Ndu languages of the Ndu language family.



The Ndu Language family:

- 1 Abelam. 2 Boiken 3 Ngala 4. Yelogu. 5 Biananambu. 6. Manambu. 7. Sawos. 8 Iatmul
- ooo000ooo

A group of people, who used the word “Ndu”, to mean “man”, once lived on a coastline of the Sepik inland sea. They subsisted from a bountiful marine environment that the sea provided. With the passing of time the marine environment changed, becoming less bountiful. The Ndu speakers looked to the north, seeking new ways of subsistence for themselves.

This northern migration may have taken place over thousands of years, and, in the process of which, the Ndu language became three separate languages – Abelam, Boiken and Sawos. With the passing of much more time each of these languages further sub divided into many dialects.

Meanwhile the on-going sedimentation of inland sea progressively pushed the coastline further to the east, until a floodplain of soft sediments was exposed, with the Sepik River passing through it. The Sawos settlers ventured onto this region eventually formed the village of Suapmeri and from there settled the river banks. Their language changed and became known as Iatmul. With the passing of time Iatmul developed three dialects.

This brief recap outlines the development of four of Ndu’s eight languages. Almost nothing is known concerning the development of the remaining four.

The following brief discussion of the Ndu family of languages is not intended to suggest any order of language creation.

1. Abelam. Abelam has more speakers than any other language in the Sepik District. The Abelam people themselves recognise three dialects Maprik, Wosera and Mamu.¹⁴

2. Boiken. Boiken language takes its name from Boiken village on the Sepik coast. Boiken language has seven dialects – Islands, East Yangoru/Kwusaun, Plains, Central Yangoru, Munji, West Yangoru, Haripmor. This classification is incomplete as a number of Boiken speaking communities cannot yet [1973] be assigned any dialect affiliation¹⁵

3. Ngala. As indicated in Chapter 33, The Ngala speakers of Swagup village in their discussion of the accumulation of many clans and their wars against the now extinct Bodif people, make no mention of their Ndu origins. But Anthropologist Ross Bowden¹⁶ and Linguist Alexandra Aikhenvald¹⁷ have evidence at least some Swagup ancestors were survivors from the annihilation of the Gala people who lived on Mt Ambunti in the 19th century

4. Yelogu. Yelogu is spoken by the inhabitants of a single village. All inhabitants appear to be bilingual, speaking the unrelated Kwoma language as well as Yelogu...in some ways Yelogu gives the impression of being a dialect of Abelam¹⁸.

Another opinion on Yelogu. Yelogu, with a population of less than 100...properly forms a distinct, politically-autonomous tribe. Several other Kaunga tribes...have amalgamated to form two Kaunga speaking villages Biananumbu and Ambuken.¹⁹

Writer's note: Laycock 1973 does not mention Kaunga, which must have been identified as a language since 1973. To the writer's uneducated linguistic ear Kaunga and Kwanga sound similar, but it is clear on page 1 of Bowden 1997 that they are indeed separate languages

5. Biananumbu. No data²⁰. Like Yelogu, Biananumbu is a small village, the inhabitants of which speak their own language. Presumably a long-forgotten event separated a group of Ndu speakers and over the duration of their isolation, they developed their own language.

Another opinion on Biananumbu. The Kaunga name for Biananumbu village is **Gumajui**. :Biananumbu is a Government corruption of the Kuanga name **Buwiyamanabu**. Gumajui village today [1997] consists of two quite different groups of clans that formerly occupied separate villages. For more in this see Sepik 2 Chapter 44. The Masalaga people attacked Townsend's 1934 patrol and suffered four warriors shot dead.

During a patrol to Ambuken in the 1970s the writer interviewed Samako/Farumu of Masalaga. He recounted Masalaga's unfortunate history including the fact that the Japanese burned Masalaga village to the ground and shot two Masalaga women. He stated that after the war the kiap ordered the remnants of the Masalaga population to move and live with Ambuken. It seems very likely that the "other" segment of the Biananumbu population were also Masalaga refugees.

6. Manambu. This language is spoken by the people of three villages – Avatip 'big coconut', Malu and Yambon 'upstream, west'. Manambu has no dialects.²¹ Chapter 28, traces the recent evolution Manambu language group.

7. Sawos No real dialect survey has been undertaken and there may be at least two distinct languages subsumed under Sawos. It appears there may be six Sawos dialects, East, Central, Chimbian, Koiwat, West and Burui.²²

The Sawos and Iatmul, apart from adjacent residential areas in the middle Sepik were, and continue to be closely linked with each other in many ways, but particularly through the sago/fish trade, to be discussed in chapter 18.

8. Iatmul Dr. Laycock identified two dialects Nyaula and Parembai²³. There is general consensus that the downstream Iatmul speak a third dialect - Woliagwi.

ooo000ooo

Sepik pre-history's ancient myth of the creation of the Ndu languages, provides a foundation that blends into the more recent known, and remembered history concerning the various Ndu languages. That more recent pre-history is the subject in later chapters.

End Notes Chapter 16

-
- ¹ J.Wassmann – The Nyaura Concepts of Space and Time. In Sepik Heritage 1990. Carolina University Press Page 24.
² Yapi of Torembei interviewed on 27th April 1973. Bragge Sepik history archive Vol 18 page 220.
³ Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 277 – interview with Gwolai of Tego
⁴ J.Wassmann 1990 Page 24
⁵ PNG Museum Publication – The Sepik-Ramu 1988. Page 14
⁶ PNG Museum Publication – The Sepik-Ramu 1988. Page 15
⁷ PNG Museum Publication – The Sepik-Ramu 1988. Page 14-15
⁸ Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 141 – interview with Guanduan of Kanganaman
⁹ Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 257 – interview with Kolion of Nogosop
¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 120 – interview with a group of Suapmeri elders, not individually identified
¹¹ Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 172 – interview with Kwonji of Burui [a Sawos community]
¹² Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 120 – interview with a group of Suapmeri elders, not individually identified
¹³ Bragge Sepik Research volume 18 page 271 – interview with Soni of Nyarengai
¹⁴ D.C.Laycock – Sepik languages – Checklist and preliminary Classification – ANU press 1973 page 25
¹⁵ D.C.Laycock – The Ndu Language Family – ANU press 1965 page 103
¹⁶ Bowden R -Introduction to a Dictionary of Kwoma – Pacific Linguistics 1997 p 6
¹⁷ Personal communication
¹⁸ D.C.Laycock – 1973 page 28
¹⁹ Bowden R – 1997 page 8
²⁰ D.C.Laycock – 1973 page 28
²¹ D.C.Laycock – 1965 page 120
²² D.C.Laycock – 1973 page 27/28
²³ D.C.Laycock – 1973 page 28

Sepik 1 Chapter 17 Ndu social structure and lingering evidence of an ancient Matriarchal Past.

Writer's note: The 18th of November 1972 provided one of those rare and treasured “Ah Ha!” experiences for me. That day I was on patrol at the Iatmul village of Yenchan to revise the census and to do research for an area study of the of the Main River census division.¹

Resident in Yenchan, was Jurg Schmid, a Swiss Anthropologist, so I introduced myself. We talked about Sepik Anthropology and the interviews I had been conducting with Sepik elders over the thirty months since I arrived in Ambunti. I valued any opportunity I got from talk with anthropologists and other academics, as, almost always I learned something new about Ambunti and its people.

Jurg was no exception, he introduced me to the Middle Sepik's social structure system's involvement with moieties, and as he spoke, a number of things I had been told in my many interviews with Sepik elders, fell into place. For example, the Yerikai/Garamambu material on the following page, I had recorded as relating to two clans – Niamei and Niaui and that of Bunebune and Manabutu from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands [Attachment 1]. It took an anthropologist to make me see and understand the underlying social structure, which had apparently been too obvious, as in the Yerikai/Garamambu case, for the elders, to explain.

How could I have missed something so important? Then I realised that there was not a single mention of the moiety system in the hundreds of Ambunti Patrol Reports I had read and analysed. All my predecessors had missed it as well!

The Middle Sepik social structure – as explained by Jurg Schmid¹.

“Moiety” is defined as *each of two social or ritual groups into which a people is divided*,² The Yenchan population's many clans are divided into two the moieties: Niaui – the sun and sky, and Niamei the earth mother.

Niamei, the mother came first, then Niaui, the father came later. In the creation the order of things was; mother, earth, black and night.

In addition to the clans being divided between the two moieties, so too are many totems: **Niaui totems at Yenchan include:** the colours red and white, sun, sky, moon, stars, rain, thunder, male, and many bird species.

Niamei totems at Yenchan include: female, black, earth, the way to the land of death, and many other totems.

Totems common to both Niaui and Niamei; many colours, water, wind, pig, dog, crocodile, many tree species.

ooo000ooo

I quickly learned that the moiety system applied not only to the Iatmul, but to the Sawos as well. This reinforced the fact that the Iatmul had broken away from the Sawos long ago, possibly as much as 2,000 years ago to reside along the Sepik River. This gave me with a better understanding of the time depth of Sepik history.

My research indicated that the moiety system went back even further in time, as it not only applied to all Ndu family language groups, but there appeared to be considerable variation in the functionality of Ndu moieties between the individual language groups. For instance:

#1 Iatmul moieties are documented as being totemic, but not strictly exogamous^{1,3}, whereas Manambu moieties are exogamous⁴, and while Iatmul moieties are totemic, Abelam moieties are non-totemic and endogamous.²⁵

#2 In relation to the Boiken moieties [Samawung and Lubuging], each male inherits an exchange partner in the opposite moiety.⁶

#3 While the term “moiety” relates to a dual system or “halves” the Manambu display a variation by introducing a third group. The Manambu structure looks like this:

Gla:gw has six sub groups and accounts for about 44% of the Avatip population, and Wulwi-Nawi also has six sub groups and accounts for about 49% of the Avatip population⁷. The third group is Nabal-Sablap – of two sub groups and [by deduction] accounts for 7% of Avatip’s population.

Gla:gw is associated with earth and dark things, while Wulwi-Nawi is associated with light, sun and Moon. Nabal-Sablap is regarded as the “Middle” group. Concerning these associations Professor Aikenvald inserted a foot note”

Laurie Bragge [personal communication] points out the similarity between the Gla:gw and the Iatmul moiety Niamei, and between Wulwi-Nawi and the Iatmul moiety Niaui. This is corroborated by the existing marriage patterns: Nelma, a Iatmul lady from the Niamei moiety living in Avatip, has married a man from the Wulwi-Nawi group.⁸ i.e. While as stated above, her own Iatmul people were not strictly exogamous at the moiety level, in Avatip, where exogamy applies, she married into the appropriate moiety Wulwi-Nawi, the equivalent of the Iatmul moiety Niaui.

ooo000ooo

Moieties in groups other than the Ndu language family.

Although thorough research on this topic has not been undertaken, it is known that some Sepik groups other than the speakers of Ndu languages have moiety based social structures. The question then arises as to which group was the first to have a moiety social structure, and thereby became the model that others copied? We need to look at these non-Ndu groups, before concluding who borrowed from whom. I will examine three such groups:

#1. Mountain Arapesh. The two [Arapesh] moieties are perceived as complementary opposites...In cult matters and in quasi-ritual contexts such as funerals and yam competitions, the moieties are aggressively rivalrous.⁹

#2 Chambri. All three Chambri villages divide into competing initiation moieties Pombiantimeri and Yambuntimeri, which criss-cross both affinal³ and agnatic⁴ connections and exist only during the ceremonies¹⁰.

#3 Yerikai/Garamambu. Niamei – Moon, pig and eagle totems. Niaui – Sun, cassowary, sago and Hornbill totem.

All the things of the day are Niaui and all the things of the night are Niamei. The night came first and the Sun came later. Niamei is the mother, and hers is the main post of the haus tambaran. Niamei initiates all ceremonial activity in the haus tambaran⁵ and Niaui fits in with the arrangements

¹ Cannot marry within the moiety

² Must marry within the moiety.

³ Affinal – a family relationship through marriage

⁴ Agnatic – A connection which is traceable only through males

⁵ An explanation is necessary here; As we shall see in Chapter 13, Haus Tambarans can be of either the Niamei or the

made. Niaui can only suggest to Niamei, not instruct. Niamei is the ground, which is the mother. We are of Niamei, so our relationship to the men of Niaui is that of mother.

In fighting the child Niaui is allowed to run ahead. The Niamei line comes behind and when the fighting starts, Niamei takes the lead and the child assists the mother. After the fight is over, Niaui commence leaving the defeated village and the Niamei people set about burning the place down. Fire is of Niamei, so Niamei must use it. If the [attacked] place is strong, burning its haus tambaran will reduce their warriors' strength and lead to their defeat.¹¹

ooo000ooo

Apart from being not of Ndu origin, what the Mountain Arapesh, Chambri and Yerikai/Garamambu have in common is that they are each located adjacent to Ndu language groups, who exert a greater or lesser degree of hegemony⁶ over them. The Arapesh reside adjacent to the Abelam, The Chambri, adjacent to the Iatmul and the Yerikai/Garamambu adjacent to both the Manambu and the Iatmul. Although it cannot be conclusively proven, it seems obvious to the writer that these three groups of non-Ndu origins adopted, amongst other things, their social structure from their Ndu language neighbours.

While this information on Moieties is interesting in itself, Jurg Wasmann's rendition of the Ndu creation myth [from Chapter 16] establishes the critical link between Ndu mythology and the Austronesian Earth Mother and Sky Father myth. From that base it is argued that the middle Sepik moieties that existed through time and into the 21st century are firmly based in Austronesian religious beliefs that applied in the Sepik thousands of years ago.

Some assumptions based largely on Sepik 1 Chapter 3 and 4.

The Austronesians appear to have had a long and influential presence and interaction with the indigenous Papuans along the coasts of Sepik "inland sea", an area, later to become the "middle Sepik.". Given the technology, skills and livestock the Austronesians introduced, they must have revolutionised the lives of the indigenous Papuans in much the same way as did the arrival of Europeans and their introduction of western technology in the 19th and 20th centuries. The other enduring contribution made by the Europeans was the introduction of the "true" religion – Christianity.

It is suggested here that the Austronesians also introduced a "true" religion based upon the Earth Mother and the Sky Father and the moiety social structure of Niamei – the Earth Mother and Niaui -the Sky Father.

With the silting up of the inland sea and the departure of the Austronesians what happened to the beliefs of the indigenous Papuan converts to the Austronesian religion? While the moiety system remains firmly in place, with variations as indicted above, other aspects of Austronesian beliefs underwent drastic change, as revealed in the Sepik oral histories, as discussed in Part 2.

Part 2 Myths concerning Matriarchal power in the ancient past.

A constant theme in the Sepik oral histories is that in ancient times women controlled all ceremonial life and the haus tambarans, until finally men took control of these things. Some examples:

Niaui moiety, in such cases members of the opposition moiety have a place in the haus tambaran, but do not take the lead in ceremonial activities. The moiety Niamei, in this case initiates the activities. But Niamei in this sense, while meaning "mother" does not imply involvement of any individuals of the female sex.

⁶ Hegemony – Leadership or dominance especially by one social group over another.

#1 All the secrets of the flutes and the haus tambaran were held by women, and at the time of the trouble, men got the secrets and held them...¹²

#2 After killing Mai'imp⁷ the men went back to the village. The women were in their house playing their bamboo flutes. The men surrounded the house and killed the women. They speared the women and took their flutes and the tambarans, and that is why men have them today. Women were originally the "Big Brother" and all the men were the "Small Brother".⁸ Just one woman escaped and she was a sorcerer and she ran away with one flute. The men then made a fence and put the flutes and tambarans they had taken from the women inside the fence. All women were dead and just the young children were left, and they were not shown the tambarans or the flutes...¹³

#3 A woman called Bribarai went to the water fishing. A stick with two faces on it floated into her net [garamut drum sticks indicated] it swam like a catfish. She saw it was different from anything she had seen before and she heard it make a noise like gidagin – gidagin – gidagin. She gave it to her brother, while still in her net. "here is a fish for you – cook it and eat it. You are a man, you have thoughts."

He took it and hid it in the bush so the women could not see it. Later he took it to the haus tambaran and showed it to the men and they copied its markings and it became their god. It communicated messages about customs and ritual it required through people's dreams...¹⁴

#4 In a version of the myth at Yambiyambi tells how once the women's secret ceremonies were discovered by men, the women turned into flying foxes and flew away. There were no women left, only children, who grew up and continued to propagate the Yambiyambi people.



The sacred pottery dish "Mauraba"

The clay flute "Terere"¹⁵

⁷ Mai'imp is key character in the story of the origins of sago and the sago/fish markets as described in Chapter 19.

⁸ Big and small brother in this sense refer to which group held dominance over the other.

The story also mentioned that:

*...in the past women had facial hair and men had clean skins and hairless chests and groins. When the men took the sacred clay plate Mauraba, and the clay flute Terere from the women, the women became hairless and the men had the whiskers.*¹⁶

These examples and many other similar myths are believed by the writer to relate to a time after the Austronesians had departed from the inland sea, a region

which became the middle Sepik. With the passing of time, the life style of the indigenous Papuans, needed to adjust their perception of their cosmos to better describe their own reality as opposed to that of the departed Austronesians. So, while their society retained the moiety-based social structure, it no longer required matrilineal and bilateral descent and female values. They then reverted to the [presumed] pre-existing Papuan patrilineal system, in which women played a lesser part than they did in Austronesian society. So, while the myths about killing the women, or women turning into flying foxes may not have actually happened as described, the myths served the purpose of explaining a necessary adjustment to society's cosmic beliefs.

The middle Sepik societies today are extremely male orientated, yet deep in the mythology are memories of a time when matriarchal influences ruled supreme.

ooo000ooo

End Notes Chapter 17

¹ Jurg Schmid's explanation appears of hand written notes in Bragge Sepik Research Vol 18 pages 131-136

² Wikipedia

³ D.Gewertz – Sepik River Societies Yale University Press 1983 page 24

⁴ A.Aikenvald – The Manambu language of the East Sepik, Papua New Guinea. Oxford University Press 2008 page 11

⁵ B. Hauser Schraublin in Dualism -a motif of thought in Sepik Societies- ed Hermann, Klenke, & Dickhardt – University of Gottingen 2009 page 229

⁶ Ethnology Vol 28 Page 221.

⁷ S.Harrison [1990a: 42-3] as quoted by Aikenvald 2008 Page 11.

⁸ Aikenvald 2008 Page 11

⁹ Donald F Tuzin – The Iahita Arapesh: Dimensions of unity. University of California Press 1976 Page 218

¹⁰ Gilbert H Herdt ed. Rituals of Manhood – Male initiation in Papua New Guinea – Transaction publishers 1991 P289

¹¹ Maimban and Wani of Yerikai – Interview in Bragge Sepik research notes Vol 19 Page 297

¹² Interview with Ban of Welgam clan, Kanganaman – Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 Page 139

¹³ Interview with Dambwi of Gaikarobi - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 18 Page 264.

¹⁴ Interview with Maimban and Wani of Yerikai - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 295.

¹⁵ Photos taken from Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-74 Page 70. Both objects were photographed in Changriman village, Southern Chambri Lakes, during the patrol.

¹⁶ Interview with Siga of Yambiyambi - Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 359.

Sepik 1 Chapter 18 Sago/Fish trade; a necessity of middle Sepik Survival.

The best description of the relationship between Sepik fish and sago providers comes from the Manambu village of Avatip, where, unlike the middle Sepik, the environment allows both commodities to be provided from the Avatip lands and waterways. Avatip social structure consists of three exogamous groups of which two are demographically dominant and exist in a near-moiety relationship.

The Nggala'angwu owns the lagoons in the sense of having the hereditary responsibility in ritual and magic for their fertility [fish production]. The Wuluwi-Nyawu has yams as its important totem, and all the magical and ritual powers relating to gardening and yam fertility are its property. A basic theme of Avatip ritual and cosmology is this immemorial relationship between the "owners of fish" and the "owners of yams". This is conceived as a tie of mutual uterine kinship, in which two groups "give mother's milk" to one another in a perpetual reciprocity of succour and nurturing.¹

In the middle Sepik river bank environment, because of the low-lying land, fluctuating water levels, are not conducive to the growth of sago palms. It is only in the swamp lands at the foot of the Sepik Plains, where the Sepik's floods do not reach that extensive sago stands are found. This is the homeland of the Sawos language speakers.

The River, its lakes, lagoons and waterways, the homeland of the Iatmul people, on the other hand, is rich in fish and other water-based foods. For both groups to enjoy a balanced diet, a three-day trade cycle has evolved. The origins of this trade cycle are so ancient that it is the subject of an array of Sawos myths described below. An outcome of the trade has been the capacity of middle Sepik communities to develop the huge villages and complex villages that exist today. Failure of the market system, on the other hand, as discussed in this chapter, has in the past, resulted in the disintegration of some communities:

The origins of trade myth - Suat and Kaman. *Suat and Kaman were two sisters. Suat was down at the water [The Sepik River] and she had no food other than fish and pitpit. The sago will not grow there. The woman [Kaman] here [in the Sepik Plains] had plenty of food and said to Suat "When the ground came up [at the creation] we lived well and ate our fill. Does your child live well? Suat answered "No. He is hungry as there is not enough food".*

Kaman then replied "OK you gather fish for two days and I will trade with you on the third." Thus, the market at Kabiwan near Wereman was established. Everywhere had plenty of food except the River area itself. We feed them, as they were strong only from drinking milk. Now [with trade] they are really strong and they got their fighting forces together and came in here and fought us. We are mad people – we feed them and they fight us.²

Writer's note: Whereas the Iatmul and Sawos women trade with each other every three days to ensure each group has a balanced diet. The Iatmul and Sawos men are traditional enemies and the source of the heads required for traditional ceremonies, as explained in Chapter 13.

The origins of Sago – Mai'imp. *Before Mai'imp came to the market, the women were already there. There were two kinds of women. Boimandalagu women had hair on their bodies, and Kwanigalaktu women had no hair on their bodies.¹*

As Mai'imp approached in his canoe, the women heard his rumbling noise and called out in a half sigh, half cry noise. They all laid down. Mai'imp came to the market site and his son

¹ Is this an ancient memory of differences between Melanesian and Asian-origin Austronesian racial features?

Gumai'imp stayed in the canoe. Mai'imp has sexual intercourse with all the women with hair on their bodies, then he had intercourse with all the women without hair.

When he had finished he went down to the water and gave all the women fish. The women took their fish and went home. The men did not go to the market, the women arranged that for themselves. Mai'imp came to the market time and again and had intercourse with the women each time before giving them fish.

The men did not know how the women got the fish at the market, they were suspicious, so they sent a child to go and spy on their mothers and other market women. They told the female child "you go and cry and they will take you in". The child did so and the women allowed the child to accompany them. The women reached the market and took off their grass skirts, and Mai'imp came ashore. The women had heard his rumbling noise as he approached, and they made their noise in return. The women hid the female child under their heaped grass skirts. The women with hair on their bodies had sex with Mai'imp first, and then the women without hair on their bodies. He finished both groups of women and went down to the water. All the fish and water food came up and the women again had their fish to take home.

But the hidden child had moved the skirts aside so she could see, and she said to herself "Ah! all my mothers have come here for this wrong [sin], So this is how we get the fish and water food we eat. Why did we not know this?" Back in the village the child went into the family house and her father came and asked the child "What happened at the market?"

The child replied. "Oh Papa, a good man came, he was not like you, he was nice, he had a nice face. He laid all the women down and had sex with them all, and then he went down to the water and got the water food and gave it to them and then he returned to the water.

*The father heard his child's talk and went to the haus tambaran and beat the garamut to summon all the men to discuss this matter. He said. "Ah! Men, my child has spoken out about the market down below with Mai'imp. Mai'imp does not give the fish away for nothing – he has sex with our women as payment, and we eat these fish! What are we to do?" There was much talk about this and then they decided "We will carve two images and make magic over them, and bury them in the earth of the river bank, upon which he walks. They carved the images and held their singsings over them and put them in holes, and they also put water in the holes. They buried the images and they stayed there. Mai'imp came and made his noises and the women lay down in their two groups, and as Mai'imp came into the market he stepped over the two buried images. The images leapt up and fought Mai'imp and he fell down. The child Gumai'imp leapt into the water and hid. The images cut Mai'imp and he was dead, and so ended Mai'imps market arrangement.³ **Photos overleaf:***

Sago making: top left, Once the sago palm is felled and bark is removed to expose the starch core of the trunk, a stone bladed sago mallet pulverises the starch core to the consistency of sawdust.

Top right. The pulverised sago is placed on a palm frond structure with a filter at its end, made from hessian like tissue from under a coconut frond. Water is added from a bark container.

Bottom right. The moistened sago is kneaded by hand to release a milk like liquid which passed through the filter to remove any fibre, to be captured in a bark or wooden container on the ground below. The sago settles to the bottom of the container to a heavy consistency similar to how corn flour settles out in water.

Bottom left. At the end of the day the sago is bundled up and taken away for consumption.

These photos were taken in 1965 in a sago swamp in the Amanab sub district. West Sepik District



The mythical extension of the story above *When the ancestors killed Mai'imp, food became in very short supply, but through the strength of Suat and Kaman, the food became plentiful again. [It happened like this] When Mai'imp died Suat and Kaman cried because, then there was no good food. They cut down Limbom and other trees and washed the pith, but no food eventuated.*

Then two Europeans² appeared before them and asked "Why are you working so hard?" They asked and the sisters replied "We are seeking food, we do not have good food." To which the man responded "Oh Sorry... You can look at me." They looked and he continued "Yes, it is me, I did not go completely away. Yes, it is me Mai'imp." Whereupon he had intercourse with both of them. They put the bark container between their legs and Mai'imp's semen went in with the pith and they washed the sago. They kneading the sago pith with their hands, and the sago formed as good solid food. They then looked around but the two Europeans had vanished.⁴

ooo000ooo

An alternate version... *a small area of land appeared above the water. Sago grew on this small island. The women came and cut the sago. This is the story in the change of the markets; from Mai'imp's market and now we are talking about the sago market. This was the alternative the people found after Mai'imp was dead and his market was finished.*

One woman cut the sago and it fell and grew longer. One woman stood at the head of the sago, another stood at the foot of the palm and a third woman stood at the middle. They took the bark off and they pulverised the sago. They took the pulverised sago to the water and washed it, and the sago we now know appeared... They took the sago to their houses and later took it to the market.

The Mai'imp market was the "Old Testament" law [meaning mythological] and the sago market is the "New Testament" The people of the "Old Testament" are once again ground [dead and returned to the soil]. The sago they make [in New Testament times] they traded for fish, as we do now. Before that, there were no enemies, no death, no poison and no sorcery, but now in the "new Testament" time we have all these things. Do you understand what I am saying? Now the sago is Mai'imp's body we eat⁵." [Needless to say, Mai'imp was regarded as Jesus in the beliefs of Sawos Elders of the 1970s.]

A summation of middle Sepik market operations as they existed in January 1973 was written up by myself in Appendix F of Ambunti Patrol Reports No 8/1972-3 and Appendix B of report No 13/1972-73. While these descriptions are contemporary, they are believed to accurately reflect the sago/fish trade and related issues, as it existed immediately prior to the first western influence in the Sepik. If nothing else, these notes demonstrate just how all-encompassing the Middle Sepik fish/sago trade is. Map no 2 shows all the villages mentioned. The notes appear as follows

Ambunti Patrol report No 8/1972-73 – Main River – Appendix F⁶

The Sepik River in the Main River division runs through low lying country, which is almost completely inundated in time of "high-water". The result of this is that sago will not grow in any useful quantities along the river.

Thus, developed one of the most important features of Sepik life, the sago/fish marketing system. All villages market on a three-day basis – fish or make sago for two days and trade on the third. [With regard to fishing, as the fish quickly spoil in the tropical conditions, fish are caught on the first day and are smoked to preserve them on the second day and traded on the third day. Any

² The myth states two Europeans, but the context of the myth suggests one – the spirit of Mai'imp

fish taken from the fish basket traps on the third morning are taken along and traded as fresh fish] Trade is in the basis of one fish for one block of sago of equal value.

River women go in turns, and act as agents for other women who stay home. Upon return, social discussions at the canoe landing places take place concerning village events while the day's shopping is sorted out.

The marketing arrangements in force in 1972/3 were;

Iatmul villages

Nyaurengai & Kandingei

Yentchanmangua
Japanaut
Yambunumbu
Japandai
Korogo
Suapmeri
Indabu
Yentchan
Kanganaman
Parembei
Malingai
Tegoi

Trade with Sawos villages

Torembei & Wereman – each with each on a three-day basis.

Yanget
Wereman
Wereman [main market], Burui, Sengo.
Sengo, Wereman
Yamuk and Torembei No 1
Yamuk
At Marap – many Sawos communities trade
At Marap – many Sawos communities trade
At Marap – many Sawos communities trade
At Marap – many Sawos communities trade
At Marap – many Sawos communities trade
At Marap – many Sawos communities trade

Waterways used to access Markets

Wereman channel which joins the Sepik River opposite Japanaut.
Laterwan channel to Yanget and Torembei, which joins the Sepik River at Yentchanmangua
Marap channel which joins the Sepik River at Yentchan
Marap channel entrance to Sepik near Korogo
Wabiui channel to Sengo which flows into the Sepik between Yambanumbu and Japandai.

Relations between the Iatmul [fish traders] and Sawos [sago traders] are very intricate, as in most cases the traders are traditional enemies, who to some extent, overcome their warfare in order to facilitate trade. This is usually achieved by the exchange of a woman, or a group of river people sitting with the bush people. For example, enemies Parembei and Marap are able to trade as both communities have membership of the same clan. Legend has it that two brothers split; one to produce sago and the other to provide fish.

Repercussions over marketing and use of marketing channels can be far reaching. Examples:

1. Suapmeri killed members of their marketing partner Yamuk, in ancient times, resulting in the loss of the right to trade, ancient Suapmeri broke up as a result, with most Suapmeri people migrating to the Nyaula groups, and Angriman, Mindimbit Kaminimbit and Chambri.
2. Timbunmeri Island was colonised from Kandingei in the 1930s when Yentchanmangua fought Kandingei over the use of the channel to Yanget and Torembei. At Timbunmeri, the Kandingei settlers again had access to sago [The settlement of Timbunmeri Island is the subject of Sepik 4 Chapter 8]. Yentchanmangua itself had earlier been established from Nyaurengai as a guard post on that channel to deny Parembei access to it.

Ambunti Patrol report No 13/1972-73 – Burui Kunai & Sepik Plains – Appendix B ⁷*The age-old Sago/Fish exchange markets between the Kunai/Plains people [Sawos] and the River people [Iatmul] are probably the most important day to day activities in the lives of the Gawi Local Government Council [i.e. Middle Sepik] people. Any local politics or dispute can be expected to have*

a market arrangement close to the heart of it, or a market will be a means of mediation. In cases where market arrangements are terminated, relations are usually very bad.

Sawos market arrangements in place as of 1972/3

<u>Sawos village.</u>	<u>Market with</u>	<u>Market place</u>
Aurimbit Slei 1 & 2 Nogatimbi Kosimbi Torembei no 1 Miambei, Yakiap	Korogo and sometimes Parembei, Suapmeri, Malingai, Indabu, Yenchan	Dumasaun [near Korogo school] & Magro in Slei area during dry season
Yakiap, Sarum	Korogo	Kambangua in the Yamuk area.
Yamuk	Yenchan, Malingai Suapmeri, Kanganaman, Parembei	Sapwi or Pangan channel near Marap
Yamuk Marap 1 & 2	Korogo, Malingai, Suapmeri	Palingau In the dry season
Yamuk Marap 1 & 2	Malingai & Suapmeri Parembei, Indabu, Yenchan	Panga- wet season Bumbia & Sapwi -Pangan channel.
The Marap market is exclusively with Parembei each Wednesdays, and with all comers on Saturdays when:		
Sarum, Yakiap, Nogosop, [& dry season] Aurimbit, Kosimbi and Namangoa Nogosop	Tegoi, Kanganaman, Yenchan Parembei, Malingai, Suapmeri. Yenchan, Parembei [week days only]	Pangan Channel Walimbalwa, Kalimbalwa on Tugwa channel
Gaikarobi Vagiput	Kanganaman Yentchanmangua	Kinkimbit Yawia near Parchi River.
Torembei 2 Yanget	Kandingei Korogo, Nyaurengai, and Yenchanmangua	Bijik River Yawia & Korogo
Nambagoa	Yenchanmangua, Korogo	Yawia, Korogo and Malinjo.
Kimba, Nagotimbi, Wosera, Yangoru Bensim, Kampupu	Japanaut, Jambanumbu Japanaut, Jambanumbu	Benjintupa Benjintupa & Malinjo

Sengo, migrated from Parembei/Malingai area in the mid-19th century and has suffered at the hands of River people. Trade relations existed with Yambanumbu and Japandai until a dispute in 1962/3. Trade was broken off, and as at 1972/3 trade had not resumed.

Jama, Bangwingei, Maingugu and Moi ceased trading at the same time as Sengo. Since then, Jama has recommenced limited trade with Yambunumba and Japandai at a site called Yaubumbo. Bangwingei and Maingugu which are collectively known as Manja, have commenced trade with the Manambu speakers at Avatip.

Burui and Maiwi Neither are involved in the sago/fish trade. Burui ceased trading over strained relations with river groups, and Maiwi claims to be self-sufficient. A truer statement for the

Maiwi situation might be that around 1900 AD they squatted on Burui land³ and suffered raids from Burui and Japanaut. Maiwi is now a feared sorcery community and are not on good terms with either the Sepik or the Plains people; to cut sago to trade would anger Burui and to catch fish to trade would annoy Japanaut. Their best approach seems to be to exist as quietly as possible.

Two major cash markets also exist in the area- Pagwi Patrol Post and Korogo. While the priority is cash, some level of barter also takes place at these venues,

Pagwi Patrol Post market. All Middle Sepik groups as well as buyers from the Maprik sub district, as well as canoe travellers from as far as the Chambri Lakes come to attend this market.

End Notes Chapter 18

¹ S.Harrison – The Mask of War – Manchester University Press 1993 Page 78

² Informant Kwonji of Burui – Bragge Sepik research notes Vol 18 page 167/168

³ Informant Kolion of Nogosop – Bragge Sepik Research notes vol 19 page 252

⁴ Informant Kwonji of Burui – Bragge Sepik research notes Vol 18 page 174

⁵ Informant Kolion of Nogosop – Bragge Sepik Research notes vol 19 page 253

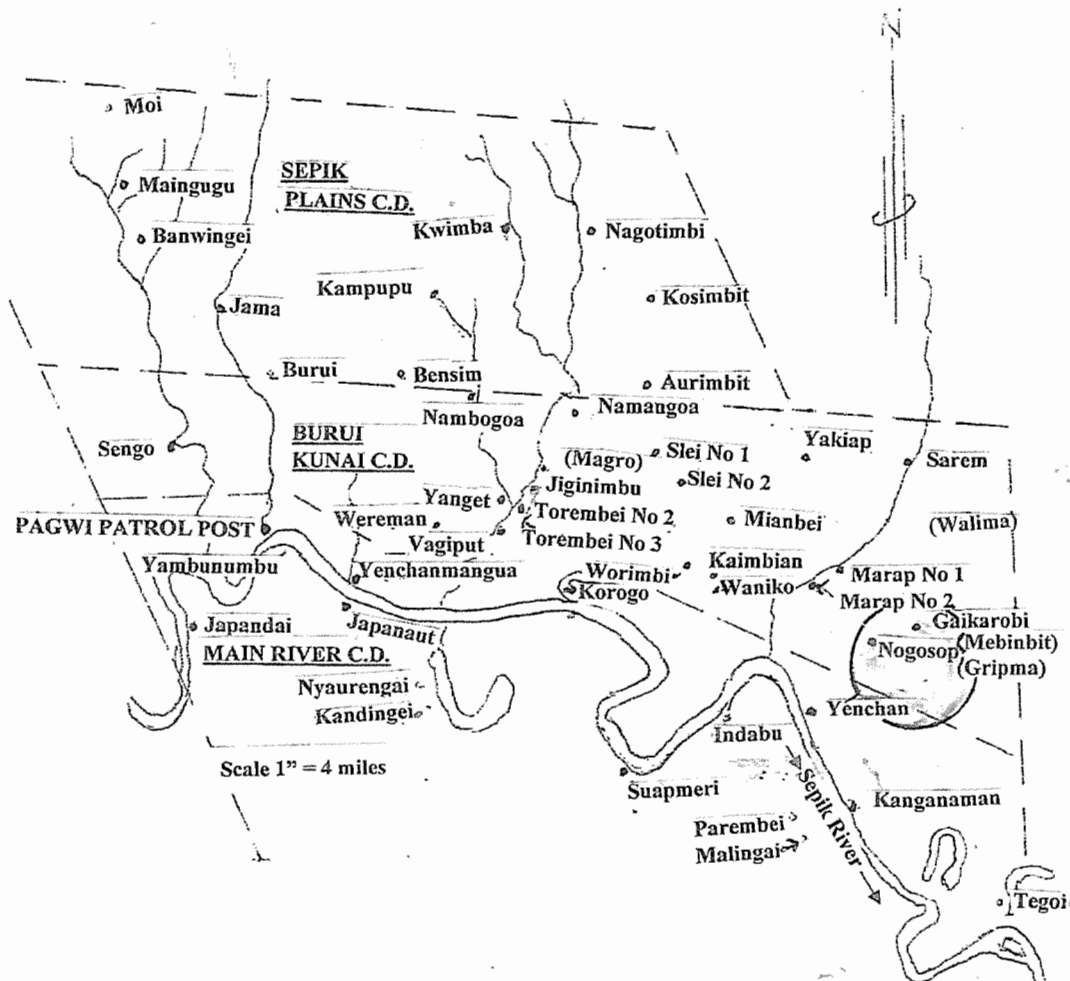
⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 – Ambunti Patrol Report No 8/1972-3 Appendix F

⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 – Ambunti Patrol Report No 13/1972-3 Appendix B

³ Maiwi was a daughter village of Nyaurengai and they lived south of the Sepik until they were raided and heavily defeated by a combined Japandai-Kwoma fighting force, as described in Sepik 2 Chapter 26. The survivors crossed the Sepik River and settled on Burui land.

Sepik 1 Chapter 19 Sawos - From Mebinbit to Gripma to Nogosop & Gaikarobi.

Most of the research that went into this and subsequent Sawos chapters, was conducted during my 32-day Ambunti Patrol No 13/1972-73 in January and February 1973.



That patrol covered the two Ambunti census divisions inhabited by Sawos speaking communities; the Burui Kunai division, and Sepik Plains division. For these Sawos chapters, and for the following, concerning another member of the Ndu family, the Iatmul, necessary reading includes Sepik 1 Chapters 16 & 17:

- 16. *The Creation Myths of the Ndu and ancient migrations to populate the World, &*
- 17. *Ndu social structure and reflections of an apparent Austronesian past.*

Ndu language family members acknowledge mythical Mebinbit, the place of the creation, to be near the Sawos villages of Nogosop and Gaikarobi, and as is fitting for such a sacred place, Sawos philosophers from these villages provide fascinating religious interpretations [Sepik 4 Chapter 59.]

While the Iatmul reside primarily along the Sepik River banks, the Sawos reside in swamp and plains environments adjacent to and immediately north of the Iatmul. Each group interacts with the other in regular trade cycles which ensure that both communities enjoy a balanced diet of Sawos produced sago and fish caught by the Iatmul as described in Sepik 1 Chapter 18.

These parallel communities extend eastward from the Ambunti district downstream into the Angoram district, with the most easterly Iatmul village being Tambanum, which interacts with the

adjacent inland Sawos villages Kamangau and Koiwut. The current Chapter relates only to the Sawos villages in the Ambunti District, presumably the “West” and “Burui” dialects listed below

Whereas the Iatmul language has three acknowledged dialects, the writer has been able to find a more recent Sawos analysis than that of Laycock in 1973:

No real survey has been undertaken, and there may be at least two separate languages subsumed under Sawos, though all villages listed [as Sawos] are part of the Ndu family...indications are of the following dialects – East, Central, Chimbian, Koiwud, West and Burui.¹

ooo000ooo

Nogosop

Informant Kolion, mentioned above, continued his saga from Sepik 4 Chapter 59, by stating:

After they killed Mai'imp the people ran away, and as they went the mother [not clearly identified, but presumably the mythical Niamei] gave them the clans and the languages.²

Both Nogosop and Gaikarobi lived at an ancient place called Gripma and each left there to settle their present village sites probably five generations prior to 1972/3. The reason for this was stated to be over-population.

Fighting between Gripma, Parembei and Sarum is believed to have started over children in the kunai [grass areas] throwing grass spears at each other. Parembei raided Gripma regularly.

There was also a village called Walima which was to the north of Gaikarobi. Gripma [and Nogosop and Gaikarobi?] fought the Walima people until they were extinct. Some Walima survivors fled to Sarum. Until that time Sarum was a brother village. Gripma/Nogosop/Gaikarobi told Sarum to stay out of it as Waniko survivors were pursued. Sarum defended them, so fighting against Sarum also started. This fighting only ended when the white men came³.

Gaikarobi

In the beginning it was dark and a man and a woman worked. When it became light another man and women worked. These four made all the stories associated with this original place [of origin] All men of New Guinea and other countries came from Gaikarobi, which should be called Nogosap [Admin pronunciation – Nogosop]. Nogosap was a man. Nogosap and Nogosime are the same name...

Before, all things and people lived in the water; there was nothing but water. One man on a small piece of ground in the water moved back and forth...The thunder rumbled in the clouds and the man knew the water was about to recede. The water went down and became what we know as the sea. New Guinea was formed thus – by this small piece of land growing.

The man continued to strike the ground making a noise like thunder, soon the water would break and the people to come up. The ground turned into a woman and the people who populated the world came from her vagina. This is how my father explained the story to me.

The lone man, before the arrival of the first woman, moaned to himself “Who can help me with my work? I alone, am not enough! How can I have a family?” The Niaui¹ man came up, and he was of the right hand, then the Niamei man came and he was of the left hand. They came with their sisters from the ground. The Niamei couple worked in the dark and the Niaui couple worked in the night.

¹ Niaui and Niamei are of course the moieties which divide each Ndu society into opposing halves

[Writer's note: This was a story told to me at Ambunti by Councillor Dambwi of Gaikaroki shortly before Ambunti Patrol No 13/1972-3, and Informant Kolion seems to continue telling the story once the patrol reached Gaikarobi]

ooo000ooo

Sepik 1 Chapter 18 tells the story of the origins of the traditional sago/fish markets with cult hero Mai'imp exchanging both sago and fish for sexual intercourse with all the women with hair on their bodies and all the women with no hair on their bodies. The Nogosop version of story tells how Mai'imp was killed and his son Gumai'imp escaped by leaping into the water.

In a Gaikarobi version, Mai'imp's son is known as Marakumban, and in the water he took refuge under the upturned canoe. The story continues: *Mai'imp was dead and the canoe with the man in it we call Sangi [of the Nogusimei]. We can ask Sangi anything – its name is Marakumban and it's second name is Sangi. He is also called Maru, the man the white men call God. His full name was Marakumban*

Now, after putting betel nut and lime [offerings] I push the canoe out into the water and paddle very gently. Then I ask my question and the movement of the canoe will be Sangi answering either positively or negatively. We cannot see Sangi.

As described previously, with Mai'imp dead the men took the sacred objects and control of ceremonial life from the women and killed them, just one woman escaped... The Gaikarobi version continues: *The people went to live at Jiginbit. The trouble had occurred at the Rami market place.*

Jesus' true name is hidden, so we have many names for him, Jesus, Mai'imp. Kurumban, Nogosap, Nogusimei. Mambarakumban and Nondimeri.

Mai'imp was the boss of Papua New Guinea, but when they killed him all his good laws vanished and the white men [created at Mebinbit] also went away and left New Guinea. The black men also went away because the only men with understanding had all gone. Only Garandimi - big brother and Yangandimi - little brother were left.

The sides of the market – Kwanjigatur and Beimatur.

Kwanjigatur was the side of the market for the women without any hair on their vaginas and Beimatur was the side of the market for the women with hair on their vaginas. The ones with hair were of Niamei, those without hair were Niaui.

Although Mai'imp is dead, they still heard him at the market site at night if we go there in canoes, we hear him. We do not cut cane or building materials there, because if we did, we believe we would all become sick. It is a sacred place for all men of New Guinea, Australia and everywhere, so we do not cut the bush. The market site belongs to the Lenga and Uriap clans. I [informant Dambwi] look after the place.

Young men who do not know the stories, hear Mai'imp and they come back and say they heard a sorcery spirit...I am not afraid of Mai'imp. He is just an ancestor, so I go hunting in the sacred bush.⁴

ooo000ooo

Then they made the second market. Garandimi and Yangandimi stayed at Mebinbit, then they moved to Gripma. They agreed that the laws of the first market were good. They decided to put a native market at Yenchan, called Wamimbaru and Kamimbaru. One of these markets was near the haus tambaran and the other was near the present rest house site.

Writer's note. *The Gaikarobi claim that Sawos markets were established on*

the river bank at Yenchan makes the point that Parembei village had not yet started to fragment at that time and the Iatmul village of Yenchan did not exist.

Trade for stone Parembeis, Aiboms and Chambris came to market there. They did not trade fish and eels, we wanted [and traded for] stone for tools and monoliths. We traded for stone as we had no stone of our own.

During Ambunti patrol 13 1972-3, the writer conducted a preliminary survey of where monoliths are located in the Sawos and adjacent Iatmul areas. The survey map appears at the end of this chapter. Most villages with monoliths were noted to have a number of them. Also, ancient village sites such as Gripma, reportedly have monoliths. Regrettably the patrol did not have time to visit the Gripma or other ancient sites.

Ambunti Patrol No. 13/1972-73

APPENDIX 'G' - Page 18



5. STONE Monoliths

See Page 9 Appendix 'A'

Stones at **WOKIMBI**, the tallest stands 6' out of the ground. These stones came originally from Chambrri. The stones are of village power significance and were the central feature in head hunting dances.



Stones at **Kanganaman** wrapped in coconut fronds to protect them from canoes travelling in the flood

The mythical introduction of sago to Parembei. A Parembei man Weikaviandu, with a boil of his scrotum was banished from Parembei. *The Parembeis did not know of us people [the Sawos]... Weikaviandu... had been living in the bush and eating whatever he could find. Garandimi found him and told Yangandimi and they fed him sago. Back in Parembei, the people did not eat sago; they ate greens and fish.*

They [Garandimi and Yangandimi] agreed to trade with Weikaviandu, who went back [presumably to Parembei] and hid sago in a garamut. Weikaviandu's brother found the sago and from there the sago/fish trade developed between the Iatmul and the Sawos.

Fighting started at this time. We [Gaikarobi] fought up at Marap. Then we [our ancestors] heard a report that a raid from Chambri and Aibom had killed many Parembei women at a market. The Parembei men were away, having gone up beyond Marap. The raiders lined the bodies of the Parembei women and stuffed the vaginas with limbum shoots. The bodies lay with heads pointing towards the Sepik and legs towards the bush. The Chambri and Aibom left the heads on, so the Parembei men could recognise their women. The Parembei men put their women's bodies in their canoes to the village and buried them.

Due to this incident, the brothers Garandimi and Yangandimi ended the market on the river bank and brought the market inland to Kwimo. They erected the haus tambaram Mebuwari on that site. Then Sugundimi, a man from Gripma came to hunt a pig at his sago patch. He saw a man called Uwaguson who came to Kwimo with his brothers. They prepared to fight. At 7pm they beat a croton onto the ground. Sugundimi spied on these Parembei raiders, who had come to seek paybacks for their dead women. Sugundimi set a mantrap with a spear. He put fire into a bamboo and put it on the track. He called from the dark in Parembei dialect "I have no tobacco, give me a smoke,"

Uwaguson, decorated in kinas and cassowary feathers, was still beating the tanget [croton]. After someone gave Sugundimi tobacco, he went to another fire and begged for betelnut. They gave it to him with mustard and lime. He went to another fire and begged again for tobacco. [With his reconnaissance done] he went back and selected an ambush site. As the Parembeis came he speared one of them in the neck and the rest ran away. The Parembei attack did not eventuate and the raiders fled back to Parembei.

Ambalangwi of Nogosop took the body of the dead Parembei beck to Parembei and gave it to the people there to bury. They put him on a bed [platform] to rot at Yenchan. That market arrangement ended over this incident.

They moved to a new market site at Kapartu. Yenchan and Parembei marketed there. You [the writer] saw this market – it has two areas close together. The area this side belongs to Yenchan and the other side is where we market with Parembei.⁵

ooo000ooo

Biat and Ganja

Ancestors Biat and Ganja made a market with Kanganaman when Nogosop made the market at Kapartu. Biat went and met Ganja and they arranged the market, which is still in use. Ganja used to eat pitpit, greens and water foods. Biat lived in this area and his dog found Ganja when his dog was sniffing after a pig. Ganja asked the dog "Did you come with a man?" He took fish, pitpit and water flowers and tied them around the neck of the dog. The dog returned and Biat saw the food and he thought "This dog did not just find this food. This is human's food, a man must have tied it around the dog's neck."

He untied the food from around the dog's neck and in its place, he tied cooked pig meat and fried sago. To the dog he said "Right, take this back to the man you met.". Biat followed the dog through the bush and along the creek and came upon the man Ganja, who saw the dog and untied the food from around the dog's neck and ate it. He noted "The men of the bush eat very good food" He found the sago and pig meat sweet to his taste.

Biat arrived and Ganja was afraid, but Biat said "No, I will not spear you. You sent me something, and I followed the dog back to you. It is the same as you giving me a tanget." [a device to arrange a meeting]. They became friends and Ganja said "I will not give it to you now. We will mark a day for a market."

The market started. The [Kanganaman] women would put down baskets of fish and the [Gaikarobi] woman would put down her sago. At first, they exchanged whole bilums of fish for whole bilums of sago. This resulted in some women missing out if for example, there were more bilums of fish than there were of sago. Now they break the contents and trade certain ratios of different trade items.²

There were individual names for days in a week-like cycle; Saseve, Maraseve etc. They prepared food on Saseve, but would not trade on Saseve because that was the day they speared the Parembi man in the neck at the first market. Saseve, was sort of like a holiday. We are allowed to meet on all the other days.⁶

The market with Kararau.

This market is ancient. When we were at war with Kararau, we did not trade. We were putting the finishing touches to a new haus tambaran at Nogosop, and Kwaru was playing a flute. A Kararau man called Lituman, was spearing fish in Lake Labamba. This lake is near Mebinbit and Kanganaman, Kararau and us eat and gather from this lake. It is also an area of strong disputes between these three places.

The Kararau fisherman heard the flute and thought it was a water spirit. He put his ear to the water to listen and he heard the sound coming from the bush "This is a nice flute my liver is bugged" [apparently the liver comment was supposed to mean infatuation]. He did not think he might be killed, he just followed the found of the flute "That sound is coming from Mebinbit. I must go there."

Lituman had a canoe full of fish. He paddled to Mendo and on to Wabuna and on to Timbunke. He came further and went ashore and he took bamboo, betelnut and tree bark with him and he went to the haus tambaran. The men there stood ready to fight. He went inside peeling a betelnut and he spat the husk out and said "I have brought you a canoe load of fish. I heard your wonderful music and I came. Go down and take the fish I have brought for you."

They went and took the fish, bringing them to the haus tambaran. Lituman then said "If you want to fight me, you can". A man from our place called Uriap gave the Lituman betelnut and mustard to eat. After this ceremonial chewing of betelnut Uriap said "We must respect and care for a man who came into an enemy camp." After the ceremonial chewing the people were forbidden to spear him. They divided the fish between all of the families.

Lituman's family back in Kararau waited for him and feared that Mindimbit people had killed him. They mourned and after a week passed they prepared a feast. Then Kwaru, who had played the flute came with Lituman in his canoe. The Mindimbit people had decorated Lituman with native wealth. They cut his hair, painted his skin and decorated him with bird of paradise and cassowary feathers. His arms had armllets and tambu shells on his legs. The flute player went undecorated. The two of them went back to Kararau.

The Kararau people welcomed Lituman and sent Kwaru home with a tanget for a market at Siluva. This market is still in use. The market traded food stuffs, special bamboo for making flutes and [surgical] knives, used for blood letting from foreheads to ease head-aches. The two communities no longer fought and have lived in peace from then on.³⁷

ooo000ooo

² Also fundamental as the trade developed of were individual trade relationships between latmul and Sawos women.

³ While this may have been so, these interviews, elsewhere show that that latmul Kararau and latmul Parambei were longstanding traditional enemies.

Another account of Mai'imp

In the previous market arrangement Mai'imp had brought all the things of the water to trade; eels, prawns, fish, crocodile. After the trouble at the market the men waited in ambush and tried to kill Mai'imp, but he managed to avoid them. In the first market Mai'imp traded the shell wealth from the sea and the people used this to pay bride price. The second market traded the food from the water for sago as we do now. Mai'imp started the market with a five tanget arrangement [five tanget arrangement is not explained]. Before it came free, but with the death of Mai'imp

It was the wrong of Mai'imp that we pay now, by having to work hard for our fish and water food, we had to work for it. Before we did not have to fish or hunt or trade with other villages. Now we do.

Dambwi was Mai'imp's equal and they walked around together. Dambwi was of the Amass clan. Dambwi had a daughter who was a European woman and Mai'imp used to have sexual intercourse with her and Dambwi told Mai'imp to leave his daughter alone. But Mai'imp did not leave her alone. She liked Mai'imp and did not think much of her father; Mai'imp was her man.

[Accordingly] Dambwi collected vines and ginger and made magic and a singsing over them. He put the vines and ginger on a track where Mai'imp was to walk, but Mai'imp saw it and went another way. Dambwi was annoyed at this failure and tried again on another track. Mai'imp was able to keep avoiding these charms.

Dambwi now carved a piece of wood and made a singsing over it. He put the be-spelled wood into the water. He tested it by throwing some limbum into the water and the be-spelled wood leapt up and broke the limbum in two. He told the be-spelled wood "...When Mai'imp comes, cut him."

Mai'imp and the woman came in canoe and as they came Mai'imp said "Woman, I have a premonition that we will be harmed somehow. Something to do with falling in the water or falling on the ground." She said "Let's go back then." But Mai'imp said "No". They decided to go to her father's place and as they passed place where the be-spelled object was in the water, it leapt up and broke the canoe and broke Mai'imp's leg. He and the woman climbed into the overturned canoe and he asked "What was that thing that hit me?" His leg was swelling up. He speared the be-spelled object and then he speared the woman. He said "We live together and I bring you around with me. Now your father and others have become enemies and attacked me." Then Mai'imp died. Dambwi and others speared him that day.

Before, there were no laws, there was no fighting, no weapons, no sorcery and ginger was not used. There was no murder. Mai'imp was the cause of all these things like death, ginger, sorcery and jealous coming about. For this reason, we people today, are always in court, paying fines, or going to gaol. You white men still hold the original laws, and you are free from our troubles.⁸

Writer's note. This version of the Mai'imp myth paints cult hero in a completely different light, but reaches the same conclusion of a lost ancient utopia.

A completely different interpretation of "Mebinbit." – food for thought.

...Mebinbit means East. [from here – Torembei] Yamuk is Mebinbit, but Wereman is called Kambiambit...Kambiambit is where the sun goes down. Kambiambit is the second name, Mebinbit was the first name.

QN. What do you call the direction we call North?

ANS. *Yambunmanga – Wind comes from that direction. Poinmanga is what we call south. It also has a wind. Yambunmanga blows and talks to Poinmangaat and then Poinmanga replies back.*

QN. The suffix "Manga" indicated female. Are the winds female? **ANS.** *Yes all four winds are female -Yambunmanga, Poinmanga Mebinbtorli and Kambiatorli.*

Writer's note.

The entrance of the Sepik inland sea into the open ocean beyond was roughly where the Sepik River mouth is today, east of today's middle Sepik. The Sawos and Iatmul ancestors who we assume met and traded with the Austronesian navigators, would have seen their canoes coming from the east. Given revolutionary impact the arrival of, and interaction with, the Austronesians must have had on the Papuan residents of the shores of the Sepik Inland Sea; has mythology equated this impact with the creation. If so is "Mebinbit" a direction rather than a place.

ooo000ooo

Burui Kunai Division villages

Torembei

Marap

Sengo [The story of Sengo is told partly in Sepik 1 Part 2.

Wereman

Nambagoa

Yanget

Vagiput

Namangoa

Slei

Sarum

Worimbi

Waniko

Kaimbian

Sepik Plains Division villages

Burui

Jama

Yamini

Banwingei

Maingugu

Moi

Kwimba

Kampupu

Bensim

Kosimbit

Aurimbit

Nogotimbi

End Notes Chapter 19

¹ D.C.Laycock – Sepik Languages Checklist and Preliminary Classification ANU 1973 Page 27.

² Kolion of Nogosop – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 P 257

³ General discussion with Nogosop elders – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 P 257

⁴ Councillor Dambwi and assembled elders of Gaikarobi Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 P 263-265

⁵ Councillor Dambwi and assembled elders of Gaikarobi Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 P 266

⁶ Councillor Dambwi and assembled elders of Gaikarobi Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 P 266

⁷ Councillor Dambwi and assembled elders of Gaikarobi Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 P 266/7

Sepik 1 Chapter 20 Sawos – The Wereman mother, daughter and related villages.

Wereman.

We originated on this land Wereman. We are descended from one man and one woman, whose names we do not know. When the population was large the Wereman haus tambaran came up out of the ground, its name was Wereman and our people are named after it. The haus tambaran was made of stone. All the posts had markings on them and all the chairs were of stone like cement.

The men made copies of the markings, carved in wood, and when they had done this, the haus tambaran went down into the ground with plenty of men in it and they were lost. The men had been sleeping in the haus tambaran, and next day the people saw only a hole. We do not cut bush or make fires near the hole.

A bad spirit ate [a man] and rubbed blood on a post of the haus tambaran, while the haus tambaran was asleep. The bad spirit said “Hey! You ate this man”. The haus tambaran said “Hey! I was asleep. You are lying. I did not eat him.” The people said “But the blood is on your post, we think you ate him.” The argument raged with the haus tambaran denying eating the man. Finally, the haus tambaran said “Ah you people make too much talk and accusations.” It then vanished into the ground taking men with it.

[After the mission came] the priest came and looked and said there was plenty of evil spirits [masala] in the hole. He came back and sprinkled holy water and now the place is OK. Before the water was deep and black, now it is harmless.

From here the people went and settled the land. First there was Wereman, then people from here settled Kandingei and Nyaurengai. and then Chambri

Writer’s note: There does appear to have been an ancient connection between Wereman and Aibom Island in the Chambri lakes. *Wereman...is also a men’s house name. It is said to have been the very first men’s house to exist; it was not built by men but appeared together with the earth. It is situated therefore in the landscape of primal events, right in the notch between the two Aibom hill tops, and when the river tried to break through the mountain at this place, it was swept down on the other side...The origin, position and fate of Wereman indicate that it marks, in the Aibom view, the very beginning of the history of the hill...it is not known in Aibom what kind of people – or beings – actually sat on the benches in this primeval Wereman’s men’s house.¹*

All the Sepik River villages are recent except Kandingei and Nyaurengai. [It is said] that that the brother of a woman with a baby went down and established Kandingei, and then went on to establish Chambri.

The legend states that Chambri was in the front of the canoe and Kandingei was in the middle and steering the canoe was Wereman. Little brother went down and established Kandingei and Chambri and built the mountains. The story goes that he took a lot of new sago down and built the mountains. Big brother tried the same here, but he did not have enough new sago to build mountains here, just little hills as you have seen.

Also, from here people went to Nambagoa, Bensim, Kampupu, Yanget, Vagiput. Minjimbi [The bottom half of Wereman village]. The eagle clan broke away from Wereman and established Minjimbi. Wereman clan remained here and gave rise to the Wereman population, as did the eagle clan down there.

From here they took cane and established Kwimba, and the other places broke away and established villages throughout the kunai. Burui, Jama and Yamini also originated here. They took

separate languages and went on their own from here. The villages that went from here, went a long time ago and we do not know their actual stories of their migrations. We just have the handed-down stories that they originated from here.

Enemies and allies of Wereman.

Our enemies are at Nambagoa. Kampupu and Torembei were our allies. Our dispute with Nambagoa was over land; they tried to take our land. We also fought Yanget. These places came from here, but we fought them never-the-less because they were trying to take over our sago stands. The Sepik was not a real enemy. They came and fought the small places Vagiput and Yanget, but not the big place

Wereman was never driven off Wereman land. Fighting against us always took place in the bush. If people came here [the village] to fight, the spirits would protect us. The enemies would be hung up with sago needles and die in the bush.

Writer's note

One of these spirits is embodied in a two ft tall stone head called Tumu¹. This head is of unknown origin and is kept in the Councillor's haus tambaran.



A story tells how Manja, Kukuri² and Jama sent a big line to fight Jama. All these fighters died without cause, caught up in vines and prickles. They rotted and polluted the water, so the people had no fresh water. Our ancestors went and collected the heads and strung them on a cane and encircled the Wereman haus tambaran with them. Some heads were just heaped up and left.

This is the story why no one comes to fight at Wereman. If they want to kill us they do so when we are in the bush seeking food.

Nambagoa is on land we originally gave to Yanget. Nambagoa came and ate our sago. We sent Yanget to live next to them and to protect our sago stands. Vagiput holds the Wereman land down to the Yenchanmangua border.

Bensim was just yesterday. A woman from here went up there and got married, we ourselves were alive when the village was established. Daro of Nimbunkei married Kakakambun of Wereman.

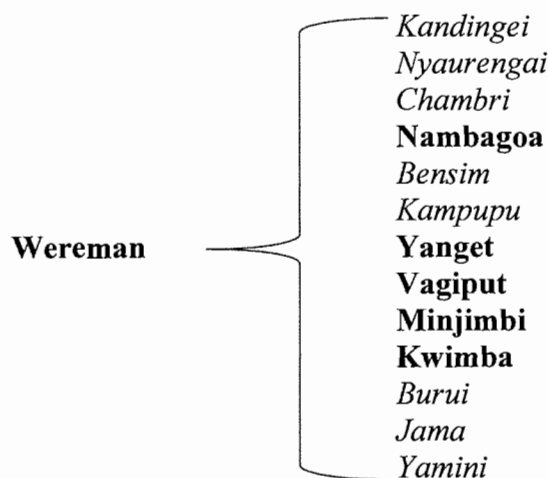
¹ During the Japanese occupation, for reasons unknown, the Japanese set about defacing this object.

² A place name not known to the writer

Two brothers, whose names we did not hear from our fathers established the [Wereman daughter] villages. Wereman clan was the mother and the eagle clan was the father. They married and had plenty of children.²

Wereman mother and daughter villages.

There is considerable disparity between mythical claims and accepted mutual knowledge of the mother/daughter relationship in the table below. For this reason, mythical daughter villages or those with uncertainty are shown thus *Chambri*, while accepted mutual knowledge daughter villages are shown thus **Vagiput**.



Yanget.

Our story is incomplete as we rely on the memories of people who are dead. You white men

We started at a place called Yambugonja, where, now they are making one work [i.e. Yangoru area where the Mt Turu Cargo cult was very active at the time of the patrol.] We came down and settled at Gaikarobi, then at Torembai and finally at Wereman, where we built a village called Kugui. Then we built this place – Yanget.

We are of the water down below (Sepik River) and so we have no food or sago rights and we rely upon the sago of our wives' clans.

Writer's note. Throughout the Iatmul and Sawos areas, and in association with the moieties, are many clans each with representations in many villages. It is assumed that the Yanget clans in question are affiliated with Iatmul, river villages, rather than Sawos plains villages.

We left Wereman and came here because there was a fight over a tumbuan [spirit figure] and they killed a man. The haus tambaran enclosure was fenced, but a woman saw the crotons on the tumbuan; bullroarers were sounded and they killed one man. So, we left and established ourselves at Yanget. Our ancestor was Tangwanauwi of Samiangwa clan. My own clan is Mondigo – a fish.

Vagiput also came from Wereman, but they are not descended from Tangwanauwi. The big brother stayed at Wereman and the small brother came to Yanget [meaning there is an on-going, but undefined relationship between Wereman and Yanget, with Wereman being the stronger party.] It is said that a woman started Yanget, but we do not know her name.

Fighting started at the same time Jesus was killed and we started head hunting... We stopped fighting only when the Australians came. Our fathers told us the white men were the small brother and the black men were the big brother. Big brother tried your kind of weapons and found them difficult to handle, so left them for small brother. He took the black palm spear and found it easier to handle. Small brother took the rifles and bombs you use in fighting. If our ancestors had taken these

things we would be equal now. When the white men came back we saw the guns and we wondered by our ancestors had not kept them for himself. We still use the spears Domagwa gave her men.

Domagwa was the mother, she made the spears and the stories that we still hold. She brought snakes and other things and wanted to establish the village, but the village was not properly established. Then she killed a man and the village became properly established. The men put on black face paint and wore flying fox skins. These things can only be done after a man has killed.

Domagwa was of the Sangarek clan, which is of the ground [indicating membership of the Niamei moiety] and we are descended from this clan. She killed frogs and snakes because she wanted to put on black paint. She struck the garamut, but the place remained silent. Then after killing a man, the garamut made noise and she made a singsing. Next day she put black paint on the men of Yanget and she said "Take these spears and fight!" The ancient ancestors did not fight, but after they killed Jesus³, fighting started.³

Enemies of Yanget.

Our enemies are, or were, Slei and Namangoa. We did not fight with them until Nambagoa, with Torembei No 3, invited us to help them against Kwanjtaki [Namangoa] and Slei. Later a Wereman conspiracy involved us against Kampupu.

They [Kampupu] washed sago and had a small men's house in the sago patch. Wereman burned the men's house down and told Kampupu that Yanget had done it. Wereman then killed two Yanget man, Mathias and Tambanagwan, and told us that Kampupu had done it. Wereman's aim was to get back Yanget land they claimed was theirs.

Yanget was unsure why Kampupu had allegedly killed these men, because in the past there had been peace between Yanget and Kampupu. Yanget went and burned the Kampupu hamlet called Masamoi. After this hamlet had suffered killing and burning, the Kampupu survivors met and built a new village. Yanget went there and killed and burned the place as well as burning their haus tambaran and ransacking the Kampupu belongings. Yanget came back and settled down.

Then, through Wereman's conspiracy ginger was given to Nambagoa against us. Kampupu and Nambagoa came twice. After the first raid, we did not think they would come a second time, but they did. They burned the village houses and we went to Vagiput to live. We gave them rings and gam shell wealth and we fastened the blades of our spears. This fighting stopped when the Australians came. Then Vagiput let us go back to our land and we rebuilt our village. You can see [in 1973] the mature coconuts of the old village.

Nambagoa became involved against us because a Yanget man, Maindambwi, gave ginger to Nambagoa because of an incident of sorcery against him. His sister and her husband died and he asked why they had been killed, and what he had done to deserve this sorcery. He went on to challenge "I want to see your strength in the light of day. I have seen your powers of darkness⁴". His target was the Nambut clan.

Writers note: a Niai moiety clansman present among the elders in this discussion said *They [presumably the Nambut clan] killed the men of my father's generation and my brothers and now there is only me left in our clan*

Sepik raids against Yanget.

The Sepik's came and fought us, but we had no means [not being canoe people] to do down and fight them. They would come and raid and then go and camp on the opposite bank of the Sepik

³ As mentioned in the previous Chapter "Jesus" had many names, one of which was Mai'imp, so the reflections of Christianity have been left in these chapters, as the utopia of ancient Sepik mythology is taken to be what matters. "In the light of day" means overt aggression, "Powers of darkness" refers to covert aggression through sorcery

River, where we could not reach them. Our enemy of the Sepik was Yentchanmangua. They traded with us and used the trade to get us to a place where they could kill us. This was a tactic used in pre-European times. After such a raid, trade would be suspended for up to five years. Then peace would be made and trade would recommence. They needed our sago.⁴

ooo000ooo

Nambagoa.

Like Yanget we gathered at Mebinbit in the ancestor's time; all places in New Guinea did. Now we have different languages. At Gaikarobiwe all people spoke the same language, but insects stung our mouths. The insect was called Sam and he caused the variety of languages we have now.

We [our ancestors] went to Vagiput, and then to Wereman where we assembled. We moved from there to Numbunkei⁵. We made camp there and later moved to Tinut, the Nambagoa ancestral village. On the way we [they] came to Bensim and the Kubuguta bush.... We moved from Kubuguta to Tinut. Later, in the time of my father and grandfather, my ancestors were afraid of the fighting going on and came down to Nambagoa. While we were at Tinut, Yanget came and fought us. We left Tinut we lived at a place called Kando but we were driven out of there by fighting. At Kamdo Wereman and Jama inflicted heavy losses on us and burned our village. Yanget took us in and later again gave us the Nambagoa land. Yanget wanted us here as a sentry post for themselves.

Our language is not the same as Yanget or Wereman, but is the same as Wosera and Jama. Our last migration was before German times, and fighting was still in full swing.⁵

ooo000ooo

Vagiput.

Our ancestors originated somewhere and came to Torembei and on to Wereman. At that time the ground was water, it was like the sea and the water dried up. My clan [moiety] is Niamei and we came first, Niaui [the opposite moiety] came later. Tanganauwi was here and he was of the water. My ancestor was Dambwi. The bush where Vagiput is now, had no people, so they dealt allocated the men and made Vagiput.

Torembei and Wereman were already established and the small places sprang up like plantations of these two big places. You know about this fashion, white men do it too; you see a good place and you put in a station there and allocate people. And so, it was that our ancestors gave rise to Vagiput. There was no fighting involved.

Qn. *Who was the ancestor who came and established Vagiput?*

Ans. *It was beyond memory. I do not know.*

Vagiput's moieties are Niamei and Niaui, there are many clans as well. The totems were also divided between the moieties. Niamei started the fashion of killing men. Domagwa sharpened the spears and gave them to men, who went and killed men. They decorated the haus tambaran and had a singsing. Domagwa started it all. She gave out the spears, the black paint and ginger. She told the people this would make them strong.

The people put long feathers in their hair and fought. They did not wash or cut their hair. They were more like spirits than men. Then you white men came and we changed to be like white men.

Vagiput had no real enemies of its own, we just followed other groups and helped them in their fights. We were allies with Wereman, and so was Yanget. The Sepiks only came to fight us, only when our own people invited them to do so.⁶ They would take women and kill children.

⁵ location unknown to the writer

⁶ Historic evidence does not support this statement.

We called in allies and paid them rings and gams and ginger for providing killing men. In return for these services a man had to kill pigs and give them to the men who helped him.

The order of settlement from Wereman was Vagiput, then Yanget. Both were a very long time ago and we do not remember names, we were all Weremans.⁶

Initiation. [also see Chapter 10]

Male initiation resulted in the same markings as Sepik initiation. We stopped doing this when some died when the bleeding caused death. We stopped when I was young.⁷ [estimated early 1920s]

ooo000ooo

Bensim.

In the beginning, our ancestors lived in the big bush and they came to the big place on top – Nimbunkei. The two ancestors were both old single men. Two girls had reached puberty and were in the initiation fence. The day came when they were to be taken down to be washed. They did this and came back and the singsing was held.

The two men heard this and came up by another creek. They heard the talk of the day the girls would complete their initiation. They wanted wives, so they set about making love charms. They wanted the new initiates, but they were inaccessible, always moving with a number of other people. The love charms were the feather decorations they put in their hair. The old men had white hair, so they died it black so the girls would think they were young men.

The singsing started about 4 pm and the two men mingled with the people of the village. At about 8 or 9 pm they took their feathers off and the girls saw them and noticed that they were not the same as the people of their village and wondered from where they had come. The love charms were strong and the girls had long since been smitten by them. They wanted the old men. They decided to wait until it was darker and then they would take the feather decorations and follow the old men and hold their hands. They took the decorations from the heads of the men and put them in a safe place. They told the men “We do not know what place you are from.”

They replied “You would not know. We live in the bush, and later you will know our place. We have plenty of food. He killed and share plenty of pigs and we work together.” The girls made a promise to go with the old men. Their shell decorations were weighing them down making escape difficult. They went to their parents and said “Mama. Papa, these shells are too heavy around my neck. I want to take them off and put them safely in your bilum.”

The father said “No leave them on. And when you marry, you will wear this wealth also.” But the girls took all the decorations off until they were naked. The people were all there gathered. The men told the girls to bring some fire materials so they could light a torch to follow the creek by which they had come. One girl stood guard while the other got the fire.

The girls did not know where they were going and the parents suspected nothing. The four of them went to the place of the men and they settled there. The girls talked together “There are no people here.” They saw plenty of food and shell wealth. They washed and the die came out of the men’s hair and the girls saw they had married old men. “We did not come to young men” they realised “We came to old men, but we came of our own desire. And we do not know the way back home.”

Both girls became pregnant...and had a boy and a girl. The children grew up and fund they had no one to marry, so they married each other. They did this with successive generations and the population grew.

The elders looked around and saw the place had no sago and not enough food to support the group. Just growing mamis was not enough to make their stomachs strong, and there was no motota

to thatch houses. The two elders followed the kunai plains up and found Nimbunkei. They saw a Kwila tree and went to it and decided that was a good place settle and they established Nimbunkei... They made gardens, but then they decided that just one village was not enough. Big brother said to little brother "I think we should follow this kunai down and see what we find." They did this and came to where Bensim is now. They decided it was a good place, and claimed it.

Then they went further east. They came to the land where later Wereman and Nambagoa were in dispute, but that is our bush. They went around a hill and found there was sago growing on both sides. They decided not to settle there but to keep the area as a hunting and gathering area. They heard a wild fowl crying out from the bush on the other side of waterway leading to Yanget. They decided this was a good place... They asked each other who would stay and who would go back to Nimbunkei. The little brother stayed at Nimbunkei and big brother stayed at the sago near Tinut in the Nambagoa area. They agreed that each would trade with the with the other.

"ÓK little brother when I have gathered sago or killed a pig, what will be do. It is too far to tell you by garamut" "Yes, big brother, when I burn the kunai and get food to give you. How will I let you know?" They decided to tighten a rope between the two places and each to hang shells on a light line from the rope. To contact each other, they would pull on the line and the shells would rattle.

So, Nimbunkei was the first place, Samba [Bensim] was the second place and Tinut was the third place. They decided that they had plenty of land and that no other place had rights to it. They would increase their population and give land to the new families as they evolved. So, the brothers agreed each would live separately on their own land and trade occasionally, and that each would die on their own land. That was the situation when our ancestors went down to Wereman. They found that Wereman had not planted any bush or bamboo for defence. They had just surrounded themselves with planted ginger, which will not stop a spear "Where will your women and children hide when your enemies come? You will be wiped out." Then they said "I have found a place for you, come outside". They then moved the Wereman people to where they live today.

The Wereman people are not really Weremans, some are Chambris and some are Torembeis. Wereman is up this end and Minjimbi is down at the canoe place. Torembeis live at Minjimbi and Cham bris live at Wereman. The ancestors said they would get some bamboo from Nimbunkei [also pronounced Nimble] and plant it to give the Weremans a place to hide.

The ancestor arranged trade and established bamboos at the Kambako market site. It was a site Wereman could trade with the Sepiks, including Japonium and with Bensim. We can give the Sepik's sago and they can give us fish. Thus, Wereman is our name, they lie if they say otherwise. **Writer's note.** In 1973 it was noted that there was a land dispute between Wereman and Bensim.

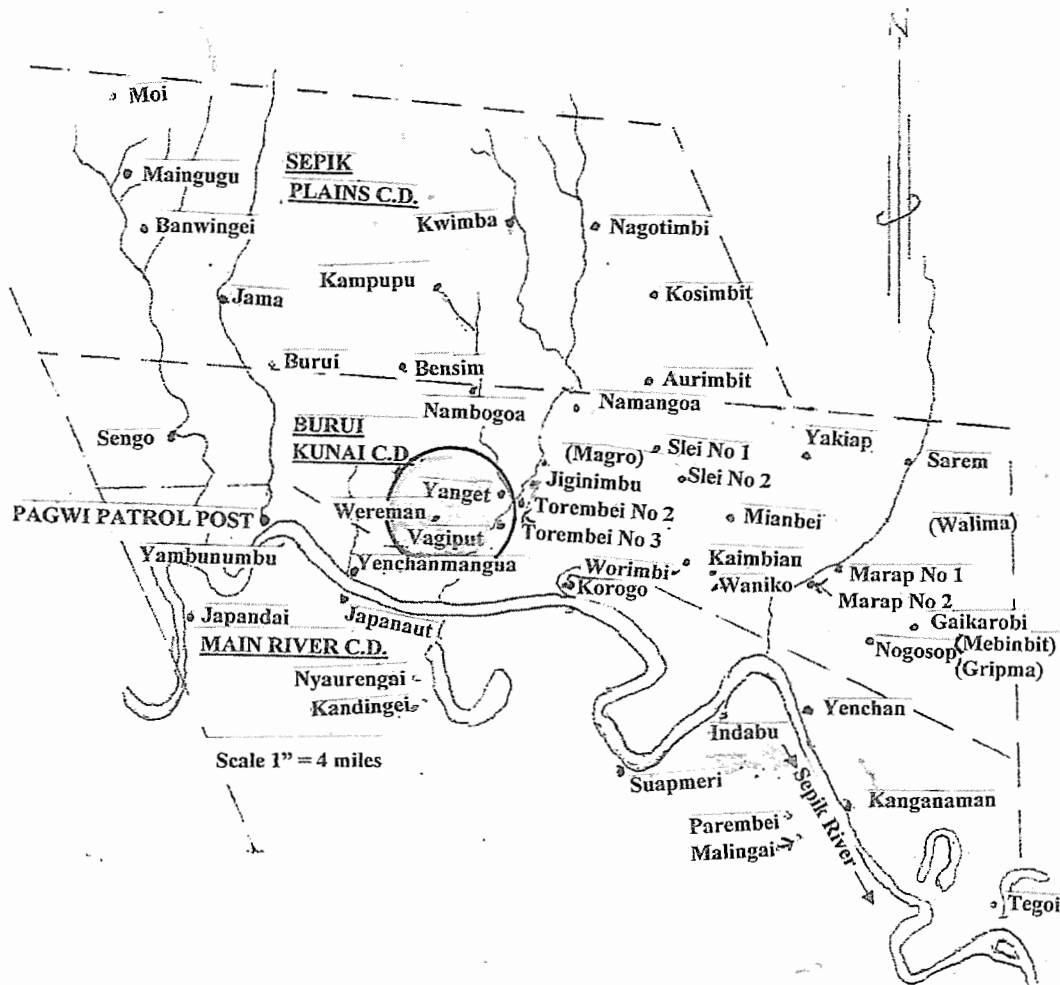
The ancestor Jambaut then developed a second market. That market was at Malinjo. He decreed "Who ever comes into this market must not fight or be angry. We need then trade with the Sepiks and they need us. It would be bad if we were both short [of a balanced diet]

The ancestor then set about marking land boundaries between Bensim and Wereman. He said "You people of the cassowary clan [Wereman] will have that bush and we people of the parrot clan [Bensim] will have this land. The land in the middle between both of us will be public land common to both of us. The descendants of the big brother are at Nimbunkei. It was the ancestral brothers who put us here."⁸

Fighting. The Kwimbas told us and our ancestors to help Kwimba in their fights against Kosimbi, Aurimbit and Suwambo [Namangoa. When we got this talk we would send it also up into Wosera via Jama. They would gather and we would go and fight the place that Kwimba marked. They did not

repay [pay-back] this fighting. No one pushed us off this land. We were allied with Kwimba. They tell us they are the big brother and we are the small brother.⁹

Wereman were not our enemy, [although] they gathered with the Japanauts at the market place against us. They cut our people down. They did it at the first, second and third market places, killing all our good young men and woman and taking their heads back to Japanaut. There was only one fight at the market places. Some of the men were up at the big place Nimbunkei and only women and young men were here to be killed. That was in the time of our fathers before the Germans came into the Sepik. At that time, we retreated back to Nimbunkei and this place became bush. The Weremans did not come and touch it. It remained unoccupied. A generation passed and then some of the people came back and re-established a camp here. Big trees had grown up and they cleared them. This clearing happened before the Japanese came.



End Notes Chapter 20

- ¹ G.Schuster – Aibom concept of history – In Letkehaus et al Sepik Heritage. Carolina Academic Press 1990 Pages 16/17
- ² Unnamed elders of Wereman. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 158-160
- ³ Tamadi/Manji of Yanget, name not recorded. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 153
- ⁴ Tamadi/Manji of Yanget, Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 153/154
- ⁵ Clements Watnumbuk of Nambogoa. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 155/156
- ⁶ Pius Kwangu of Vagiput. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 156/157
- ⁷ Pius Kwangu of Vagiput. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 156/157
- ⁸ Committee member Magalminja of Bensim. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 161/163
- ⁹ Committee member Magalminja of Bensim. Bragge Sepik research Vol 18 page 163

Sepik 1 Chapter 21 Sawos – Torembei mother, daughters and related villages.



Photo¹ This squat figure sculpted from lava was seen at Torembei No 1. As mentioned in Chapter 3 the writer believes the statue is an Austronesian tiki dating from the time of the Austronesian presence in the vicinity of the site of present day Torembei on the shores of the Sepik inland sea. The name of the statue and two ancestral women, from the story below, have been excluded from the text at the 1973 request of the informant Yapi.

Torembei no 1 is two places together – The Korogo end [i.e. the southern end] is called Kamanimbit, which takes its name from the haus tambaran, and the other end is Torembei, which also takes its name from the haus tambaran. The woman [represented by the statue which shares her name] started Kamanimbit, and another woman [name withheld] started Torembei. At first it was only one haus tambaran which was very long [800ft indicated and communication with a person at the far end had to be by garamut].²

Writer's note Kamanimbit a Iatmul village on the Sepik river, so it is interesting that a Torembei haus tambaran and village section has that name, so I checked the Kamanimbit interviews and found the following:

When our ancestors were at Torembei two brothers, Kabogabi and Kauawali, fought with pieces of firewood. They did not fight with spears. [limited aggression between brothers] Over this fight, the people of the Kamanimbit haus tambaran left Torembei and came to Kararau. They brought the haus tambaran Kamanimbit with them. One brother went down to the [Sepik] river by canoe, the other brother, Kabogabi went overland.

Kabogabi went to Yamuk with his people and stayed a few days, then to Gaikarobi and stayed two or three days and then to Kararau. The brothers met again at Kararau. Later they moved to Kamanimbit and re-established the haus tambaran there³. [expanded discussion to be found in Vol 19 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 P289]

ooo000ooo

Torembei is the ancestral place, we are not an outstation of anywhere else. The ancestors came and settled here. It was from here that the people of Nambagoa, Wereman, Botbi¹, Vagiput, Yanget, Burui, Sengo, Malu, Manja, Jama, Wosera, Kwimba all went from Wosera to settle. They were here and they said "Forget it, I have had enough" and they left, one at a time.

The background to this story is that there was a large bamboo flute with a wasp inside it. It stung the mouths and caused the different languages. They said "Torembei, you are our father, we leave you to look after all our things. Some left their skirts and marls behind and went naked. [This explains the Sepik cultures who traditionally went naked] They said "Look after our skirts and marls ...Oh please, we are leaving you now, look after our ancestral stories."

Now Torembei uses the big bush they left to us. These villages know where they come from; Malu² does! Their councillor asked me if we had the same story as they do and I said Yes. The Wosera call us Mama because we look after their things. It is the same with Yangoru. Kwimba even speaks our language. They left never to return. They left us the lake at Korogo. These stories have been passed down by our fathers. In the village there are water holes and marks where each of the villages were, and the circle of stones which indicates each individual village that left.

Yamuk is our big brother, Suapmeri,³ Malingai, and Torembei No 3 are our small brothers. From ancestral times to now, we are of the same womb and we have never fought or been angry. We have the same mother. We [including Torembei 3?] are the third family. In the old times we traded, and we still trade sago for fish.

Aibom, Timbunke and Tambaran are also of the same womb and we do not fight. Under no circumstances could we have their blood on our hands, even to the extent of slapping a full mosquito. We never had their heads in our haus tambaran, and none of ours were in theirs. We never wore black war paint



1973 Photo: The Torembei No 1 haus Tambaran. The earth mound with a stone protruding from it is stated to be the place from where the population disbursed to populate the Sepik and beyond.⁴

¹ Botbi is not a name known to the writer. It is probably also known by another name the writer knows.

² A Manambu village immediately down stream of Ambunti

³ according to legend – the initial Ndu settlement on the Sepik River

A contemporary example Last year [1972] there was a big party in Wewak, and I [Titus] was there. One of our lads was fighting and holding the neck of a Tambanum lad. A Tambanum went and broke it up, saying that if the fight went on, there would have to be a big party and big wealth exchanged as there was a prohibition on fighting between our two groups, which was very strong and contraventions were very expensive. The prohibition was many generations old. The lads stopped fighting and it was over.⁵

The problem posed by Korogo [background to be found in Sepik 2 Chapter 22 The Korogo expulsion from mother village Nyauirengai]

*The Korogos do not understand at all. The people who left here will never return. They said they are satisfied with the distribution made by the Torembei ancestors, as each village got kunai and sago and all that they need. All was well. Korogo. came from Kandingei/Nyauirengai. Their ancestors left here long ago to go to Nyauirengai.*⁶ Now Korogo has returned

Writer's note. *In this discussion Torembei relies upon ancient happenings and implied obligations, which play against more recent military outcomes. Korogo was expelled from mother village Nyauirengai and threw themselves upon the mercy of Nyauirengai's enemy Parembei, buying Korogo survival with gifts of Korogo girls. In these negotiated outcomes, Torembei was basically ignored.*

Qn. Where did you [Torembei] get your black paint and heads in ancestral times?

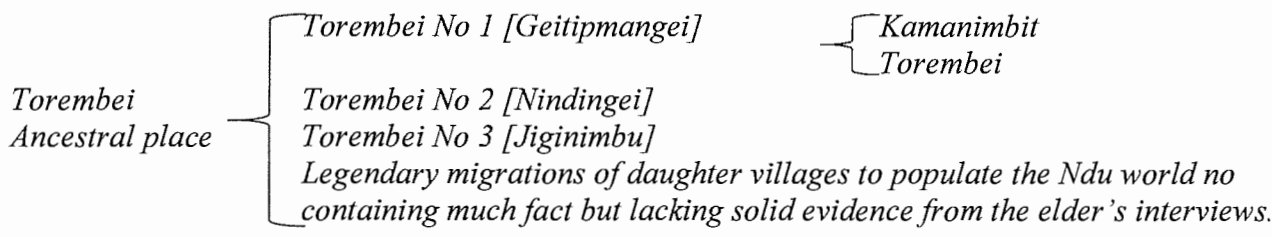
Ans. *We fought Kumbwi and Kambuk [both in the Yangoru area], Miambei and Yakiap. The men of Namangoa and Slei were our allies. The enemies never got passed them to get at us. They were also our spies. They would creep up to haus tambaran through the long grass and listen. Then they would return with word of the enemy plans. We would go and ambush them at their place the day before their planned raid.*

We would be in position at dawn and would spear the first person, man woman or child, who came out to urinate. We would then fight the village. Spearing the surprised people as they emerged from their houses. The main thing was the power used on the first spear. That spear must strike its target, it must not miss. There was magic and a singsing made on one special spear and the thrower was sent forward to be the first to throw. When the spear struck the person, the magic made a sound like a bomb. The people back in the village would hear it and know the fight had started.

*The selection of the vanguard of spearmen was given special care. It included only the best, fittest and bravest fighters...The elders had the ginger to give the power and they urged the fighters on from the rear. Preparations for a fight included prohibitions on tobacco and some foods, and the fighters had to chew a small lemon to cleanse the mouth and throat. They then waited for the day set for the fight. **The separation of the three Torembeis.***

We all lived at Torembei No 1 and a woman made a fence [in the waterway] to catch prawns. She came and went and she was tired and wanted to camp near where she fished They made a camp and a haus tambaran and that was Torembei No 2.

*Torembei No 3 started over youths not going down to wash and their elders beating them with sticks in the early morning to make them go and wash. The youths became tired of this and went to make Torembei No 3. We call Torembei No 3 Jiginimbu, Jigi being the word in our language for stick. Another name for Torembei No 2 is also called Nindingei – the middle place and Torembei No1 is also called Geitipmangei – the big place.*⁷

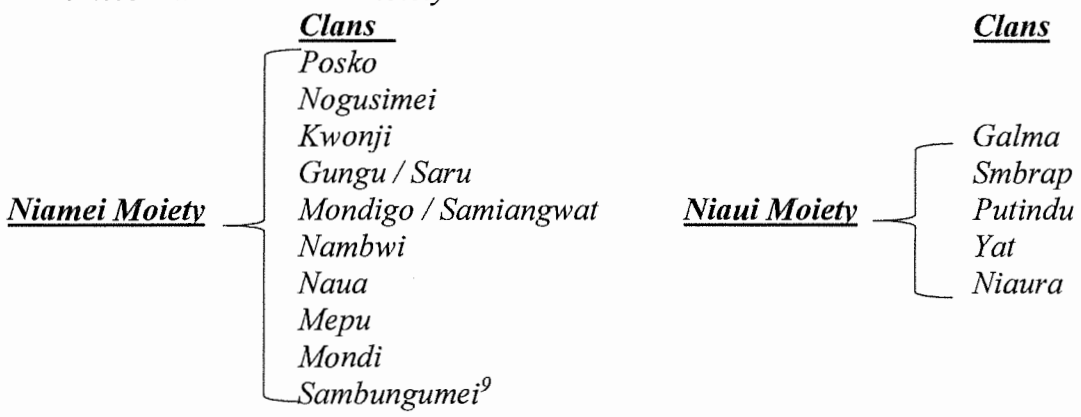


Torembei interaction with ancient Magro.

Some Magro descendants still live at Torembei. The remnants of their story have been drawn together in Chapter 22.

The Ndu moiety system from a Torembei perspective.

Niamei [moiety] is the mother and Niaui [moiety] is the child. These are the two big families for all Sepik villages.⁸ The mother is associated with the earth, pig, cassowary, and darkness, while the child is associated with the [totems] sun, [light], moon, crocodile, tortoise, prawns, fish, eagle [Gai], coconuts, betelnut. Both moieties share fire and ginger [different varieties] The [Torembei] clans associated with each moiety are



ooo000ooo

Some enlightenment from Torembei No 2 concerning “Mebinbit.”

Mebinbit means East...Magro, Gaikarobi are both Mebinbit, whereas Wereman are Kambiambit – west. The north is Yambunmanga – the wind comes from there. Poinmanga is our name for South, another wind comes from there. Yambunmanga blows in the dry season and Poinmanga replies during the wet season.

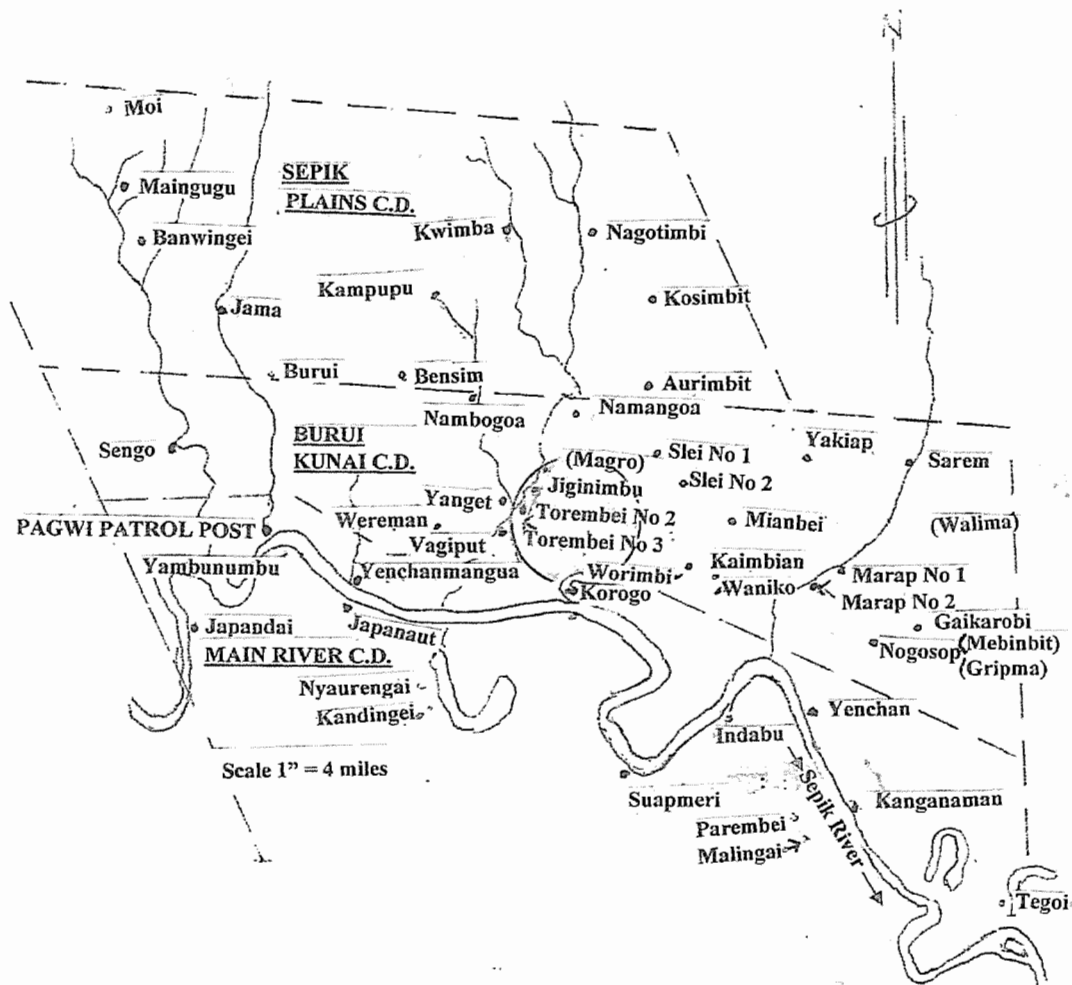
Qn. Does the suffix “manga” in Yambunmanga and Poinmanga, suggests the winds are female?
Ans. Yes, all four winds are female Yambunmanga, Poinmanga, Mebinditorli and Kambiambitorli.

When the wind blows from Mebinbit we have no food, no prawns or fish. It is a time of shortage. Mebinitorli blows the rain away. The sun rises at Mebinbit and makes everything dry.

When the wind comes from Kambiambitorli there is plenty of food, plenty of game. It is the high-water time and the time we can make magic and the food comes.

Writer’s note: The suggestion that Mebinbit is “east” may mean that the Ndu perception of the creation at Mebinbit may not mean an ancestral village site, as much a direction from which the creation, or perhaps enlightenment arrived.

A possible way that this may make sense is that the entrance of the ancient Sepik inland sea to the ocean was east of the Middle Sepik. The Austronesian navigators with their wondrous technology, livestock, and religion would have arrived from the east.¹⁰



End Notes Chapter 21

- ¹ Ambunti patrol report no 13/1972-3 Appendix G pages 18
- ² Councillor Yapi of Torembei 1. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 18 page 215
- ³ Waliaba of Kamanimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 19 page 289
- ⁴ Ambunti patrol report no 13/1972-3 Appendix G pages 16 and 18
- ⁵ Titus Warabung of Torembei 1 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 18 page 216
- ⁶ Titus Warabung of Torembei 1 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 18 page 216
- ⁷ Titus Warabung of Torembei 1 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 18 page 217
- ⁸ Writer: All Ndu language family villages recognise the moiety system, some Sepik village communities do not.
- ⁹ Titus Warabung of Torembei 1 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 18 page 218
- ¹⁰ Bugu Simdabuma of Torembei No 2 Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 19 page 302

Sepik 1 Chapter 22 Sawos - Magro and Yambunei– ancient communities

Writer's Note: Mention of a once large, but no-longer existing community called Magro was made in three separate interviews during Ambunti patrol No 13/1972-73. The interviews were with elders at Torembei No 1, Torembei No 2 and at Slei. In retrospect, had I asked more questions, a clearer picture of Magro history may have emerged. As it is, this chapter pulls together the little that was said. An additional impediment to the Torembei interviews was that a Lands Titles Commission hearing of a land dispute between Torembei and Korogo and informants may have been somewhat guarded in what they said about ancient settlement patterns.

The overall impression the writer received was that Magro was an evil place and that the middle Sepik was better off without it and that with the community entity gone, the Magro refugee descendants living at Torembei and elsewhere, were acceptable people.

ooo000ooo

The Magro village site is in the Torembei bush. After Magro, Yamuk and Torembei were equal second. Magro was near where Torembei No 1 is now. This land was discussed in the Lands Titles Commission. The Lake Yaminj near Korogo belongs to us. Before, when Magro was here, they used to gather food from there

[In ancient times] The Torembei, Kamanimbit and others were here and there was fighting, because there were plenty of men gathered and living at the place Magro and the population pressure caused food shortages. They were even eating the seeds of wild limbum and fighting started. The men who started the fighting were Nangan, Timaut Lungwa and Malinda, all of Magro. The fighting caused the different groups to migrate away. The last groups to migrate were Yambunei, Parembei, Kamanimbit, and Torembei.

Kamanimbit moved to Kararau, but their real [ancestral] land is at Torembei. Yambunei and Magro lived together, but then they fought again over food. Magro also did many things that were bad. They stole other men's wives and dug man traps and buried the men who fell into them.

Yambunei. *Migrated to Suapmeri, which was the meeting place [on the Sepik River] for the migrating groups. Parembei also gathered at Suapmeri. While Yambunei lived at Supmeri, they were subjected to Parembei raids. Now we call Kanganaman, Suapmeri, Yenchan and Aibom, Yambunei [as Yambunei survivors went to many places] One or two men of Yambunei went to Korogo, and to Torembei, Wereman, Nyauengai and other places.*

Ambarap people are also Yambuneis. Arbarap is just a place name where some of the Yambuneis lived. They went through Slei and settled at Ambarap. Then they moved to Maiwi¹ and then came back to live at Torembei ...They came down the Sepik, then in here via the Yenchanmangua waterway. There were Yambuneis here and the Ambaraps came to live with them.¹

ooo000ooo

The ancestors of Slei originated at Mebinbit, then went to Suapmeri for a while, then moved to Magro and then to Kurangambi.

Magro village and its demise.

There were ten haus tambarans in the village of Magro. They lived with Torembei four of five generations ago [dating from 1973]. A Torembei woman called Samanbi went to cut sago and Gunumbuk of Magro went and had sex with her. He pushed a stone axe blade into her vagina and it stayed there. She came back to the place and called her husband Urumai from the haus tambaran.

¹ This was presumably when Maiwi lived south of the Sepik near Japandai.

She said. "I am going to give birth now" He said "But you are not pregnant". She used the rope that women use when having babies and the stone axe blade came out. Urumai said "What's this?". She replied "A Magro had sex with me and put that stone blade up my vagina."

Her husband said "Do not wash yourself. Cook me some sago and throw it on the floor." She fried some sago and threw it on the floor where he was sitting. He went outside eating the sago and went to the haus tambaran of his in-laws and he explained "They did this to your sister. He had sex with her and shoved a stone axe blade into her vagina. She got it out like she was having a baby. She cooked sago and threw it down and I am eating it now" He showed them the sago.

Our tradition is that if there is a sexual problem, the women must wash herself thoroughly after another man has sex with her and before she cooks food for her husband. If the husband demands that she not wash, there is big trouble coming. This is the same as the husband saying "I will eat his filth."

His in-laws immediately agreed to fight the offender. The husband took 10 bunches of betelnut and covered them with a limbum. He made a singsing over them. It was a time of betelnut shortage and he went and gave betelnut to each Magro haus tambaran and the Magros ate it.

The singsing was aimed at removing all the things related to the Magro from the village. After the day was set, all the places came – Namangoa, Nambagoa, Wosera, Slei. They surrounded the Magro and killed them. Magro survivors ran away and some came here and now live with Torembei. They no longer have a separate identity and we no longer want to fight them. An ancestor in this fight was Ulmei. We still have the offending stone axe blade.

Ulmei – Asaku – Kinganjangai – Wopwaiambi – 1973 elders born 1920s-30s²

ooo000ooo

More on Yambunei from Suapmeri informants.

We think the Kamanimbit haus tambaran group of Yambunei were at Magro before they moved to Suimbo [Nyauarengai]. At Suimbo, there were two Yambunei haus tambarans, Kamanimbit and Minjimbit.

Trouble arose at Suimbo over a Yambunei man called Niagara who was of the Kamanimbit haus tambaran. He made trouble with Yambunei women who were in a Kantiri [cousin] relationship with himself. He also forbade the cutting of building materials from the bush and the making of fish trap baskets. Due to this trouble the people of the Minjimbit haus tambaran left Suimbo and crossed the Sepik to the left bank to an area of land and a lake called Mangimbi, which is just below [downstream of] the Palangai channel into the Korogo lake. After they had settled there, the Kamanimbit haus tambaran group came and joined them there.

After living there for some time, the people moved as a magic carving made of wood, which had been buried in the ground, was killing the people off [sorcery]. They came down river and landed at Suapmeri, where they gave us one of their women as payment for Suapmeri agreement that Yambunei could establish a village at Waikurei, which is a point on the right [or south] bank of the Sepik River between Indabu and Yenchan. Waikurei point has since eroded badly.

The Yambunei village was still at Waikurei when the German ships came up river. Then the Nyaula came down in a combined force of their whole seven villages. This Nyaula raid fought Suapmeri, Indabu, Kwolingai and Yambunei and defeated us all. Suapmeri survivors went to Malingai and some to Yenchan. Yambunei survivors went to Yenchan.

A second Nyaula raid disbursed the Yenchan people and saw nearly all the Suapmeri and Yambunei refugees there killed. Whereas most Yenchan people survived as they knew the bush land behind the village and where to go, the refugees did not.

In Sepik history the ancient village names of Yambunei, Magro, Suapmeri and Kararau always come up. We were the people who made the culture and traditions of the Sepik. Ancient Suapmeri and Yambunei, on many occasions had sub groups migrate away and live with other communities. Suapmeri has representation in all Nyaula and Parembei dialect villages. Yambunei has people in Yamuk, Torembei, Yenchan, Korogo and elsewhere.

It is these former Suapmeri and Yambunei people who spearheaded the Nyaula raids upon the home villages Suapmeri and Yambunei.³

End Notes Chapter 22

¹ Bugu Simdabuduma of Tormbei No 2. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 19 page 302

² Councillor Yapi of Torembei 1. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Volume 18 page 215/216

³ Suapmeri Councillor [no name recorded] and elders. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 398

Sepik 1 Chapter 23 Sawos – Yamuk mother, daughters and related villages.

The story of the Sawos people commences with the creation myth of the Ndu peoples, As told in Chapter 16. The Sawos language group is one of eight Ndu languages that originated at the place of the creation, Mebinbit. Chapter 19 traces the Ndu migrations from Mebinbit via Gripma to Nogosop and Gaikarobi. From there the population commenced to disburse. Important to the disbursal were three ancient Sawos communities, Wereman, Torembei and Yamuk, each became mother villages from which daughter villages broke away. The story of Wereman is told in Chapter 20 and Torembei in Chapter 21, while Chapter 22 is devoted to the now extinct Magro community.

The present chapter seeks to describe the evolution of the Yamuk community. The Yamuk story of the creation generally follows that recorded in chapter 16 with some variations, and an interesting rationalisation of traditional beliefs to explain the existence of Europeans.

In the beginning, this area had no land. It was all water. It stayed like that for a very long time, and then there was some water grass growing. This died, then re-grew until a little ground showed itself. There were no men on the ground. First a dog came and sat on that ground. The dog howled and the ground shook and grew larger, stretching to the coast where it stopped. Dogs were here first and that is why we keep dogs and do not kill dogs.¹

The mythology of migrations from Yamuk

Then the men came, or originated at Gaikarobi and Nogosop. They left there and followed the Kunai [grass plains] and rested at Sarum, where they built the haus tambaran Munjimbit. They left there and followed the kunai around to Yamuk where they settled... The people and populated the land. The people who went northwards were naked, both men and women. Later the Europeans came and gave them clothes to wear and they were alright.

Others went from here to settle at Parembei where they all lived in one large haus tambaran called Pai'imbit, they slit up and went from there... Torembei, Miambei, Marap, Siota Kworowi, Nindigum, Manmginjamgu, Samangai, Gwoliangwa, and Timbanangwa were the kunai [grassland] villages [mostly] in the Angoram sub district.

[Others left here to populate] the Chambri and Aibom, Nyauirengai, Kandingai, and the ancestors of Avatip, Malu, Yambon, Yerikai and Garamambu...

Avatip left here. The mother [It was not stated who she was] distributed the places and they went. We all went to Avatip, even us Yamuks went to Avatip and later we came back here. . I do not know the details of this, it was a long ago. We think it was over fighting between us and Avatip.²

The mythology of origins sago/fish trade and relations between Yamuk and Suapmeri.

A man called Kumbianmeri introduced fish here. He said "We will market every third day" He was speaking to a woman called Biogwa... The Yamuk men came and prepared to kill Kumbiameri. Biogwa saw them coming. At the time she was eating coconut and sago and so to prevent them killing him she gave him food. The would-be killers saw this and said "That woman is giving him food, we had better not kill him."

Kumbiameri took out some fish and sago and said "Try this." She replied "No, we do not eat that" He said "Try it, it is good food. Here, I am eating some of it now". She tried some of the fish he offered "Yes, it is good" she said. They agreed to market and that was how the sago/fish market originated.³

***Suapmeri.** Suapmeri came and raided us many times. They nearly killed all of us. We were not strong against Suapmeri when they came to fight here... Down in the channel we planted sago to*

block the channel, so the Suapmeri canoes could not get up to us. Suapmeri and Yambunei used to come in here all the time.

[For this reason, the sago/ fish market between Yamuk and Suapmeri.] *It was in the distant past that we [Yamuk] forbid marketing with Suapmeri, after their raids against us*

Now, there are some Suapmeri left. A few Yambunei¹ now live with us. There are none of them still at Suapmeri. A third group [who were allied with Suapmeri was called] Mondomeri. They are completely finished.

Yamuk decided that it was time to pay back Suapmeri for their raids. [Yamuk] got up their power in the haus tambaran...The Parembéis were our ally...Each time we wanted to go in and fight, the white water-birds would fly up and warn the Suapmeris of our approach, and the Suapmeris would be ready-with their spears. One of our men, a Parembéi called Amen, used a cassowary bone and made a channel into the Suapmeri] lake. In the night the Parembéis raiding party went into the lake. The Yamuk raiding party went in by a track and waited.

In the morning as the Suapmeris came down to the water's edge to take their canoes to check their fish baskets, the Parembéis attacked from the water. The Suapmeris and Yambuneis turned to fight them, but Yamuk came in from behind them and they were finished. They had few people left after that. Yamuk took pity on them and took them in and looked after them. Later, Korogo and the Nyaulas nearly finished them again, and again we took some of them in and cared for them. We do not think of fighting with them anymore. It was in the distant past when we [Yamuk] forbid the marketing arrangement with them, after their raids here.⁴

Writer's note. The antiquity of Yamuk myths and legends needs emphasis. As we shall see in Chapter 31 - Iatmul, The Sawos migrations to the Sepik River, which gave rise to the Iatmul population, first settled at Suapmeri. It follows that Iatmul/Sawos relations probably originated in Suapmeri relations with the nearest and most accessible Sawos community – Yamuk. These relations would have included the establishment of the sago/fish trade, and ultimately the consequences for such trade when warfare developed between the trading partners.

The rationalisation of traditional beliefs to explain the existence of Europeans.

[continuing the mythology of migration...They followed the kunai around to Yamuk where they settled...] All black and white people settled here. The white people left and we do not know where you went. Now you have come back and found us again...

Black and white were brothers, we do not know their names. They competed with each other. The young brother [white] was smart and resourceful. The big brother [black] was not smart and he did bad things, like killing people, eating human flesh and hunting for heads. Then big brother took a spear and small brother took a musket. It was the mother of these brothers who distributed the spear and musket. This was the story [we had] before the white men came, and after you came we said "Em tasol!" [confirmation of something expected]

The two brothers lived together until a bad behaviour of big brother annoyed young brother, who took all his things and put them in his ship. He waited until 3am and then he left. Big brother awoke to find himself alone. The bad behaviour involved their sister, and big brother making her pregnant. They were both supposed to look after their sister. In his anger younger brother left and took Australia and Big Brother took New Guinea and continued his bad ways of fighting, ginger, sorcery and magic, while the good ways of the law, business went with the younger brother.¹

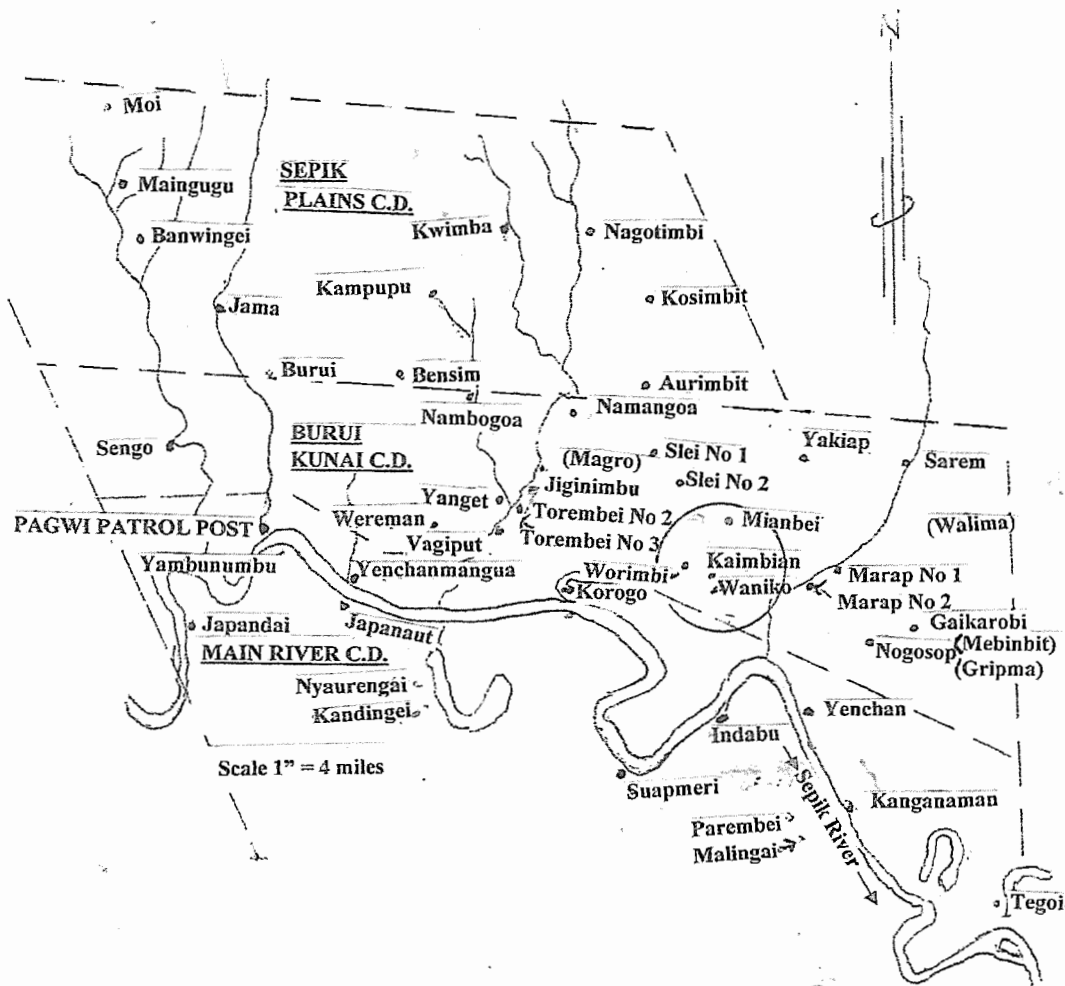
¹ Yambunei was an ancient community, which is also mentioned In Chapter 28 concerning the now-extinct Magro

Writer's note cont. The above text box is included in this chapter as an example of how traditional religion is adjusted to explain changes in the cosmic order. Also, in the paragraph below, Yamuk probably was a village community in its own right at some stage, which experienced waves of unrecorded historic change and conflict.

ooo000ooo

Yamuk is not a village in its own right, it is three separate villages – Kimbian, Waniko and Worimbi. Together the inhabitants of these three villages are known as Yamuk. It is explained thus:⁵

Kimbian broke away from Worimbi over pigs. Their [Kimbian] pigs had piglets and a man from here [Worimbi] stole, killed and ate their piglets, so they moved away. This was before the Germans came. [prior to that] Waniko is really Paiambit, but we call it Waniko. There has always been the two places Worimbi and Waniko. [Waniko] is not a break-away group from here.⁶ The three villages comprising "Yamuk" are circled on the map below.



The

ancestral story of two garamuts.

Before, the sun was very hot and the ground burned; the trees and the sago burned. The people went to the Sepik and held onto canes and stayed in the water while the fire went by. Everything burned, all the houses and everything. A snake slithered through the ashes to the Sepik and the trail it left became our channel down to the Sepik.

Two garamut trees grew in the ashes. There were no men here, just two women. If any place came here to fight the women would drive them off. They dressed as men and they had two haus tambarans. The women would arouse their haus tambaran and their timbuans, so when the enemies

came this power drove the enemies off. The two women cut down the garamut trees and made garamut drums. The big sister was at Waniko and the small sister was here [Worimbi]. It was the small sister's garamut you saw today [Bragge note: I was shown the rotting remains of an old garamut which was split in two]

The women's names were... [Names of the women were given as were the names of the two garamuts – all four names are withheld from the text as the informants indicated they were the strength of Yamuk, which enemies could use to harm Yamuk people].

The women killed men. The big sister killed an old man and the younger sister killed a young strong man. They killed the men to put their blood on the garamuts. The garamuts and their story are one of the strengths of Yamuk strengths...The garamut names were [with-held] ...⁷

The ancestral story of the eagle.

There was a woman who used to make sago and she did not wash her sago mallet when she finished work, she just hung it up in the house...Her brother's wife said to her "Tomorrow we will go to the lake and catch fish" The stone blade of the mallet heard this. While the woman was frying sago, the stone blade turned into a woman, who said "What are you doing? I am ready to go now."

"You wait! I am frying sago."

"No, we should go, and fry sago when we come back"

They did as suggested, and went in a canoe out into the middle of the lake. The spirit or the "stone" woman said "You get out on this floating grass while I go and check my fish baskets. I will come back for you." The woman got out onto the grass and the "Stone" woman went back to the village, and left the woman stranded. She stayed there a long time until her grass skirt wore out and she was naked.

A spirit came to the floating grass and saw her. He asked "What are you doing here?"

"I came with another woman and she left me. I think she is an evil spirit, but I don't know"

The spirit had sexual intercourse with the woman on the grass and he left her there. He came and brought her food every day and slept with her every night. She became pregnant. She had two children, a crocodile and an eagle. She stayed there and quickly became pregnant again, and again gave birth to a crocodile and an eagle. The eagles were the women's children and the crocodiles were the spirit's children.

The eagles learned to fly and the crocodiles went down into the water and helped their mother with food. The eagles flew and found fish and they went and landed in an Erima tree and looked down upon a house near the tree. They went back and reported to their mother and asked her "Whose house is that?" and she replied "It is my house. There is an Erima tree near it."

"Mother, we will fly and carry you back to the house."

"No. I will fall."

"You are not heavy, we can do it." They flew with her to the Erima tree and asked "whose house is that". "It is my house" she said. They lifted her again and took her down to the house. The two eagles then said "We will live in this Erima tree, we will not live anywhere else."

...They found food from the lake...and fed their mother. The eagles became very angry and took any man or woman who came by canoe out onto the lake. The crocodile children also took any person who entered the water to wash or swim.

The people became very worried. They looked at the big eagle nest in the Erima tree and wondered how they could kill the eagles. They performed a very big singsing, all the men and women were involved. The eagles sat in the Erima tree and watched... The dancers were decorated in their

feathers and ornaments, and when they came outside to dance, the eagles swooped down and lifted one man each and the people at the singsing ran away.

The eagles cut the heads off the two men and threw down and they ate the meat of the men. The people were angry and drifted a kundu drum out into the lake. The eagles swooped down and took it up to their nest and looked at it and said "We thought it was a man," so they threw it away. The people saw this and said "If we put men into kundus, we can get at them."

They put a man into a kundu and another man into another kundu and drifted them out into the lake. The eagles swooped down and took the two kundus with a man in each and flew back to their nest. The two men swallowed their saliva and thought "Please do not throw us down, wait for the night."

It became dark and the men were pleased to be still in the nest...at about two am the men went out of the kunkus and saw the eagles were sleeping. They had brought limbum² knife clubs with them. They held their saliva, made magic and approached the eagles...and each hit one eagle. One eagle was killed outright and fell to the ground. The other eagle was only wounded and fell down into the bush.

The two men had to find a way to get out of the tree. They thought about this problem for a long time. Then that spat their saliva and it trailed right down to the ground and made a rope which they climbed down to the ground.

They went with all the village men seeking the wounded eagle. The eagle had fallen into the sago. The men met two women making sago. The women had found the wounded eagle and put it into their bilum. The wounded eagle was then killed and its meat butchered. The enemies from the sky were then finished, but they still sought the enemies from the water.

The mother of the two crocodiles said to them "Show me your tongue. I want to see it." They poked out their tongues and the mother held the tongues and cut them off. She took the tongues to the haus tambaran and you can hear the bull-roarer, which represent the sounds of crocodiles with their tongues cut off. If you catch a crocodile today, you will see it has no tongue. This ended the enemy in the water; their own mother stopped them by cutting off their tongues.⁸

Writer's note: A variation of this myth is important in Iatmul communities, particularly Kanganaman where it is depicted on the finials of haus tambarans. The Kanganaman version of the myth, [See Chapter 31].

Enemies of Yamuk. *The enemies we fought before the arrival of Germany, were Marap, Yapiap and Slei, and later, when the Nyaulas came, we fought them as well.*

Marap. *Our ancestor's main enemy was Marap. Yamuk's land is where the school, is now. Marap's boundary came up to the Channel beside the school. The ancestors fought them and drove them off. The ancestors fought them and drove them off. Later peace was made and the fighting stopped.*

The peace-making process: *We each gave the other women, torembum [green snail valuables], kinas and other valuables to seal the peace. This peace negotiation was just before the German times. Now we eat and gather together and singsing together.*

Peace negotiations started with mediation links. A friend from Yamuk would meet secretly with a friend from Marap, and they would make arrangements. When it was discussed [at village level], a Yamuk man would go to Marap and a Marap man would come here, and each side would wait to see if their man was killed. No such killing was done. They [both communities] set a day to

² Limbum – palm wood

meet and make exchanges. [To] the Marap man here, we gave great wealth to take home. They did the same with our man at Marap. We also exchanged girls in marriage. His was the way to peace.

...Now we have no boundary; we each used the land between ourselves. We purchased rights from Marap to this land in between. We are just friends and relatives now.⁹

Yakiap. *Olibinabi and Tondugumban [of Yakiap] sat in a haus tambaran where the big ruined church building is now.*



Writer's note: This church was on the site of a former haus tambaran, located in the sacred haus tambaran avenue. It seems likely that there may be a story as to why this impressive building was allowed to fall into ruin. In a seemingly similar situation at Bangwis a church was built on a haus tambaran site and this resulted in serious conflict between the SDA mission followers and the traditionalists. See Sepik 4 Chapter Part 2 – Chapter 45.

Olibinabi's child had died and he mourned. They cooked and ate bananas. Tondugumban took ask from the bananas and rubbed black paint onto the mourner's face. He became angry, saying "Don't do that", but he did it again and Olibinabi said "Do not play around with me!" They chewed betelnut and they agreed to go to the bush in search of tulip – [edible greens].

They took their spears and went towards Miambei. Two women from Yakiap were making sago. They speared them and they came home, conducted a singsing and put on black face paint. This was what started the fighting with Yakiap. They came and burned down our haus tambaran, speared us and broke our garamuts. Then we went up there and did the same to them. This fighting stopped when Mr Townsend came.¹⁰ We did not fight them except for the matter of Olibinabi and Tondugumban.

We set up Miambei village to hold our lands in that direction. The lands were not guarded so we had not sent people to establish Miambei. Slei and Yakiap would have tried to take the land. They [Miambei] fought to hold the land until the Germans arrived.¹¹

Recent – Pre-history – The massacre at Dumasaun market place. *Worimbi³ did not take part. The talk started at Kimbian, they went with Waniko to Yenchan and they [men of all three mentioned villages] laid an ambush at Dumasaun.*

The women who came to the market came in canoes. Ten men came with them, they came into the market place, running around prepared to fight. They samsamed⁴ up and down and satisfied

³ One of the three Yamuk villages.

⁴ War dance

themselves the place was clear of enemies. [Then] the Torembei and Nyaula women held their market.

All through this the raiders watched from their ambush position. A Torembei man called Gambenyagen knew of the planned attack and he called out to the Torembei women – “Hey you Torembei women, hurry up and finish your market. Look at the rain coming”. They hurried and left. Gambenyagen said to the market gathering “Tell the man from Kandingai that I will buy the hook [A fish hook made from pig bone] for oil. When I have the oil ready I will let him know.” This was the signal, now the Torembeis were clear, for the fight to begin.

Maugan, the ex-Luluai of Kimbian, held a limbum container of ginger and he followed the Nyaulas, on a bit of a slope he made a loud noise “Keng” and threw the parcel of ginger and it hit one of the women on the back. They turned to look and the fight started. Nine of the Nyaula men ran away. The 10th was speared along with 36 women.

There was a big singsing at Yamuk, with 37 heads taken. This was pay back for the two previous raids against us. The first was before German times at Waniko, the second was at Kimbian, in German times, using a German musket. Our fathers did not know about muskets. They shot one man and our fathers ran away.

All three raids, two against us and one by us, were before the Korogos came down river from their camp near Yentchanmangua. [See Sepik 2 Chapter 22 – The Korogo expulsion from mother village Nyauarengai.¹²

End Notes Chapter 23

¹ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 237 of ginger

² Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 238

³ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 245

⁴ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 244/5

⁵ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 240

⁶ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 240

⁷ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 242

⁸ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 242/244

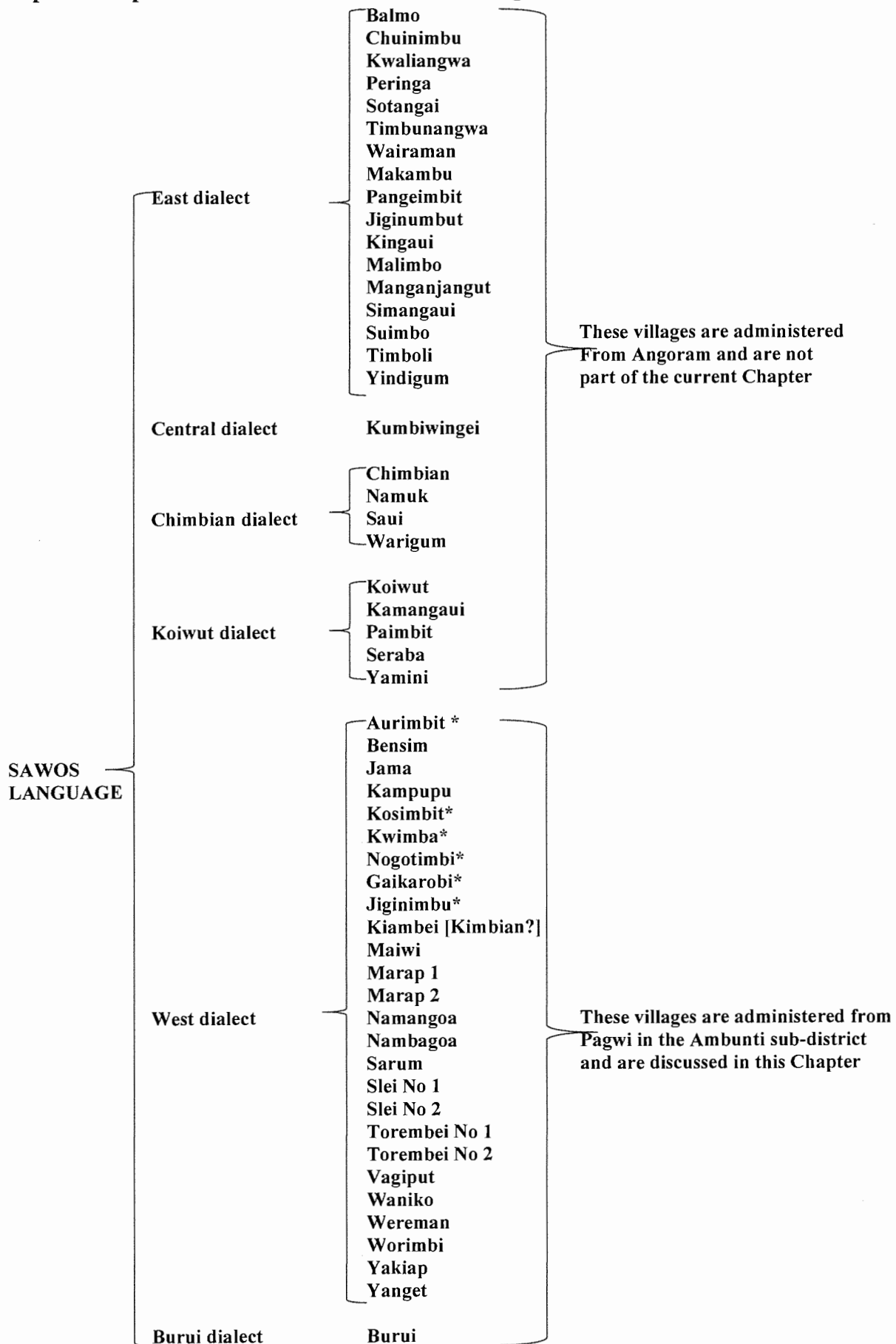
⁹ Informant Wolion of Worimbi Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 239

¹⁰ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 239

¹¹ Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 239

¹² Informant Wolion of Worimbi. Bragge Sepik Research Notes volume 18 page 240

Sepik 1 Chapter 24 Sawos - The other Sawos villages in Ambunti Sub District - [Burui Kunai]



As mentioned in Chapter 25 Dr. Laycock mentioned on Page 226, that at the time of his writing *Sepik Languages Check list and Preliminary Classification* in 1973, much remained to be learned of the Sawos languages, the writer believes that situation remains the same in 2018. Dr Laycock's classification suggested there may be six Sawos dialects, as indicated on the previous page. For the purposes of this chapter I have moved the villages marked with [*] in to the western dialect simply they are geographically located with other west dialect villages in the Ambunti sub-district.

Village by Village research – Burui Kunai Census Division villages

Torembei See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 27 Interviews conducted 9th – 11th February 1973

ooo000ooo

Marap

Our ancestors left Gaikarobi and came and made camp at Webisu, between the present locations of No 1 and No 2 Marap. Other people came here from different directions, some came by canoe, some [on foot] from the Sarum direction and gathered at Bumbiangei, the first camp of the Maraps. That is near where the kunai is on the west side of the Pangan channel. The people gathered to make a haus tambaran, called Kambungwat. Then there was a population density problem and some people moved inside a bit further and made camp.

Then Parembei came to fight us. We did not lose many people in that fighting. There was not a lot of room; too many people had gathered and there as only one big haus tambaran. Two brothers were there and they left to set a third camp at Luwingei, which is near the canoe place on the Pangan channel.

Then the younger brother slept with the older brother's wife and they fought with sticks. The older brother went to Marap 2 and the younger brother, Wumbunke, went to Marap 1.

Yenchan, Parembei, Nogosop, Sarum and Yamuk each came separately to fight us, but they did not defeat us. The Germans came and stopped the fighting. The Germans and their police killed people here and there. They did not kill anyone from here, but we heard the stories from other places.

Writer's Note. My experience with these interviews has been that the elders in Middle Sepik villages blame "The Germans" for any punitive action taken up until the commencement of the Australian civil administration commenced in 1922. The truth of the matter was that although Native administration through the use of punitive expeditions was a regrettable policy, The Germans, at the outbreak of World War 1 had thirty years of New Guinea experience and generally did not act indiscriminately. The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force [AN&MEF] with very limited experience were required to administer German law from 1914 to 1922. The writer believes that most incidents that Sepik elders remember and attribute to "The Germans" were actions by the AN&MEF.

Enemies of Marap. *Sarum has been an enemy of ours from ancestral times down to our father's times. Other inland enemies were Miambei and Yamuk, Nogosop also came to fight us. These fights were a long time ago. Yamuk also came and raided us. From the Sepik River our enemies were Parembei, Kanganaman and Yenchan*

Ancestral Markets. *We put our market at Bumbia in ancestral times and we still market there with Parembei. We market on Wednesdays and Saturdays. We market with plenty of places. From the bush [sago traders] there is us, Sarum, Yamuk, Yakiap, Miambei, Nogosop, and in low*

*water times, Aurimbit, Kosimbi, Namangoa and Magambu. From the Sepik [fish traders] Tego, Kanganaman, Yenchan, Parembei, Malingai and Suapmeri.*¹

Writer's note. These notes on current markets are included here as they are indicative of the importance of traditional sago/fish markets going far back into ancestral times.

. ooo000ooo

Sengo See Sepik 1 Part 2. Chapter No Interviews conducted 29th January 1973

Wereman See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 26 – Interviews conducted 24th January 1973

Nambagoa - .

Like Yanget we gathered at Gaikarobi in the ancestor times, all places in New Guinea did. Now we speak different languages. At Gaikarobi we all spoke the same language. Then insects stung our mouths and [as a result] now we all speak different languages we have now.

We went to Vagiput and then to Wereman, where we assembled. We moved on from there to Numbunkai. We made camp there and later, we moved by way of Bensim and the Kubuguta bush. My ancestor heard the cry of a wild fowl and he went to investigate. He followed the fowl to the top of a hill called Tinut. We moved from Kubuguta bush to Tinut, which was our main ancestral place and we lived there.

Yanget came and fought us at Tinut and for a time we lived at a place called Kamdo, but fighting drove us off that land as well. Wereman and Jama inflicted heavy losses on us there and burned our village down. Yanget took our survivors in and gave us land at Nambagoa. Yanget wanted us at Nambagoa to act as a sentry post for Yanget. Our ancestors migrated to Nambagoa as they were afraid of the fighting between Kampupu and Jama. This was in our father's and grandfather's time.

*Our language is not the same as that of Yanget and Wereman, ours is related to Jama and Wosera². **The writer** understands Nambagoa to have been an ethnic minority, which was at the mercy of all its neighbours and that Yanget took advantage of this to make them a sentry to protect Yanget. Under Nambagoa's unfortunate circumstances, they accepted because to be needed in this way also provided a protective alliance with former enemy Yanget.*

ooo000ooo

Yanget See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 20 – Interviews 21st and 22nd January 1973

Vagiput See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 20

ooo000ooo

Namangoa

The story of the black and white brothers and the story of sago and of the first death – that of Mai'imp, we believe the white men are our dead returned to life. Our clan is the sago clan, which has land everywhere. Kwonji originally marked out the land for the sago clan, not the present Kwonji [current 1970s leader at Burui] but the mythical Kwonji. I am of Nogusimei clan [recognised far and wide as the Sago clan].

I live at live at Nindugwa, the small hamlet near the service camp at Namangoa [Service camps – in the post-world-war 2 era, retired soldiers, police and public servants often chose to live separately from villages or patrol posts in communities populated by their retired colleagues].

*Nogusimei clan ancestors came in a canoe from Suapmeri. They came ashore at Timbunki. We did not come through Gaikarobi.*³ **Bragge note.** On the day I recorded this interview I made a

foot note that I was unimpressed with the attitude of the people and did not place much reliance on what they said.

From another Namangoa sub group: *Our ancestors came from Gaikarobi. They simply migrated. There was no fighting involved, the place of origin [meaning Gaikarobi] had become over populated and the ancestors came to Namangoa*

*Namangoa's enemies were Aurimbit and Sleis. In more recent times we fought Nambagoa and Wereman over land, but these were not enemies of land standing. We were head hunters before.*⁴

ooo000ooo

Sleis

My true place is Kurangambi. My Ancestor came from Mebinbit. He went to Suapmeri for a while and then to Magro. Then he went to Kurangambi, which is just trees now. Eight water holes of the people of the past are still there as are the ancestral stones. You can still see where the houses were. It was a very big place. We left there and became Sleis No 1 and Sleis No 2. We are the same people, but we just live separately...

Our ancestors came to Kurangambi and made a haus tambaran called Wanbinoli. It was a long house with 12 posts. The other clans; sun pigeon etc, heard the beat of our ancestor's garamut and they came quickly to see who it was. Little by little these clans came to live at Kurungambi, until the place was very large...It was a long time ago and we do not remember the names of the ancestors of that time.

We left there because of women trouble. A man made trouble [had sex with] a woman and his brother pushed a stone into her vagina [This relates to the myth involving Magro as told in Sepik 1 Chapter 28]. Her family made a singsing to finish the place. The singsing included all the ancestral names and all the details of the place. They made a mat which they held during the singsing and when they turned the mat over, all the people left Kurunbambi.

The ancestors who Kurungambi were Kinbei and Nyagala. I do not remember the name of the Ancestor who went to Sleis No 1. The ancestors who left Kurungambi made three camps Sleis No 1, Sleis No 2 and Wanbinoli. When I was a child the kiap came, and as there were not many people at Wanbinoli, so we came here to live at Sleis No 2.

Kurungambi was located between here and Torembei. Some of the people who scattered from Kurungambi went to Torembei, some to here and others to Aurimbit, Kosimbi Miambei, Yamuk and up into the Kunai and elsewhere. Some of the Magros [this informant Magro is pronounced as Magaro].

Directions. *Mebinbit is what we call the direction from where the sun comes up – East – All our stories say we came from the east. Numbu is what we call the direction where the sun goes down. Mebinbit is at Gaikarobi. Gau is north – where the kunai and the mountains are and Sat is south, where the men come from in their canoes*

Enemies of Sleis. *Yamuk, Ambarap, Torembei and Nambagoa were not true enemies [although they were enemies] Our real enemy was Kambukwat, in the Yangoru area.*⁵

Nimbuk of Sleis stated: *I am of the pigeon clan. Yamuk was not a true enemy. We fought them over a Yamuk man called Ambiatkei, whose child had died. He came to Sleis and said "My son is dead and the Yamuks are my enemy you can fight them." He explained that his son's name was Omeikon and that he wife had been taken by the Yamuks and married among their number – he wanted revenge. He gave shell wealth to pay for these requested services. The [Sleis] people, in ones and twos accepted this shell wealth, and thus he recruited a fighting force of Sleis.*

Two men took ginger to Aurimbit, Kosimbi, Namangoa and Torembei to be our allies in the fight. They went to the Kaliatju sago stand of the Yamuks, where Yamuk women were making sago for the market next day. They attacked and killed women and men, and then they came to Yamuk. [This was wrong because] Yamuk and Slei were brothers. Yamuk came straight from Mebinbit, whereas Slei came from Mebinbit and went to Slei via Kurumgambi.

We fought Torembei over the Magros and at Kurumgambi we fought the Magros. Our ancestors sent talk for the Magros and Yambunei [a Magro sub group] to come for a singsing on a set day. The request included for them to bring crocodile meat for the Kurumgabis to eat.

They came all decorated for the singsing and with the requested crocodile meat. In the night the Magros went up into the top story of the Wanbinoli haus tambaran, leaving their spears down stairs. There were two ladders up into the top store, one at each end of the haus tambaran. Upstairs the Magros had their singsing and beat their kundus. The Kurumgambis down below called out and made noise to Magros.

Near dawn the Kurumgambis took away one of the ladders. They went upstairs and held the dangers and killed them with bone and bamboo daggers, stone axes and other hand weapons. They killed and killed. Down stairs the blood came through the floor like rain. Where the ladder had previously been, spears were positioned and unfortunate Magros were thrown down onto them. One man escaped through the roof at the front of the haus tambaran and climber down a betelnut palm. His name was Yambiwus. He ran back and brought the talk to Magro. At Kurumgambi the men counted the Magro spears and found there was one spear for which there was no body. They knew someone had escaped.

This trouble was over a disagreement at a market, where women spoke badly to a Kurumgambi woman...A Suapmeri woman trading fish was sitting with her eyes closed as if she was asleep. A Kurumgambi woman wanting to trade sago for her fish came and tapped her on the head and said "Hey wake up, why are you sleeping?" The Suapmeri woman replied "You must not hit me. At night I do not sleep because we watch day and night for an attack from you people."

The Kurumgabi woman went home and cooked the sago and fish for her husband, but instead of serving him she threw it on the floor. Her husband asked what was wrong and she told him what the Suapmeri woman had said. Next day the husband took the fish to the haus tambaran and challenged the men there.

Writer's note. I am at a loss to understand how something said by a Suapmeri woman could have instigated an attack against Magro people. I must have missed something in the telling.

We were allied with Aurimbit against Ambarap. We fought through time down to our father's time over land rights. We did not fight the Sepik River people and we never had any trouble with them over markets.⁶

ooo000ooo

Yakiap Interviews conducted on 17th and 18th February 1973

The ancestors were at the top of Mt Ambunti. [it seems likely that these ancestor were of the Souli Moganai – See the chapter entitled "The demise of the Souli Moganai. In Sepik 1 part 2] They did not want to stay there. They were afraid and they came past all the places, until they came to Apangai close to Slei. They settled there and then they went to Ambarap where they stayed for a short time.

But the ancestors pulled [inappropriate behaviour towards] the Ambarap women and a fight started. The Ambaraps were about to fight when the ancestors ran away through the swamps and found a little Island there called Wiyambit. They stayed there for a short time, until it became evident

that there was no good water or building materials there to build houses. So, they left there and came to Yaugurumbit. There were already people there and they were afraid, so they looked further.

The crossed a creek and came through a swamp until they came to the place where Yakiap is now. They settled here. The ancestors came in the story time. Our ancestor was Tegindambwi.

Tegindambwi – Yambigumban – Suiyengen – Tanganamhun [female child in 1973]

We do not know why the ancestors came. We heard there was a fight but we know nothing about that. No Kiap, we do not know the names Souli Moganai or Olu. We are of the Niamei moiety.⁷

The story of the Wakauwi family or clan of Yakiap: *My ancestors came from Yambunagwi Aibunagwi. We do not know where these ancestral places are or were, but our stories tell us it was at Chambri and Aibom. Three families or clans of us came. The big pisin [clan] the small clan and the last clan. They came and held this land. We came on the Kunai [grassland] road [called] Kwanjarangwa to get here. Then other clans came and joined us and they took our land, water, sago and bush.*

They were not good to us, they took what they wanted, they killed us and made bad fashions towards us and now we are short [poor]. One of the families with which we came is extinct and only my family Wakauwi is left.

The clans which pushed us and took our lands, still live with us. They are Niaui and Niamei [moieties], Indagambei and Kamangau. These families came from the Sepik River. [the latter two are presumably clans]⁸

Writer's Note: The last para indicates the Wakauwi group were an ethnic minority, to which the moiety system did not apply, and therefore, probably not of Sawos, or even Ndu origins, whereas their enemies were.

ooo000ooo

Sarum

Writer's note: Nothing was taken down on tape. A general discussion took place with elders in the haus tambaran, during which notes were made. They said. *We believe we came originally from Nogosop. But if we did it was in the time before memory. Our language is spoken only by Sarum, it is part Nogosop and part Yamuk. The name "Sarum" is what the kiap calls us, but this place is Kamambit.*

Sarum relations with neighbouring groups: *We have no enemies in the Yangoru to the north. Pangambit in that area is our ally. Allied with them we used to fight against the Waiu group of villages in the Kubalia area [further to the east]. We fought a little against Gaikarobi and Nogosop, but our main enemy here was Marap.*

Sarum is in a mother relationship with Yakiap, who we call child. We, in turn call Slei mother. In the distant past we did not fight with Kosimbit or Aurimbit, but in our father's time they allied with Kambu [Kambungei] against us in fighting here. We paid back and the fighting came and went. Our ancestors were head hunters.

We heard the fighting with Marap started over women in the distant past. We did not fight Yamuk or Torembei or the Sepik River villages.⁹

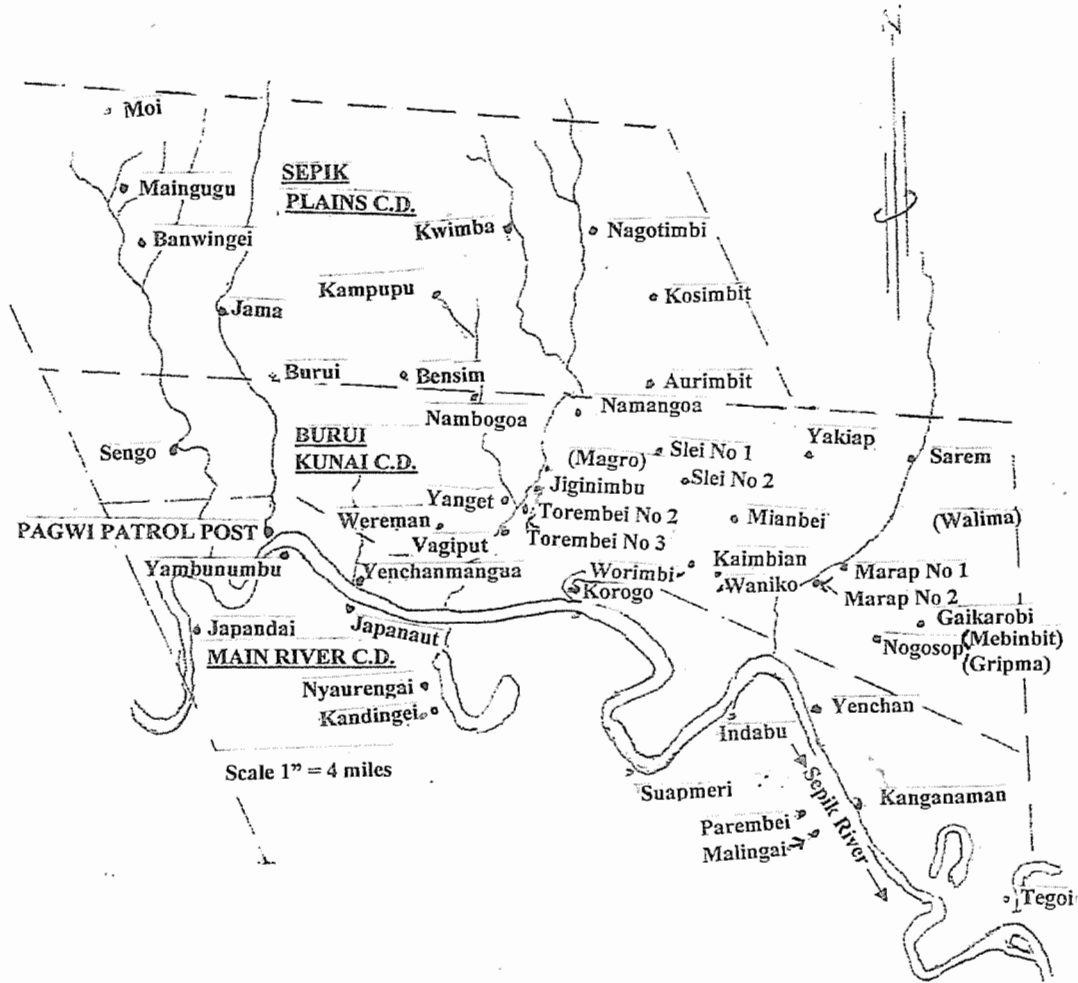
ooo000ooo

Miambei See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 23 Interviews conducted on 16th February 1973

Worimbi See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 23 Interviews conducted on 19th February 1973

Waniko See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 23 Interviews conducted on 20th February 1973

Kaimbian See Sepik 1 part 1 Chapter 23 Interviews conducted on 20th February 1973
Maiwi See Sepik 2 Chapter 26 Interviews conducted 7th and 8th February 1973
Nogosop See Sepik 1 Chapter 19 Interviews conducted on 21st and 22nd February 1973
Gaikarobi See Sepik 1 Chapter 19 Interviews conducted on 23rd February 1973



End Notes Chapter 24

¹ The Councillor and elders of Marap Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 250-251
² Clements/Watnumbuk of Nambogoa Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 155/156
³ Yangen Nogusimeit clan of Namangoa Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 232
⁴ Tarabungau of Namangoa Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 232
⁵ Tobias Bala of Sleis Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 233
⁶ Nimbuk of Sleis Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 233/234
⁷ Michael/Labi, Committee member of Yakiap and ex- Catholic Mission Catechist Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 246
⁸ Moligumban of Yakiap. Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 246
⁹ Assembled Sarum elders in their haus tambaran Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 249

Sepik 1 Chapter 25 Sawos - The other Sawos villages in Ambunti Sub District - [Sepik Plains]

Burui Interviews conducted 27th and 28th January 1973

Nungwaimo, used to own most of the land Burui is now on. Their village was on the big stream between here and Bensim. The half caste Chambris here and the Maiwis have nearly finished them. Although they used to be a separate village with their own Luluai and Tultul, now [1973] there are only three men left, and they live at Burui with us. The men of the group are Yiakamben of the Cassowary clan, Wangi of the Limbum clan and Suambo of the Yam/Mami clan. Their women and children are here too.

The Nungwaimo say they want to give men their girls without bride price, so the men can become members of the Nungwaimo group and use their name and use Nungwaimo water land.

But if men come and take our daughters away and pay bride price for them, their removal will finish Nungwaimo off and there will be no one left to rightfully claim the Nungwaimo lands. They say we have plenty of land but Bensim, Wereman, Burui and Maiwi are all trying to take our lands. Nungwaimo want just Nungwaimo and Burui on Nungwaimo land. Before Burui used to be down near Pagwi with a boundary facing the Sepik River down near Japanaut. Nungwaimo was finished by sorcery so people could take their land. Their girls can marry free, so they can breed up soldiers to protect their land. Burui is the same. I am a half-cast [Burui/Japanaut] and I have a sister. There are in-all, about four Burui men – other men – Woseras and Chambri came in to swell our population.

The Nungwaimos would not come to talk to you, they were afraid.

Nongumoli was a small place Nyaula place near Pagwi. They were on this bank, [left or north bank of the Sepik] not the other bank [where most of the upstream Nyaula Iatmul reside] They were Burui's friends against the Sepiks and the Maiwis. They went to Japanaut and now live there.¹

Writer's Note Informant Kwonji was a very important man in the 20th Century history. His mother Yembeli was captured as a girl by Nyaula Iatmul warriors to be sacrificed by being thrown from the roof of the haus tambaran onto the spears below [See Sepik 2 Chapter 28], but instead her capturers raised her and she married. Kwonji's mother taught him her language – Sawos and his father's language Iatmul. He was unique, in that he could speak both Middle Sepik languages and so became G.W.L.Townsend's interpreter.

Jama Interviews conducted 29th January 1973

Before there were no men here. There was only a woman and her name was Anyik. She made the earth, and then she thought, "There are no men". She looked at the earth and saw there was white earth, black earth, red Earth, yellow earth. She made a picture of a child in each of these coloured earths, each was a model, and she put each out in the sun to dry. She made a singsing over them and blew and blew on their heads, and they got up and were like men. She sent them to distant parts of the land that was not occupied. They bred and the population grew.

The black one's line is the story I will follow. There was no food on the land. Anyik made foods of all kinds; yams, mamis, pigs, cassowaries, snakes, insects etc. She made a hole in the ground with no entrance to the surface. She did not look after this hole and trouble came in the hole and the surface caved in and the food in the hole came outside and we found this food.

Before, the people she made from earth had no trouble or fighting. But when the hole caved in trouble and fighting started between the ancestors. They made spears before and they made a singsing, and the spear itself would go and kill people. They would make a sago camp and make a singsing and the spear would be in a little house. The spear would hear a pig and would go and kill

it. In the morning, the people would see blood on the spear. Then follow the trail of blood back to the pig. They ate that way.

My own personal ancestor started fighting here. He took the spear and he killed pigs and later he killed his wife. Warfare commenced as a result. My ancestor Simbrae, came from Bugimbalikim in the Wosera. He had no children. He worked with his big brother, but big brother would only allow him the edge of the garden, not the middle of the garden for planting food. He was angry and ran away because of this. He came here [Jama] and found no men, but he found a Jama ancestor at Waimo.

The Jama ancestor's wife was fetching water and she saw the reflection of his feather headdress in the water. She looked up and saw he was just a small child, and she had no children of her own, so she took him back to the house, intending to keep him as her child. Her husband came and he did not see the child. She said "I have found a good thing; can I keep it?" "What thing is that?" he asked. "A small child."

"Oh yes, we have no child of our own I think we will keep him as our own." They were afraid if they showed the child that other people would kill him. He took coconut shoots and a bilum and a lime stick and decorated the child and took him outside where plenty of men were building a haus tambaran...the builders stopped work and said "Hey! That couple has no children, where did that lad come from?" The ancestor asked them "This coconut shoot, may I plant it?" They responded "Yes, that is OK you can plant that coconut." This was symbolic of allowing him to keep the child.,

Jama did not have a lot of ancestors before mine came to join them, mine was the fourth. We divided the land. Yambi, which the government later purchased, was given to my ancestor as his land. My ancestor grew up to be a man. At that time, the Jamas did not know how to fight. As I have explained the spear went and killed pigs.

My ancestor asked about the spear and he was told of the singsing and the movements of the spear of its own volition. "How then do you spear men?" he asked. "In the same way" they said. "We can make a singsing, and if enemies come, it will spear them." My ancestor said "No, we can do better than that" He took the spear and said "Right tomorrow we will go and chase and hunt pigs." The ancestors had no idea what tomorrow would bring. My ancestor told them to chase the pigs towards him...they chased the pigs and my ancestor threw the spear and the pig died. They killed two that way and they cooked and ate them. The ancestors were pleased with this new way of hunting. They hunted again, but did not find any pigs.

A woman of the village had purchased a wife for my ancestor. The woman went to the ancestor's wife and asked if she could borrow some sago to make soup. The wife gave her a stone as a joke. The woman thought it was sago and broke her finger trying to break it up. She held her injured hand and told her tale when the hunters returned empty handed. He heard this and took the spear and killed his wife. The people were not angry, they just said "It's his wife, if he wants to kill her that is ok, He is a good child.

At that time, the villages all around did not fight. My ancestor, with the Jamas went and fought around in the kunai and pushed the neighbours back and took their lands. His boundary was Pagwi. This is how killing and hunting started.²

ooo000oo

Burui is on our land, and we put them there, I will tell an ancestor story of Burui. When the Jama ancestors were at Waimo. The ancestor from Waimo became a spirit like a crocodile. This crocodile made a lake and lived in it. This lake was up in the kunai. Men came and dug a ditch and drained the lake and the crocodile was exposed...They speared the crocodile and carried it back to

the place. The people said which parts of the crocodile they would like as it was being carved...I want the bones, I want the meat, I want the head etc...But the carver made a point of not giving the people what they wanted. The man who wanted the meat was angry at this and he went to Maikum near Kaugia in the Wosera. The man who wanted, but did not get the bones, went to Burui. Bone in our language is "Butui". The man who missed out on the head went to Kandingai – Head in our language is "Kande" The man who wanted the liver went to Yalikin "Yali" is Liver in our language.

...Later when the Nyaulas went to fight Burui, we were Burui's allies. Had we not been there to help them, they would have been wiped out.³

ooo000ooo

Yamini This village name is not known in Ambunti sub district.

ooo000ooo

Bangwingei Interviews conducted 30th January 1973

Writer's note made on 30th January 1973 Upon arrival here I was greeted by an ex-prisoner from Ambunti Corrective Institution. [someone I had gaoled for some summary offence]. He introduced himself as Bowdimi, an ex-committee member for his village. He wanted to be interviewed, but not with many others present, preferably just his brother. He did not want to be ridiculed by other from the village.

When the opportunity arose Bowdimi came to the rest house and instead of commencing his story he asked if I was recording the stories so I could find out who all the ancestors were. This immediately struck me as cargo cult thinking, as the ancestor's actions in pre-history, which interested me, were also the ones the people believed who created the cargo for them [The Mt Turu cargo cult was in full swing at that time, not far to the North East – Sepik 4 Chapter 47] I could not get Bowdimi to reveal why he thought that might be my motivation. He also proved to be a good historic informant.

ooo000ooo

Our people started at a place to the south called Keiwan¹. Our enemies lived where we are now. Two of our ancestors came and put a fishing line on the pandanus where the pigeons come to feed. They were watching the line when they felt hungry. They went to where the enemy Angurangu and others were making sago nearby and asked for sago to eat. They broke some sago from the bark container, which still had water in it. [sago is leached from sago pith and after passing through a coconut fibre strainer, is caught in a container, where the sago settles to the bottom of the water.]

They took a stick and measured the depth of the water and the depth of the sago. They took that stick back with them to Keiwan and showed the men. They decided to get up their ancestors [arouse ancestral power] and fight to gain control of the [productive] land the enemies held. Three separate lines attacked the enemy from different directions. One of the factions attacked was pushed to near Hayfield [Maprik's airfield constructed during World War 2] to what is now Yaramaiku. The other lines were annihilated. They cleared all the land as far south as the Sepik and as far west as the Amagu River. Sengo is still on our land.

We moved to a new camp called Kuriangu, which was between here and Jama. Originally there was only one place Keiwan. Some of the people went to form Avatip – so their ancestors and ours came from Keiwan.

¹ Sepik 2 page 325 mentions Bangwingei far to the south near the Amagu River.

The origins of three names – Manja, Bangwingei and Maingugu.

In ancestral times we had no group name, we just fought back and forth, made camps on captured lands then fought on again. That was the old way. When the kiap came and conducted census, he asked us our group name. We were censused as Manja, Bangwingei and Maingugu, as these were the places where we lived.

When the people lived at Keiwan, there were no singsings as such [taken to mean ceremonial life] ...Two of our people went to Wosera and learned their singsings and brought them back inside, and now we have singsings.

Markets. *On our boundaries, we were surrounded by enemies. Our ancestors wanted to make friends, and they decided the best way to do this was through marketing arrangements. It was enemy territory, so our women went to market under an escort of armed men. After the exchange of fish for sago the party would return home under escort. Then Australia came and appointed Luluais and Tultuls. The Luluais said the fighting was finished and we planted coconut shoots to commemorate the end of warfare. The escorts ceased to accompany the marketing parties after assurances were given to [and presumably from] the Sepiks about safe conduct to and from the market places. We, Jama, Sengo and Maingugu used to market with Japandai and Yambunumbu on an island called Dabi, which is near Sengo... We just trade with Avatip now, [1973] at Kworum in our bush.⁴*

ooo000ooo

Manja informants at Maingugu Interviews 30th January 1973.

Our place of origin was Munduwara-Penguan. We left there and came to Moromi. The ancestors then decided to fight against people who lived where Manja is now. The clans Mar, Wasolobo and Tamanbo were our enemies. The clan Mar, ran away to Auimbu in the Wosera. We fought them still and they went to Jiribilk. Then we divided, some went to Jiribilk and the remainder came back to Sigilaribo.

They then thought about the land they had won and decided to go back and occupy it. When they returned, they found that men from the Maiku and Yar clans had occupied the land. They argued over ownership and then fought and pushed the Maiku and Yar clans up to Tamauwi near Kunjingini. Those clans are still there. That made five clans we pushed off this land. They [the ancestors] came back and went down to the place called Kaiwa and lived there.

Some of the Mar went into the Konjigo group and the Konjigos came and burnt down our village Kaiwa. One man had gone to the sago swamp at night and he encountered these enemies and he hid and counted them. He broke sticks, one for each man he saw and when he counted them, he went back to Kaiwa and told the people within the village stockade. "Tomorrow our enemies will burn down our village." He showed them the number of sticks. They thought about what to do. They started a singsing which went through until dawn.

At the cry of the third fowl all the men quietly left the camp. Everyone went except an old woman and an old man whose jobs were to keep the fires going in each of the houses to indicate occupancy. The enemy heard the singsing and expected that the people would now be heavily asleep. They came and broke into the stockade and killed the old people who had tended the fires and they burnt the village.

The village men were ready to fight from ambush they set on the track. All the enemy except one man were killed. The survivor who hid in a hollow sago log, which also had wasps in it. They saw the log moving and heard sounds coming from it, and they took the man out. They decided that as only the two elders had died and all of the attackers apart from this man had been killed, that they would let this man go to take the story back to the women and children of their place. They skinned

the man's penis and gave him a stick to take home. The Komjigo people still keep the stick in their place as a talking point.

The ancestors then left Kaiwa and went to Yongurengu, which was on a high hill. The Tibando-Jibaga people came to attack Yongurengu, they did not get to the village, just to the edge from where they talked fight, then went back to their villages Kambijimarabo and Kambudu Kumbunrinjei. It was always like that they came to fight...

A girl had just reached puberty and was initiated in the enclosure. They had a singsing and she was married. At that time the ancestors decided that all the threats from these enemies must not go unanswered. They decided to go and burn down their villages. They went, but they fought only on the tracks and several times in the sago. Fighting along these lines was continuous, but theirs' was a huge village and [the Manga forces] were not sufficient to take it. They just fought in the swamps, on the tracks and in the streams. The enemy became fewer and fewer.

Our ancestors moved from Yongurengu to make three settlements Tanaka, Okiso and Maingugu. It was like we have Bangwingei and Maingugu now. This was a security tactic. If we all lived together, enemies could beat us, but spread out, if one of our settlements was attacked, the other two would then lay in wait for the enemy on its way home. They decided it was time to burn down the enemy village,

At this time a lot of our people were in the Wosera because one of our elder's wives had died. While they were away an incident occurred in the home village. A widower was looking after his child. He was cleansing the child, and a woman laughed at him. He was ashamed and said "Whatever did my wife do in her lifetime to make you people laugh at me. I am ashamed. You should not laugh when I clean the child." In his anger he carried the child to the enemy camps at Kambijimarambo and Kumbunrinjei, where the enemy made a fuss over him. They washed his legs and face with water from green coconuts and made a bed of wild taro leaves for him to sit on. With all of this done they asked "Why have you come?" He replied "I want you to burn my village down. The people have gone to Wosera for a singsing and there are few people in it."

"Oh good." They said "Just women and children there, we will come and kill then and burn the village." The man then left ahead of the raiding party. He did not come to Maingugu, instead, he hid in his garden house. All the fighters were still up in Wosera. The Tibando-Jibaga warriors came to Maingugu and burned the village. They killed the women, the elderly and the very young, who were there. There were no men, just a spirit, a spear which was guarding the doorway of a house and speared an enemy as he tried to go inside.

At dawn after the Wosera singsing, the men started their homeward journey and they saw the smoke from the burning village from afar...they ran to the village and found the houses burnt and thee women and children dead. All that was left were some coconut and betelnut palms that grew far enough from the houses not be destroyed when the houses burned. It was a terrible loss, so now we always have a man in the village called Tusola to commemorate this loss. Tusols means everything burned. Someone in every generation is given that name.

The ancestors decided it was time to burn the enemy village in return. They went to burn Kambijimarabo, the lower village. They fought outside the stockade and found that the enemy was strong. A good young man of our group called Abila and speared and his throat was cut...They showed our men Abila's head and they lost their strength. They were sad and they came home. They decided they could not beat this enemy as they were too strong.

Yalindu, Jama, Angaji contributed pigs and gathered rings [shell valuables] together as payment with which to buy the services of allies. A bilum of rings went to Moi. Moi sent the rings

back with word that they would not fight Tibando-Jibaga people as they were in a relationship of child to Moi. Moi said "They are your enemy. You fight them." ...But some of the Mois talked among themselves "Those were good rings, what can we do to get them?". Other Mois were opposed "No leave them along."

[Meanwhile] Lai'imbia of Tibando-Jibaga, went to a swamp called Kaiega to see his pig in an enclosure there. Lai'imbia had two wives, who had been arguing. One wife was walking with her man and the other wife was tagging along well to the rear, as is the fashion when wives argue. Lai'imbia saw a Moi ancestor celled Tangil sitting on the track, and with him was Mamba. The rest of the Mois were hiding in the bush. "What are you doing sitting here?" Lai'imbia was wary "I think you have brought Manja enemies with you. I am afraid." "No, we are just looking at you" They replied.

"This not your land, that you sit here" Lai'imbia said "I will spear you" He threw a spear which the dodged. The ambush was sprung and the Mois speared him and he died. The wife who was tagging well behind heard the commotion and did not come close, but fled back to the village.

The Moi community as a whole did not know about this ambush. It was only the families [clans?] of Embuga and Tibanga and Wiranga who were involved. The Mangas then sent the rings back to Moi and the Mois reconsidered their position. They dealt [distributed] the rings, and decided to help Manja in their fight. But some of the Mois were not in favour of the alliance and were angry with those who were. They were the Cassowary and the Cockatoo clans. [Also] the Parrot clan was still loyal to Tibando-Jibaga. A major dispute arose over the killing of this man "You have killed our friend. You will compensate us right now with rings and pigs." The Embuga, Tibanga and Wiranga clans agreed and paid two pigs and a bilum full of rings to compensate the others and to offset the likelihood of a fight within the village. Then it was alright.

We, Manja, were the real enemy and Moi was just helping us. The ancestors were still worried about the death of the young man Abila, so the ancestors sent a pig and a bilum of rings down to Pugunuk, our market place with Avatip, the place where the Ambakim [Japandai] used to live. The pig and bilum of rings were given to them. They are not there near Sengo now, they went to establish Brugnowi. [The ancestors] of his group, now called Japandai and Brugnowi used to be called Ambakin. They were our allies.

We now had two allies ready to fight them with us, but they were in two places and we did not have enough men yet to beat them. A man from Jaminja, a friend of ours, took a bilum of rings and some pigs and went to Yelogu and Modiagu, then Jaminja also came in to make five places. Then the Avatips came inside, because this was their big [ancestral] place where they originated.

Tibando-Jibaga, were thus surrounded. Their place was near the Amagu River, not far from the present location of Biananumbu. Fighting started and continued until they were completely exterminated. These groups had more land and sago than anyone else. Now this land and sago is common land to all six groups that wiped them out.

We settled down on our present land and we have lived here ever since. Our ancestors who went to the big fight were Jama, Yelindu and Angaji.

Yelindu – Yagawas – Biranjigi – Kokbeli [Kokbeli was about 38 years old in 1973]

The Avatip Migration: This migration [from here] happened in the distant past. No one can remember just when or the names of the ancestors.⁵

ooo000ooo

Moi interviews conducted in January/February 1973 – actual date not recorded.

Our place of origin is in the Wosera area. Our ancestors fought the men of Bangelebo. They [the ancestors] left their village and came and established a place at Ligibuwanjan. They aroused their tambaran and it had a singsing. A man from Bangelebo was following the Amagu river upstream was heard by women in the gardens to be singing things like "I can eat bandicoots. I can eat big mouth fish. I can eat pig." But he, the tambaran, really wanted to eat meat.

The women returned from the gardens and said "That man from Bangelebo spoke jeeringly at us and he made fun of the tambaran. The men said "True!" and they were very angry. It rained heavily and the people collected frogs in the lake, and in the night the man from Bangelebo ran away and in the morning a fight started at Bangelebo and continued on to Moi.

A big man from Moi, called Wasangu became involved asking "Have you not killed him get – are you people serious." With that he speared the Bangelebo man and the others finished him off. They took a stone axe and broke his legs and arms and cut off his penis. Then they threw the body away.

The Bangelebo people ran away and allied with Muik to fight Moi, and Muik became Moi's prime enemy. The Bangelebo ran away completely. After the fighting Moi abandoned Ligibuwanjan and established a new village at Numbukei-Kwonjikei. Peace was made, compensation paid and a taboo was placed on fighting.

Masember of Moi had a child who was always sick, always close to dying. He said "My child remains ill. You men of Moi come and help me fight Muik." But the people said "No the fighting is over, we do not want to fight again. We are at peace." Masember continued to worry about his child and he went to Nungwaia, which is not our enemy, but like a mother to us.

A man of Muik came and sat with the Men of Moi in the afternoon. He went to Masember's house and spoke with Winjinimbik, Masember's wife. She asked "Who is it?" and he replied "Me" and she said "Can't you see we have sickness in this house, your in-law [Masember] is worried about his son and has gone to Nungwaia. So why have you come to see me? Do you want food?"

He replied "No, I was just looking at you, that is all." In the afternoon he went back to Muik and he said "A man called Masember, with a worry about his son. What does he plan against us. I think he has gone to get allies to fight us."

They decided to ambush the track and see Masember. At the cry of the second fowl they went and laid the ambush. Masember had spoken with Nungwaia and made his arrangements to fight Muik. He came back with a tanget from Nungwaia marking the day for Kirimp'r the Muik fight. He walked along the track and walked into the ambush.

The ambushers recognised him and asked "What are you doing walking around?" He threw his spear at them, but he was alone and they were plenty and they speared him. Kangia, an old man of Muik came and told Moi. The Moi people did not know anything was happening and Kangia said "You did not know? All the Muiks have gone down to ambush Masember on the track, they probably have killed him by now."

"True?!". The Moie quickly gathered their spears and went to investigate and they found his dead body. They hanged his body up to rot and they came and they came back to the Moi camp and discussed what was to be done. They decided "We must move camp, because if we stay here, they will continue to come and fight. We can push our enemies away and settle new land." They left Numbukei-Kwonjikei and came and made camp at Saingingi. My old father Mi'ink was there.

A big man of Muik called Sangen, came to Saingingi and talked about an alliance whereby Moi and Muik would go and fight against Kwalingai. This caused an argument "Before we went with

you and killed the Kwalingais and burnt their village, but you did not pay us for that service. Now you ask us to go again. No! we will not do it!"

Then my old father got up and speared Sangen. The Muiks worried about this killing and they came down and fought us Mois. A man called Rangil, with others were gathering breadfruit over by the Amagu River. Muik got together with Kwalingai to come and pay back Sangen's death. They speared the men and women who were cooking breadfruit.

The Mois left Saingingi and came to talk with the ancestors of Manja. The Mois said "We have been driven off our lands." The Manjas gave them land and sago and a place to settle called Kirimp. Some Mois came and settled, but many broke away saying "We do not want to go and live with the Manjas and eat poor food like bamboo and greens. We want to eat meat. You go to Manja we will go to Jaminja near Gomanjui."

They went and met the people down there who gave them pieces of human bone taken from the bodies of people the Jaminjas had killed and put into the arm bands of the Mois who went. They reassured the Mois "Have no fear. You can live with us here. There is no fighting and no trouble here. I pity those of your group who went to Manja, I wonder if they are getting enough to eat up there." This was the way the Jaminjas greased the Mois who lived and ate with them.

Then the Jaminjas finished off all the Mois who had gone to live with them. A few women were held to be kept as wives of the Jaminjas. They escaped and ran away back to our ancestors and told the tale... They moved in and settled. This is an old story that my father passed on to me.

The men of Moi then decided "If we stay here [Manja] like this we will die out. I think we should go see out mother at Nungwaia." On the way them met a man called Waspin on the track, he was from Tabandu-Jibagwa. He asked them where they were going and whether they had come to fight him. "No, we have not come to fight, we are going to Nungwaia to see our mother" "No" he said "I think you have come to fight me". He threw his first spear then and the Mois dodged it. He threw other spears and a Moi threw a spear which wounded him. In return he wounded one of the Mois. The Mois had at first been reluctant to fight, but once having seen blood spilt, killed the man and left his body on the track.

The wounded Moi man had been speared through the lower buttock and the spear point came out on the inside of the left thigh near the groin and pierced the other leg as well. They broke the spear off, pulled it out and let the blood run. The wounded man limped as the party moved slowly on to Nungwaia, which they reached in the dead of night...

The Nungwaias were worried about their child Moi. They thought from what they had heard, that enemies had finished Moi off and they feared that with Moi gone the enemies might turn their attention on Nungwaia...

The Mois came into the camp quietly...they knocked at the door of Wanga and his wife Neimapu [after questions and doubt the door was opened] They were taken in and mad welcome, with much show of feeling. They called out and woke the village with the news "Watimber has come back" [repeated]. The village community got up and made them welcome. The wounded man was taken aside.

"Ah, our child...How many places have been fighting against you?" They asked.

"...Muik, Kwalingai, Gomanjui and Jaminja. They have all be after us."

"Ah! It is good that you have come back to your mother. Now we will not sleep, we will talk, we will mourn and we will sing until dawn". Then they asked "Why is that man just sitting there doing nothing?"

The Mois answered by lying "As we were coming, we saw a possum up a tree and this man went up and killed the possum. As he was coming down a stick stuck into him"

The Nungwaias took a fine stick and probed the wound to establish its size and seriousness. The stick went right through the buttock. "Aaiii! This is not a stick wound. This is a spear wound!" they declared. "You cannot hide this talk, you must talk out so we can hear it."

"Yes, we killed the big man of Jaminja, and in return he speared this man, and we have been carrying him slowly to reach here."

They prepared bamboo as a knife and cut the skin around the entry and exit wound. They heated big stones in the fire and cleaned the blood from the wound, and out native sale, made from coconut husk ask, on the wound then burned [cauterized] the wounds with the heated stones. The wound healed and the next day he was able to walk around.

The Nungwaias said "We will stay here today and discuss war." ... They marked a day to go to the Amagu River ... Moi would go with Nungwaia support. If the enemy paid compensation in shell wealth the Nungwaia would not be called in.

At dawn on the marked day, the men moved to Saingingi. A Muik man called Wanga [we now have two Wangas – a possible error?] and his wife were at the old village site. The woman ran away and dived into the Amagu River and swam to safety on the other side. The man ran into the bush and swamp. The Mois and Nungwaias went after him in twos ... Two men of Nungwaia heard him coming and they hid behind a large tree. The man showed his face around the tree and one Nungwaia held him and his spears against him. The other Nungwaia had gone, so it was just one man holding another.

The holder called out "Hurry up he is about to get away!" They struggled and the spears fell down and were broken as they were trampled. The other parties heard the cried and moved in that direction. They arrived and speared him in both sides of his neck, by pushing the spears into him. They finished him off... The Mois were elsewhere, ambushing a track in case the man came that way. They heard the call and ran to the spot and to the Nungwaias they said "This tree kangaroo, it is not good that we have killed him."

With the man dead, the Mois gathered food and made a feast for the Nungwaias and they ate. Then they fastened a target... [marking a day] to finish the enemies at Gomanjui. "Now about this man we have killed we must not hide it. Have you made garamuts? If not use a buttress root of a tree. We must let Manja know. In the past by killing two men at our request. They did that and they took us in and gave us land."

"Tell them you came to mother and mother gave you milk and now you are strong and you are ready to push your enemies away. The Mois came and beat their garamuts and the Manjas heard it and said "Hey! Moi is playing a head-hunting beat. I wonder who they have killed."

Next morning the Manjas came to Moi to inquire... The Mois explained and the Manjas took the talk home with them, where they agreed that Moi was not an enemy, and that if Moi was going to fight anyone, that Manja would go with them as their ally. They prepared targets and sent them to Moi.

The fighting force gathered and went to Jaminja and fought, spearing men and women. Nungwaia speared only men. Nungwaia had gone ahead and Moi came behind. Nungwaia came back to the Mois and said "Child did you not hurry, we came first and all the men ran away leaving just one old man and we killed him. You should have come first because you know your way around down here."

That night the Jaminjas took the old man's body and the raiders heard them crying in the night. But at dawn when they surrounded the place the people had gone. The raiders consoled themselves with the man Nungwaia had killed. Nungwaia said "What is the score child? In the only two fights we have been in on your behalf – Muik and Jaminja, we did all the killing, you have not done any."

The Mois replied "Oh mother, we are enough! You can go back and we will succeed on our own. If we do not succeed, we will come back and ask for your help. Now we will try fighting Jaminja on our own."

The other places [allies] went back and on a set day Moi went again down to Jaminja. They saw one man going down to the sago. They quietly waited for him to come. Then he saw them and was about to call out when a spear stopped him, Killing him. They went on until they were close to the village. They took up positions and waited for dawn. The devil [spirit] of the man they had killed, entered the dream of one of the Mois and told him "You have come to hunt your enemies. Do not go there [the village?] but go to the point, [a bend in the river] where you will find the people. They are planting Mamis there." He awoke and said to the Mois.

"Hey you men, are you asleep. The man who spoke before and gave the human bones to the line who came here; he just came and spoke to me and said you must not go here, but go to the point called Luklukbauinyamba...wo brothers, Wanganau and Simbapi, two brothers are in a garden planting mamis."

They went as the devil had directed. The big brother was working ahead making the holes [in which to plant the mamis] and the small brother was coming behind. Big brother called "Hey junior, you are too slow. The pigs will be in this garden shortly the way you are going." The younger replied. "That is ok friend, they can come into the garden."

The two of them has put their spears aside while they worked. There was a woman there making soup. She was bending down to put wood on the fire. Her child was clambering on her back. She half turned trying to dislodge the child "Get down!", when she saw the Mois. She tried to call a warning, but she was speared before she could. The child was speared as well. Noise alerted the two brothers, who grabbed their spears and jumped into the river. They turned and saw people on the other side of the river and more people upstream, they were surrounded, so they stayed in the water. The small brother recrossed the river. They killed the big brother first.

The small brother twisted and turned and dodged. The Mois were over confident. They said "You alone are not going to get away. This is the end for you." The younger brother's spears were finished, but he had a black-palm spear clasped between his toes and he dragged it across the river gravel at the water's edge.

The Mois observed that his spears were finished and moved in close to make the kill. Walingambongwoi of Moi went close to spear him and the hunted brother flipped the spear up with his toes, into his hand and speared Walingambongwoi. He fled again dodging spears, he had flesh wounds. He tried to get out of the water and up the bank. He lunged to grab a tree root but it broke and he fell backwards into the water again. He lunged again and with most of his body out of the water, a Moi threw his spear which hit him in the small of the back and came out in his groin. He straightened up with the spear hanging out of him, straight and arching back against the spear. Then he fell over stiffly like a sago palm and splashed into the water.

The Mois then went and cleared the bush and looked at the bodies. They cut the legs, arms and face of the younger brother with stone axes and were about to cut his throat when one man said "No leave his neck – he was a good man" They skinned his penis and then they returned to Moi

village with shouts of victory. Later they went back again to raid again. They counted the Mois they had killed Kalgwa, Yagimi, Wegra - three men killed in the first fight when Moi was split during the Manja migration. "They killed three of ours and so we have not fully repaid them yet! We must raid and raid, we cannot leave them be."

On the next raid they killed Garamal, just the one man. The others ran away. Moi moved their village to Mamber, where they had lived in the past. Our fathers cleared that site while we were still small [mid 1930s?]. We were still living there when the Australians came and finished the fighting. We saw the Jamas hanged, [Sepik 2 Chapter 32 – 1934 page 253] all the villages went to see. The Kiap said: If you have fought and killed in the past, look at this [and learn] ... no more fighting."

Word reached us that the Jaminjas were worried that they would be wiped out... We sent word to them. "You can come back onto your land now. The fighting is over. We will not raid you again."⁶

ooo000ooo

Kwimba Interviews conducted 12th February 1973.

The place we came from was Kringambi. All places got up from there and disbursed. We came to Bangiap. There was no fighting or trouble and we lived well, but there was a wasp that lived in an area of the creek and it stung the tongues of men, so we have different languages now. We went our own ways, some to Wereman, some to Wanjeigut'r.

There was trouble over sago and we fought the Kworowi and we left that place. Kworowi is now scattered throughout the villages. There are plenty at Kosimbit, Mangeijangun and Nindigin. We [our ancestors] came to Bangwura and we fought the Suikau of Nogotimbit.

Our ancestors had taken their dogs hunting in the morning and had met one Nogotimbit man. The speared him and there was another man was down in the creek positioning fish trap baskets. They reasoned "If we do not spear him too, he will bring talk to the village", so they speared him as well...

After killing two men [Kwalindimi and Tango] the ancestors thought it would be better leave that land. They came and heard a wild fowl. They followed it and came and placed a tree branch over the Waimbo River and crossed and saw a cane hanging from a tree... Our true name which we brought from the ancestral place is Sawwungei. We crossed the river and established this camp. Saugulimbanga was the ancestor who came to this camp.

Saugulimbanga – Monjongei – Kamluwogen – Kosimei – Michael [aged about 30 in 1973].

We had no enemies here. Then the Kulombo people, who were sort of nomads had no place of their own, came from Yauenyapaku because the ancestors of Nogotimbit had attacked the. We took them in. The sister of Saugulimbanga, whose name was Patjagwi was married to a man from Kolumbo. The Kolumbos were having a singsing called Bri. They had singsings for every small event and a pig heard the singsing and ran away.

Saugulimbanga was angry with his sister and he said "Why must your people have singsings all the time. The pig will not hang around with all that noise going on." Patjagwi asked "Brother are you worried about something?" "Nothing in particular" he replied. Brother "I want to prepare a way that you can spear them and make them leave us. We are not living properly with them here with us. Their ways are not good."

Our ancestors sat on a log and did their toilet. She prepared a track to allow an ambush of the toilet area. It was the Kolumbo leader that he wanted to kill. It was his talk that initiated

singsings, marriages, haus tambaran rituals etc. So, they waited for the sound of a kina rattling in his bilum as he walked. People came and went. Then they heard the kina sound "He is coming". He came, hung his bilum up and climbed up onto the log...As he sat down Saugulimbanga speared him and he fell into the human waste under the log and he cried out in pain. The attackers ran away. The people heard the cry and ran down to look. The Kwimba people heard the garamut and kundu drums stop and said to themselves "That's it."

Saugulimbanga ran and washed the dirt off himself and pretended to be asleep in case they asked him. The Kolumbos left crying that very night. They burned their houses and broke their household items, saucepans, frypans etc and went up to Kulubungei near Narl. They scattered and their descendants are now represented in small numbers in many villages. Kwimba looks after its own land up to Kwalgutu and Kwaliengu.

Our enemies were Nogotimbit and Kampupu. I have mentioned the killing of the Nogotimbit men Kwalindimi and Tango, the Nogotimbis found out about this and they fought us. We fought back and forth. We started that one. Kampupu as allied with Nogotimbit against us, one being on either side of Kwimba. Their strategy was if Kampupu attacked us in the morning and drove us east. Then Nogotimbit would attack in the afternoon and drive us from the east...

Our allies were Gamapil, Torembei, Namangoa, Wereman, Yanget, Vagiput, Burui, Nambagoa and Bensim. We are of the first wife and Bensim are of the third wife, so we are brothers. The name of the first wife was Ganjanaugwi. The third wife was Walinganagwa. The husband was Tangeidambanga and another husband was Walimbanga **Writer's note made during the Interview** there was some indecision over the content of this paragraph. We sent Bensim to where they are. As you heard at Bensim, they call us Big Brother.

Kampupu became our enemy as follows: A woman called Tangemdaua was making sago. Her husband was Palipa, and they were of Kwimba. The Kwimbas were angry with Palipa because he had married Tangemdaua. She had been the most sought-after girl in the place "Why should she have married him?" they asked. Palipa became angry about this and invited the Kampupus in to finish the Kwimbas off.

The Kampupus laid their ambush there... Palipa and his wife went up into the kunai and met a man called Kwalku and his wife. Palipa gave Kwalku a spear with a girigiri [small cowrie] shell decoration on it. He also gave sago to Kwalku and they set a day for the fight. They went and got men from Kunjuanjua near Jama. They got the Manjas also as allies of the Kampupus. Plenty of our people were killed.

They surrounded the village in the early morning. The spear given by Palipa felled Simbukubi, a wife of Walgei. They killed all the people except the men who had gone off to hunt and make sago. They did not take the heads, we were not head hunters. Headhunting was limited to Torembei and Maiwi. They heaped the bodies in houses and in the haus tambaran and burned them to destroy the bodies.

The men who survived, now had no wives. The pay back took place. We brought in Wereman, Bensim, Burui, Yanget and Gumapil and we attacked Kampupu. They came and attacked us again and we fought back and we both lost men. They came again and it was the same. This is not Kampupu's land of origin. It is Suikau land – the pig clan. The true land of Kampupu is in the north – the Krampeiwa, Urasei and Wamasei clans came here and they wanted land so they fought us for it. An investigation would prove them to belong to Wosera, not to us. It was their ancestors or

grandfathers who came. It was not very long ago. The first fight we had with Kampupu was in Kosimei²'s time and his father's time.⁷

Kwimba women were sent to Kampupu to buy peace, a mother and her four daughters. The mother, Gambien was a widow. The daughters were Gwiala, Ungwoli. Gwoli and Gugalma³. There was no payment.

Gugalma went in 1964. She was not paid for and now she has four children. I sent her with the words "Here is my daughter. Our fathers and grandfathers fought, let that be ended, you can send a girl to us in return." But they did not send a girl to us, so I demanded payment. No payment has been made.

Gambien went to Kampupu with her daughters because our people accused her of being a sorceress. Nogotimbit is better, our girls marry there and we have girls of theirs married here. Our girls have all had babies and have bred soldiers for them.

In the fighting times we did not abduct women, we just killed. Kampupu did abduct one of our women. She was there for three months. I and her two brothers went and took her back from Matu, the man she had married. Matu and Wanjingau abducted her from the bush to the south of here. I was away, and I heard the talk and we went to get her.

They wanted to fight, but there was a division, with one half cast Kwimba/Kampupu saying "If you want to fight Kwimba, you will be fighting us also." We took both the girl and Matu back with us. The Kwimbas beat Matu and he ran away. Before Matu went, we gave her to a Kwimba man to marry. Matu went back, he remarried and he has since died.⁸

ooo000ooo

Kampupu Interviews conducted 26th January 1973

My ancestor came from Manja, which had become over populated and people disbursed. My clan is Koki [Cockatoo]. The migrating ancestors looked around to the south and then they came here. There were two migrations of my clan also from Manja. My family was in the second migration. We are only young men here now and we do not know the fine details of this migration story because all the elders are dead.

The first migration was with the ancestor Yaman. Their first camp was Kunjigo, our old ancestral place. My ancestor Sambu came with the second migration. The Cockatoo clan was the first to settle at Kampupu. Later people came from different places and joined them there. These other clans came and sat on my ancestor's lap and he looked after them with land sago and protection.

Next came the red parrot clan. They also migrated because of population pressure. There was a fight over a tanget⁴ and they left their place Bitubalingamba near Mt Turu. Then came the Councillor's line. They had already migrated and made camp down below [meaning to the south]. They came originally from Burui. The ancestor in question, Kwalungwa, had just been initiated. His skin was cut and they tried to strike him and he ran away to the big place Jiraningi. Then the ancestors of his clan [Kwaru clan] went to Kampupu's camp and were accepted into the Kampupu community. The reason the Kwaru clan migrated because of fighting with Yanget, Nambagoa and Kwimba. The Kwaru slam parrot clan is a sub group of the Cockatoo clan.

Next camp people in canoes from Nyaurengai. They came with their paddles and sat on our ancestor's lap. They were of the Hornbill [Kokomo] clan. We do not know why they came. We heard

² Informant Michael Kosimei father and grandfather's time – probably early 20th century

³ The informant – village Councillor aged 60 [no name recorded] indicated the Gugalma was in fact his own daughter.

⁴ An invitation to fight on a scheduled date – no indication of the participants or the date.

they were arguing while they were fishing. They came and their descendants are still here. They do not want to go back because there is plenty of food here and too much trouble in their old place. Next to come was more of the Hornbill clan, this time from Korogo. We do not know why they came.

People also came from Torembei...they came and made camp on an old village site in the kunai. The Kampupus saw them defenceless in the Kunai, facing many enemies, and took them in. They are of the Chicken clan [Kokaruk]...

In all fights we called for our allies. There were always feasts and shell money payments before, you use an ally in battle. We always fought with the aid of allies. We, just killed one man there, because Wereman is also our ally. We fought Wereman over a market. A woman called Nangoli had been to the market and the people from Batbi [the bottom half of Wereman village. The people from this end of Wereman are our friends. Those from the Batbi end are not] ambushed her on the track on her way home and killed her. So, we went to fight them.⁹

Our biggest enemy was Bensim. All fighting stopped when the Sengo and Jama people were hanged [1934]

ooo000ooo

Bensim Village visited 25th January 1973

During the writer's patrol visit to Bensim, Sepik History was a side issue because Bensim was an extremely active cargo cult village [See Sepik 4 page 555 for a photograph of the Bensim "Money house complex"]. Under the circumstances my focus in discussions with the people related to coinage and how the national monetary system worked and that coins did not miraculously appear in a metal dish in the hands of naked "Flowers" [Sepik girls with new pointy breasts, as favoured by cult leaders]

ooo000ooo

Kosimbit Interviews conducted 14th February 1973

Our ancestors were at Kurungambi [said to have been between Slei and Torembei] and now reverted to bushland.] when the wasp stung their tongues and created the many languages. My ancestor was one of two who came to Sangi and settled there. [Sangi is said to have been near No 2 Namangoa]. There was no fighting at Sangi

[Of the two ancestors] The small brother, Namangoa had the land from Torembei to Kwimba. The big brother Kosimbit or Kosimbi and he was still at Sangi. A fight developed. Aurimbit attacked and drove Suambo off and Kosimbit took them in. [Suambo had some prior history]

The Suambo fought the Kwaruwei, who now live at Mambisangut-Nindigen. The Kwaruwei ran away. Two of their men, Luei and Tamanga, had been in the bush at the time of the fight. They came back to see the ashes of their village and other burnt remains. They found some burnt sago and ate it. Then they followed the tracks of the attackers. Finally, Kosimbit took them in and gave them wives, Yambudambi was given to the big brother, and his cousin. The small brother at that time remained single. [until] The first child was a girl, who was given to small brother.

They said "The place of Kwaruwei, was Mambisangut-Nindigen. [But] the Kwaruwei population at Kosimbit became large as Kosimbit was still looking after them when Suambo came to fight them at Sangi. They came to fight again and again. The Suambos killed a woman called Sitapimgumbauthem,

The Kosimbit people had been away fishing in the Weimba River. They were carrying the fish when they met the Suambos. They if the Suambos would like some fish, but they said no. They mentioned that they had killed the woman. The Kosimbis were angry. The woman had been warned of the danger of going down to the river, but she had gone anyway, and now she was dead. Kosimbit

said to Suambo. “They are not pigs or dogs that you can go and fight them like that. Can’t you see we were looking after them?”

The Koisimbits went home and talked the matter over. “We are worried about our children” [presumably meaning the Kwaruwei refugees]. [The Kwaruwei said] we will leave here and find new land beyond Sleibit...

The name “Kosimbit” is really the name of our haus tambaran, we the people are called Kambu. This is Kambu land. Some of our ancestors were Magros. We left Sangi in the time of Meriwandi ; [Meriwandi – Katmo’ei – Kantilabei [aged 60 years in 1973]]¹⁰

Writer’s note. There is a little more pre-history of Kosimbit on pages 229/230 of Vol 18 of the Bragge Sepik Research Notes, but it becomes incoherent. If some researcher wants to try and made sense of it, that is where to find it.

ooo000ooo

Aurimbit Interviews conducted 15th February 1973

Writers note made on 15th February 1973. The only purpose these [Aurimbit] notes serve is to show that Aurimbit is an accumulation many separate groups assembled under one name.

Writers note made on 10th November 2018. The Aurimbit notes although brief, are fascinating as they show that ancient clan histories remained in the forefront of the thinking of the elders half a century ago.

ooo000ooo

Ancestors of ours came from Sauinabit. And they came to Apangai. The Nauas [Naua clan] came and live with us. Then the men from the Sun and Sago clans came and lived with us also. Then we came to the present camp – Aurimbit.¹¹

My ancestors came from Parembai. They were of the Pai’imbit haus tambaran. They followed the river up into the kunai and settled at Ambarap [Ambarap is not a current village, and has been mentioned several times in this and the previous chapter, so it was apparently an important centre in the past]. At first there were three families Kinjaimeri [clan?], Niamei [moiety?] and Sago [clan?]. We expanded in population and Ambarap became a big place. Ambarap is also known as Kambauimbit.¹²

I am of the Nogusimeis clan. My ancestor’s place was Sauinabit. Mandangu of Yambunei buggered the place up before. The water rose and killed all the men and women. Then they [survivors?] came to Aurimbit’s old camp Aurisago. Now the place we are in at present is called Lagingu [presumably an Aurimbit hamlet]

One clan, Kworowei was the first to settle at Aurimbit. The second was Eandigo, the mother of the ground [land]. Then some clans came from the old place called Sangiwomburei. The people assembled and went to fish and to drive off places called Ambarap and Ambatu. We took their bush and now we have plenty of bush.¹³

I want to comment on the story that Sui told. My ancestors did not bugger up his place without reason. Our ancestors cried for the talk their mother gave them, and did as she ordered in attacking them. They killed the people – that is true. Their mother was Kapimanga. She created this land and made it strong. Her place was Lagingu and Aurimbit.

The fight started in ancestral times and continued down to our father’s time. We [sadly the informants clan name was not recorded] pushed out the Ambaraps. The Nogusimeis also fought.¹⁴

Nogotimbit Interviews conducted 13th February 1973

A 1973 discussion of Nogotimbit marriage customs. *Our way of marriage is to exchange sisters and to make some payment as well. We marry according to our own wishes...If I seek a bride, a youth from her clan will take my sister in exchange. But if I am not keen to marry, and my sister wants to marry her boyfriend, I will demand one hundred dollars in payment for her.* ¹⁵

ooo000ooo

We [our ancestors] came originally from Yangul near Mt Turu. We came to Noelgai and Yentchangai and we came to near Giniambu to a place called [space left blank]. They fought us and drove us away, and we settled at Tangembit in the Yangoru area. We left some of our people there and we went down to Gaikarobi. There was another fight and we came back to where the Yamuks are now. Then we went to Torembei. There was a land shortage and a fight developed from this, so we came north following the Yuemba River. Kwimba had gone ahead of us and they would not allow us to live there. We came on to where the mission is now called Bauwingei [presumably Banwingei – see above]. There was another fight and we came on to Yambinbungmagiso, near Aurimbit, where we lived with the people called Kumbwikambu and Kwimba. There was fighting both by day and night and the Kwimbas came on again and made camp at Gumgwianwimbit. There are still coconuts standing there [in 1973, perhaps not in 21st century].

We left some of our people at Marap and at Yakiap. We regard them as our brothers. While we lived at Gumgwianwimbit a man from Yakiap called Dangul, came to see our ancestors saying “Brother, I am seeking betelnut.”

Nogotimbit’s “small brother”, another group living with Nogotimbit at the time, was engaged in sewing up roof thatch for the Kambu haus tambaran Kambukwatbi, which was located on land called Bandiagwa, others of the group were fishing...Tamiangwan, our ancestor, who led our people through all their migrations to that time. He told Dangul “If you are looking for betelnut, go over there. Do not go this way because they are sewing up thatch for the haus tambaran and they will fight you.”

Dangul did not follow this advice, and went to the group sewing of the thatch and said “I have come for betelnut”. They replied “Ah! You want allies to fight an enemy. Which enemy?” The got up and speared him. He cried out and Tamiangwan heard his cry and said “I warned you not to go there!” But there was no one to hear him. He took his spears and rubbed ash on his face to represent black war paint.

The Kambu people used to fetch water from a waterhole Tamiangwan went there and speared a pregnant Kambu woman called Jikambanagwa, who was carrying a bamboo water container and coconut containers of water. This was pay back for Dangul. Tamiangwan then took wild taro from the bush and went to the haus tambaran where the Kambu men were sewing up thatch. He said “Oh brother, a log of mine, you have speared. Where is it?” The answer was “Oh brother, he is over there. He came asking for betelnut and we killed him. Why did he not ask you for betelnut?”

“I have come to take my log back. I have cut down a tree in return.” He said “What tree?” they asked. “I speared one of your women as payback, and I will also be bringing more men to fight.” He beat the garamut to summon allies. The allies came and surrounded the village...They killed Kandindo and Natinaui in payback for the Yakiap death. As they fought, they [the Kambu] said “But why are we fighting? We are brothers”. They decided to stop fighting and move away from us. They went and they were called KambwiKambu.

Originally, just one ancestor gave rise to us [Nogotimbit] and KambwiKambu. His name was Yamagwan [or Yamaga, also spelt Yamanagwan].

Tamianagwan [also known as Tamianapai] – Gaimnumbuk – Kwarapnowi – Banguwan [aged about 30 in 1973]

They [KambwiKambu] abandoned their land and sent talk that they would live on bandicoots they caught in the kunai and leave our joint access to the lake to us alone. They would no longer eat fish. They are still our friends. They help us with work. They now reside in the Yangoru area.

Our ancestor Yamanagwan's wife was Mamioli. Their descendants are plentiful and are distributed far and wide. It was Mamioli or her daughter, who gave us out haus tambaran name Nogotimbit, after which we are all now called Nogotimbit.

Next the Kwimbas speared two of our men Danwan and Saben, as you were told at Kwimba. [In the Kwimba version, the two men were called Kwalindimi and Tango]. We raided them in return and a war started. Before that we did not fight with Kwimba. They raided us again and we looked around for allies. Kampupu was our ally. That war lasted until the time that village officials were appointed.

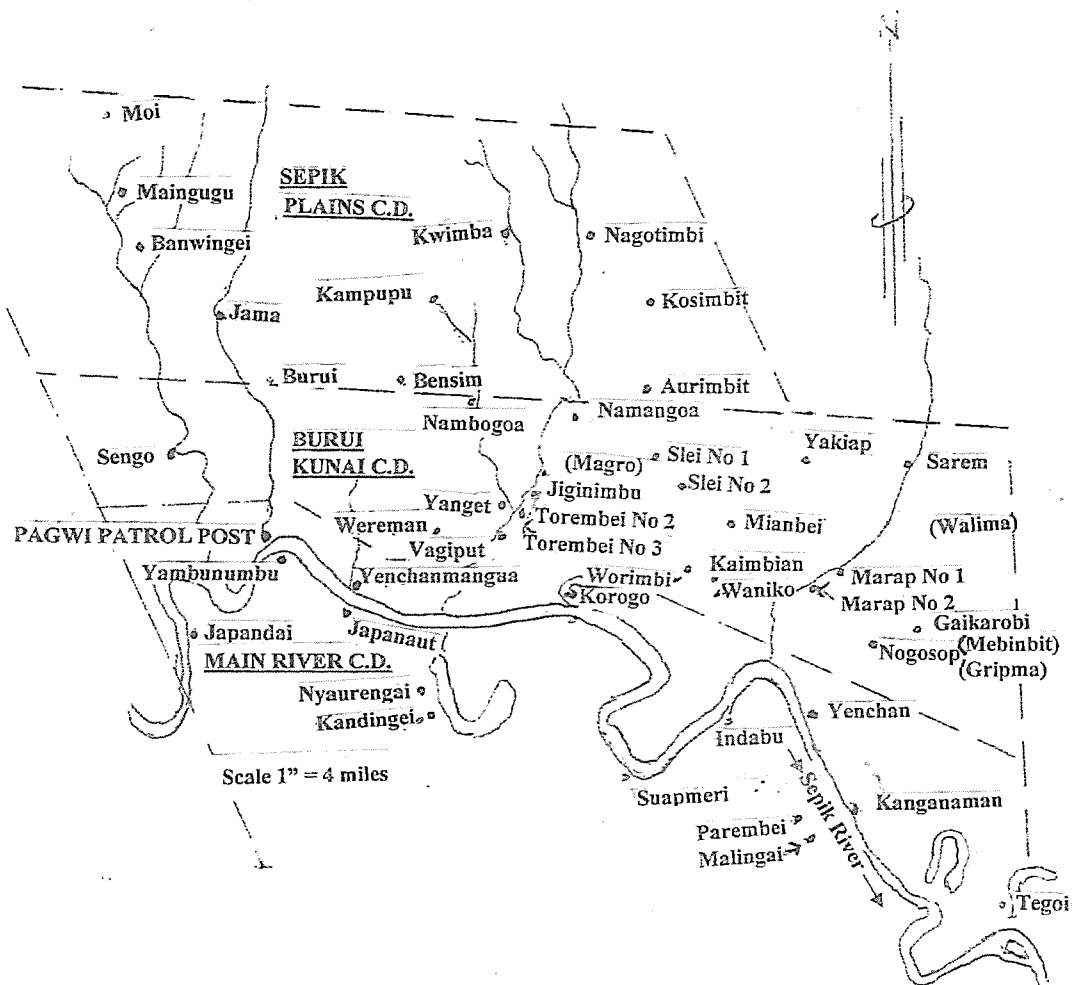
Nogusimei clan at Nogotimbit story. *When this place was only water our ancestor Bonjui left Yangoru and went to Chambri. He came from there by canoe when this area had dried out. He landed at Suapmeri and came inland. At Chambri he had three children and they came with him. The first child came all the way up to here and made this place. The second child settled at Marap and the third child settled at Yakiap.*

The first camp of the first child was Yamambumagisaun. Other children went to Ambarap and the last child went back to Bwima at Yangoru. The father Bonjui came to Yamambumagisaun with the first child whose name was Managwan. They travelled [patrolled?] up to the north and established ownership over the land Bandiagwa, and pushed to the edge of Yangoru. They fought Kwimba but did not push them off, because they did not push us off our land. No one was able to push Nogotimbit off their land.¹⁶

ooo000ooo

Eagle clan at Nogotimbit story. *In the beginning we lived at Dumbit and we went to Gaikarobi and then to Suapmeri and then back to Yatgau and Kambangau. Then we came to Nogotimbit. There were not a lot of people here. One man had two grand-children - brothers called Waninjo and Yami. They married their sisters and there were plenty of children and the population increased. The brothers competed with each other and big brother was angry when small brother went north to Kambu, while the big brother stayed and looked after Nogotimbit.*

They both had haus tambarans. The one here was called Nogotimbit and the one up there was called Kambukwatbi. The true place name here is Geikara. That is the land name. The other names are adapted from the Haus Tambaran names. Both places still exist and each acknowledges the other. The Eagle clan and the Sago clan [Nogusomei] are close together. The other clans are Sun, Gambeli [the man in the water] and Pig.¹⁷

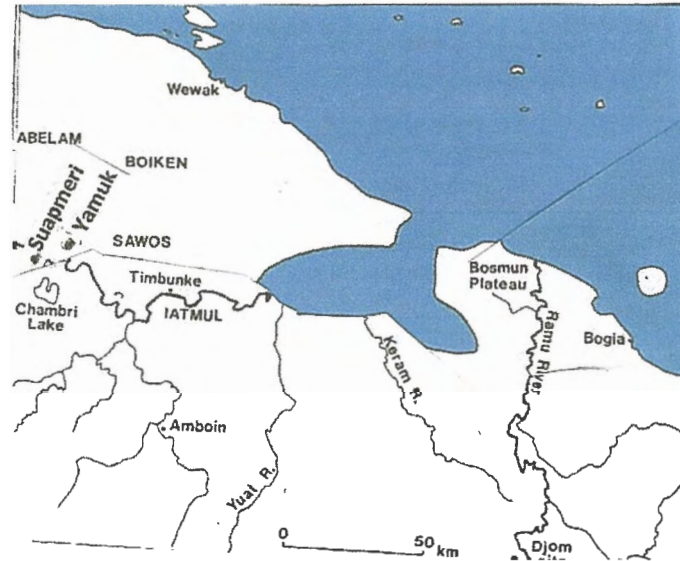


End Notes Chapter 25

- ¹ Kwonji of Burui – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 188
- ² Kontrak Nowab of Jama. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 200-201
- ³ Kontrak Nowab of Jama. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 202
- ⁴ Bowdimi of Bangwingei. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 203
- ⁵ Manja Councillor and others of Manja, including Kokbeli. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 205-207
- ⁶ Committee member of Moi [not name recorded] Bragge Sepik Research Volume 18 page 209-214
- ⁷ Michael Kosimei of Kwimba. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 223-224
- ⁸ Councillor [no name recorded] of Kwimba. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 225
- ⁹ John Wotom and the Councillor and others of Kampupu. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 193-194
- ¹⁰ Councillor Moses Angwononjei. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 229
- ¹¹ Wagen of Yagingu [Yagingu is presumably a hamlet of Aurimbit] – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 231
- ¹² Kangwoi of Ambarap, a resident of Aurimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 231
- ¹³ Sui of Yagingu – Aurimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 231
- ¹⁴ Kambuman of Aurimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 231
- ¹⁵ Old Councillor of Nogotimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 226
- ¹⁶ Guria/Waken of Nogotimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 228
- ¹⁷ Aimeri/Panginmeri of Eagle Clan Nogotimbit. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 228

Sepik 1 Chapter 26 Iatmul pre-history

[With regard to the Sepik inland sea] by 2,000 years ago, the coastline was probably located in the vicinity of the current junction of the Sepik and Yuat Rivers. Angoram and Marienberg would be on the coast and the Murik Lakes did not exist. Since that time the coastline has moved out to its present position. There is no doubt that the major cultural traditions such as the Iatmul splitting from the Sawos to occupy the banks of the Sepik River and the departure of the Muriks from Moim Lakes and their settlement of the Murik Lakes some time later, actually coincide with significant natural events.¹



Writer's Note: The current chapter introduces the Iatmul, one of the eight Ndu languages [See Chapter 16 for the creation myth of the Ndu], which, incredibly includes oral histories going back thousands of years to the last ice age when the inland sea was far larger, and as the mythology put it – everything was water.]

As indicated above the Iatmul split from the Sawos to settle the Sepik River banks. Chapters 25 to 31 describe Sawos pre-history, including the departure of the people who would become the Iatmul. Their initial settlement of the banks of the Sepik River was at Suapmeri. Not surprisingly the oral histories of the current Suapmeri residents do not provide anything like what must have been a complex, bloody and fascinating history.

Given my pre-occupation as Assistant District Commissioner at Ambunti, with the need to understand indigenous settlement patterns, migrations and resulting background to land issues and disputes, I paid particular attention to the Iatmul communities in the Ambunti sub District and reported on my findings in Ambunti patrol report no 8/1972-73 – appendix B and F. Appendix B appears over leaf – [a picture is worth a thousand words – several thousand in this case.] Appendix F provided a brief documentation, based upon elder's interview material, to explain Appendix B's diagram.

While the information is brief, it was well received by the secretary Dept District Services & Native Affairs and the District Commissioner – East Sepik. “...An excellent piece of field work and reporting...Appendix B contains information of particular value as also does Appendix F. Sgd C.G.Littler a/Secretary.”

“A very fine report” Sgd E.G.Hicks District Commissioner. The remainder of this Chapter is based upon Appendix B and F – Ambunti Patrol Report No 8/1972-73.

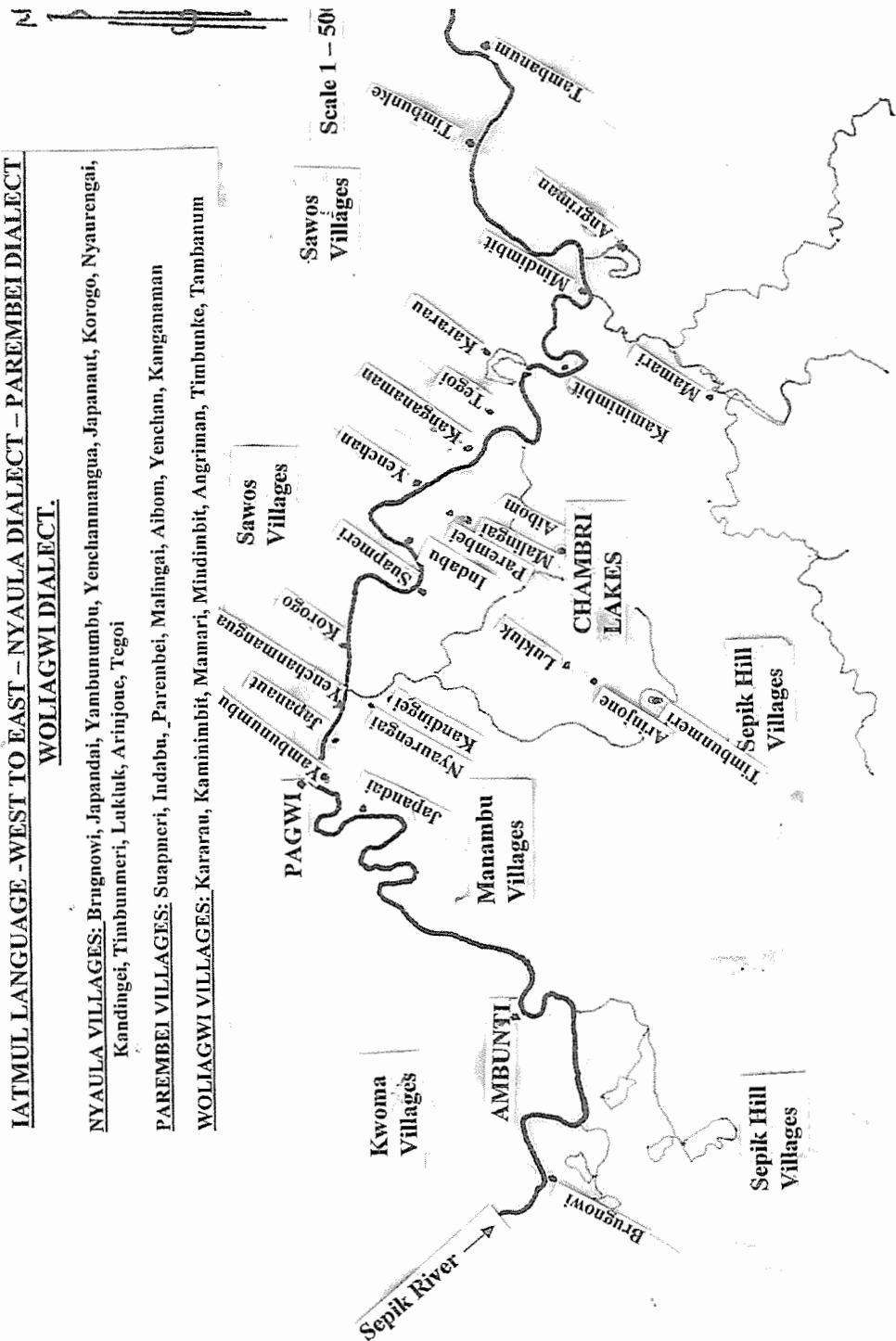
ooo000ooo

IATMUL LANGUAGE - WEST TO EAST – NYAULA DIALECT – PAREMBEI DIALECT – WOLIAGWI DIALECT.

NYAULA VILLAGES: Brignowi, Japandai, Yambunumbu, Yenchannangua, Japanaut, Korogo, Nyauarengai, Kandingei, Timbunmeri, Luktuk, Arinjoue, Tegoi

PAREMBEI VILLAGES: Suapmeri, Indabu, Parembel, Malingai, Aibom, Yenchan, Kanganaman

WOLIAGWI VILLAGES: Kararau, Kamimbbit, Mamari, Mindimbbit, Angriman, Timbunke, Tambanum



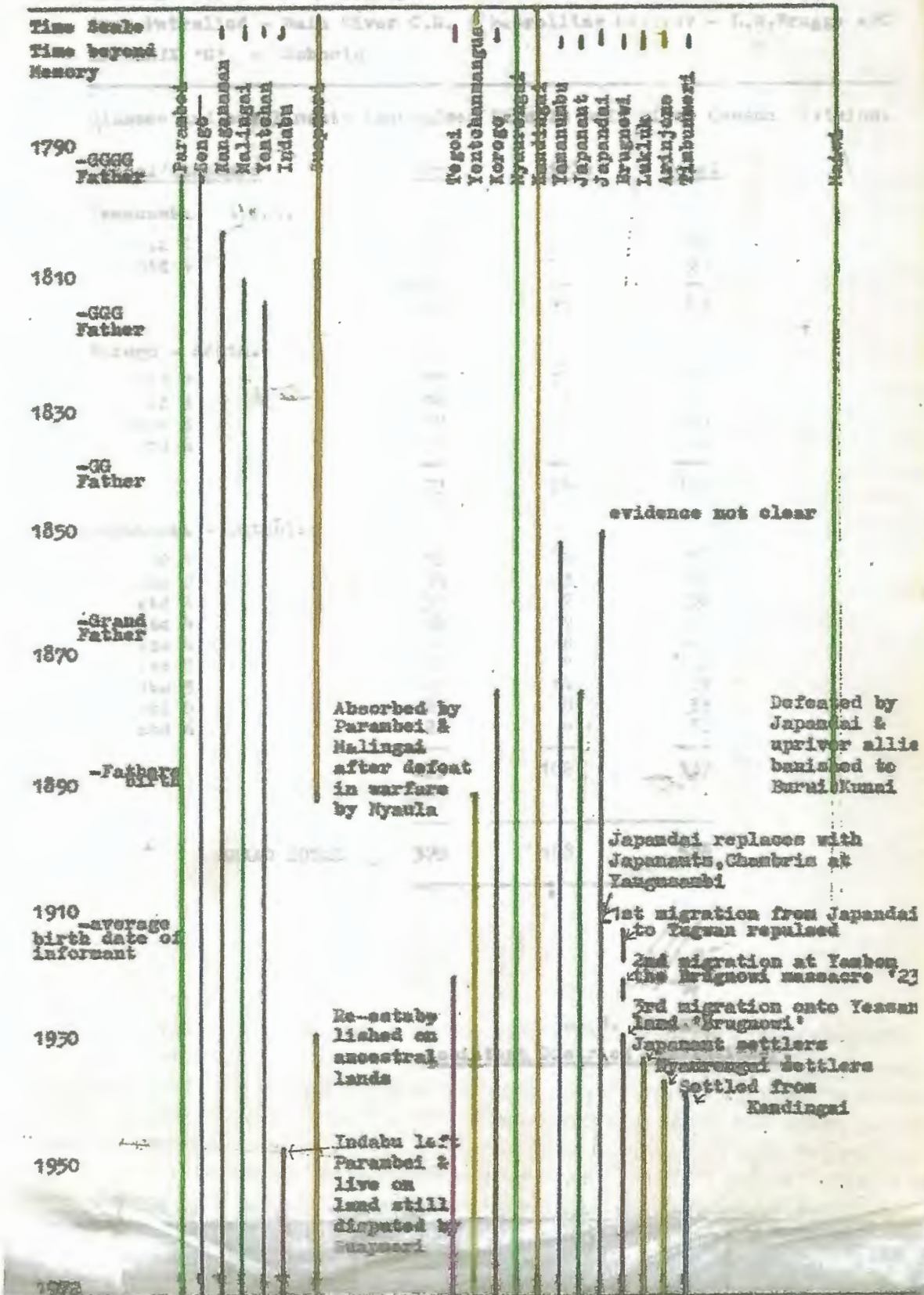
Writer’s note: After the ancestors broke away from Sawos they migrated to Suapmeri where they assembled. After some considerable time, groups left Suapmeri, via Parembel and settled the downstream or Eastern Sepik River banks, where the Woliagwi dialect of Iatmul developed. The Parembel or central Iatmul dialect is centred on Parembel village. Finally, the apparent youngest of the Iatmul dialects, Nyaula, developed along the upstream River banks. This dialect is centred on the mother village Nyauarengai. Nyaula is also known as the “Western” Iatmul dialect.

Woliagwi – was probably the first dialect to develop. It is spoken by the down-river Iatmul villages – Kararau to Tambanum. Although the writer visited these villages, they are located within the Anoram sub-district, so no oral histories were recorded.

Parembel - Spoken by Parembel, and daughter villages – Kanganaman, Malingai, Yenchan, Indabu, Sengo, and associated villages Aibom and Suapmeri.

Area Patrolled - Main River C.D. : Patrolling Officer - L.W. Bragge ADC

APPENDIX 13 - Settlement Patterns and Migrations etc. - CHART



Nyaula or Nyaura¹ - Spoken by Nyarengai and daughter villages Kandingai, Japandai, Japanaut, Yambunumbu, Yentchanmangua, and “granddaughter villages Brugnowi, Lukluk, and Arinjone

Appendix B [Previous page - with edits to include new information acquired since 1972

Suapmeri. The Ndu stories of origin state that Suapmeri was the first village to be established on the Sepik River by people who are said to have migrated from Tipmangei² and no doubt other Sawos villages. Suapmeri grew and trade relations were established with the Sawos community known as Yamuk [See Chapter 23]. Yamuk raided Suapmeri and Suapmeri retaliated. The outcome was that Yamuk terminated their mutual Sago fish trade arrangement. Also see Chapter 22 under the heading **the mythology of origins sago/fish trade and relations between Yamuk and Suapmeri.**

Suapmeri, now without a sago source, broke up and most people moved away, leaving very few in residence at Suapmeri. Those who moved away then turned against those who stayed. This explains the wars between Suapmeri, the Nyaula dialect and the Parembei dialect.

Suapmeri found itself being hit from both sides – Parembei from the east and Nyaula from the west, until finally, the village was abandoned and the people fled to the settlements of Indabu³ and nearby Kwolingai, where some time shortly before the arrival of the first German scientists, a Nyaula raid destroyed both Indabu and Kwolingai on the same day. The Suapmeri survivors scattered with most going to Malingai, some to Yenchan and some to Parembei.

In about 1930 Suapmeri was re-established on the land Suapmeri ancestors settled. The Suapmeri had 300 residents in 1972.

Note: Despite Suapmeri’s unique historic status, sequential abandonment and re-birth, now has it classified as a Parembei daughter village.

Parembei – The centre of the Parembei dialect of Iatmul language and mother of many daughter villages.

Parembei is an ancient village with scattered stone monoliths standing throughout its area. While Parembei’s stories of origin, claim it was the first village to exist in the Middle Sepik, it is generally accepted that Suapmeri was. Parembei’s story of origin has it thus:

In the beginning Parembei was just a small piece of ground and one woman who was created with the ground. She made a small house from limbum palms and she fished for Maliam fish in the water’s around Parembei. Maliam fish were also created with Parembei. This was her food and she caught them with cane prickles. She took her catch back to her house, cooked it and ate it. She stayed there and the land became larger and larger.

¹ The Administration uses Nyaula whereas most academics prefer Nyaura

² The location of Tipmangei is no longer known and the name Tipmangei does not appear in D.C.Laycock’s Sepik languages checklist and preliminary classification

³ The chart on the previous page neglected to show this earlier Indabu presence.

The fish Maliam belong to all clans; all the places with origins here and which moved away from here – Nyaula, Kanganaman, Malingai, Indabu, Yenchan, and Aibom.

Writer's Note. A feature of the Sepik River, and many other rivers, is that it has natural levee banks, which to the writer's observation in the Middle Sepik provide a strip of land along the immediate river bank with an area averaging about 50 metres wide and cresting at up to 1 metre tall. It follows that ancient Suapmeri and subsequent River villages were built on these levees as they offered immediate access to the river itself and some level of security against flooring.

Parembei, Malingai and the former village site of Sengo were all well inland from the levees themselves. This was demonstrated during then 1973 floods which provided both problems and opportunities for the Sepik people. In 1973 Yenchan, made magic to maintain the floor level, as moderate inconvenience in Yenchan meant very serious inconvenience in lower lying Parembei. Informant – Yenchan resident Anthropologist Dr. Jurg Schmidt.

When the land large, the people became numerous. Parembei was the place of origin of all these villages.²

Individual reasons are given from the daughter villages migrating away from Parembei [See below] but an overriding story accepted by all is that Parembei was surrounded by enemies who allied themselves together to fight the defenceless Parembéis of the distant past. These enemies were listed as Kararau, Suapmeri, Gaikarobi, Nogosop, the Nyaula villages, Aibom and Kamanimbit.

As a defensive measure, Kanganaman broke away to fight, and act as a sentry post against Kararau, Malingai went to fight and guard against Aibom and Suapmeri, Yenchan went to fight and act as a sentry post against the bush people [Sawos] Gaikarobi and Nogosop and the Nyaula villages.

The creation of these daughter villages created its own problems for mother village Parembei, which continued to claim its ancestral external boundaries; each daughter village now sought its own boundaries, by sub-division of the region traditional claimed by the mother village.

Parembei daughter village Kanganaman.

Some Kanganaman clans claim to have migrated from the Sawos villages of Timboli and Gaikarobi in ancient times, and settled at a lake and on land called Sororogwi, and at a sister settlement of Tegoi. Due to the rape by a man of Kosimbi[t] haus tambaran of a woman known by two names – Maliaimanga and Nogusime. God frowner and the lake beside the village, flooded and drowned the people in hot water. The ancestor Naua [Noah?] built a ship and sailed the good people of the village away to safety. Naua had a brother called Masam, who was also responsible for settling of the [good?] people.

Some of the Sororogwi survivors went to Tegoi and then went on to Parembei. This all happened before recorded time. After a time at Parembei, a woman was killed in a dispute and the people who would become the Kanganamans moved across the Sepik to a site near ancient Tegoi and Sororogwi, where they spent most of their time at War with Kararau.

Parembei's myth of the reasons behind this migration states: Two Parembei men, Niuogwei and Angubuguban, carried sticks to fight people as they moved around the village. They stopped the women and opened their grass skirts to feel their vaginas. They let those with small vaginas go and kept those with large vaginas for themselves. The people who were angry about this decided to leave Parembei. They settled at Kanganaman.

In Chapter 23 concerning the Sawos village Yamuk, there is **the ancestral story of the eagle**, which involves a woman who did not clean her stone bladed sago mallet after making sago. The spirit of the mallet transformed itself into an old woman who on the pretext of going fishing,

marooned this woman in a remote part of the from whence the story unfolded. Interestingly Kanganaman has its own version of this story as the ancestral myth upon which Kanganaman haus tambaran finials are based. The point which suggests this myth which is typically associated with Kanganaman, may be or more ancient Sawos origins as Sawos women are sago producers and so are closely linked to stone bladed, sago making tools, river women have no such association with stone bladed tools. The Kanganaman myth, as quoted in the catalogue of the Bragge tribal art collection:



The finials represent a story of a young and an old woman who was known as the Axe. Axe was jealous of the younger woman and suggested they go fishing in a remote place...The young woman needed to urinate...the young woman stepped from the canoe onto a timber snag protruding from the water. Axe paddled away...all the way back to the village leaving the young woman abandoned in the wilderness...

...The young woman saw a large crocodile and was very frightened. He spoke reassuring words to her and she became less afraid. He asked her to climb onto his back so he could take her down to his home and haus tambaran at the bottom of the lake. She refused "I will drown" she said. He convinced her that she would not drown, and that she should do as he said. To her amazement she found that once she was under the water, she was indeed able to breathe. She was also amazed at the beautiful land of plenty to which she was taken at the bottom of the lake.

She married the crocodile and gave birth to two sons; they were neither human nor crocodile, they were eagles, but with crocodile tails. Her eagle sons dearly loved their mother and they knew that she missed her home far away. They flew aloft and saw her former home and the fact that there were people there.

The home of her closer relatives was near a big Erima tree. They flew back and consulted with their mother. They said they could build a nest in the Erima tree as a place to which to bring her. They commenced carrying heavy objects through the air to be certain they could safely transport her. They built the nest and their mother climbed into a giant string bag which the eagles carried and set down in the nest.

From high above, she observed the happenings in the village below. [She saw] that people still mourned her loss. She climbed down and re-joined her people and introduced her sons to them. The sons were made welcome and were asked to join the community. But they preferred to remain as eagles and they can occasionally be seen to this day, circling high in the sky, watching over their mother and their human relatives.³

Parembei daughter village Malingai

Not long after the Kanganamans broke away from Parembei, the Parembeis were making a canoe in the haus tambaran, and a singsing had been underway for some time. Two men, Gubat and Ginjit, became offended about remarks made about sores on Gubat's legs and about sexual prospects with the wives of these two. A spear was thrown within the haus tambaran, and the canoe was either destroyed or taken away by Gubat and Ginjit.

The Parembeis fled and in their absence Gubat and Ginjit, took their families to the south to an area of swamp called Malingai. They established their village and the swampy land firmed up. They cleared the swamp to make lake Malingai and dug a channel out to the Sepik River at Indabu.

According to legend, other families migrated to Malingai from Parembei because of the intensity of fighting against Parambei by the encircling enemy groups.

The Malingai section of the Ngragen clan, which is said to have been of Chambri origin, claims to have migrated from [the Sawos village of] Marap, because of various fights over women. They moved back and forth until they settled at Parambei, and then moved to Malingai. The Ngragen clan migration to Malingai came in the form of a youth. In 1972, this man's grandson was 40 years of age.

Much of the current [1970s] disputes between Parembei and Malingai is over fishing rights to lakes, and the alterations to water courses and resulting changes in lakes etc

The Parembei version of the Malingai migration are basically as stated above

Parembei daughter village Yenchan

Appendix B cont. The founding clans of Yenchan were Yentchanmoro and Fulindu. A youth called Yari of the Yentchanmoro clan left Aibom went to Parembei and from there to Yenchan with a Fulindu man after fighting at Parembei. The fighting resulted in the deaths of two Yenchan supporters and the burning of their bodies. A third victim of this fighting was carried to Yenchan and was buried there.

The Fulindu and Yentchanmoro clan are of the Niaui moiety, which is largely a Chambri group.⁴ Other Chambris later came and settled at Yenchan with these first settlers. With the break-up of Suapmeri, the Lenga clan and others migrated to Yenchan. There were also Kandingai, Kanganaman and Parembei settlers.

ooo000ooo

Informant Councillor Kemen and others. Yenchan's haus tambaran Nangarambi and Parembei's haus tambaran Pai'ambit are both od the pig totem. That is the basis of the

⁴ That was apparently the writer's opinion at the time of writing Ambunti Patrol report No 81972-3. It is not my opinion in 2018.

Yenchan/Parembei dispute. This is of the past, it is not anew thing. When Pai'ambit and Nangarambi were both still at Suapmeri, they were "Big Brother" and "Small Brother". The dispute has been on since then. Pai'ambit has the head of the pig and Nangarambi has only the pig's jaw. Also, as shown in Chapter.

The situation is that the...haus tambarans at Parembei have plenty of power and all the lesser haus tambarans such as Nangarambi are [also] of the larger totem, and so are held within the power of the big brother and go out to fight under the umbrella of the power of Pai'ambit. There have [also] been fights between Pai'ambit and Nangarambi.⁴

ooo000ooo

Appendix B cont. Yenchan made war on each of its neighbours, until the time when the neighbours allied together and attacked Yenchan, devastating it. The new migrants suffered worst – most were killed, but other settlers who knew the bush behind the village escaped.

Yenchan was abandoned and a new village, also called Yenchan was established in the bush about half way between the present villages of Yenchan and Nogosop. After the Germans arrived, their Tultul Wabiui of Parembei encouraged the Yenchans to move back to the Sepik, which they did in about 1900.

Parembei daughter village Sengo

The reason why our ancestors moved was that crocodiles were finishing all the young men and women. My ancestor killed all our pigs and said 'If we stay here, we will be finished.'...They married off all single girls... They doubled canoes and paddled upstream. They went ashore at Yambon and the Yambon people wanted to fight them... the Parembei visitors hastily broke camp and back went down river. In their haste, they left two young women behind. Damdagwa and Mabisauogwi were asleep and accidently left.⁵

Why did the Sengo ancestors choose Yambon?

The latmul people of whom the Parembei/Sengo are part, see the Sepik River as the centre of their universe. Upstream of Parembei all the Sepik River bank real estate was in the hands of powerful, Parembei daughter villages, then Nyaula and Manambu mother/daughter village combinations. For the Sengo ancestors to obtain land in any of these areas would have involved the sort of life or death confrontation the Korogo migrants would soon experience⁶.

Yambon, immediately upstream of the Manambu, appeared to Sengo, and Japandai after them, to be a small group, with Sepik River bank real estate, without alliances. This apparently made Yambon an attractive option. Then, being unable to settle at Yambon, the Sengo ancestors moved back downstream and inland through the swamp plains waterways opposite Japandai and settled there.⁷

Sengo's language has altered from latmul to a language which is unclassified as far as the writer knows. Sengo is now administered from Pagwi Patrol Post as part of the Burui Kunai census division. There is no known regular communication between Sengo and mother village Parembei.

Writer's Note: An area of land near Malingai was pointed out to me as the place where the Sengo ancestors had lived. I believe this was a residential ward similar to the sections described by Coffier. (1991)⁸.

ooo000ooo

Parembei daughter village Aibom. The early history of Aibom is covered in Chapter 10. Aibom earned the title "daughter village" as its original language was replaced by the Parembei dialect of latmul through marriages of Malingai and Parembei women into Aibom and these mothers teaching their children latmul. Aibom did not migrate from Parembei as did other "daughter villages".

Parembai daughter village Indabu. Note: The Suapmeri section above indicates Indabu was attacked by Nyaula forces soon after the arrival of the Germans. This indicates that there was an Indabu settlement prior to that described by Indabu informants below:

Appendix B cont. – Indabu. A man called Gaudi of Parembai was married to a Suapmeri woman, who was making a garden on Suapmeri land called Indabu. This was in 1947, and Gaudi's situation at Parembai was not good, due to restrictions of fishing and gardening rights. Gaudi was a Kwonji clansman, whose ancestors had come from Angriman [a Woliagwi dialect village] five generations before Gaudi's birth.

While at Parembai Gaudi's clan gained knowledge of Indabu and claimed land rights there as this was a traditional gathering and fishing area, and the place the Kwonji clan sought refuge when the Parembai's fled after a skirmish with the Germans.

Suapmeri informants state that Gaudi was banished from Parembai, as he married his father's second wife. [My inquiries at the time revealed] Gaudi was a son of his father's first wife, and upon his father's death he married the second wife's daughter – his half-sister.

Gaudi was followed to Indabu by the section of the Parembai population known as Angimbit. There was also a later migration of Malingais to join them. The decision by ADO Wearne in 1964 that Malingai was to remove its people from land known as Mongambo, land which was disputed by Kanganaman, added to the flow of people to Indabu.

All notations in village books through the 1950s give land decisions in favour of Suapmeri against Indabu. The matter was registered with the Lands Titles Commission for hearing. Whether this actually happened is not known to the writer.

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai – The centre of the Nyaula dialect of Iatmul language and mother of many daughter villages.

Writer's note: While it is generally accepted that Nyaurengai/Kandingai had their origin at Parembai, Nyaula informants tend not to mention Parembai as their place of origin. The writer believes there are two sound reasons for this.

The **first** is the intensity of hatred of Nyaula's traditional enemy.

The **second** is the time span back to when Nyaurengai separated from Parembai; The tambaran figure Tangweiyabinjua [Chapter 7 *Illumination of ancient Sepik time-lines by modern science*] from Nyaurengai was carbon dated as 1330 – 1470 AD

Appendix B cont. The people of Nyaurengai village claim to have emerged from the hole in the ground at Gaikarobi [Mebinbit] and then migrated to Suapmeri and from there to Nyaurengai. The population grew and the village elongated along the shore of the lake, until it was in excess of two miles long. The two ends of the village were called "down below" - Kandingai, and "on-top" - Tangei. Finally, the Tangei section retained the name Nyaurengai, and the other end became the village of Kandingai. These are now quite separate villages. Nyaurengai claims to be suffering heavily from Kandingai sorcery.

The stories of the break up and daughter villages migrating away from Nyaurengai and Kandingai have two aspects:

1. **Internal pressure**, over the killing of a man in an adultery case, which caused serious fighting and political pressures between the different factions within the village.
2. **External pressure**, in the need for defence against Parembai [Downstream] and Manambu [upstream] raids and the protection of waterways access to Torembei and Yanget sago/fish market sites.

To a large extent it seems the differences over internal pressure within Nyaula, were overcome by the services provided in defence against Parembei.

ooo000ooo

Nyaula daughter village Japandai. The first ancestor of Japandai is said to have been a man called Ambalangai. His genealogy is neither positive or unbroken, so his period of existence is not known. He was joined by another man called Pikwali and together they established Japandai. Other Japandai informants state that Ambalangai came from Gaikarobi⁵ to Nyauengai to Japandai. He lived in the “Free time” before fighting commenced. The story goes that Ambalangai killed a Sengo woman and thereby initiated the time of fighting.

ooo000ooo

Appendix A of Ambunti Patrol Report 10/1970-71 has more Japandai’s early history.

The ancestors came from Gaiwoluwi near the present Torembei mission station in the Burui Kunai area. They settled at old Japandai, also known as Kambaramau. This is now a lagoon inland from the present Japandai settlement. Living at Kamanjau were a people we called Magan. There was a split [between Japandai and Magan] over women, and most of the Magan were killed. A few descendants still make up a portion of the Japandai population. Yambai/Tambinyawi’s line [is of Magan descent]. Kamanjau is said to have been adjacent to Asiti.

The Mondigo people used to live in the Bawajui lagoon area. Mondigo commenced hostilities by killing a Japandai man. In the resulting fighting most of the Mondigo were killed, and the survivors fled to where they now live at Sengo... At this time the Sepik flowed through what is not the Bawajui lagoon and went straight Bowintum [presumably Bowinjum point – see map In Chapter 28 – The Manambu]... The river changed course, leaving much Japandai land on the left bank of the Sepik.

It seems to the writer that the people Japandai call Mondigo are the same group Avatip described to me as the Maume, and described to Anthropologist Harrison as the Ngginyap.

Much later, in the middle age period of a man called Gumbeli of Maiwi, a migration of families from ancient Maiwi to Japandai took place. A war followed, in which a combined force of Japandai, Avatip and Kwoma warriors defeated Maiwi and banished the survivors across the Sepik to their present village site near Burui. The previous Maiwi camp had been on a lake inland from Japanaut.

Gumbeli led a Japandai migration up river in about 1900 and settled on Yambon land called Tugwan. This was the first of three Japandai migrations, which involved two massacres of Japandai people and the establish of the village of Brugnowi. See Sepik 2 Chapter 26, *the Japandai Migrations*.

To provide some idea of a time perspective - Gumbeli was the great-grand father of a 45-year-old informant. Interviewed in 1972.

Also, around 1900, friction at Japanaut caused residents there with Chambri ancestry to settle on land at Japandai; land called Yaugusambi. These settlers expanded their numbers with the departure of Japandai people to Brugnowi. The Manambu enemy, Avatip, in the 1970s, lodged an application with the Lands Titles Commission, stating Japandai had abandoned their land to go to Brugnowi. It is not known if that dispute was heard by the LTC. Yaugusambi land is located between Japandai and Yambunumbu and is disputed by both villages.

⁵ The Ndu place of the creation – Mebinbit is said to be near Gaikarobi. It is common for informants to mention Gaikarobi when they are indicating the Place of the creation. This appears to be so in this case.

Japandai's claim is based largely upon the fact that Yaugusambi was where Japandai villagers hid the Nyarengai people who would become Korogo, after they were rejected from Nyarengai. - See Sepik 2 Chapter 22 *The expulsion of Korogo from Nyarengai*.

ooo000ooo

Nyaula daughter village Yamanumbu

An ancestor called Mamandai is claimed to have established Yamanumbu, when he brought his family there from Kandingei. His genealogy is clear, making his period of migration fairly clean. An elder interviewed in 1972⁹ stated he was Mamandai's grandson. Mamandai was Yamanumbu's first fight leader of note and most of the present [1972] population can trace direct descent from Mamandai.

Further evidence of Mamandai's time line:

- #1. When the Germans came Mamandai took his people and fled to a small place called Irungai. Muskets and ships were new to the people and they were afraid.¹⁰
- #2. Korogo was established later and became our [Nyaula's] boundary of Parembai raids and Japandai [clearly already established] was our buffer with Avatip. Yenchanmangua was established next and then Japanaut.¹¹

Appendix B cont. In the period between the German departure and the Australian [civil administration arrival – 1914 and 1922]. Yamanumbu was defeated by Japandai and Avatip and the village was burned to the ground. The survivors fled to Japanaut, but re-established Yamanumbu village shortly afterwards. The Yamanumbu land had not been occupied by enemy forces during their absence...

Yamanumbu and Japandai still [in 1972] hotly disputes control of the Wabiui waterway with Sengo, as they pushed Sengo out in fighting which continued up until the establishment of Ambunti Patrol Post in 1924.

ooo000ooo

Nyaula daughter village Japanaut.

Due to Peli Association [cargo cult] activity in Japanaut at the time of Ambunti patrol No 8/1872-3, While Japanaut was visited, and census conducted, the people were politely untalkative, so the writer did not learn of the motivation for Japanaut's Migration from Nyarengai and subsequent migrations from Japanaut. Some Japanaut history was revealed in the notes on "Grand-daughter village." – Lukluk.

Writer's note Yabisaun of Japanaut is mentioned elsewhere in Sepik history as a person of some infamy, in that he took part in the 1923 Japandai massacre. This was viewed by many Nyaula people as unacceptable as Japandai was a sister Nyaula village. Also, during world war 2, he settled a band of renegade police on Sambugundei island in the Chambri lakes and led them to the Yambiyambi area where they murdered the gold miners there [See Sepik 3 Chapters 17 and 19]

ooo000ooo

Nyarengai grand-daughter village Lukluk. [Nyarengai-Japanaut-Lukluk]

Japanaut warriors participated in the massive raid against Japandai settlers at Yambon in 1923. This was not popular with other Nyaula daughter villages, who were preparing to retaliate against Japanaut, when Nyarengai elders removed the offenders from Japanaut and hid them on Maimban land on the remote Yau'umbak channel into the Chambri lakes, then, in due course moved them again to Lukluk Island in the Chambri Lakes. Their descendants are still resident on Lukluk Isl, despite the fact that ownership of the island is disputed between Garamambu, Chambri and the current Nyaula occupants. [also see Sepik 4 Chapter 8 *The Nyaula colonisation of the Chambri Lakes*.]

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai daughter village Yentchanmangua

Parembai raids on market parties using the Gungus channel to the Torembei and Yanget markets had become such a frequent and serious problem, that Nyaurengai people settled on land called Yentchanmangua at the junction of Gungus channel and the Sepik River. They were a sentry post, sending garamut drum messages to Nyaurengai of the approach of Parembai raiders. Yentchanmangua was established shortly before the arrival of the Germans.

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai grand-daughter village [new] Tegoi. [Nyaurengai – Yentchanmangua – Tegoi]

Samiangwat clan members at Yentchanmangua were angered by the fact that some Nyaula villages contributed warriors to the fighting force that contributed to the Japandai massacre in 1923. Their opposition was well known, and it soon led to the realisation that such opposition to the broader Nyaula group of villages saw the Samiangwat clan members badly outnumbered and endangered.

The Samiangwat families quietly left Yentchanmangua under cover of darkness, to drift down river to Kanganaman where they had some clan members who took them in. Soon afterwards these refugees were placed by the Kanganaman people on the site of old Tegoi. Kanganaman now [1972] disputes Tegoi's rights to occupy the "old Tegoi" village site.

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai grand-daughter village Timbunmeri. [Nyaurengai – Kandingai – Timbunmeri]

A Kandingai trading party using the Gungus channel to Torembei market was waylaid by Yentchanmangua warriors in the mid-1930s. The would-be traders were beaten up. A fight developed and Kandingai was refused access to the Gungus channel and therefore to the markets upon which they depended for their vital food source – sago.

The grandfathers and fathers of the Kandingai residents of the 1970s had killed the Manabi residents of Timbunmeri Island many years before so they went [at an invitation from Chambri people] to take up residence there and have their own sago source. The Kandingai migrants to Timbunmeri Island paid traditional wealth to Changriman, Mari and Garamambu for the Island. [also see Sepik 4 Chapter 8 *The Nyaula colonisation of the Chambri Lakes.*].

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai grand-daughter village Arinjone. [Nyaurengai – Nyaula forces - Arinjone]

[When Chambri's once indispensable provision of stone axe blades was abruptly made redundant by the arrival of steel axes], Parembai defeated Chambri, and the occupants of Chambri Island were driven into hiding in the Changriman bush, beyond the southern shores of the Chambri lakes, and elsewhere. Nyaula forces fought Parembai and brought the Chambri people and re-settled them on Chambri Island. This fighting, and return of the Chambri exiles occurred around 1920.

Nyaurengai considered there were no boundaries within the Chambri Lakes, so when Nyaula forces had re-established the Chambri people, they occupied Arinjone and Sambugunde Islands. The ownership of these Islands is now disputed by Chambri. [also see Sepik 4 Chapter 8 *The Nyaula colonisation of the Chambri Lakes.*].

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai daughter village Korogo.

The story of Korogo's origins is told in full in Sepik 2 Chapter 22 *The expulsion of Korogo from Nyaurengai.*

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai grand-daughter village Brugnowi [Nyaurengai – Japandai – Brugnowi]

The complex story of Brugnowi's origins is told in Sepik 2 Chapter 26 *The Japandai migrations.*

ooo000ooo

Nyaurengai daughter village Maiwi.

The more recent history of Maiwi is told in Sepik 2 Chapter 26 *The Japandai migrations*. The Maiwi migration from Nyaurengai apparently occurred in ancient times and no Maiwi informant spoke of it. The fact that the Maiwi village mentioned in Chapter 26 was far inland from the Sepik River suggests that the passing of time saw the presumed river bank village location of Maiwi, being cut off by changes in the river's course. A similar situation faced the Manambu villages of Asiti, Mogambo and Garakoli, before they re-established themselves back on the river bank at Avatip.

ooo000ooo

Concluding observations concerning latmul migrations and settlement patterns.

While this chapter appears comprehensive, it describes a mere fraction of the latmul migrations and settlements which must have occurred through time. There are at least three reasons for this.

Firstly, as indicated earlier, no information has been presented on the Woliagwi dialect villages – Angriman, Kaminimbit, Kararau, Tambanum, Mindimbit, Timbunke, Wombun or Mumeri. Some of these villages are believed to be longer established than those of the Parembei and Nyaula dialects.

Secondly, given that latmul settlements have probably existed along the banks of the middle Sepik River and its associated lakes and waterways for up to 2,000 years, untold numbers of settlements have no doubt existed and subsequently vanished because of the ever-changing course of the river itself or because of warfare in the time before living memory.

Thirdly, with the ongoing loss of village elders, there is a progressive loss of the Sepik oral history.

End Notes Chapter 26

¹ The Sepik - Ramu. PNG National Museum Publication 1988 pages 14 and 15. Map is an amalgamation of fig 34 & 34C – pages 14 & 15.

² Tombwi/Tongwanauwi of Parembei. Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 143

³ The Bragge collection [unpublished] The collection including the two finials has been donated to James Cook University – Cairns campus.

⁴ Councillor Kemen of Yenchan - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 page 312

⁵ Gai of Sengo - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 19

⁶ See Sepik 2 chapter 21

⁷ The Sengo information had been extracted from Sepik 2 Chapter 25

⁸ Coffier C. Sepik River Architecture: Changes in Cultural Traditions. Fig 1 P493 Sepik Heritage 1990

⁹ Namburi of Yamanumbu - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 106

¹⁰ Joe Bai of Yamanumbu - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 106

¹¹ Kinablan of Yamanumbu - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 page 106

Sepik 1 Chapter 27 Tangweiyabinjua and Magisaun

As described in Sepik Book 4 Chapter 34, two exceptional Sepik works of tribal art formerly belonging to the Iatmul tribe came to my official attention on separate occasions during the early 1970's whilst I was ADC at Ambunti, these were: -

1/ **Tangweiyabinjua**, a wooden female carving 41.5 inches high, a cult figure described as a basket suspension hook. Her Photo is located on page 69 of Sepik 1. She originates from Kandingai, a village in the Middle Sepik, and was the property of the Niaura clan. I failed in an attempt to have her classified under the National Cultural Property Ordinance - subsequently she was sold abroad by a tribal art dealer and, I recently discovered, is now part of a prestigious American museum collection.

2/ **Magisaun** (or Margisaun or Manggesaun), a seven-foot-high – 84 inches - wooden male river god/cult hero from Nyaurengai, a sister village¹ of Kandingai, and was also the property of Niaura clan members. Also described as a 'hook', he is always accompanied by his canoe paddle. Despite being legally protected as National Cultural Property it is believed there was an intention to take this carving out of the country. Fortunately, as described below, that attempt was thwarted, and Magisaun now resides in the Museum of Papua New Guinea.

ooo000ooo

The first object, which we shall call 'Tangwei' for short, is now held by the De Young Museum as a component of its Jolika collection in San Francisco. There are in fact two of the same image – the original in San Francisco and an exact duplicate made in about 1973 which presumably is still held in the village (the actual hanging hooks are missing from the bottom end of both Tangweis'). I have recorded this story in Sepik Book 4, but I wish to discuss further the story of Tangwei and Magisaun here as important parts of the culture and history of New Guinea going back into antiquity, and adding an important date anchor context to this and other chapters in *Sepik Book 1 – From the Beginning of Time to 1885, or First Contact*.

When taken to America, a Carbon-14 dating was done on the original Tangwei. The result indicated this stone-carved figure was over 500 years old (C14 1330-1470 – 95% probability)¹. It can be reasonably assumed then that the original Magisaun could well be of a similar vintage. I recorded aspects of the mythology of these figures when I investigated issues surrounding the purchase of Tangwei in 1973, so consequently that mythology can be projected back into the distant past through these two figures, with an examination of the anthropology of the Iatmul and their possible progenitors the Sawos people.

Writer's Note: Both Sawos and Iatmul peoples, along with speakers of the Abelam, Boiken, Manambu, Yelogu, Ngala and Buiamanambu languages are members of the Ndu Language family of the Middle Sepik language super stock.² [See Sepik Book 4 Part 1 – Chapter 25 for more detail on the Ndu languages]. The Ndu speakers, to a greater or lesser extent, but particularly the Sawos and the Iatmul, claim a place called Mebinbit³ to be the place of the creation of mankind.

¹ Or Mother village of Kandingai depending upon which interpretation is being discussed. Nyaurengai and Kandingai are adjacent villages, sometimes referred to top village – Kandingai and bottom village Nyaurengai. Historic renditions state that the "mother" village of all the "Nyaula" dialect villages was Nyaurengai and that Kandingai, Japandai, Yambunumbu, Japanaut, Korogo and Maiwi were "daughter" villages of the mother. Some daughter villages have daughter village of their own – Kandingai has Timbunmeri Island in the Chambri Lakes, Japanaut has Lukluk and Sambugundei Islands, Japandai has Brugnowi and so on.

As discussed, the Sepik valley was a giant ocean gulf or inland sea, the shore line of which approx. 2000-3000 years ago was adjacent to today's Middle Sepik region. It is interesting to note that during the construction of an airstrip on the Frieda River in the Middle Sepik during the early 1970's, a 27cm long adze [See Photo in Chapter 3] made from a giant clamshell was excavated from a horizon three metres deep during the digging of a drain. This artefact, now in the PNG Museum collection, is interpreted to be approx. 5,000 years old. This identifies it as being of Austronesian origin, a race of people still living in enclaves on the north coast of New Guinea. The Austronesians were, and still are potters, coastal traders and fishermen - the site of the Frieda adze suggests, in all probability, that locality was once close to a pre-historic sea shore line).

Writer's note: In researching this and the previous chapter I found myself becoming confused by quoted dates. The 5000 years BP above for example conflicts with 1,600 BC [3,600 BP] for the first evidence of Austronesian in New Guinea. New "earliest dates" are continually being set of carbon dating of new archaeological discoveries. EG Pamela Swadling [1996] indicated for instance *There was simultaneous introduction of pottery in archaeological terms in Island South East Asia as far as New Guinea about 5,000 years ago.*⁴ Ms. Swadling quotes two sites on the Sepik/Ramu coast Taora 5,410 BP and Akari 5,580 BP.

Suffice to say this chapter records available information without trying to explain anomalies.

ooo000ooo

The Ndu creation myth commences with the statement that in the beginning everything was water and then the land appeared from beneath the water and man emerged from a hole in the land. Both Iatmul and Sawos social structures are a moiety system represented by Niamei the Mother and Niauwi the sun – all Iatmul and Sawos clans belong to one of the other of these moieties. Chapter 3 discusses the influence of Austronesian navigators on the Sepik during the time of the "inland sea" – one such influence is the apparent adaptation of the Austronesian myths of the Earth Mother and Sky Father.⁵

The Ndu post-creation myths of migrations from Mebinbit in today's Sawos area to populate the world. The myth states that the first place settled on the Sepik River was Suapmeri – presumably at some time after the progressive sedimentary infill of the inland sea had progressed further east of that point where the Sepik River had formed to drain the country to the west. From Suapmeri, the people now known as the Iatmul established the village of Parembei. From there the down-river "Tambanum Iatmul" was formed and lastly the upstream Nyaula Iatmul established themselves initially at Nyauengai. There are now three Iatmul dialects – Parembei, Tambanum and Nyaula.

Douglas Newton's statement – see below - that the Sawos were the apparent progenitors of the Iatmul is almost certainly based upon this migration story.

ooo000ooo

My association with Tangwei commenced on 21st July 1973 when a representative of the Niaura clan of Yamanumbu village complained to me at Pagwi Patrol Post that an art dealer had purchased the figure a few days earlier from the Kandingai members of the Niaura clan and they, the Yamanumbu members of the clan and part owners of the figure had not received their share of the \$3000 paid, and moreover, had not agreed for the piece to be sold (the daily wage for a native labourer at that time was approx. 1\$ per day).

I subsequently approached the dealer and explained the situation regarding the disputed ownership. He returned the figure to the village and cancelled his wisely post-dated cheque for \$3000. I did not see the original figure, but I was able to inspect and photograph its duplicate which was carved to replace the original once the decision was made to sell it the original. It was not until 2016 that I the writer first saw a photo of the original. I was amazed by the accuracy of reproduction. I am sure that if my measurement of 42 inches was checked, it would prove to be the actual 41½ inches tall. Although it is clear that the original figure was a basket hook, the reproduction was true in detail, even down to the broken hooks and the small central knob at the base of the figure.



- 84 inches (7') high



- 3' 5½'' (41½ inches high)

Previous page: Magisaun (above), 'brother' of Tangweiyabinjua - new and old - below ...

ooo000ooo

Writers Note: - Much of the information recorded here is from my Situation Report #1 which has part of Ambunti Patrol Report #1 1973/74. The Situation Report in turn was written largely from notes I transcribed from interviews with Jacob Yagaro, Naas Sengi and Mathias? and many prompts from other Nyaurengai, Kandingai and Yamanumbu villagers, all of the owner families of the artefacts.

After investigating the matter of disagreement regarding the original Tangwei, I determined that this art piece was of major importance and should be gazetted as declared National Cultural Property. I recommended that the piece should be purchased by either the Papua New Guinea Museum or, at that time, the proposed Sepik Cultural Centre.

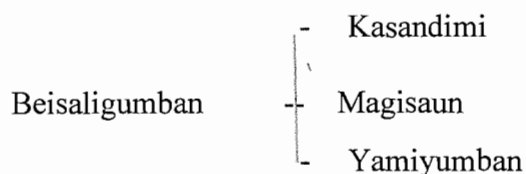
Tangwei was not gazetted, nor was she acquired for the PNG public estate. Instead, the art dealer re-purchased her from the villagers, she left the country and eventually emerged as part of the De Young museum Jolika collection in America. At that time, as now in 2016, the export of any tribal artefact made before 1960 is usually prohibited.

It is noteworthy that the De Young museum was evidently unaware of the name of their Tangwei figure and aspects of her tribal associations prior to Crispin Howarth, the Curator of Pacific Arts at Canberra's National Gallery of Australia, recognizing her after reading a draft of my chapter dealing with Sepik art and artefacts. I subsequently contacted the Curator of De Young and passed on additional information, which I suspect added considerably to the provenance of the item. Tangwei is part of the Jolika collection of approx. 400 New Guinea works of tribal art, donated to De Young by Marcia and John Friede in 2002. The collection is rated as one of the best of its type in existence, and was insured for US\$90 million in 2008.

Many eminent individuals feature in the provenance of items held in the Jolika collection, including Douglas Newton, the first curator of the Rockefeller Gallery of AOA Art at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The writer knew Doug Newton and his wife when they visited Ambunti on various occasions. Mr. Newton believed that the Tangwei carving and certain other early Iatmul religious objects actually originated with the Sepik's Sawos people, whom he suspected were the progenitors of the Iatmul. The extreme age of Tangwei suggests there is still much more to learn about ancient Sepik origins and migration patterns.

ooo000ooo

Tangweiyabinjua is loosely termed to be Magisaun's sister, but mythology indicates she was merely a classificatory sister. The essential myth indicates Tangwei had no relatives, but Magisaun's family was reported as follows: -



It is claimed these three sons of Beisaligumban made both the artefacts Magisaun and Tangwei. Both served the same purpose (see below). As described above, Magisaun was held by the Niaura clan members at Nyaurengai, and Tangwei was held by members of the same clan at the sister village of Kandingai.

At the time of Magisaun, there was believed to be only the Weinwandu clan of the Niamei moiety at Kandingai. The three brothers finally died and the myth has it that their spirits entered the body of the black and white bird called Gogora. The ancestors living in this bird gave their

descendants the clan name Niaura or Nyaula. The Tambaran who gave them this name was Jameiwan.

The Myth of Tangweiyabinjua

According to my informant Chara⁶ :- *‘When this place had no men (people), just Tangwei was here. The smoke of her fire rose and the men of Parembei² (village) came and asked ‘Who is making that fire?’. They came in five canoes and came to see Tangwei. “Ah, you are a woman, are you?’ asked the Parembeis, and they started a fight. She ran along a hill on which we have planted our coconuts and she killed one of the Parembei’s who was tending a canoe. All the other men who were in that canoe went into other canoes in which the Parembeis had come. The name of their canoe was Bonjui. The canoe went in and stayed at Maliguma. The canoe rotted, but our fathers remember seeing the head of this canoe, but it was gone by our time and we did not see it.*

The ancestors killed the first man and made the ground strong with his blood. The ancestor cut the meat of this man and Tangwei smoked the meat and the ground became strong. So Tangwei has the name of being the first on this ground, and later the Niamei and Niauwi people came and lived with her’ (Sindaun antap long em – signifying that she herself was the ground).

There are also references to interaction between Magisaun and Tangwei – she carried his billum, he killed game and brought it to her to cook ...

Suspected Deeper Mythological Significance of Tangwei

As indicated above, the base of Middle Sepik mythology and social structure is the division into Niamei and Niauwi moieties. The social structure section of Ambunti Patrol Report #11 1972/73 goes into this. In brief: -

A Niamei moiety member was the first created person, according to mythology⁷. First there was darkness, then ground, then the Mother. She was of the left hand. Associated features with Niamei were darkness, black water, land, all things female and death. The other moiety Niauwi is based on the sun, lightness, white water, etc. The sun is regarded as being of the right hand⁸. The clans are either of one moiety or the other. The interchange of things female and the ground is typical of Niamei allegorical thinking, e.g. Askan (the original vagina) is commonly used to refer to the hole in the ground [at Mebinbit] from which people originated according to mythology.

Sawos and Iatmul people see the Sepik’s flowing grey muddy water as “White” water and the tannin stained – tea coloured - swamp water as “Black” water. They also see the Sepik swirls and eddies in the “white water” as indicating life, movement and vigour, whereas the black swamp water lacks life and movement – it is regarded as dead.

Such importance was attributed to Tangwei that I asked ... *Does Tangwei represent the moiety mother Niamei?*

² The Parembei Iatmul were, and still are the traditional enemies of the Nyaula Iatmul

The answer made a clear differentiation *No! Tangwei was an ancestor* [as opposed to the mythological Earth Mother Niamei]. *The name of this ground Nyaula is Tangwei. She is the mountain of this place*³.

The carved figures of Tangwei and Magisaun were the focal point of the religion of each respective group. Traditionally in head hunting, the raiders before the raid made offerings of betelnut and shell wealth which were attached to the hook at the base of the carvings. Fight magic was also made⁹. Responses to my questions were couched in notes of caution and secrecy;

You would not understand, but I will explain it as wind [demonstrated as blowing on the figure] *Then they make the spells and blew and spat betelnut onto the figure. They would decorate the figure with ginger* [the fight totem plant]. *I cannot tell you more because it is our secret communications with our gods.*

*'Saun and Tangwei also transmit messages about the success of raids before the raiders' return, these messages come in the form of dreams. The figures go to the sleeping people and tell them things. These dreams tell us what to do. In everything we do we will dream and learn whether we are going properly or going badly. If I dream that something I am doing is not right, I know that Saun or Tangwei has told me and I change it and make it right. The floor of the house [Limbum⁴] – they make it straight and level and all is well...They put a pig of dog or chicken on the limbum and cut it up and then Tangwei gets up and makes a fire and smokes the meat. [If] the smoke rises and goes -this indicates that all is well.*¹⁰

After these preparations, the figure would communicate with the raiders, either with a prophesy of success or failure of the proposed raid, and the best tactics to use. These communications came in the form of dreams.

Informant Yakob / Kagang explains the ceremony after a raid as follows (and this is equally applicable to either Magisaun or Tangwei) :-

*'After we have fought, we give gifts of shell wealth, tambu, torembum. The heads are decorated with kinas. Kinas were also put on the chest of our god Saun (an abbreviation of Magisaun). Saun told us he wanted kinas – if we did not have any, he would say "Why have you only put tambour (inferior shell money)?"' So the people would put kinas on him (kinas – traditional pearl shell currency)*¹¹

Question – *'If you were bigheads (arrogant) and said, "No kinas" – what then?'*

Answer – *'We would die. People would become sick and die, like sorcery, so we heard the talk and gave him kinas. Later we could not get them back, unless gifts of betelnut and a chicken was killed and presented. Then we could take the kina back. Then we would wash the kina and go and buy women or what we wanted with the kina.*¹²

In the past, as we did recently, Saun was not kept in the haus tambaran but hidden in a house. People of other families did not know or see him. They all have their own equivalents which they kept secret. Close native can see him, but not outsiders. Outsiders would only hear talk of Saun's

³ Sepik villages such as Kandingai flood each wet season. Mounds [mountain] of earth, usually in long rows forming an avenue around the haus tambaran, have been heaped up since the villages were founded - to providing a limited area of flood free land upon which coconut palms are grown.

⁴ Flooring made from the outer layer of a palm trunk

existence. Now when I was selling Saun, outsiders came and looked at him. There were crowds of them – they saw his markings and I sold him. Now Saun’s sister (i.e. Tangwei) is the same. She is not of another family – she also is kept in a house hidden from outsiders.’

I asked, ‘How can you dispose of such an important figure as Tangwei?’ This was explained to me as follows by the Kandingai informants: -

‘We have made a replacement for Tangwei and we have had a singsing and given the name to the new Tangwei, and now we want to get rid of the old carving. We have all agreed to sell the old Tangwei – she has been here a long time and now we have replaced her. We sold the old one to ... the art dealer for \$3000 and he took her to Ambunti, but then he sent her back and when she came up here, there were four headaches caused. When this sickness came to us we killed three chickens and a dog for our ancestors who went away and came back to us, to cure our sickness. Now both (carvings) are here, the old one and the new one. We will continue to get headaches and sick while the old one remains. The new one has taken her place and we have given it names already. We got \$7000 for Saun, and now we want the same price for his sister’

Writer - ‘You accepted \$3000 (for Tangwei) and now you want \$7000. You have no hope.’

‘We would accept \$3000 for her, plus two 18 horse-power outboard motors ...’

ooo000ooo

Magisaun

The acquisition of Magisaun however was not without controversy. The figure was gazetted as proclaimed National Cultural Property on 23rd December 1971¹³, a few days after it was purchased by an art dealer. The PNG Museum challenged his ownership, amid a furore among Magisaun’s former traditional owners as to who had authority to sell the object, and how the proceeds were to be divided.

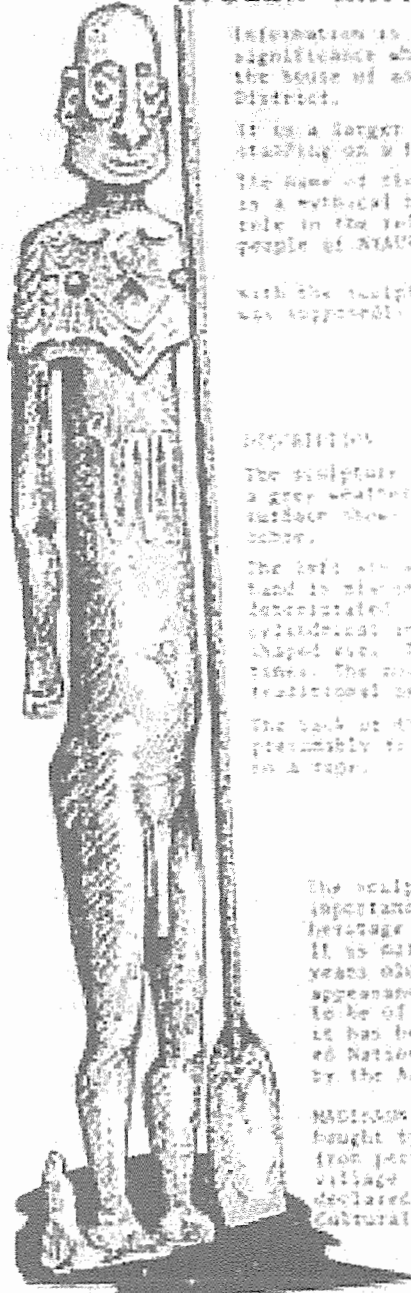
The Public Solicitor requested the dealer to return the item¹⁴. He refused. After Magisaun stood in the dealer’s house for almost a year, the Public Solicitor issued a letter of demand, an event which apparently triggered Magisaun’s disappearance which was duly reported as theft to me as ADC Ambunti. Fearful that the piece would be illegally exported, by the end of 1972 the PNG Museum drafted a leaflet for local and international distribution as a publicity campaign (see below). With such an elevated profile, no intelligent tribal art dealer or buyer anywhere in the world would have been foolish enough to have anything to do with this piece of hot property, especially as it was over two metres high.

The alert extended to a ship named ‘Lindenbank’ which had sailed from Lae en route to New York on 18th December 1972 with cargo which included consignments of New Guinea artefacts. There was a flurry of communications at high levels between Port Moresby, Canberra and America, which resulted in 52 cases of artefacts being detained and inspected when the ship docked in New York¹⁵. Magisaun was not on board.

Back at Ambunti, word came to me that if, hypothetically, Magisaun were to be found, what would be the outcome. After consulting with the police, I voiced the opinion that if, hypothetically speaking, the item was to be given to the PNG Museum on permanent loan, it was likely no further action would be taken. And that is exactly what happened when the figure arrived unannounced in Port Moresby by air from Wewak on 10th February 1973¹⁶. I suspected all along that the piece was still on the Sepik, especially as Magisaun’s paddle, which was an integral part of the provenance of the item, was still in evidence in Ambunti.

WANTED - - -

STOLEN NATIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTY



Information is wanted on a national treasure of great significance which has been reported as stolen from the house of an artisan located in Ambunti, East Sepik District.

It is a larger than life size sculpture of a male figure standing on a block shaped base.

The name of the sculpture is **MAJISAM** or **MAGISAM** is a mythical hero or ancestor who played a significant role in the religious and ceremonial life of the people of **MAUSUMBI** village, East Sepik District.

With the sculpture belongs a paddle which was reportedly used by **MAGISAM**.

DESCRIPTION

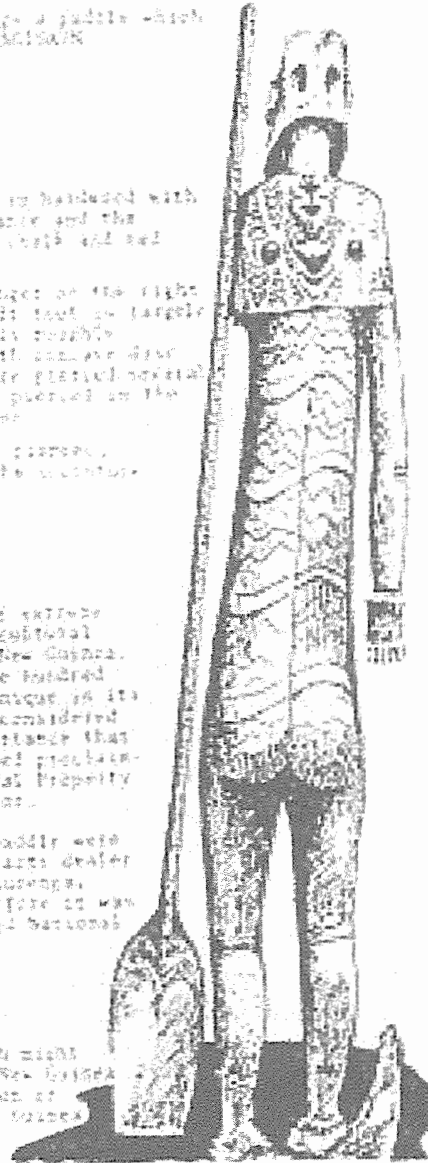
The sculpture is carved in beaded with a grey weathered appearance and the surface shows traces of red and red ochre.

The left arm is one finger on the right hand is missing. The left foot is largely intact but the head is possibly eroded and the legs with some wear shaped feet. The ears are pierced several times. The nose is also pierced in the traditional Sepik fashion.

The back of the head is pierced, presumably to suspend the sculpture on a rope.

The sculpture is of extreme importance to the cultural heritage of Papua New Guinea. It is more than one hundred years old and is unique in its appearance. It is considered to be of such importance that it has been declared protected National Cultural Property by the Administrator.

MAGISAM and the paddle were brought to an antique dealer from people of Mausambi village shortly before it was declared protected National Cultural Property.



Anybody who can provide information which might lead to the return of **MAGISAM** to Papua New Guinea is requested to contact the Administrator or Police, or the Director of the Papua New Guinea Museum.

Figure 8. Leaflet prepared by PNG National Museum for distribution worldwide, notifying of loss of carved figure named 'Magisam'. Figure and paddle now in PNG National Museum collection.

It had been drawn to my attention that a section of the weathered chest of the figure had been scraped down to the raw wood. This was initially interpreted as deliberate damage, but it was learned that the scrapings had likely been taken for ceremonial purposes, in order to transfer the spirit of the original Magisaun to his replacement. Thus, as with Tangwei, once the original had been sold, identical figures remained in the village, embodied with ritual significance and continuing to play an important role in the religious life of the villagers – a process which no doubt had been in place for thousands of years.

As described in the leaflet, Magisaun is an imposing male figure. He displays some damage and deterioration, not surprising as he probably dates from a similar era as Tangwei. One of my informants said he had been shown a basket containing a stone axe blade and a very worn and possibly burned pig tusk, a number of mussel shells and strips of bamboo, and it was explained that these were the implements with which Tangwei was carved. This would have applied to Magisaun as well.

Unlike innumerable culturally valuable figures which have been exported from New Guinea legally or otherwise, it is fortunate the role and traditional importance of both these figures in tribal society has been well documented.

ooo000ooo

End Notes Chapter 27

-
- ¹ Item 153 Jolika Collection catalogue – de Young Museum publication San Francisco USA
- ² D.C.Laycock – Sepik Languages Checklist and Preliminary Classification ANU Canberra 1973 page 75
- ³ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P139, 155-156, 167, 256 and more
- ⁴ Swadling P – Plumes from Paradise PNG Museum in association with Robert Brown and associates (Qld) Pty Ltd 1996 Page 52.
- ⁵ Earth Mothers and Sky Fathers of Austronesia – Item 701 Bragge Reference Vol 22
- ⁶ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P272
- ⁷ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P252 -257
- ⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P254
- ⁹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P273
- ¹⁰ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P273
- ¹¹ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P270
- ¹² Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 – many references including P271
- ¹³ B. Craig '*National Cultural Property in PNG*' Journal Anthropological Society of S.A. Vol. 30/2 Dec.1992 p.1543
- ¹⁴ B. Craig '*National Cultural Property in PNG*' Journal Anthropological Society of S.A. Vol. 30/2 Dec.1992 p.1544
- ¹⁵ B. Craig '*National Cultural Property in PNG*' Journal Anthropological Society of S.A. Vol. 30/2 Dec.1992 p.1545/6
- ¹⁶ B. Craig '*National Cultural Property in PNG*' Journal Anthropological Society of S.A. Vol. 30/2 Dec.1992 p.1546/7

**Sepik 1 Chapter 28 The Origins and early history of the Manambu and the demise of Maume
[Also known as Ngginyap, Mondigo and Tibando-Jibaga], Amei and Wankainkaiuk**

The Manambu social structure consists of three exogamous groups which we shall call “clans” These are Wuluwi-Nyawawi with seven sub clans, Nggala’angkw with seven sub clans [these two closely resemble the Niaui/Niamei moities of the Sawos and Iatmul language groups] and a third clan called Nambul-Sambelap with two sub clans.¹ Alexandra Y Aikenvald agrees with the above under differing “clan” names – Wulwi- Nawi, Gla:gw and Nabal-Sablap respectively.²

According to oral history the three clans...came from three mythical villages...The Gla:gw lived near the Yentchanggai-Lapangai areas, somewhat inland from today’s Sepik.

The totemic ancestors of the Wulwi-Nawi lived in a village far to the east, which according to some, is the reason why Wulwi-Nawi own the south-eastward areas, including modern Australia and places white men came from, as well as “white-men’s” objects

The Nabal-Sablap lived further to the west, in the direction of the sea...They are the ones who are said to have ‘carved’ the Sepik River.

This may imply that historically, the Manambu could have consisted of at least three large groups merged together, one of which used to be located towards the coast.³

ooo000ooo

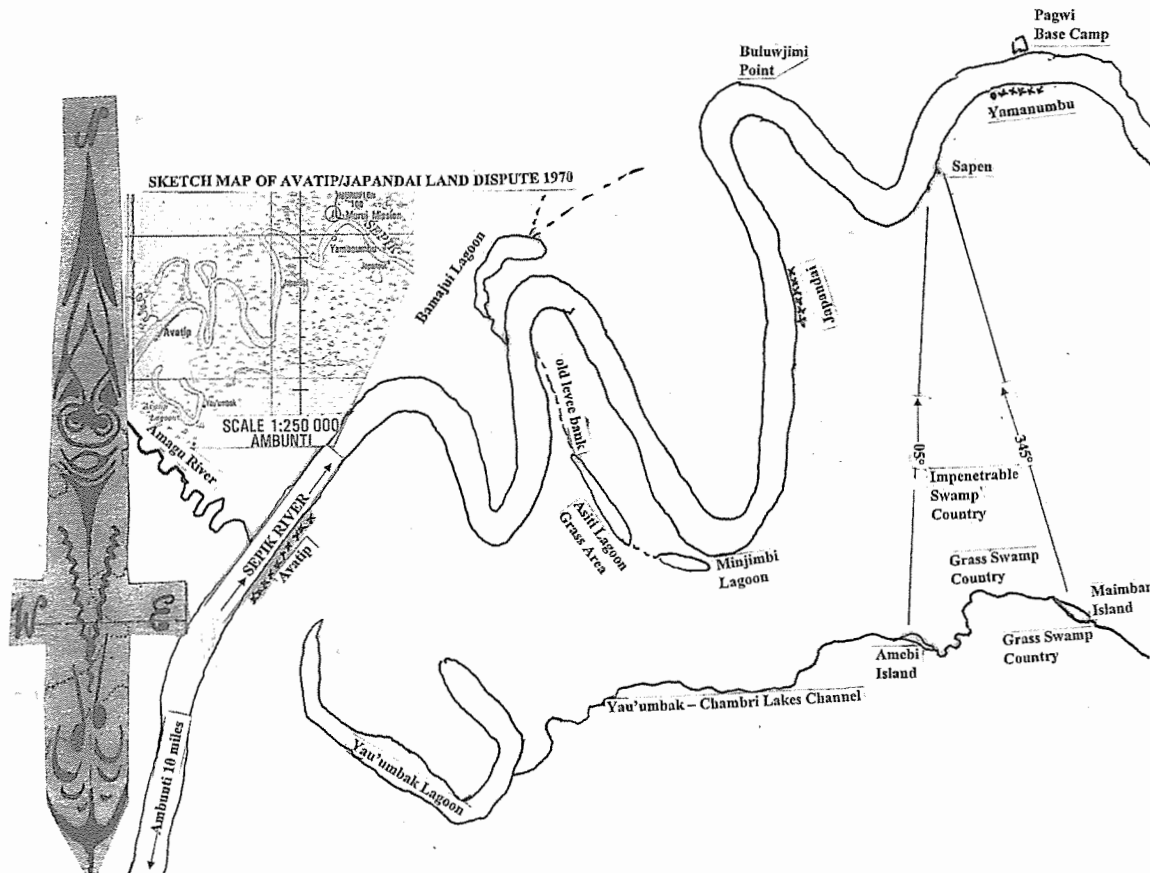
Introductory comment to Manambu history. In collating this chapter from many interviews with elders of Avatip, Malu, Yau’umbak and Yambon, several points became apparent, which may be helpful to the reader.

1. The wars against the people known alternatively as the Maume, Ngginyap, Mondigo and Tibando-Jibaga, described below, were not only of a huge scale and vast duration, but they also appear to have been pivotal in subsequent Sepik historical events. It seems to the writer that until this enemy was defeated the following events, described below, would have to have been on kept on hold;
 - a. The abandonment of Asiti, Garakoli and Mogombo [Pronounced *Garakwali and Maukambu* respectively]⁴ in favour establishing Avatip and Malu settlements on or adjacent to the Sepik River bank.
 - i. Such a delay in the establishment of Malu would presumably have prolonged the survival of the Souli/Moganai [Pronounced *Seuali Mongunai*]⁵, also known as the Kompong/Nggalla – Chapter 36.
 - b. As Japandai was also fighting the same enemy, the Japandai Migrations [Sepik 2 Chapter 26] may not have happened, or may have been delayed.
2. The history of daughter village Yau’umbak, seems to have pre-dated the establishment of daughter villages Malu and Yambon
3. Throughout these interviews the name “Avatip” is used to refer to the Manambu people. As much of the history discussed by the elders, predates the establishment of Avatip village, I have substituted “Manambu” for “Avatip” where applicable in this chapter.
4. Also the story of Asiti-Mogombo-Garakoli/Avatip i.e, the Manambu Mother village and Daughter villages Malu and Yambon, coincided with, and is heavily inter woven with that of Sepik 2 Chapter 26 *The Japandai Migrations*, which should be read in conjunction with the present chapter
5. An important Manambu ancestor, Olu, mentioned below, originated at Asiti and became the founder of Yau’umbak and a friend of the Amei people. It is unclear from the elder’s

interviews, which of his adventures occurred when he was at Asiti and after he established Yau'umbak.

Writer's note. In October 1970 the writer spent several days trying to register a Lands Titles Commission application on behalf of Avatip in a dispute with Japandai village. This exercise revealed some aspects of Manambu pre-history and on-going hatreds of Manambu's enemies.

ooo000ooo

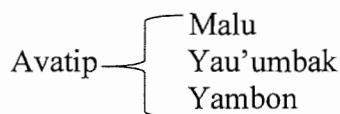


Appendix A of Ambunti patrol report 10/1970-71 reads in part.

...In the present case this long-standing dormant dispute was brought back to life, by Japandai removing crocodile lines belonging to Avatip men, from a lagoon that both Avatip and Japandai claim as theirs.

See the map above. The Avatip [Manambu] people used to live at Asiti before daughter villages Malu, Yambon and Yau'umbak moved away and the [Manambu] ancestors who would populate Avatip moved out to the river bank, abandoning Asiti. Avatip [Manambu] won the land now claimed in two separate series of fights; against Maume and against Nyaula.

Writer's note: The Manambu like the Iatmul, Sawos, Abelam etc, are classified as one of the Ndu language family members. The migrations from Asiti [also Garakoli and Mogombo] classified Asiti as the Manambu mother village. When Avatip was established on the bank of the Sepik river it retained the mother village status exactly, as did Parembai and Nyauirengai.



ooo000ooo

The ancient villages of Asiti, Mogombo and Garakoli.

Two ancestors started at Asiti they were Kwananp and Maintapi. All the men had gone to the sago and these two men killed a big man from Chambri called Andinga. They killed him in front of the haus tambaran to make the place strong...[Then] when the next high water came, the Chambris came to fight. The elders stood against them and fought. No other enemies came ashore at Asiti...

Maintapi had a daughter and the Chambris came and caught her and were carrying her off in their big canoe. She cried out while the Chambris were singing as they paddled down the channel. The two elders tied a cassowary bone to a length of bamboo and hid in wait. As the canoe came abeam, they hooked it, tipping it over. They speared the Chambris in the water and rescued the girl.

When Asiti over populated the ancestors made Mogombo and Garakoli villages nearby. They stayed there a long time and had many fights. The channels silted up, leaving Asiti Mogombo and Garakoli too far inland, so they left these places...When we migrated from there, we divided the people to set up Malu village; Big brother to Avatip, small brother to Malu, one cousin to Avatip another cousin to Malu. We did it like that so all and all the clans of Avatip were represented in both places...Malu is the name of the mountain where the village was established, but the people are Avatips. [this chapter returns to Malu history shortly]⁶

ooo000ooo

Wars against Maume. [also known as Ngginyap, Mondigo and Tibando-Jibagal]

Writer's Note: At an indeterminate time in the past, and apparently over a very long time-frame, a series of wars either annihilated or disbursed a large community of people, who had lived on the left bank of the Sepik River and along the Amagu River. These people were known to their surrounding enemies alternatively as the Mauma, Ngginyap, Mondigo or Tibando-Jinagal. The alternative accounts of the demise of these people appear below:

#1. Appendix A continues with Avatip Informants. At the time of Asiti, a large number of people resided on the left bank of the Sepik River, opposite and downstream from the present Avatip location. In a series of wars Waskuk and Bangwis [Kwoma people] allied themselves with Asiti, against this population. The remnants of the various sub groups, re-assembled at Bawajui lagoon and became the group the Manambu knew as Maume.

Maume was raided by a strong Avatip force and every Maume man woman and child was killed. As a result of this Avatip now claims the left bank of the Sepik down past Bawajui lagoon to Bowinjum point [wrongly listed on the map on the previous page as Buluwjimi point]. This claim goes as far inland as the Jangawi kunai area up towards Sengo.

This was an ancient ancestral war, which through the [many] years of warfare cost Avatip [read here to mean the Manambu] 1,010 men dead. The writer questioned this figure and in response, The Avatip elders produced sticks of panggal [The ribs of sago fronds] with beads strung on them as a means by which a count of the dead was maintained.

#2 Simon Harrison's *The Mask of War - The Ngginyap wars.* Up until the late 19th century there was a large village near Avatip on the opposite side of the river, the home of a people whom Avatip called the Ngginyap. These seem to have been a bush people, possibly speaking the Sawos language or some variant of it, they fishing on Pakwusuwi and Aranya'amb, the two large lagoons north of Avatip and by exploiting the large sago palm areas surrounding them.

Some Avatip sub clans had close ties of friendship with these people and traded with them for sago and sometimes for fish. Close and long-standing ties had clearly been formed in this way between the two peoples and the Ngginyap had become bilingual in Manambu, which was the

language used in these transactions. But in general, relationships between Manambu and the Ngginyap were hostile, and according to legend, wars with the Ngginyap, even before the foundation of Avatip in semi-mythical time when all Manambu lived in their ancestral village of Asiti. What seems to have happened over this period, probably of several centuries, is that the two peoples were competing for the control of the immediate area, which is a favourable one with a cluster of large lagoons, Ngginyap gardening lands and many other resources.

The last war fought with Ngginyap seems to have been fought in the late 19th century, because old men during the time of Mr. Harrison's field work could remember having seen the house posts of the ruined Ngginyap village as children, until the site was swept away by a shift in the course of the river. The final war, they say was provoked by a dispute over fish. Whenever large shoals of fish appeared in the Ngginyap lagoons, the Ngginyap would go out onto the lagoons early in the morning and spear them. When Avatip people came later in the day to visit them, the Ngginyap would hide the fish...and deny had any fish, only trading them secretly with the few descent groups at Avatip that had clan-ties with them. The underlying cause of the war was clearly the control of the fishing lagoons themselves and of their surrounding resources...

At one stage during the war the Ngginyap made a highly disastrous direct attack on Avatip. They do not seem to have fully acquired the skills of the water people. Some of Mr Harrison's informants said the Ngginyap did not know how to make canoes or how to swim. Instead of attacking by canoes, the Ngginyap came across the river on rafts, pulling themselves along on vine cables, they had laid from one bank to the other. The Avatip men had been forewarned of the attack and sent the women and children for safekeeping in the bush, while they, themselves lay in ambush in their canoes some distance away from the village on the river bank. The Ngginyap entered the deserted village and proceeded to ransack and burn it, except for the wards of their trading partners, which they left untouched. They loaded their rafts with their booty of yams, dogs, chickens and so forth...it was when they were in midstream and the cumbersome rafts made easy targets, that the Avatips made their attack, coming out in their canoes and killing many of the Ngginyap men.

But this was not quite the end of the Ngginyap. They suffered a series of later defeats, moved their village site a number of times and their last village was eventually destroyed by Avatip with a contingent of Kwoma allies. Avatip trade partners with the Ngginyap did not take part in these expeditions, indeed the preparations for these raids were kept quite secret from them by the other Avatip descent groups. The survivors fled northeast and sought refuge among their Sawos kinsmen are said still to live⁷

#3 Appendix A continues with Japandai Informants. The Mondigo people used to live at Bawajui lagoon. Mondigo commenced hostilities by killing a Japandai man. In the resulting fighting most of the Mondigo were killed, and the survivors fled to where they now live at Sengo...At this time the Sepik flowed through what is now the Bawajui lagoon and went straight Bowintum [presumably Bowinjum point – see map above]...The river changed course, leaving much Japandai land on the left bank of the Sepik.

#4 Chapter 24 – Sawos – Sepik Plains Manja informants. *We now had two allies ready to fight them [Tibando-Jibagal... but they were in two places and we did not have enough men yet to beat them. A man from Jaminja, a friend of ours, took a bilum of rings and some pigs and went to Yelogu and Modiagu, then Jaminja also came in to make five places. Then the Avatips came inside, because this [Manja] was the big [ancestral] place where they originated.*

Tibando-Jibaga, were thus surrounded. Their place was near the Amagu River, not far from the present location of Biananumbu. Fighting started and continued until they were completely exterminated. These groups had more land and sago than anyone else. Now this land and sago is common land to all six groups that wiped them out.

We settled down on our present land and we have lived here ever since. Our ancestors who went to the big fight were Jama, Yelindu and Angaji.

Yelindu – Yagawas – Biranjigi – Kokbeli [Kokbeli was about 38 years old in 1973]

The Avatip Migration: *This migration [from Manja] happened in the distant past. No one can remember just when or the names of the ancestors.*⁸

Writer's Qn to Karandaman of Malu: Where did the ancestors come from before they were at Asiti?

Ans. I do not know.

Qn. I heard some came from Manja and some from Torembei.

Ans. Manji, Wosera, Sirangwanda, not just Manja. I went with Mr Woodman [Harold Woodman, pre-war ADO at Ambunti]. When I arrived the people there said *Our ancestors left here and went down to the Sepik*... They were pleased to see me and they adopted me and brought me food. Mr Woodman said *What's this?* And I said *Before my ancestors started from here.*⁹

ooo000ooo

Wars against Nyaula - Avatip informant

Appendix A cont. Nyaula, like Avatip was an old group which has broken into many minor groups [Nyaurengai – mother village broken down into many daughter villages.] – Korogo, Japandai, Yentchanmangua, Japanaut, Nangumui [Kandingai?] and Niulingei [Nyaurengai?] Over the years in fighting with Nyaula, Avatip [read to mean Manambu] lost 187 men dead.

A spear thrower was shown to the writer and the elders continued their story – After warfare had raged for years, The Nyaulas indicated they had had enough. On the last battleground, which was the bend of the Sepik River immediately above where Pagwi Base camp would be established, a spear was fitted into the spear thrower and thrown. Where the spear stuck into the ground, clump of bamboo now stands as the Avatip Yamunumbu boundary. This place is called Sapen.

ooo000ooo

To close the land dispute discussion. Avatip's argument was that the Japandai people abandoned their land by migrating to Brugnawi, and that the current residents of Japandai had no rights there as they are of Chambri origin. [See Sepik 2 Chapter 26]

The dispute was not heard by the LTC as the registration of disputes required chain and compass surveys with boundaries marked with cement markers. This was impossible to achieve because of the deep swamp nature of the disputed area. While this was pointed out in my report, the need to find alternative methods of surveying in deep swamps, did not receive a response from the bureaucracy; It seems the problem went into the "too hard" basket.

The complexity of land dispute resolution is evident in this case. It is little wonder that whatever the LTC decides, very few disputes are actually resolved in the eyes of the people.

ooo000ooo

The Mei bush spirits

Our ancestors made their carvings from timber. If they made them from stone, we men would live for a long time; timber rots and men die. Before, our ancestors were not like men...I think we men came up later... There is no real story about this, just things our fathers said.

In the first place, there were the things made of timber, like the images we make now. They came first and the wooden hooks we use in the men's house, they came too. These image men we

call “Mei”. Then we real men came and went to the place Asiti and these Mei lived in a ficus tree. They just hid. They were like men and our ancestors used to sit down with them and eat with them.

There was a place for them in the haus tambaran, and the people gave a basket of pig meat and sago to the Mei who lived in the ficus tree. His name was Meimgai. He took the basket of pig and sago, then came back and stole two bilums of sago belonging to Apengeli.

Apengeli looked for his food and discovered that Meimgai had taken it. The children beat the garamut to tell Meimbaui to come and get more pig [and when he came] Apengai hit him with the handle of a mosquito swatter. Meimgai ran away saying “I wanted to stay with you, but you hit me and now you will not see me again” All Meis are now invisible.

These Mei, were the forerunners to people, and they lived with people like brothers. [Meimgai said] “You will not see me again, but I will see you...Before, I gave birth to you and you came up as a man, and now you and your people are here...” He climbed the ficus tree never to be seen again.

Apengeli – Kambenuawi – Yamgandimi { Apingeli – School children [in 1970]
Taukebi
Gundu

The original Apengeli had five children, and they had many offspring.¹⁰

ooo000ooo

The first fight – Manambu against Garamambu and Amei.

The first fight was at Kapangai channel. Twenty men and women of Garamambu and Amei were fishing there and the Manambus killed them. Amei used to live at Labumbu. Garamambu and Amei were trespassing on our fishing area Kapangai.

Later, we called for them to come to Kabuginmuk and we killed forty there. The third fight was at Wabitok, on the Sepik near where Malu would be established. We killed forty there also. This third fight was against Amei, who lived on the hills close by. The fight was also against Garamambu. This fight finished most of the Amei. Then Manambu went to their place Labump and killed the rest of them.

An Amei woman called Apo [also pronounced Yapo] was dressed like a man, in flying fox skin and cassowary feathers. She fought like a man. When the fight was over two Amei women, Apo and Wulwei ran away to Garamambu and had families there. The present [1970] Councillor of Garamambu is descended from these Amei women. But the Amei are finished as a group.

When our people went to wash sago, the Gramambus used to come and fight us. They would kill us and we would kill them. There were three Garamambu raids like this before the kiaps came and established Ambunti. From then on, we have lived in peace with Garamambu. They did not beat us and we did not beat them. [with the Amei now removed] we have no land boundaries with Garamambu. Both we and they have rights to the hills between us.

The Manambu leader in the fight [at Kapangai] Ulo. He was a Manambu, but he was also a friend of Garamambu, Yerkai and Amei. He would give them tangets, allowing them tom use th channel for fighting purposes.

The second fight came up as Ulo was a friend of these people and used to have his own market with them, which the rest of the Manambu did not know about. He would receive a tanget from then [setting a time for a market] and put it in his basket so other men would not see it. He hung his basket in the haus tambaran and slept. While he slept, the people found the tanget in his basket and wondered who he was meeting.

They followed him on the day of the market, with their weapons. Ulo sat down with his friends and they had their market. The men who had followed him killed everyone there except Ulo.

Ulo was sad at this deception and cried to the Amei place Labump in order to again be friends with the Amei. He went into their haus tambaran which was called Wasabaraman and lay down in the hot ashes of the fire. They asked Ulo what he was doing and he said *I am sorry for you people. All the time Manambu comes and kills you people and that is why I have come.* They said it was OK and that he was still their friend.

They [the Amei] washed sago and went to market it at Wabitok near the Sepik. This was Ulo's market. It was a place where the Manambu's knew and used to come to in order to ambush the Amei. The Manambu again got news of Olu's market target. Two of Ulo's cousins saw the target and asked about it, He told them, in confidence that he was going to Wabitok to trade with the Amei.

The Manambu fighters went on foot unbeknownst to Olu, who went to the market place by canoe. Two ancestors Karowabi and Karagabat were great fighters and they led the raid... The market was arranged and they were all seated when the raid occurred and 40 were killed and the heads were taken of men women and children.

The Amei – Yerikai informant Yagi.

Our big name is Garamambu...Amei was created with the land and they lived in the hills above the junction [of the Yerikai channel and the Sepik River].

Our fathers and grandfathers fought against the Manambu. The Manambu attacked the Amei camp when the Amei were sick with dysentery and were just lying around in the houses. The Manambu finished them. One Amei man, Mondikumban, was not sick. He had gone to the bush with his dog to hunt that morning and he missed the fight. The Manambu took the Amei heads down to Avatip for their singsing, in his absence.

Mondikumban had a clansman at Avatip called Kambai. While the singsing was in progress Kambai inspected the heads and found that his clansman's head was not among them, and he realised Mondikumban had escaped.

While the singsing continued Kambai and his dog came to find Mondikumban. He told the Avatip people he was going hunting. Mondikumban was in a hole a pig had made under a tree stump and Kambai's dog found him by his smell...Kambai cared for Mondikumban until he was again well. He braided Mondikumban's hair and made him a lime gourd and lime stick, then took him to the haus tambaran. The men at the haus tambaran wanted to kill Mondikumban, but Kambai supported him and they accepted him...

Mondikumban decided to go back to his own land...He came back and had two sons, Wapi and Maimai and two daughters, who were sent to be married to Avatips¹...One of them came back and cut sago and Maimai killed her. He said "Sago does not just grow, my father planted it¹¹" [The significance of this is that the sister, once married at Avatip, should have been cutting Avatip sago.]

ooo000ooo

Manambu daughter village Yau'umbak.

Our lake is called Walmau.¹² It is also known as Yau'umbak lagoon. The lagoon was always here, we never knew the Sepik to flow through here. It used to be a very big lake, the land has come in and left it as it is now.

¹ This suggests that Mondikumban's wife was from Avatip and the daughters' marriage there equated to bride price

Olu was Yau'umbak's first ancestor...He came from Asiti to establish Yau'umbak. He was a friend of Amei, Garamambu and Yerikai.

Olu – Gimbank – Pakamoi'in – Ulmakan – Sauikambai – Kabandimi – Ingimanonk and two more generations. **Writer's note** This genealogy was drawn to try and establish an approximate time line for when Olu lived. The genealogy is shaky, as not all of the generation links are remembered. Suffice to say – Olu lived a very long time ago.

The annihilation of the Wankainkaiuk

People we knew as Wankaikaiuk, lived on the Island Arabi, which is in the bush between the Sepik River and Yau'umbak. Ulo [alternative name Olu] took a canoe with Amei warriors, and went ashore at Arabi Island and attacked the Wankainkaiuk. Then Ulo transported the Amei home again. Some Wankainkaiuk, escaped into the bush, mostly wounded. Ulo called out to them *When I came to your place, you had burnt the kunai in hunting, but you did not share the pigs you killed with me, nor any other meat. I am a big-man of Manambu and I am entitled to more respect than you have shown me. That is why I raided your village and killed you*"

The remnants of the Wankainkaiuk are finished and we never saw them again. The Amei are also finished, except for those at Garamambu. Amei spoke the Garamambu language. Wankainkiuk spoke the Kaiuk language.¹³

Writer's note: While "Wankainkaiuk" sounds like Pidgin English for "like the Kaiuk". Professor Anaesthesia Aikenvald, who studies the Manambu culture, advised: *The correct pronunciation is Waan kany kaiuk. This translates as "Ear bamboo Kaiuk" and explained to me as "The Kaiuk with ears like bamboo"*¹⁴

The Kaiuk themselves were a minority ethnic group who lived along the lower Amagu River. The writer knows little of them except that when Avatip was shelled during a punitive expedition [presumably Captain Olifent's ANM&MEF expedition on the SS Sumatra in 1919 – see Sepik 2 Chapter 21] the Avatip people took refuge with the Kaiuk. Also, in March 1934, DO Townsend used Kaiuk interpreters and guides during his exploration of the Sepik Plains in March 1934 – [Sepik 2 Chapter 40].

The Wankainkaiuk, were of the same language and cultural group as the Kaiuk, who had the mis-fortune to be resident of the Manambu side of the Sepik, and so were exterminated

ooo000ooo

The annihilation of the Mukun. Informant Sibalawan of Yau'umbak said.

My ancestor's names were Tamunt and Mindaman. They fought a people we knew as the Mukun at the big lake we share with Bangwis. The Mukun

[This lake is adjacent to the eastern extremity of the Waskuk Hills, so the Mukun would appear to be part of the Souli Moganai/Kompong Ngglla population – See Chapter 36]. We used to ambush the Mukun by laying down in the grass and rubbish in which the crocodiles lay their eggs. The Mukun would come collecting eggs and my ancestors would get up and kill them. Stone axes used for making canoes was the usual weapon used to kill them.

Tamunt did this first. He told his brother Mindaman to come with him so he could earn the right to wear black paint...Tamunt lay down in the crocodile house and Mindaman covered him up with grass. He then went and hid their canoe nearby.

The victim Mukuns came and uncovered him as they sought the crocodile eggs. Tamunt called his brother and they killed all ten Mukuns. We have a rope showing the number of men killed

at that lake. This tally rope has been handed down from father to son for generations and replaced whenever necessary.

We [Manambu] did not eat our victims, we killed [and took heads] for the honours of black paint, flying fox skin aprons and lime stick decorations. ¹⁵

Manambu daughter villages Malu and Yambon.

Avatip and Malu were established at around the same time as Mogombo broke up and the people went to settle Avatip and Malu... We migrated to Malu to obtain sago stands growing there and land... [The village site selected was on top of the ridge line immediately opposite the 1970's river left bank site of Malu]. Upon arrival at Malu my ancestors saw fires at Mt Ambunti, indicating enemies were close at hand. [The story of the people on Mt Ambunti and the outcomes of the Malu/ Kwoma plan to attack them, is taken up in Chapter 36]

Gutubi was with the first migration from Mogombo to settle Avatip and Malu.

Gutubi – Kamai { Irembu - Dangwan - Lisindu –[in 1970 Lisindu was a grandfather]
Wunjuban
Darambi


Next, the Malu ancestors met and it was decided to extend Malu's lands by destroying Yambon [the next village upstream of Malu]. At this time the Yambon people had been hunting on their hill Ianambunimber, and killed the pigs there. The hunters were smoking the pig meat when the Malu raiders arrived. All the Yambon big men and their dogs were killed. All the canoes became the possessions of the Malus victors.

Two or three men survived and fled to the bush. These survivors are the ancestors of the present Yambon people. Malu settlers went and established a camp at Yambon to protect our new lands.¹⁶

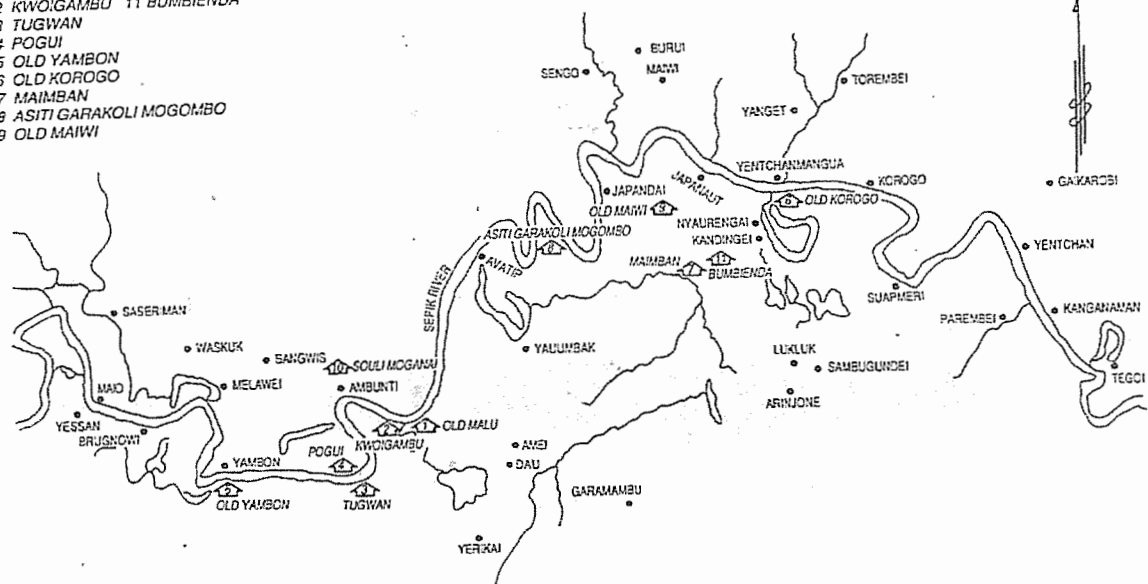
The events of the paragraph occurred in conjunction with the Japandai migrations. The fate of the Yambon survivors was negotiated between Malu and Japandai elders. Malingot of Brugnowi explained:

During the first Japandai migration, the Yambons had been attacked by Malu and were wild in the bush. Our ancestor saw footprints of a man... Malu said it was their enemy Yambon and suggested Malu and Japandai lay an ambush... but my ancestor said *No we will become their friends*. They found the Yambon [survivors] and established them at Suaigai...

Yambon does not acknowledge Japandai assistance, asserting that the Malus invited them to come and live at Malu. They finally came and set up camp at Tugwan. Nauwi Sauinambi's Kwoma version of these events supports the Japandai version.¹⁷

ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS : 

- 1 OLD MALU 10 SOULI MOGANAI
- 2 KWOIGAMBU 11 BUMBIENDA
- 3 TUGWAN
- 4 POGUI
- 5 OLD YAMBON
- 6 OLD KOROGO
- 7 MAIMBAN
- 8 ASITI GARAKOLI MOGOMBO
- 9 OLD MAIWI



ooo000ooo

End notes Chapter 28

- ¹ S.Harrison – The mask of war. Manchester University Press 1993 Pages 77.
- ² A.Y.Aikenvald – Language Contact along the Sepik River – Oxford University Press 2009 P10
- ³ A.Y.Aikenvald – 2009 Pages 9 & 10
- ⁴ Personal communication from Professor Aikenvald Nov 2018
- ⁵ Personal communication from Professor Aikenvald Nov 2018
- ⁶ Elders of Avatip interviewed 1970 - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 29
- ⁷ S.Harrison – 1993 Pages 66-68
- ⁸ Manja Councillor and others of Manja, including Kokbeli. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 205-207
- ⁹ Karandaman of Malu. - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 40
- ¹⁰ Elders of Avatip interviewed 1970 - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 46-47
- ¹¹ Yagi of Yerikai - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 12
- ¹² Kalinauwi of Yau'umbak. - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 48
- ¹³ Parnek of Yau'umbak and assembled elders - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 50-51
- ¹⁴ Personal communication from Professor Aikenvald Nov 2018
- ¹⁵ Sibalawan of Yau'umbak - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 51
- ¹⁶ Lisindu of Malu - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 35
- ¹⁷ Letkehaus et al, Sepik Heritage – Caroline Academic Press 1990 – Bragge – The Japandai migrations page 40

Sepik 1 Chapter 28 A glimpse of the pre-history of a Lower Sepik community.

The writer did not serve as an administrative officer in the Lower Sepik, and so had very limited exposure to information on the pre-history of the region. While working as a field manager in PNG's petroleum industry I spend time in the villages of the Bien River in the Marienberg area, where I was able to indulge one of my other interests – investigations into and the purchase of tribal art. Those experiences, which include some information of the pre-history of the Aion people, is documented in Sepik 2 Chapter 13 *Destruction of Traditional religion and culture in the Bien River area* and Sepik 4 Chapter 43 *The Bien River traditional revival of the 1970s*.

During my time in the villages of Ombos and Oromai the people sold to me several pottery heads, the origins of which they said they knew nothing except that they were old.



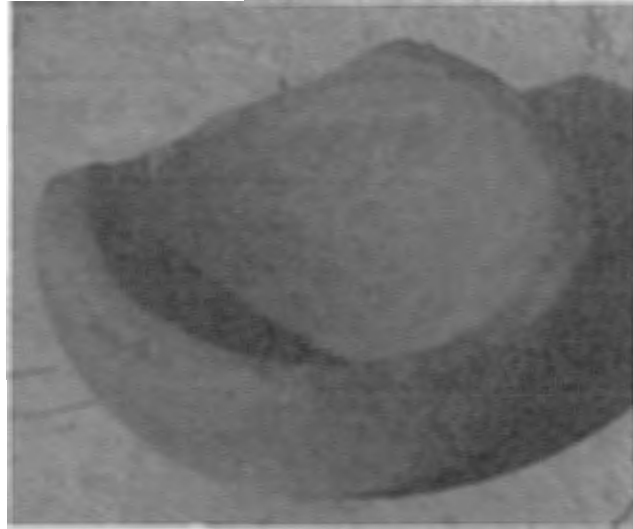
I saw that each of the clay faces was beautifully made and very expressive. This was clearly the work of skilled potters. In the design of the two examples on the following page is evidence of cultural activity associated with the culture of the time. The upper face has a series of holes around the perimeter. These would have been allowed the attachment of decorations – perhaps feathers, or string ornaments.

The lower face is beautifully symmetrical and has a very unusual nose feature, which may represent the piercing of the septum to accommodate a large ornament.

There was no pottery making in evidence among the Bien River communities, so I concluded that these faces were either the product of lost local skills, or traded in from elsewhere. Sadly, as I was an art dealer at that time, and these objects were very saleable, they are no longer in the Bragge collection.



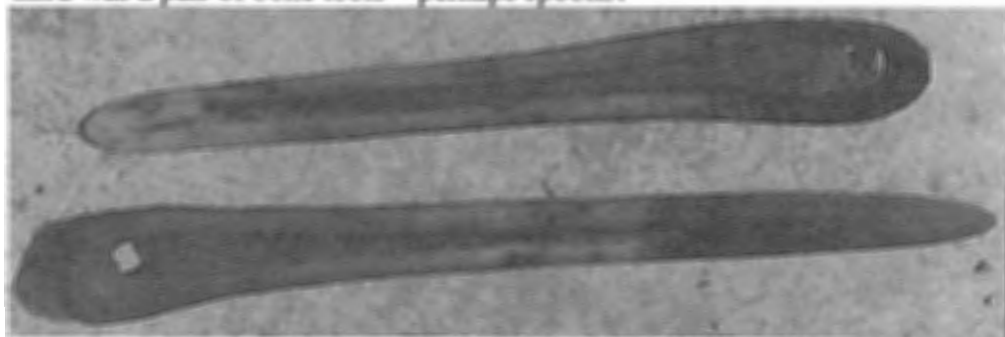
Also shown to the writer with the clay faces were four other objects that had been in the people's possession for many generations going far back in time. The first was a broken stone mortar. This was presumed to belong with the mortars and their distribution described in Chapter 4 *Tracking New Guinea's now vanished archaic civilisation*.



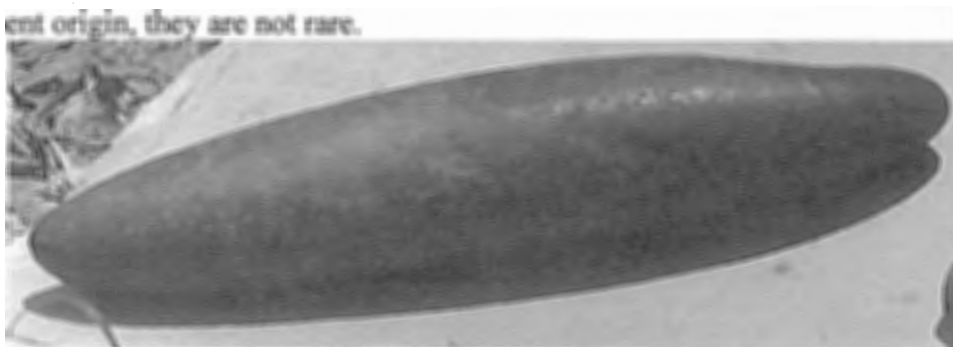
The second was a very narrow ground stone blade, which might be a knife.



The third was a pair of bone tools – perhaps spoons?



The fourth was a cigar shaped stone tool used, when fitted into a stone adze handle, for felling sago palms by bruising the base of the palm until it falls. While these are known to be of ancient origin, they are not rare.



Items of Tribal art compared with Items ethnographic interest.

Tribal art masterpieces are such as the items in the Jolika collection, as shown in chapter 7 *Science's illumination of Sepik pre-history*.

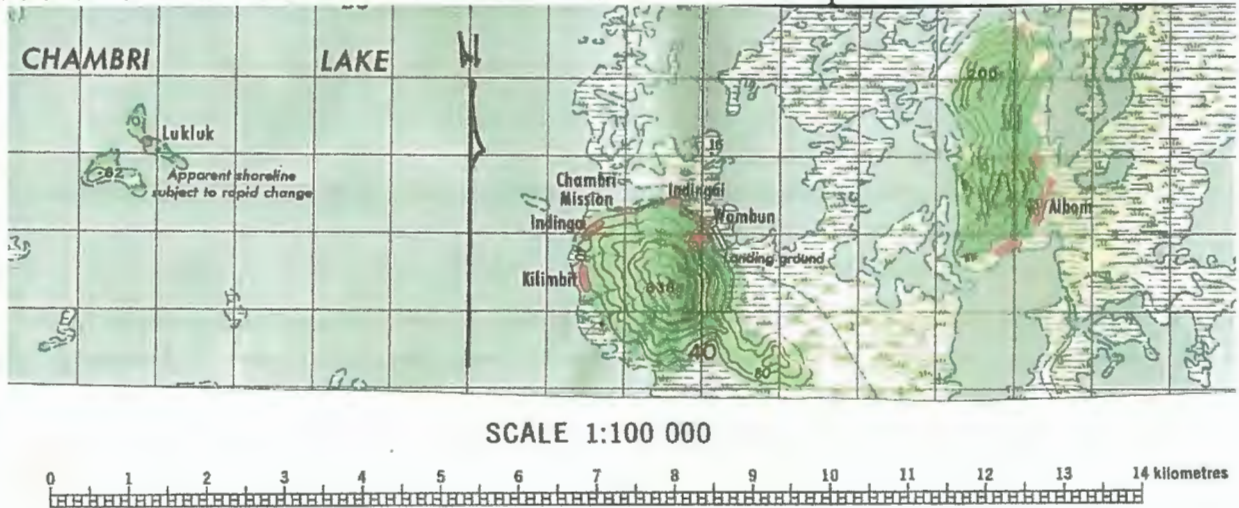
An object, requires several qualifications to be recognised as tribal art.

1. They must be genuine, and highly valued by village community from whence they came.
2. They are usually of some antiquity.
3. Above all, they must show artistic merit.
4. Ideally the purpose for which the object was traditionally used and all known history of the object should be documented.
 - a. Amazingly, provenance also includes, in which individual's collection the item had been and any information of prices paid
5. Items must have sound provenance, which reliable documents points 1-4 above.

Items of ethnographic interest, on the other hand, benefit from all of the above, but need not display artistic merit. Such items are usually found in museum and field research collections. Typical uses of ethnographic items are to show how a people live or lived, or to help identify usage patterns over a present of ancient landscape.

Sepik 1 Chapter 30 Origins and early history of the Chambri lakes pottery, stone adze blades, stone monoliths and mosquito basket industries

Two tall islands, visible for miles around, stand out of vast wetlands of the Chambri Lakes region. They are Aibom, the home of the Sepik's most famous potters, and nearby Chambri Island the home of the stone adze blade Industry that supplied the Middle Sepik with adze blades as well as the stone monoliths which are found in association with Middle Sepik haus tambarans.



At the time of the arrival of the Austronesians in the Sepik embayment or inland sea thousand years ago, these mountainous Islands, would presumably have drawn the attention of the visiting navigators like a magnet. It would be interesting to know if archaeology will ever provide proof that the Austronesian's who first introduced pottery into PNG can be directly linked with today's potters of Aibom or were involved in stone adze manufacture and trading at Chambri.

A history of Aibom and its potters.

On Aibom Island there are several stone monuments of apparent great antiquity, which while they are claimed by various currently resident clans – see below, were carved and erected by unknown people back in antiquity. While the acquisition, transportation and erection of monoliths, acquired mainly from Chambri Island was common practice, the monoliths at Aibom differ from these in two ways. Those at Aibom are smoothly rounded stones and some of them have faces and other carvings on them. The monoliths that originated at Chambri, by contrast, are unshaped and jaggedly angular. **Chambri Monoliths**¹ **Aibom Monoliths**²

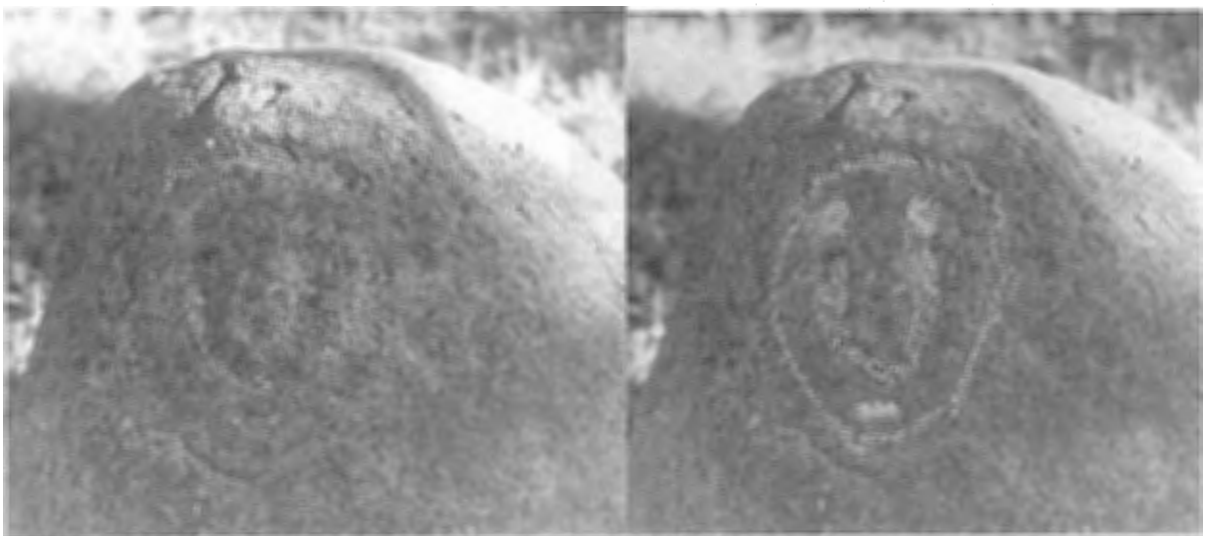


Aibom monolith below left: The name of the monolith is Kwonjigumban and it is located on the Pondambit haus tambaran site at Aibom. The inscriptions are believed to represent a man who struggled during his skin cutting ceremony and turned to stone as a result. The writer applied chalk outlines to the designs as they were partially obscured by lichens and moss.³

Aibom monolith below right: Another view of Kwonjigumban, which is the property of Aibom's Kwonji and Naua clans



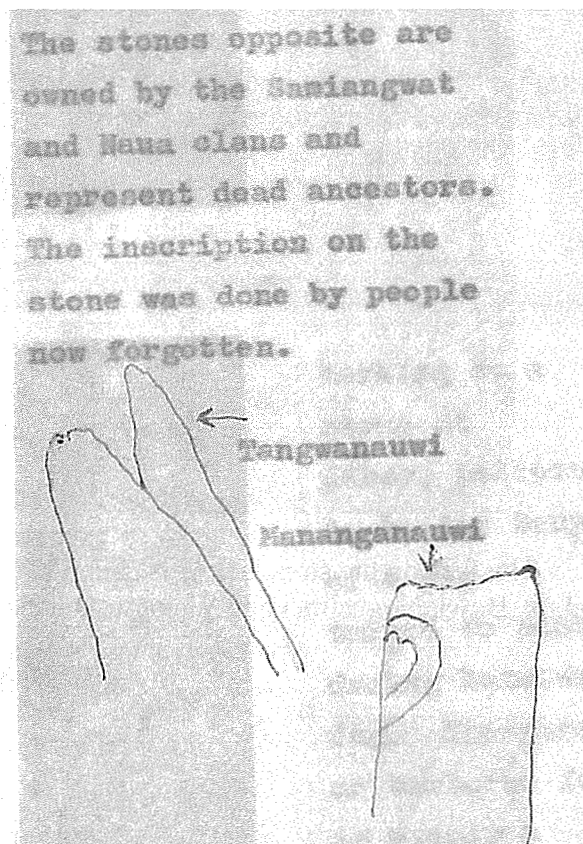
The face on the stone below is called Koronbelabun. It is the joint property of the Nambuk, Bowi, Nogusimei and Weingwanda clans of Aibom⁴



Below - the face on the stone is known as Angungwinjoa. It is the property of the Weingwanda clan and is located at the south end of Aibom village.⁵



More ancestral stones at Aibom⁶



Aibom pre-history and change.

I found that Gisela Schuster's *Aibom Genealogy as History*⁷ assembles the facts of Aibom prehistory in more depth and with more clarity than any other account that I have read. My own Aibom informants also offer some key observations which I shall add after the Aibom story, below, as told by Gisela Schuster:

Aibom history consists of two layers: An older layer – non-Iatmul and younger Iatmul one. The Iatmulisation of Aibom took place some generations ago. It was not a single event.

It was a continuous process of intermarrying, mainly of Aibom men with Iatmul women – perhaps among other wives. The Aibom descendants stated - “we speak the language of our mothers”. Most Iatmul women married into Aibom came from the nearest Iatmul village Malingai, which itself originated from the mother village Parembei

People say that the pre-Iatmul language was similar to that of Chambri, but that their original language died out in Aibom quite a long time ago and now they no longer understand the Chambri language.

Mensuat Village informants [of Peliugwi Island] say the earlier Aibom was located on a mountain called Dougual to the west of Mensuat near Mari and Changriman. The earlier Aibom was called Dougual. There was clay there from which the earlier Aibom made pottery. Its language was said to be the old Mensuat one, not Chambri. This earlier Aibom had no canoes. This corresponds very precisely with Suapmeri’s claim that they had given the first canoes to Aibom and shows the difference between the river going Iatmul and the walking mountain peoples quite clearly. After conflict with Mali [Mari], this early Aibom is said to have abandoned the area in favour of Aibom Island

Such southern relations point to the mountains around Lake Kuvanmas, [some 40 kilometres south-south-east of Aibom] which are collectively called Kumbranggau and are, in Aibom mythology considered to be the places or origin and of various actions of various important personalities at the beginning of time; Kumbranggau represents the southern of two world hemispheres resulting from the break-through of the Sepik in the primeval past. The northern one, Ampiangai, consists mainly of the Sawos region, but also the whole country between the north bank of the Sepik River and the north coast and culminates, symmetrically in the Maprik hills...

These old southern and southeastern connections of Aibom seem to be an important key to Aibom history. There is also a suggestion that Masendenai [42 kilometres east of Aibom] had links to Aibom’s ancient past. This southern orientation is also apparent in the location of Aibom’s wild sago swamps. These obviously belong to different time levels, but are not arranged in our knowledge in a coherent sequence. Seen together, they provide a contrasting sphere to the Iatmul style of modern Aibom life, imported from the north.

Kumbranggau is not part of the old Aibom repertoire but is Iatmul in origin. But in spite of that, pointing to the Kumbranggau mountains in Aibom is pointing to the pre-Iatmul southern past orientation of the village – for instance as the region from which Yuman Wusmange, the founding goddess of Aibom pottery was said to have originated. Yuman Wusmange, the goddess of Aibom pottery, is unknown in Iatmul mythology and therefore probably a leading figure in the old Aibom religion.

Aibom on the hill. The Aibom hill represents the transformed body of the above mention goddess, who is herself split into two female beings and is present in each piece of Aibom pottery, as the clay comes from the Aibom hill.

There is a history of consecutive settlements on Aibom Island. The first was Wereman – located on the top of the Island at the headwaters of the Kumbrameli creek. Wereman is also the name of a men’s house, which is said to have been the very first men’s house to exist. It was not built by man, but appeared together with the earth.... Wereman, in the Aibom view, marks the very beginning of history on the hill... Wereman men’s house on the Aibom hill was not of the Aibom people. The people of Aibom wonder what kind of people – or beings – actually sat on the benches in the primeval men’s house. Also see Chapter 28. Wereman legends confirm the Wereman ancient presence on Aibom Island

The other places on the hill pose no conceptual problems either for Aibom or for us. As pot sherds of various types in the Suinggei-Awanggei region as well as at the Kumbuimalinggei indicate, Aibom had been a pottery place for a number of generations. Kumbuimalinggei was probably the place where the Iatmulisation took place. The apparent order of settlements on Aibom Wereman, were Nongruimbit, Suinggei, Awanggei, Kumbuimalinggei, Awanggei No 2, Aibom 1972/73.

ooo000ooo

The Aibom picture of history is given as a sequence of localities and events...the difference between earlier and later. Whereas we may reconstruct the Kumbuimalinggei events [Iatmulisation] with a certain probability and satisfy, our European style picture of this part of Iatmul history estimates that the Kumbuimalinggei settlement period probably lasted from 1850 to 1900. The Aibom reasoning about the past concerning something that appears to have happened not too long ago and was, as such nothing very unusual, but in Aibom logic, it needs to have a prefiguration or, a foundation in, and a relationship with an event of the same type on a higher – and, therefore former, plane. The two events are seen as the same by the habitual combination of the two events...the earlier event was probably a historic event in its own right. In this way, the Aibom conceptualisation of history tends to blur the European need for precise time lines.⁸

ooo000ooo

Some key amplification and/or second opinions on the above by the writer's Aibom informants.

Peliaugwi an ancestral place. Our Aibom ancestors originated at Peliaugwi [a Chambri Lakes island 12 kilometres south-south-west of Aibom]. Peliaugwi is an Island, but. Also, it is not an Island, it is a woman we left there. The Island surrounds a crater¹ [Thus, presumably, making it female] Our haus boi [haus tambaran] we left there is still there and there are still men in it. The haus boi is called Maindandu.

Now we have long left Peliaugwi and another line of men have gone to live there... We cannot go back there and get our stories. We could if we were a pure line and claim our ancestral home. But we came here and met and mixed with Parembei and Malingai and we took [adopted] their language and now we are changed from what we were... We look towards Peliaugwi from our distance. It is part of our meat that we left there, our spirits and ancestors are there. They are up on top of the mountain in the crater lake.⁹

About Aibom, Chambri and Iatmul languages It is true that Aibom and Chambri ancestors broke apart over a dispute about food. The spirit called Kambarameri was what they were cross about and some of the ancestors went to live at Chambri... Yambiyur was the leader of the family that went to Parembei and Malingai... and gained knowledge of the Parembei language [Iatmul]... The family of Yambiyur [later] started to come down from Malingai and married into our line at Aibom and had families. They were here to watch and see which way the fighting was coming [This suggests they were a lookout post for Parembei/Malinai]. The Nyaulas would come to get stone axe blades and Parembei/ Malingai would wait for them and fight on the other side of Aibom Island. Our [Aibom's] old language Aunumbuk is still spoken by the Aiboms who live at Wombun [One of the three Chambri villages]. We call the Chambri language Kurunumbuk... We speak the Parembei language [Iatmul] here.¹⁰

¹ The writer climbed high on Peliaugwi Island to the site of a former haus tambaran, and saw no sign of a crater lake, but then I was not looking for one. Had I known of its rumoured existence I would have asked to be taken there.

Before, Aibom also spoke the same language as us [Chambri]. [That was] before they married women from Parembai and Malingai. The Murik lakes people also speak a language similar to ours. We use the same words for some things.¹¹

Trade and marriage gifts When a girl marries her father wants her to have an Aibom stove and saucepans and many men tried to reach Aibom, to get such marriage gifts. Those who succeeded were regarded as strong and brave men in their village. [But] many were killed on their way here. Once they arrived here they were safe, we did not fight them... Once the man who came to trade had received his saucepans and was going home, if he was confronted by aggressors, he would hold a saucepan on high for his would-be attackers to see and the fight would be over. Koulimanga's face on the pottery forbids fighting ...and showing a saucepan will deter an attack.¹²

Aibom fights with Parembai the fight that brought Parembai influence to Aibom occurred some seven generations ago [Seven generations ago as of 1973] in the time of Yambiyur and Abran. The Parembais were not real enemies of ours – they came to kill us, certainly, but they did not take our heads, which is the real enemy fighting. We fought with pitpit or bamboo before we knew about proper spears. Sometimes we fought with our ally Suapmeri against Parembai and Malingai. The fighting here between us was training...for the real fight against Nyaula¹³. [The Nyaula are the most westerly and upstream of the three Iatmul dialects]

Aibom learned to fight and take heads We did not fight, so Parembai and Malingai came here to teach us to fight. The Aiboms [also] went to Parembai and Malingai to learn how to fight and take heads. We did not take our canoes and go out seeking enemies, that was against our law, but we could go out and help others in their fights.¹⁴

ooo000ooo

About Aibom pottery itself. The leading text is *the traditional pottery of Papua New Guinea* by Margaret Tukson and Patricia May¹⁵ Their text tells us: *Ceramic objects produced at Aibom include sago storage jars, cooking pots, gable ridge ornaments, hearths, sago frying dishes, serving bowls, eating dishes.*



Sago storage Jar

Large Saucepan – in use

A Hearth that allowed cooking in-doors

There are five different faces representing humans, animals and spirits; a pig's face with eyes and protruding snout, a human face, a bush spirit face with a prominent nose, a slightly protruding mouth, a bow shaped arch protruding from the forehead to the chin and decorated with strips applied in a scalloped design, a bird's head (probably that of an eagle), with a sharply protruding beak, and a mark or abstraction of a human skull.

The women make the vessels and apply decorations, but men specialize in forming and decorating the faces and figures on the ridge gables. Almost all the adult women from the age of 15 years know how to make pots and here is no particular specialisations in the types of vessels made. All women can produce all kinds. Pottery is made mainly during the wet season.

Clay deposits are numerous on the slopes of the hill behind Aibom village. Different types of clay come from many pits and most women mix two types and a few add a third type.

The decorations and modelled forms of faces used on the ceramics are representative of cultural deities. Basically, there are two deities – a male figure Mwintumbangge and a female – Kolimangge, both of whom are depicted as animals and bush spirits. There are many versions of the myth of the female deity called variously Kolimangge, Yuman, Wusmangge, Ntshambeyaintshe, Wiremangge and Mempintshaua. In one version Kilimangge created pottery for the tribe and taught the women to pot. Kolimangge subsequently transformed herself into earth and clay is thus called Kolimangge.

In another story Kolimangge made pits which were her children, created by her hands without a father. She was raped and disappeared. The ancestors tried to make a mask of her face, but they were unsuccessful until they killed an enemy, cut off his head, boiled it, over-modelled it with clay and painted it. Thus, it became a “tumbuan’s” head². At one stage Yuman killed a man and used his thigh bone and upper arm bone to make music.

A different Kolimangge story tells how the clay, the fuel and the sago sealing solution all came to her when she called them. On her command the fuel prepared itself for firing, the pots settled themselves on the fuel and later took themselves to market and stood in a row...

The history of the Aibom potters and Chambri stone adze makers, is continued in Sepik 2 Chapter 8 *Differing impacts of contact with the outside world on the stone adze and pottery industries of Chambri Lakes.*

A history of Chambri and its stone adze makers.

Probably the most recognized academic publication of the Chambri people is Deborah Gewertz’ *Sepik River Societies*. Incredibly, neither anthropologists Margaret Mead, nor Reo Fortune mention stone adzes in their field notes¹⁶. Concerning the Chambri stone adze industry Professor Gewertz wrote the following.

The Chambri operated six quarries. Each was thought to be inhabited by a particular ancestor, and each was supervised by one of that ancestor’s descendants. Rights to the quarries were inherited patrilineally. When a new supply of stone was to be gathered, those concerned sacrificed a pig and some chickens to the ancestor, thereby warning him that he would be visited on the following day. They then climbed Chambri mountain, lit a fire, and spent that night close to the quarry. At day break they gathered loose pieces of stone, which had separated from the main boulder of “ancestor’s house”. If no chunks had fallen, they chipped away at the boulder until they had collected enough and then returned down the mountain to their spirit houses to prepare the stone.

The processing involved shaping and polishing the stone with a harder variety of rock found not at the quarry, but close to the streams that run down from the mountain. Often

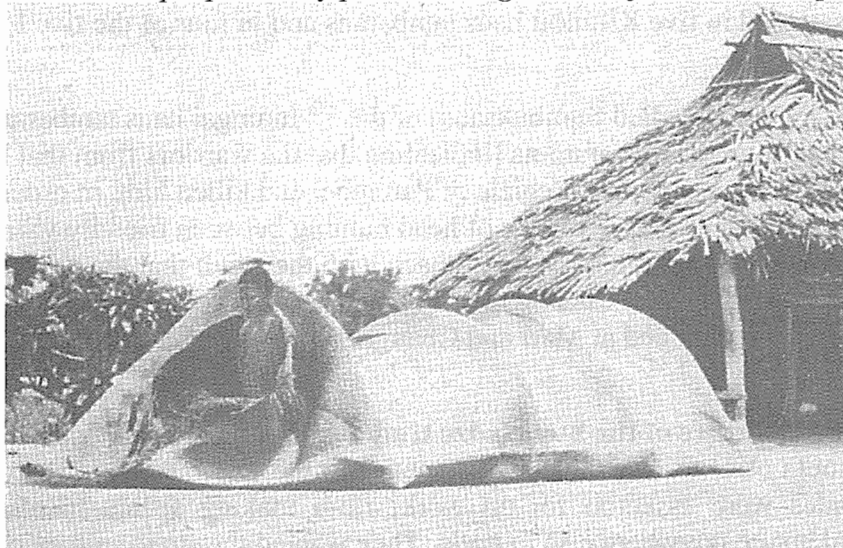
² Tumbuan is a word commonly used in Pidgin, yet it escaped definition in every Pidgin language dictionaries I have seen. The meaning of Tumbuan according to the writer’s memory is ceremonial dance figure featuring a skull or mask.

those who had inherited access to the quarry were without a source of this harder stone, and they acquired it in exchange for the quarried variety.

The Chambri acted as a central distribution agency; their “stone-iron” network extended through primary, secondary and tertiary contacts and encompassed villages throughout the northern and southern drainage systems. Their stone adzes were made in four sizes. The largest was for felling trees, the second largest for building canoes and houses, the third for sago processing and the fourth for carving sacred wooden objects. Purchasers also acquired polishing stones, with which they re-sharpened the adze blades...

Each individual man made “iron stone” transactions on his own behalf. He met his obligations to the quarry custodian by furnishing food at the ceremonies that preceded the gathering and related exchanges.¹⁷

Chambri was also a manufactured and traded in family sized mosquito proof sleeping baskets. These were built on a cane frame and covered with tightly woven matting.¹⁸ Deborah Gewertz added: These were *ten to fifteen feet long -called arank...these were made by Chambri women and used throughout the Middle Sepik. Before the Europeans introduced cotton and nylon mosquito nets, there were the people’s only protection against the ferocious mosquitoes.¹⁹*



Some key amplification and/or second opinions on the above by the writer’s Chambri informants.

A myth of Sungwimeï the first man to made Chambri adzes. The first man to make stone adzes used a pig called Eimasui as his pillow. The man who was called Sungwimeï was a man of knowledge. [At that time] the ground was bare, but soon a few trees, some grass and vines grew. Sungwimeï said to the pig. “We will make a house and one for you as well. It would not be right if our people did not have houses...” The pig was not really a pig, but a man who could shed his pig’s skin. They made family houses and then they made the first haus tambaran. These were the first houses ever built.²⁰

...The ancestor Abangeï made the first adze, which was called Kanauï and he made it for Kanauimeri. The other he made was for Lubundimi. The adze itself was called Wanauï. The people saw these two adzes and so they came to Chambri seeking adzes in trade. Lubundimi was from Kamindabit and Kanauimeri was from Nyaurengai. These two showed the [the stone blades to] other places and so they came to get adzes for their everyday work.²¹

Chambri history Initially, Chambri people occupied a single central village on the present site of Indingai village. The first split was when Wolindimi went and established Wolindimigeï, also

known as Wombun, after a dispute with his Indingai brother over the theft of some bananas. Later Saun left Indingai and established Saungei, which is also known as Kilimbit. This split was over population pressure at the central village. The name Indingai was then used to refer to the original village – the word literally means ‘Middle place.’

Writer’s note. At this time, it is assumed that the first steel axes reached the Middle Sepik, probably by traditional trade routes and people, who until that time had been prevented from fighting the Chambri people because of their essential commodity supplier status, now felt free to do so. It is also important to note that whereas Aibom were taken under the wing, so to speak, of Parembei/Malingai and were shown how to fight, as Iatmul-speaking Aibom was regarded as important.

Chambri on the other hand, needed to learn to fight as they defended themselves against Manabi. Any limited skills they learned proved to be insufficient when a war footing developed with Parembei.

War with the Manabi people of Timbunmeri Island was underway and in the dry season Manabi raiders crossed the dry lake bed in preparation for a dawn attack on Kilimbit. Their presence was detected and Kilimbit sent word to four of Indingai’s haus tambarans. Kilimbit fought the Manabi, while Indingai warriors crossed the lake bed to Manabi from the rear, defeating them. Victory garamuts sounded in five Kilimbit haus tambarans and in four of the five Indingai haus tambarans.

A half-caste Parembei called Sumbuksaun, of the 5th Indingai haus tambaran heard that only his haus tambaran had sounded no garamuts [indicating that the warriors from that haus tambaran had taken no heads]. Sumbuksaun met Yebiela of Parembei and killed him, in order that his haus tambaran also had a head to display. This act of head hunting between friendly villages resulted in a payback from Parembei, which, in turn was paid back with the result that the paybacks escalated into open warfare, which Parembei won causing the three Chambri village communities to flee into exile in the Korosameri River region and at Mari and Changriman in the southern region of the Chambri Lake.²²

The extent and nature of the Stone adze trade. All the men of the Sepik from Kabriman [30 kilometres to the south east] to Ambunti [40 kilometres to the west], came here to obtain stone adze blades...These blades were essential for all work; from making spears to mosquito baskets to gardens...²³ We did not go anywhere else to trade. They wanted the stone so they came to us

The manufacture process of blades: We [our ancestors] took the stone from all around the place, burned it with fire to make it break, then they chipped it into shape, then ground it with quartz [sand] until it was a tomahawk. Up on the mountain was the main place where they made the adzes.

Writer’s note: In the 1980s the elders of Wombun took me up a creek on the hill behind Wombun and showed me many “dishes”, most in large immovable rocks in the stream, but some were portable.

I was able to pick up a dozen stone adze blanks, some partly ground, from around these “dishes”. These were all of a uniform size – averaging about eight by five centimeters. The elders who took me there said the grinding method was to put water and quartz sand in a “dish” and grind the blade in the water with the quartz abrasive. Whereas Professor Gewertz said the grinding was done on a harder rock, to my untrained eye the adze blanks and the ‘dishes’ were of the same material – the “harder” material would have been the abrasive quartz sand.

I examined only one of the many creeks that flow down the face of Chambri Island, and I saw many “dishes”. I would not be surprised therefore, if a full census of dishes on all Chambri creeks was taken, that evidence of a very large ancient industry would be revealed.



Three “Dishes” in the creek behind Wombun village.²⁴

End of Writer’s note.

Overview discussion of pre-contact Chambri and Aibom trade. The Aibom women made pottery for trade and we made adzes. It was just one pig [referring to trade as a pig – symbol of feasting and celebration] it slept here, then it would go and sleep at Aibom.²⁵ [i.e. the periods of trade alternated between Chambri and Aibom.]

Production and sale of monoliths. Our ancestors carried them out from the bush and put them close to the water and the purchasers came and purchased them took them away on rafts. Yamuk and Parembei used to come and buy them in the time before fighting. After they got the stones, our native wars started. It was not long ago.²⁶

Concluding Comments:

The image of the Aibom and Chambri communities as the manufacturers and traders in essential commodities – pottery, stone adze blades and mosquito proof family sleeping baskets, must point to something unique in their shared ancient history and again the trading Austronesian navigators come to mind. Nowhere else in the Sepik, or within PNG for that matter, within very close proximity of each other, have I seen three separate essential industries operating.

End Notes Chapter 30

¹ Photo – Album Kiap Period 1961-78 Vol 7 of 8

² L.Bragge – Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix ‘T’ Page 75

³ L.Bragge – Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix ‘T’ Page 74

⁴ L.Bragge – Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix ‘T’ Page 78

⁵ L.Bragge – Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix ‘T’ Page 78

⁶ L.Bragge – Ambunti Patrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix ‘T’ Page 78

⁷ Gisela Schuster – Aibom Genealogy as History Pages 20-22 Sepik Heritage 1990 – Wenner Gren Foundation, Caroline Academic press. North Carolina.

⁸ Gisela Schuster 1990 P19

⁹ Councillor Bowi and others of Aibom – Bragge reference volume 19 page 321

¹⁰ Councillor Bowi and others of Aibom – Bragge reference volume 19 page 315

¹¹ The Councillor of Wombun, Chambri Island and Wombun elders. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 323

¹² Councillor Bowi and others of Aibom – Bragge reference volume 19 page 315

¹³ Councillor Bowi and others of Aibom – Bragge reference volume 19 page 317

¹⁴ Councillor Bowi and others of Aibom – Bragge reference volume 19 page 315

¹⁵ Notes taken from **The Traditional pottery of Papua New Guinea – Patricia May and Margaret Townsend,** Bay Books Kensington NSW 1992.

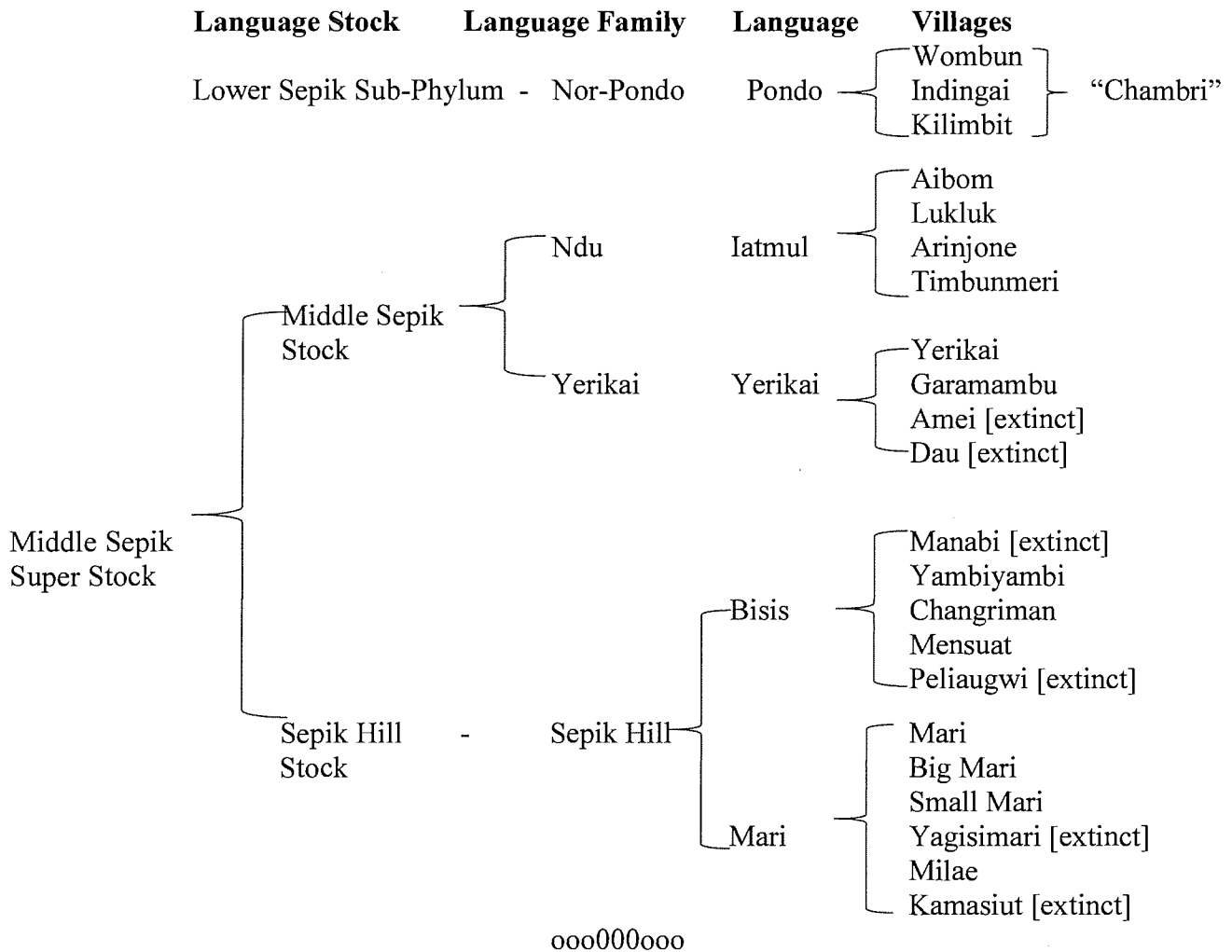
¹⁶ Deborah B Gewertz *Sepik River Societies.* Yale University Press 1983 P 238

¹⁷ Gewerts 1983 Pages 38-40

-
- ¹⁸ G.W.L.Townsend – District Officer. National Library of Australia Registered NomAUS68-22080 1968 after Page 96
- ¹⁹ Gewerts 1983 Pages 37
- ²⁰ The Councillor of Wombun, Chambri Island and Wombun elders. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 322
- ²¹ Councillor Mebiangen of Wombun. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 322
- ²² L.W.Bragge – Ambunti OPatrol Report No 5/1973-4 Appendix N page 46
- ²³ Mingin, an elder of Wombun, Chambri Island and Wombun elders. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 322
- ²⁴ Photos from Photo album Tourism Operations 1985-89
- ²⁵ The Councillor of Wombun, Chambri Island and Wombun elders. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 322
- ²⁶ The Councillor of Wombun, Chambri Island and Wombun elders. Bragge Sepik Research notes Vol 19 Page 324

Sepik 1 Chapter 31 – Pre-history of Chambri Lakes Communities

This Chapter follows on from Chapter 30 *The origins of early history of Chambri Lakes pottery, stone adze blades, stone monoliths and mosquito basket trade*. The current chapter aims to document what is known of the pre-history of the eleven villages listed under Lower Sepik Sub Phylum and Middle Sepik Stock. Chapter 31 will document what is known of the Sepik Hill Language Stock communities as it applies to the Chambri region..



The Chambri villages Wombun, Indingai and Kilimbit.

Writer’s note. Chapter 26 describes the Iatmul breaking away from Sawos, to settle the banks of the Sepik river, which, at that time were newly emerged from the receding inland sea. That probably occurred some 2,000 years ago.¹ And some time later the Muriks moved from the Moim lakes, downstream of the Yuat Sepik junction, to the Murik Lakes.²

Given that the Murik and Chambri communities both speak Nor-Pondo languages, it seems possible that just as the Muriks migrated downstream, Chambri ancestors who may also have been resident at the Moim Lakes, migrated upstream to Chambri Island.

Chambri story of origin – unnamed Chambri informant.

We have not received a clear story of origin...I think we must have come from somewhere else to come here, because plenty of places say they originated here and moved away. Pangeimbit, [a Sawos speaking community in the Angoram district] were from where the Chambri mission station is now. Masendenai [A Karawari speaking community in the Angoram district] was the last place to

migrate from here. Mundomundo [Angoram language group – Lower Sepik] say they came from Chambri. So, I think we must have arrived here after all these people left. We have no language similarities with the people upstream on the Sepik...our language is similar to downstream groups.³

ooo000ooo

Indingai village.

Indingai was the first Chambri village. The second was Wombun, which was started by Wolindini. He started it like a garden, after he had burned it off, he built a men's house called Wombun and from there, the village developed...Then Saun left Indingai and started Kilimbit. The hidden name of Kilimbit is Saungei and the hidden name of Wombun is Wolindimigei.⁴

The clans Yundunump and Weremunump were the first two families at Indingai.⁵

Writer's note. Although I interviewed many elders from the three Chambri villages, very little information was recorded for the vast period between the stories of origin and the first contact with the outside world. I put that down to the fact that the Chambri villages and Aibom were purveyors of essential commodities – stone blades and pottery, and as such, they were held immune to outside aggression. No one wanted to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs, so to speak.

Then, after first contact, as indicated in Sepik 2 Chapter 8 Aibom pottery remained in strong demand and Aibom continued to enjoy its special status in the middle Sepik. However, the arrival of steel axes immediately made stone blades redundant and the Chambri communities faced a violent future. **So what was the direct reason for Chambri's former traders, formerly a protected species now becoming a hunted species of the Parembai Iatmul?** Wamba of Indingai explains:

Wamba of Indingai: *My ancestor came from Parembai, his name was Sumbuksaun of the Weingwanjap clan. When Chambri fought and annihilated the Manabi, Sumbuksaun had been at Parembai and slept there. As he was returning to Indingai he heard the garamuts celebrating the Chambri victory. But the garamuts of Sumbuksaun's haus tambaran were silent. Sumbuksaun realised that the people of his haus tambaran had not gone to the fight and that they had killed no-one. [He felt the need to remedy that]*

As it happened, Yebiela and his wife of Parembai had been visiting Chambri and were now returning home. And they met at Kububauwi. Sumbuksaun said to Yebiela "Give me fire". Then as the canoes came close together Sumbuksaun speared Yebiela. Yebiela's wife tried to get away, but Sumbuksaun said "Do not run away". He cut off Yebiela's head and put the headless body into her canoe to take back to Parembai.

She called out when she arrived "Men of Parembai, come and see! Sumbuksaun has done something very bad, and he is a Parembai!" She showed them the body. They took it and buried it in the floor of the Pai'ambit haus tambaran... [in due course] they took their spears and came in their canoes to Chambri. Chambri women were in their canoes out on the lake tending fish traps. The Parembais surrounded a woman called Kiganmank, killed her and cut off her head. This was payback for Yebiela.

The Indingai men went to fight Parembai. They met a man and a woman in a canoe and killed them. The Chambris made a singsing as they paddled home. The Parembais and Malingis saw the headless bodies and declared "Chambri is no good. We will fight now!" Unlimited fighting continued between Chambri and Parembai until the Australian administration arrived.

The Parembais burnt our haus tambaran and stole our garamuts. They dug out the long stone monoliths and took them on rafts back to Parembai... We went to the Korosameri river to build up our population in peace for a while, as we were facing extinction if we stayed at Chambri. While living at the Korosameri, people would come back to the village to collect mangos and coconut, and return to the Korosameri. Indingai and Kilimbit went [fled] to Changriman. ⁶

Wamba was great-great-great-grand son of Sumbuksaun as shown below.

Sumbuksaun – Webukumban – Agandai – Ambagamei – { Yeginmeri – Wamba [informant]
 Augutmeri ⁷

ooo000ooo

Wombun village.

Chambri is the name of the Island, but its real name is Yambunogwi. We all lived originally at Indingai. Wolindimi established this place [Wombun]. The split involved two brothers Yambukai and Wolindimi arguing over bananas. Wolindimi ate some ripe bananas Yambukai had left in a garamut. Yambukai saw some of the bananas were missing and the brothers fought. Big brother Wolindimi was not angry, he was ashamed...he left his brother and came to live here. That was how Wombun started. This was in the distant past and we do not remember our ancestors back that far.⁸

Another story of Wombun origins

The junction of the Korosameri and Salumei Rivers was the first place of our ancestors. The ancestors had their first fight there on the hill behind where the mission station is now. They left there and settled at Chambri. Then they returned to the Korosameri River. There was another fight and they went to Timbunmeri Island, and from there back to the Korosameri River.

I was born at the camp on the Korosameri River. I was a baby when we came here [to Wombun] ... When we arrived back at Chambri Island Indingai and Kilimbit had already re-settled here. ⁹ [after the fighting with Parembai.]

ooo000ooo

Kilimbit village.

Kilimbit was established due to population pressure at Indingai. Wombun had already broke away from Indingai. Saun and Parambanu were the two ancestors who established Kilimbit. The big man Yimbugei of the Wereman haus tambaran, remained at Indingai.

Saun – Yemerigo – Majangowi – Nourdi – Abei [aged 50 in 1973] – Tauembanagwi.¹⁰

Kilimbit withdrawal due to the Parembai raids.

The first time we withdrew from Chambri we went to Timbunmeri Island. This was when I was a small child... We [Kilimbis] lived down on the flat at Sibinai... The Chambris called out for Garamambu to come and positioned them on top of the mountain at Simandangwan.¹

Koromogi and the Garamambus came down from Simandangwan and killed Tibe and a woman called Kurunkurei, both of Indingai. In response, our fathers went targets to Mensuat and Chambri. They came and finished the Garamambu camp. Koromogi escaped.

The same night we fought the Gramambus we went to Changriman to avoid a probable reprisal raid from the main Garamambu village. Then the Changriman people brought us back and

¹ The writer does not believe the Chambris invited Garamambu to Timbunmeri. The writer believes Garamambu were there before the Kilimbis. The reason behind this Chambri claim was presumably to position Chambri ahead of Garamambu in relation to the Timbunmeri land dispute which was before the Lands Titles Commission at that time

re-settled us on Chambri Island. Then Parembei came back with Korogo allies and plenty of people were killed at Indingai; men, women and children men including the big man Kraki. Our fathers took us Kilimbits and Indingais to Mensuat.

[But] the Mensuats killed Yambundum, Meibia, Amin, a mother and a child over a dispute resulting from hungry Indingai refugees eating a dog belonging to Mensuat... So, after a short stay at Mensuat, when the house my father was building was just a frame with no roof, my father led the Chambris away from Mensuat to Kamambo in the Changriman area where they made a camp on three small hills, where the Changriman village is today [1973]. At that time Changriman lived on a mountain behind the present site.¹¹

ooo000ooo

The Iatmul involvement in Chambri Lakes settlement patterns.

Of the three Iatmul dialects, ancestors of the Parembei dialect took control of the Aibom community over the decades prior to first contact with the outside world, through Parembei and Malingai women marrying into Aibom. This resulted in a passive loss of the Aibom language and the adoption of the Iatmul language and Parembei alliances. See Chapter 30.

The Nyaula settlement of Lukluk, Arinjone and Timbunmeri Islands in the first half of the 20th century by Nyauengai, Japanaut and Kandingai people respectively, of the Nyaula dialect of Iatmul is documented in Sepik 4 Chapter 8. *The Iatmul tribal colonisation of the Chambri Lakes*.

Aibom. See Sepik 1 Chapter 30.

Notes on Aibom's original language. Aibom and Chambri ancestors broke apart over a dispute concerning food. The spirit called Kambarameri was what they were angry about and some of the ancestors went to live at Chambri...Aunumbuk was our [Aibom] language, and the Chambri language was called Kurunumbuk.¹²

The Chambri opinion on original languages. Just our three places speak our language. Aibom spoke the same language before they married women from Parembei and Malingai.¹³

Writer's note. The Chambri opinion opens up the possibility that the original Aibom language was of the Nor-Pondo language family. If this was so, it would add a further dimension to the unique status of the Aibom and Chambri communities, on adjacent Islands controlling the all-important middle Sepik pottery and stone adze trade.

Writer's note 2 – My all-too-brief investigation of the stone adze blade industry of Chambri island, revealed many stone “dishes”, as photographed in the previous chapter. These must have been created over many centuries, if not millennia. This leads to the obvious conclusion that the history of stone adze manufacturer goes much further back in time that mere oral histories can tell.

ooo000ooo

Lukluk See Sepik 4 Chapter 8. *The Iatmul colonisation of the Chambri Lakes*

Arinjone See Sepik 4 Chapter 8

Timbunmeri See Sepik 4 Chapter 8

ooo000ooo

Yerikai

When the ground was made, there were no trees or other things. Yumol, our ancestor appeared, and he walked carefully because some of the land was not yet firm. When the land became firm, he hunted for meat. He made a hide near the pandanus palm so he could hunt bandicoots at night. But the bandicoots were not really bandicoots, they were wild yams that

came from the bush and walked around just like bandicoots. He killed them, but when he discovered they were not bandicoots, he threw them away.

Two wild pigs, called Ulban and Kirimbank came and Yumol was about to shoot them, when one of the pigs spoke, saying “Do not shoot, we are men...” They told Yumol to follow behind them and they walked throughout the night, revealing to Yumol everything that is in the bush and on earth today. It was nearly dawn and they had a singsing called Muguni. Then the sun came up and it was light and the pigs said “That is your singsing now.”

Yumol said “let me see what you have on your back”. But the pig said “No! that is not for you. That is mine!” It was a shotgun...The pig said “This is for you” and he gave Yumol a bow and arrow.”¹⁴

Writer’s note: A god-spirit in the form of pigs revealed to Yumol the entire Sepik cosmos, and in the process Yumol caught a glimpse of something more – the whitemen’s cargo in the form of a shotgun. The “god-spirit” denied Yumol access to the white man’s cargo.

Cargo cult is now recognised as part of the Sepik traditional religion. No matter what lengths are gone to explain historical origins and manufacturing processes of western goods, the firm belief among Sepik people is in the supernatural production of the cargo, with an ever-present element denial of access to the cargo that the people believe to be rightfully theirs.

Yumol had a big brother called Yuaimeri...The two brothers went to live where Garamambu is today. Big brother said to small brother “You stay” and he came to see some land near by and he came to Yerikai.¹⁵

Writer’s note: Although Dr Laycock’s classification named this language family “Yerikai” the, senior village of the language group is recognised by the speakers of the language, as being Garamambu.

The tambaran Mongoromeri.

A woman called Bribaraiwent to the water, fishing. A stick with two faces on it went into her net. It swam like a catfish. She saw it was different from anything she had seen before. It made a noise like “gidagin, gidagin, gidagin” in her net. She took it to her brother, still in the net “Here is a fish for you” she said “Cook it and eat it. You are a man, you have thoughts.”

He hid Mongoromeri in the bush away from women, and later took it to the haus tambaran and showed it to the men...They copied the markings and adopted Mongoromeri as their god [or tambaran]. Mongoromeri communicated its messages, and the customs and rituals it required in the form of people’s dreams. They made a haus tambaran and garamuts. After that they took the wife of the tambaran, a bamboo flute called Nambunes, and put it with the tambaran.¹⁶

ooo000ooo

The Mogutei people of Dau.

People were living happily in two villages, a place called Dau where the Mogutei people lives and a place Narump we call Amei. They had a dispute and fought over women. An Amei man called Gar wanted to marry a Dau woman, but she said “I do not want the man called Gaidabi Gaidabi. He is not good and I do not like him! I want to marry a man from my own place.”

Gar was troubled and he came home in the wind and rain, thinking to himself "My parents did not give me that name or any name like it." Back at Amei he gathered the people together and they decided that next day, they would go and fight Dau.

In the early morning they came ashore at the market and the Dau people came expecting a market, but the Amei attacked the Dau women, killing most of them; only a few survived to return home. The Amei men went home and shifted their camp to Nawei, the place where Councillor Luman lives now. The Dau found them and routed them. Then the Dau came to the Island Kubiember and settled there, but there was not enough space, so they moved to Mainamp on the Malu Yerikai channel.

They lived happily there until there was some trouble concerning small boys. Two boys had caught a lizard, which they tied to a stick and carried between them. They made out as though they were carrying a crocodile. "We are carrying a crocodile to offer to the haus tambaran" The father was laying on his bed, pretending to be asleep, but he was listening to the boys. Their mother was sitting on the floor.

The boys cooked the lizard and cut it up. "The tambaran of the big place [Garamambu?] can have the head" they said "and the tambaran of the small place [Yerikai?] can have the tail." The tambarans mentioned were Mongoromeri and Pifien respectively. These were the two spirits to which offerings were traditionally made.

The father heard all of this and in the afternoon, he met with the Dau big men, to decide what should be done about the younger generation. They decided to burn them all to death. The elders then aroused the tambaran Mongoromeri, by beating the garamut. They took all the lads into the haus tambaran and burned it down, killing all, the youths except two who escaped to the bush. The two stayed a long time in the bush. Back in the village, the elders started re-building the haus tambaran...

Two girls who had been betrothed to the two youths who escaped...The girls walked together into the bush and finally they met the two young men...At first the girls thought they were devils, but the youths reassured them they were men. They were happy then and they married in the bush.

The youths inquired of the girls as to the progress on re-building the haus tambaran, and so the girls became spies for the youths. When the haus tambaran was completed, the surrounding fence was built, and all the garamuts were back inside, the youths said "Now is our time for revenge." They sharpened their spears, and once that was done, they aroused the power of the tambaran Mongoromeri.

The youths and the two girls then went with torches and black-palm swords. The swords were for the girls to finish off anyone the youths had speared, by cutting their throats. They approached the haus tambaran at night and set fire to both entrances. The men inside were helpless. They were speared or cut as they tried to break out. The men were all killed by the youths and the two girls.

Next day the youths killed all the old women and kept the younger women for themselves. There was only the two youths and all the younger women left.

A Yerikai big man called Wakgamur was out hunting with his dog, when he met one of the youths coming from the other direction. The dogs of both parties began fighting with a pig. The youth speared the pig and butchered it "Half for you and half for me" he said. But the Wakgamur said. "You can have the pig. I have no wife [to help me eat it.] ...

[The youth invited Wakgamur to his place]. Wakgamur was surprised to see there was only two Dau youths and many women. They gave him wives and he replied. "Good, you live well, but let me make a suggestion. The Sepik's seek out and raid small isolated groups like yours. I suggest you come and live with us in security at Yerikai."

At first the youths resisted the idea, but then they agreed. Wakgamur said "I have my own house and enclosure. I have everything, you can come and live with me." He brought them into his haus tambaran, Tumbel, which is still here, and we are now sitting in it. [i.e. the interview was conducted in the Tumbel haus tambaran]

They brought the spirit² with them and brought it into the haus tambaran Tumbel...When they wanted to start their singsings, they waved torches so the Garamambu people would see, and block the ears so the spirit would not harm them.¹⁷

Writer's note:

We can take from this story the fact that a community known as Dau existed in the Yerikai region before contact with the outside world and that Dau no longer exist as a separate entity having amalgamated with Yerikai.

Further possible conclusions can be drawn from analysis of the story. Three things suggest the story or myth relates to the distant past:

1. No attempt was made to construct a time line genealogy, linking people in the myth to living people, suggesting the described events happened beyond the reach of human memory.
2. The fact that the story tends to challenge credibility, suggests that it is probably belongs in what the Sepik elders refer to as the "Sepik Old Testament": i.e. Sepik mythology.
3. Although the Dau seem to be similar to the Amei and living in the same area, there is no mention of the Amei fights with Manambu in the Dau story, suggesting the Dau pre-dated this more recent pre-history.

There is however solid evidence that the Dau actually existed. Their settlement sites were still known to Yerikai informants, who gave the writer dozens of pottery shards from both Amei and Dau sites. These are in the Bragge collection donated to JCU in 2018. Similar shards were collected at Milae's ancestral place Nimbalanta, but the Milae people have no knowledge of who used this pottery. Some shards are of ancient Aibom origin, others are of a different and unidentified style.

ooo000ooo

The Cassowary myth of the creation.

Yerikai mythology also includes that of mankind originating from cassowary feathers.¹⁸ This myth appears in the mythology of many far-flung Sepik communities as recorded in Sepik 1 Part 2 – Chapter 37.

ooo000ooo

Garamambu

Garamambu is divided into two main divisions and a third lesser division. The divisions are, known as "banis"³ No 1 Banis – is the residential ward associated with the Dengaraman haus

² "The name of the spirit they brought with them was not specified.

³ Banis is the pidgin word for fence or enclosure.

tambaran. This banis was said to have been established by the ancestor Kafus of the Cassowary and Sun clans.

No 2 Banis is the ward associated with the Meraman haus tambaran was said to be established by the ancestor Sengabi of the moon and pig clans.

No 3 Banis is an off-shoot of Dengaraman and its haus tambaran is called Womburuman.

Moon/Pig equates to the Iatmul/Sawos moiety Niamei and is called Moiel at Garamambu. Sun/Cassowary equates to Iatmul/Sawos moiety Niaui⁴ - called Sengebi at Garamambu¹⁹.

Garamambu/Chambri relations.

We used to be good friends with Chambri and lived in peace with them. We used to exchange women in marriage. But the time when we were brothers went, times changed and they were not our friends any more. It was a time of a very high flood, which did not affect the Garamambu mountains.

They came in canoes using short paddles [Meaning as men usually stand and use long paddles and are thus more visible, the use of short paddles, traditionally used by women, requires sitting in the canoes and offering a less visible profile] and skirted the foot of Mt Garamambu.

All the Garamambus except Kamandei and Karandi had gone to the bush or gone elsewhere about their business. Once near the village, Chambris called out from their canoes. The two men replied and went down to see them. Some Garamambus heard this from the bush and came running, but by the time they arrived the two men had swum out to the Chambri canoes, which were edging further out into the water, drawing the swimmers. Well out, the swimmers grasped the canoes and clambered aboard.

The Chambris began their singsing. They speared the two Garamambus through the arms and legs, thereby pinning them out alive to the plants of the canoes. The Garamambus ashore climbed trees and fired arrows, but the canoes were too far away. As the canoes entered Chambri Lake, Karandi struggled free and grabbed one of the Chambris and they both fell into the lake. As they surfaced, the brother of the Chambri threw a spear, intended for Karandi, but which killed the Chambri by accident. Karandi did not surface again, he drowned. The Chambris then cried their way home.

This raid on Garamambu was pay back for an earlier Garamambu killing some Chambris on the Changriman channel. Oram was the leader who led this attack. They put logs across the channel, and waited in the water armed with stone axes with which to kill the Chambris as they struggled to remove the logs. The Chambri big man Meimeminwan was with the Chambri party. Oram struck Meimeminwan in the back with his stone axe. The axe broke and Meimeminwan said "AAIL, Oram, I have seen you now. He fell into the water and survived, it seems he swam under water all the way back to his haus tambaran at Chambri. He knew Oram, as they were classificatory brothers. In this attack Kwaru., Tungwa and Aribien of Chambri were killed."²⁰

Garamambu fights against Milae.

Milae were our enemies, and they have come, just now, out of the bush to live on one of our islands. There was a [Garamambu] raid on Milae... Plenty of Milae people, including Mobun were killed.

⁴ Given that the Yerikai/Garamambu people are not of Ndu language descent, the writer assumes that as their social structure use of moiety structures of the Ndu type, is a case of cultural borrowing.

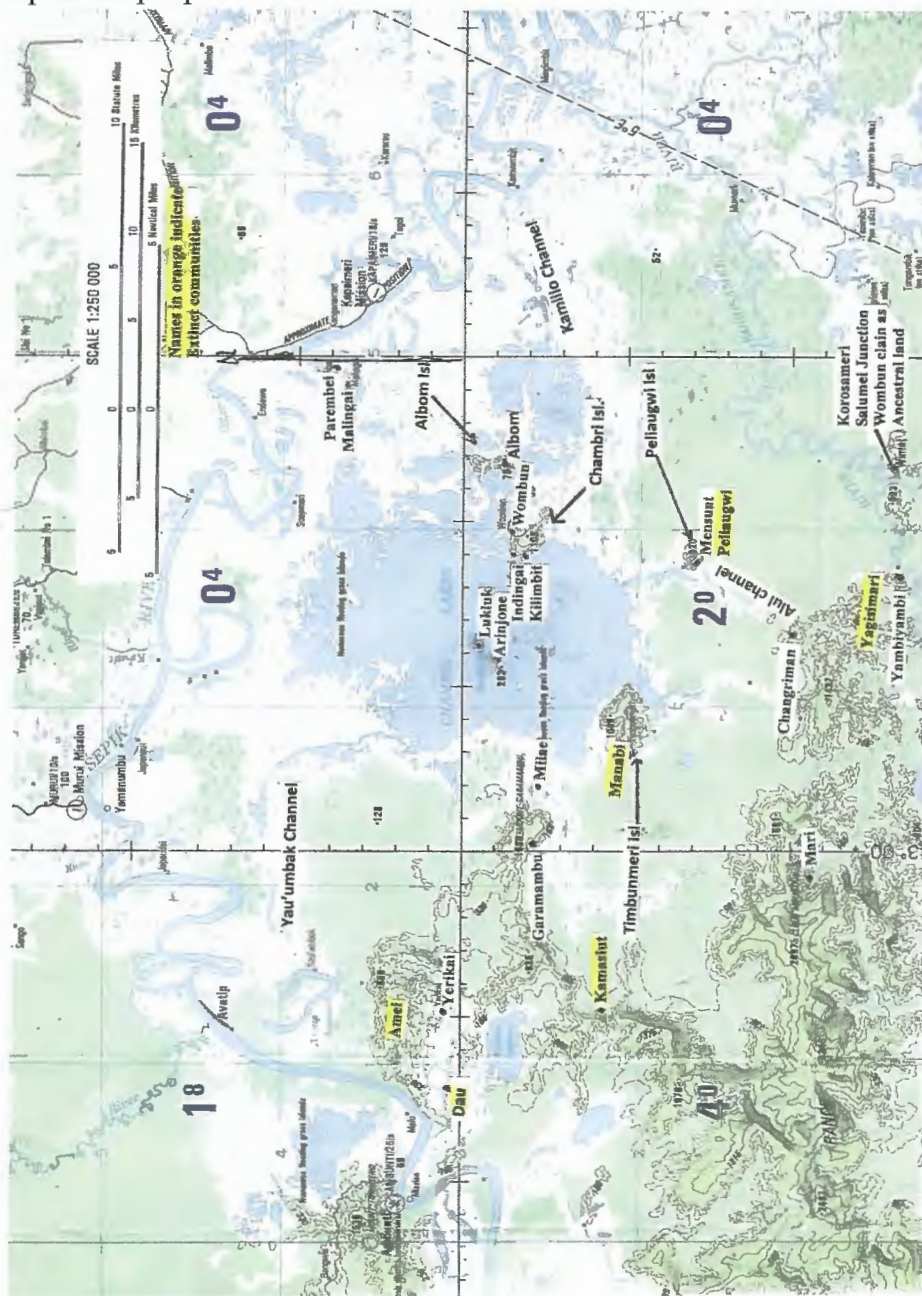
Milae gave ginger to the men of the mountain Budabi; the Kamasiut. They came to pay back at the Garamambu big place and this man's [someone in the crowd of informants] mother was killed. The payback on Kamasiut is described in Sepik 3 Chapter 22.

ooo000ooo

Amei.

The Amei people had the misfortune to be located adjacent to the territory of the Manambu speaking people at the time of the Manambu expansion, which the Amei did not survive. The story of their existence and fate is told in Chapter 28. *The Origins and early history of the Manambu and the demise of Maume [Also known as Ngginyap, Mondigo and Tibando-Jibaga], Amei and Wankainkaiuk.*

While it is claimed that the Amei and the Dau were Garamambu speakers. Their existence and demise are more in keeping with that of Manabi, Peliagwi, Kamasiut and Yagisamari of the neighbouring Sepik Hill people.



End Notes Chapter 31

-
- ¹ The Sepik Ramu- PNG publication 1988 page 14
 - ² The Sepik Ramu- PNG publication 1988 page 15.
 - ³ Chambri elders, not named – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 326
 - ⁴ Mathias Yambumbei of Indingai - Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 331
 - ⁵ Patrick Yarapat of Indingai - Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 335
 - ⁶ Mingin and other Wombun elders - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 324
 - ⁷ Wamba/Yeginmeri of Indingai - Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 333
 - ⁸ Mingin of Wombun – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 323
 - ⁹ Mingin of Wombun – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 327
 - ¹⁰ Kabiwan of Kilimbit - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 337
 - ¹¹ Kabiwan of Kilimbit - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 338
 - ¹² Councillor Bowi and elders of Aibom - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 315
 - ¹³ Councillor of Wombun plus Mingin and other Wombun elders. – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 323
 - ¹⁴ Maimban of Yerikai - – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Pages 11 & 12.
 - ¹⁵ Maimban of Yerikai – Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 18 Page 12.
 - ¹⁶ Maimban and Wani of Yerikai - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 295.
 - ¹⁷ Maimban and Wani of Yerikai - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 294-296
 - ¹⁸ Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 297-296
 - ¹⁹ Garamambu Elder's group discussion - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 378
 - ²⁰ Dumondi, ex Constable Gigio and other Garamambu elders - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 381

Sepik 1 Chapter 32 The Sepik Hill language communities of the Chambri Lakes.

An introduction to the Sepik Hill language family.

The “Sepik Hill” language communities are spread over thousands of square miles of rugged mountain valleys and inhospitable swamps, including those parts of the East Sepik, West Sepik, Enga and Southern Highlands, which radiate from the confluence of these provinces in the Strickland Divide section of the Central Range.

Dr. Don Laycock’s *Sepik Languages Checklist and Preliminary Classification*, which focuses on the East and West Sepik provinces only, noted the limited amount of study these people have received. He added:

...it seems to be that a case could be made for regarding the group as a stock...and for postulating at least two families, one consisting of the southern languages [Setiali, Gabiano. Hewa, (and many others)], and the other of the remaining languages. There may also be an east-west division that is significant; but such divisions are not made here, as the evidence is too scanty.¹

Chapter 49, examines another significant variation between the communities of the “southern languages” and the communities of the “remaining languages”. Until, and for some time after, first contact, the southern communities lived in isolated semi-nomadic extended family groups who relied primarily on a subsistence of hunting and gathering, whereas the “remaining language” communities lived in small sedentary village communities, relying primarily upon sago subsistence.

While the social structure and life styles of these small village communities was not far removed from that of their southern neighbours, they appear to have borrowed customs and beliefs from their more sophisticated northern neighbours. These usually included head hunting, other religious beliefs and the building of haus tambarans.

The southern languages were of particular interest to human and PNG history, in that their lifestyle was little removed from our hunter-gatherer forebears. In 1967, the writer was responsible for the establishment of Dr, [now] Professor Sachiko Hatanaka with a language group called the newly contacted Saiyolof at the river junction where the Om and Lagaip rivers meet to form the Strickland River.

Dr. Hatanaka was able to witness and document² the transition of the Saiyolof from semi-nomadic hunter-gathering extended families, called “Rei”, into a community of thriving sedentary agriculturalists. There were several elements to this transition; pacification of the Saiyolof region, cultivation of sweet potatoes in place of hunting and gathering, and the presence of Dr. Hatanaka as a powerful, but unintentional catalyst for social change.

Through the fate of staff postings, the writer led nine patrols into different areas of the “southern languages”. In order, these patrols left from Oksapmin, [West Sepik], from Ambunti [East Sepik] and from Lake Kopiago [Southern Highlands]. The stories of these patrols and what they found are written up in Sepik 4 chapters, and need not be repeated here:

37 Sepik *The exploration of the Strickland/Sepik Divide 1966*

42 *Professor Hatanaka and further Hewa exploration 1967 =>*

44 *Ambunti sub district 1970-74*

46 *A blank on the map [with Sir David Attenborough] 1971*

53 *The North Hewa murder investigation Nov 1974.*

More Sepik Hill language groups are described in Chapter 49 *The Sepik Hill language speakers of the April River and Hunstein Mountains.*

The remainder of this chapter describes the Sepik Hill communities in the Chambri Lakes region – all of which are classified as small sedentary village communities.

ooo000ooo

The Bisis language group of the Chambri Lakes.

The following stories of the Bisis communities Manabi, Yambiyambi, Changriman, Mensuat and Peliugwi are all influenced by Bisis beliefs in their god Gawatuk. See Chapter 33 *The creation of the Bisis world; The story of Gawatuk*.

ooo000ooo

Manabi [and by default some early history of Timbunmeri Island]

Manabi apparently spoke a Bisis language or dialect. Their residency on Timbunmeri Island seems to have been of a very long duration, as, like Peliugwi, their origin is described from a “Sepik old testament” myth. The myth tells of a hunter pursuing a wounded eagle, in the course of which he encountered and married two sisters, whose offspring became the Manabi ancestors.

Manabi’s “crimes” for which they were exterminated, seem to have been the harassment of trading parties paddling past Timbunmeri Island to the Kamanbo market site.

Warfare seems to have been long established, with Manabi having no allies and being forced to fight on all sides. The crucial turning point, was the use of market trickery which resulted in the capture of the Manabi fight leader Meibaraban, by a combined Chambri/Nyaula party. He was taken to Nyarengai and killed there. With their leader gone, Manabi was easily defeated in a combined by many forces, including Chambri and Kandingai. This defeat of Manabi was part of the Kandingai’s much later claim to Timbunmeri Island.

Meanwhile, Manabi survivors re-established themselves on Timbunmeri Island, only to be attacked and defeated by Garamambu warriors under fight leader Koromogi. The few survivors of that raid scattered to Mari and elsewhere. The Maris took some easy heads, but also looked after some survivors. One of these married a Mari woman. Their child, Tami is the present [1973] leader of the Karabio hamlet group on Timbunmeri Island.

Impacts on Changriman and its neighbours by the fighting against Manabi.

Informant Obalasuk of Changriman continues the story of the Manabi refugees: *Manabis ran away to hide at Mari. The men who ran to Mari were mostly young and the Maris killed them. One man escaped and ran back to Mensuat. He was Mambau and he settled here:*

Mambau – Nambari – Auba [27 years old in 1974]³

After the defeat of Manabi, Koromogi and others of Garamambu settled at Simandangwan to establish ownership of Timbunmeri Island, and also to have a forward base for warfare against Mensuat and Peliugwi. [As this must have been soon after the introduction of steel axes, resulting in Chambri losing its trading status as a purveyor of stone tools, Parembei was at war with Chambri] Koromogi’s forces killed a some Chambri refugees and some Nyaulas. A war was brewing. Then Koromogi betrayed his own people. He was one of the few people who survived a combined raid by Chambri, Nyaula, Mensuat, Changriman and others...

Koromogi’s betrayal of his own people. The trouble started like this. The daughter of a Garamambu man called Tafukol was sold to the Chambris to be killed... She was sold by another Garamambu called Tufui, who lived at Simandangwan. Tafukol became very angry about this. When Chambris came to cut sago on Timbunmeri Island Tufui killed Kapukurim of Chambri to make amends for selling Tafukol’s daughter.

Koromogi went to Chambri where he was given a bark container of tobacco leaves, which he took to Simandangwan where all the men smoked it. The Chambris had made magic over the tobacco.⁴ [contributing to the Garamambu defeat at Simandangwan by weakening them.]

Ambunti Patrol report No 5/1973-4 - Appendix N states. Timbunmeri Island was thus again vacated. Chambri, Changriman and Mari used it as a hunting and gathering area until it was occupied by Kandingai in the 1930s.⁵

Yambiyambi

Writer's Note The story of Yambiyambi's pre-history is intertwined with mythology concerning their god – Gawatuk – See Chapter 33 *The creation of the Bisis world; the story of Gawatuk*. Informant continues the Yambiyambi pre-history by introducing cult hero Kaiapun. His story is continued here.

ooo000ooo

Kaiapun was my ancestor. He came from Luguturu, our ancestral place. In the beginning he was by himself, then the calf on his leg swelled. This swelling was a pregnancy and a female child was born from his leg. Her name was Siningamango. Kaiapun looked after her until she was a woman. Whenever he killed meat, he beat his garamut.

Then he heard another garamut – the sound came from Garamambu's mountain Yimbanagwan. Two men there, Wandan and Bambwan, were having a singsing as they had killed a pig, but the black paint would not stick to their faces¹. Similarly, when they killed a cassowary, the paint would not stick. They thought about it and they killed their mother's brother, Asapariwan.

Wandan and Bambwan lived with their mother Elos. After killing Asapariwan, they took his body and put it in the channel with grass and pushed the body under the grass. Then they went back and said to their mother "Tomorrow morning go down and block off the channel and put in your basket. There are plenty of catfish and big mouth in the channel."

Elos heard what they said and took her basket down and the two followed her. They went into the water, saying they would scare the fish into the basket. But it was the body they pushed into the basket. She lifted the basket and saw the soles of a man's feet. "Why have you lied to me? You have killed your uncle Asapariwan!"

They paid her with wealth so she would not worry. The two men started their singsing and danced into the haus tambaran...The singsing was a repetition of their names Wandan and Bambwan. This is what Kaiapun heard and came to investigate. He went to Timbunmeri and came on to Garamambu.

When it was time for the two to find food and to go and wash the black paint from their faces, they told their mother "While we are away, do not leave the house, just sit by the door and watch the place and the road." They went and Kaiapun arrived and asked Elos "Where have my two friends gone?" She replied, "They have gone to find food. They said while they were gone, I was to watch well".

"That is good, it is alright" he reassured her. He looked around and saw the severed head of a man and then he said "Right now, you will take your bilum and climb that tree and get daka [mustard] for me." Elos did not want to do that and they argued. But Kaiapun said "If you argue, I shall kill you. He fitted an arrow to his bow and drew back the string. She was afraid and she did as he asked...He climbed the mast of the haus tambaran and took down the head and put it in his bilum

¹ To wear Black face paint was a sign that the wearer had taken a head. In this myth the ancestors are in quest of the ritual that entitled them to wear black face paint, in the early stages that had not yet discovered head-hunting.

and ran away. The old woman climbed down and beat the garamut...the two men ran back to ask what was wrong and she replied "Sorry, a man came and took the head and went..."

They followed Kaiapun to our mountain Bugumari. Kaiapun had already arrived and had started his singsing. The two were armed with bamboo spears, which they threw at the haus tambaran. Kaiapun called "Hey friends, take it easy, do not spear me." He stopped their attack and paid compensation in coconut shells and a garamut. They went back to Garamambu pulling the garamut behind them.

An ancestor of the Mari people called Wudito came when he heard the garamut to see his friend Kaiapun and asked about the singsing. Kaiapun said he was having the singsing as he had killed a pig. Wudito looked around and saw the head, but he said nothing. They slept the night. In the morning Wudito suggested that they should go and cut sago. Kaiapun's child was there and he told her to come and help them.

The two men went ahead. Wudito used a stone axe to cut the sago. He told Kaipun where to stand. The sago palm fell and killed Kaiapun, driving him into the ground. Wudito left then and on his way, he met Siningamango on her⁶ way down. To her he said. "Alright, you go down, he is there scraping the sago." Wudito then went and took the head back to his place at Mari. The place was also called Wudito – the same name as his own.

At the sago stand Siningamango looked around for her father. She could not even hear the sound of him working the sago. The dog which accompanied her started scratching at the sago trunk where it lay on top of Kaiapun. Upon investigating she saw her father's foot and realised that Wudito had killed Kaiapun with sago palm.

She threw away her sago making things and with a stone axe cut away the truck to recover the broken body of her father...She took limbum bark and placed the broken body on it. She took water and washed him...She wondered what to do with the body...She placed the body on a platform and lit a fire to smoke the body. She smoked the body for four days and then she heard sounds coming from the bark container

Next morning the body moved and the containing ropes broke and the bark unwrapped. Then the eyes of the body opened. He looked and he saw his daughter.

Writer's note. At this point the story goes into a detailed description of his recovery, not necessary for inclusion here. The story resumes.

After killing a second pig Kaiapun went to the haus tambaran and beat the garamut. Then Wudito came back and asked "Who is beating the garamut? I have killed the man of this place." Kaiapun had a spear ready to spear Wudito, but it missed and Wudito said "Hey friend do not spear me" Wudito went back without being harmed.⁷

Writer's note. I had hoped the story of Wudito might be continued by Mari Informants, but it was not. What they said about headhunting and cannibalism was interesting: *We did not kill women or take women's heads where we could avoid it. Women are productive and should not be killed. Some of our people liked human meat and others did not. The whole body was eaten, not just special parts. That was in our father's time and earlier.*⁸

Changriman

The Manabi migration to Changriman.

There was a fight over sago at Manabi and my ancestor Bamata left Manabi and went to live in the sago stand on the point between Timbunmeri Island and Peliaugwi Island. Then they crossed

the Mensuat channel [otherwise known as the Aiul channel] and went to the Korosameri River [Salumei tributary] He took a sago shoot with him from Timbunmeri Island and he planted it, so there is now sago ay Yambiyambi [which is on the Salumei River.] Recently I sent talk to get a shoot of that sago and I planted it here [Changriman]. Bamata was Obalasuk's great-great-great-grandfather of Informant Obalasuk

Bamata - { Bagana - Mumbunul - { Kenjalu - { Panganul - Luluai Obalasuk
 Mandambo [F] Aubani Genap

Bamata was of the Baksim moiety [Hornbill totem] and we are still of that moiety.

Bamata's original argument on Timbunmeri Island, was with the people who resided on the Island's Milal ridge. Bamata killed a pig called Kwata. Another pig, Wombili, they placed in a cave with payment for both pigs. Bamata took the sago shoot and they left Timbunmeri Island, and, as I said, went to the Korosameri River where the place Wimat is now. [This location is Plangambi, at the junction of the Korosameri and Salumei Rivers.] Then two other ancestors, Kwamban and Yambageta came from Manabi and came up the Changriman channel to the head of Wamanwei creek. Then a Yambiyambi ancestor, Wulo heard these two were at Wamanwei and he came to settle with them. He argued "No! you should not stay here. Let me take you to our big place Yambiyambi. Bamata is already living there with us.

At Yambiyambi they were taken into the Gwulei haus tambaran. They had a sister called A'Andauwis. They gave her in marriage to Yambiyambi and thereby purchased their land rights at Yambiyambi.

When Bamata came, Yambiyambi was already heavily populated, so the Yambiyambi people told him to go down to the edge of the village and make his camp there. He did that and he planted his sago shoot and it grew. While there his two children Bagana and Mandambo were born and later married. Bamata has many descendants.

Qn. Who of your ancestors came and established Changriman?

Ans. Mumbunul and Kenjalu. Bagana had already died and my father's brother Genap was in his mother's belly when they moved. He, Genap, was the first born here; the first blood to this place. Since then we have all been born. The reason they decided to come to Changriman was that the ancestors previously camped on this channel, and because of their origins at nearby Tumbunmeri. We did not want other men to come and occupy our ancestral lands.⁹

Mensuat

Until 1970-71 Mensuat's village site was located between Yambiyambi and Changriman, about 6 miles south of its present position on Peliaugwi Island. The Mensuat population consists of three sectors. The original inhabitants are descended from two man, Taumba and Weitei plus their wives - Selis and Bitawei who emerged from a hole in the ground nine generations ago [i.e. nine generations before 1973] Taumba was of the Niamei moiety and Weitei was of the Niaui moiety.

Upon emerging from the ground, there was a big important woman at Yambiyambi who instructed her language only – Gawatuk's language. [See Chapter 33 *The creation of the Bisis world; The story of Gawatuk.*

The second sector, were migrants from Yambiyambi

About this time a Chambri raid against Malingai captured a child. The child was sold to Peliaugwi to be sacrificed, but escaped to Mensuat. The third sector were his descendants who have flourished during the five generations [prior to 1973.]¹⁰

In 1970 the Mensuat people migrated to Peliaugwi Island

Peliaugwi.

Mensuat mythology¹¹ states that Peliaugwi was an uninhabited Island, [except] that living there, were dogs married to human women. The island was not stable, but floated around the Chambri lake as do grass islands. The myth tells how the ancestor, Kwakan of Mari, went ashore on Peliaugwi Island, where he liberated, and married the women and their offspring and descendants populated the island. Such myths are regarded by Sepik elders as part of the “Sepik Old Testament”, such myths indicate Sepik acceptance that the former Peliaugwi settlers resided on the Island from ancient times.

The Peliaugwi people spoke a language related to ours [Mensuat] - similar, but not the same. There were visitations between Peliaugwi and Mensuat and intermarriage. They were our brothers.¹²

The Peliaugwi people controlled the Aiul channel [linking Chambri Island due south to the Bisis language area] and ambushed people who used it.

Five men and five women from the Chambri village of Indingai, were collecting grass near Peliaugwi Island. They were putting the grass into their canoe when the Peliaugwi attacked. The five women were killed, but the five men, who were Kabiagwi, Minginuri, Sangwabi, Sabinandimeri and Woliabi, escaped. They took the women’s heads and had a singsing to celebrate.

We fought them over this; Chambri, Mensuat, Garamambu, Kabriman and Kamanimbit came fought and finished Peliaugwi. This was not long ago, the kiaps were already at Marienberg, but Ambunti was not yet established¹³. [1924.]

Aibom came to Peliaugwi in sorrow to see if there were any survivors. “They were our friends” they said. They came, but they saw no one. They waited for the night in case they might hear a child crying. Yiminaugwi cried and the Aiboms heard him. The Aiboms found Peliaugwi survivors hiding in a sago stand called Oromi...They took these survivors back to Parembei.

The Wombun people also found Peliaugwi survivors and brought them to Wombun. But the Indingais and Kilimbits came and killed them all. We do not know how many, to whom the Wombun’s gave sanctuary.¹⁴

Writer’s note: I interviewed Councillor Maribika and others of Mensuat on Peliaugwi Island on 19th December 1973. Having just heard of annihilation of the Peliaugwi population. I asked to see where the Peliaugwi settlement had been. Peliaugwi Island consists of a hill which is about 500’ tall. Near the top we came to the site of Peliaugwi’s “Yangaraman” haus tambaran. My guides enthusiastically cleared bush away from what would have been the front of the haus tambaran. A stone dais came into view and on it were the remains of the skulls of the five Chambri women they had killed.



The commanding view of the strategic Ai'ul channel as seen from Peliaugwi's Yangaraman haus tambaran site.



Councillor Maribika saw me picking up pottery shards and a stone sago mallet blade from the track. Seeing my interest, he sent his son Leo to collect the only undamaged piece of pottery found in Peliaugwi village site following the raid. It proved to be a standard cooking pot of Aibom origin. Maribika was pleased to sell it to me. It is part of my collection donated to James Cook University.



Aibom ancestral beliefs re Peliauwgwi.

Our ancestors originated at the big place Peliaugwi. Peliaugwi is an island, but at the same time, it is not an island; it is a woman who we left there. Our men's house we left is still there and there are still men in it. The men's house is called Maindandu. Now we have long left Peliaugwi and another line of men have come to live there [Mensuat] and talk about its stories.

We cannot go back there and get out stories. We could, if we had a pure way, go back can claim our ancestral home, but we came here [Aibom]. E met and mixed with Parembai and Malingai and we adopted the Parembai language [Iatmul]. So now we have changed from what we were, and we can never return to our ancestral place. We look towards Peliaugwi from our distance, it is part of our ancestral meat we left back there. Our spirits and ancestors are there, but we cannot go back. Plenty of places originated at Peliaugwi.¹⁵

Mari

The origins of Mari are told in several myths, of which I have recorded three.

Myth 1. Bagadia was a spirit which came from the Korosameri river. He used to kill children, women and men, and so he was banished. He came to the Wapunga River where a man called Badia was splitting a sago palm in search of sago grubs. Bagadia was in the river and he was

attracted by the smell of the grubs. Badia saw him and thinking he was a large fish, shot him in the right eye with an arrow.

Bagadia exclaimed his sister's name "Apsas! Apsas! I am not a fish, I am a man, my name is Bagadia." Badia took him out of the water and took out the arrow. The eye came with it. After collecting the sago grubs, Badia took Bagadia back to his place, and into his large men's house." But Bagadia told him "I cannot stay with you, I need a small men's house of my own. So, they built him a small men's house and he stayed on up until recently, when he went back down into the ground.

Qn. Was Bagadia a stone?"

Ans. No, he was a wooden carving with many hooks on it

Qn. What work or purpose did Bagadia serve?

Ans. He was out fighting strength. He used to talk with our fathers and ancestors and tell them when and where to fight, and he gave them the strength to fight. Bagadia went ahead and blocked the ears of the enemy so they could not hear the Maris approach. The name Bagadia was the Mari war chant. When enemies heard it, they were afraid and ran.¹⁶

Small Mari

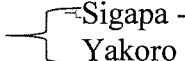
Myth 2. An old woman called Sebudas had two daughters, whose names we do not know. The daughters caught an eel, which they cut in half. Small sister got the head which she cooked and ate. Big sister got the tail which she kept in a bark container filled with water. When mother and small sister were asleep, big sister would masturbate with the eel tail.

When the sisters went to cut sago, mother swept the house and found the eel tail and wondered about its purpose. She threw it away. Big sister looked for the eel tail and there was a big fight over it. Mother now realised "So that is what it was for."

That night they slept in the mosquito basket and at dawn the mother got up and made a bamboo hook. She took flying fox bones and made a spell over them and placed the bones in the mouth of the mosquito basket. The spell would ensure the daughters remained deeply asleep. Mother they took the hook and hooked Timbunmeri and went ashore there. She captured a Manabi man and brought him back to her camp and placed him between her sleeping daughters. They awakened and were very surprised. The man married both daughters and their offspring and descendants are the Mari people, but not the people of Milae or Yagisimari.¹⁷

Big Mari

Myth 3. Two ancestors, Bobio and Babiowa came out of the ground. A man called Aparu was hunting with his dog and found the two ancestors sitting on the ground next to the hole... The ancestors saw the dog and went back into the hole...Aparu finally held the ancestors and took them to his place and they lived there. Aparu thought Bobio was a good man, so he purchased him a wife and gave her to him. But Bobio did not think or know about sexual intercourse. The woman just lived with them without sex. Then in the bush Aparu instructed Bobio, and then Bobio became the ancestor of the Big Mari people.

Bobio – Gawi –  Sigapa - Keimowa - Mawi [Informant]¹⁸
Yakoro

Yagisimari

There were no Yagisimari elders available to my 1973 patrol interview about their origins. Sepik 4 Chapter 10 describes the Yagisimari massacre of April/May 1952.

Milae

Three ancestral spirits arose from the mountain Bitabi. They were:

Kamamu – the Milae ancestral spirit.

Wahikwa – the Kamasiut ancestral spirit, and

Abrandimi – the Garamambu ancestral spirit.

They were not actual ancestors, but ancestral spirits. They came to Kamon creek where they met their uncle, who had been making a fish trap. They left him and came on, but then Abrandimi lied to his brothers Kamamu and Wahikwa. He said “You two go ahead. I need to shit.”

...Abrandimi watched them go before going back to his uncle. We do not know the uncle’s name, but he was a Milae. Abrandimi held the uncle’s throat, then cut his head off and put it in his bilum. He caught the others up... There was blood dripping from his bilum and they asked him “What is this?” He replied that it was a leach bite.

They did not believe him...and looked in his bilum and saw the head “What! I think you have killed our uncle.” They argued and started to beat Abrandimi. This was the basic reason for Milae - Garamambu fights through the ages.

After beating him with sticks, the two were sorry for their brother. They called out to the village and the garamuts started playing the head-hunting beat. They came to the village and held a singsing. The mother of the ancestral spirits, an old woman called Endafis cooked the head, but would not eat the meat or drink the soup, as it was the head of her brother. They painted the skull red and put it on the point of a spear to dry... Then the three brothers and their mother slept.

Ancestors Wudito and Dokworokwa [of Mari] heard the garamuts and at dawn they used their hook to pull the mountains close and they came to Maiwan where the mother and brothers lived. They saw the head of a man and they stole it and took it back to their place, Wudito². That afternoon the people at Maiwan got up and searched for the head. Finally, at evening they heard the garamuts at Wudito.¹⁹

Next dawn they took their bamboo hook and hooked Wuditok closer. They took their weapons and the three brothers from Maimban pushed the two brothers at Wuditok, and the two pushed the three...they did not fight in earnest, as they were all brothers. Compensation was demanded and paid in shell wealth...and they went back...

Wudito and Dokworokwa continued their singsing, and a spirit, called Gwamogwa at Big Mari the garamut and wondered what was happening. Next morning Gwamogwa and his spirit sister Dipiambol went to investigate. The Wuditok brothers were asleep and the Big Mari spirits stole the head...

Writer’s note: Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 pages 375-377 tell a long and involved story of the repeated theft of the head. On each occasion, compensation was paid and the head remained with those who stole it.

The writer’s interpretation of this protracted Sepik Hill language myth is that Abrandimi, the Garamambu ancestral spirit, who was not of the Sepik Hill language group, introduced the custom of head hunting to a sequence of Sepik Hill communities, each of which adopted headhunting as an essential part of their traditional religion.

The specific part of the myth that related to the adoption of headhunting, was that black face paint would only adhere to warriors faces after those warriors had participated in ceremonies involved with a severed head.

Observed from a wider context, in a later chapter, the writer argues that the Sepik Hill language people are in a state of transition from a hunter gather life style to that of sedentary villagers. It seems logical that such a transition involved learning and borrowing from longer

² Wudito appears both as a name of an ancestor, and of a geographic location – no explanation given. Wudito is also spelt Wuditok, with the K being almost silent

established sedentary neighbours, and the borrowing involved the establishment of haus tambarans and the adoption of tambarans as their gods and religious customs such as head hunting.

ooo000ooo

Yada clan origins

Wifianga was a Manabi man who fled from Garamambu aggression and came to Milae. He married at Milae and had a family, which in 1973 included five generations back to Wifianga. It was noted that in 1973 that a great- grand-daughter of Wifianga, a woman, called Akei could still speak the Manabi language.

Esala clan origins

This clan are the descendants of Wudito. This clan worships the god or tambaran “Weda’ Wudito - Gamskwa – Yamgwei - Soku – Kaku – Ania – Ambiabei – Menga. [informant Menga was 27 years old in 1973.

The myth has it that Wudito was killed at PeliAugwi by his brother Dokworokwa. Gamskwa’s descendants lived at Milae.²⁰

ooo000ooo

The enemies of Milae.

The enemies of Milae were the Hunstein Mountains groups Wagu. Yigei and Namu [i.e. the Bahinemo language speakers of the Sepik Hill language family] and Garamambu...

ooo000ooo

The purchase and sale of children for killing.

We used to buy children from Namu, Big Mari, Yagisimari and Kamasiut. These children were purchased for young men to kill to earn the right to wear black face paint. We also used to sell children to Chambri, Changriman, Mensuat and Yambiyambi. We also purchased them from Mensuat, Changriman and Yambiyambi.

The parents would sell their own children; children of either sex six months to a year old. The payment for a child was two kinas, five torembum [large green sea snail] and five rings. This wealth would be used in turn to purchase wives, pigs, tobacco etc. Also, in fighting we used to capture children to bring back and kill in the village. Margarita, the [Chambri] mission store girl is a Milae. She was sold by her mother Kendei²¹

ooo000ooo

The fragmentation of Mari.

There were two Mari ancestral places on the mountain south West of Changriman. There was Kilimbit village with its haus tambaran Dengaman, and Kabriman village with its haus tambaran also called Kabriman. The first reason was that the kiap came and wanted a central accessible place for a rest house. The place selected was Basisu, not either of the ancestral places.

The kiap gathered us together, so we built houses, but we did not stay together. Our only common unity was our language, but we all wanted to be on our own land.²²

The second reason was that the Mari sub groups wanted to be on their own land. We used to have three places, Milae, Big Mari and Small Mari. – A fourth place Yagisimari had been annihilated

Qn. Why had Mari assembled in the first place before it fragmented?

Ans. For defence, safety in numbers. We used to fight Changriman and the Hunstein mountain people. We also fought Mensuat, when they came as allies of Changriman. We did not fight Garamambu, Yambiyambi of Kamasiut.²³

ooo000ooo

Kamasiut

No-one knows for certain what language the Kamasiut people spoke, as they were all killed by their neighbours in 1943, during the Japanese occupation. The writer assumes, it was almost certainly a Sepik Hill language, related to Mari. The full story of the Kamasiut is told in Sepik 2 Chapter 38 *The Kamasiut of the Hunstein Mountains attack McCarthy's patrol 1930*, and in Sepik 3 Chapter 22 *Bill McGregor living dangerously*.

End Notes Chapter 32

¹ D.C.Laycock – Sepik Languages Checklist and Preliminary classification – Pacific Linguistics ANU 1973 Page 28

² S.Hatanaka and L.W.Bragge 1973.

³ Obalasuk of Changriman – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 361

⁴ Dumondi of Garamambu Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 33

⁵ Ambunti Patrol Report no 5/1973-74 Appendix N pages 48 and 49

⁶ Mari elders – unnamed. - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 338

⁷ Yambiyambi elders including Siga and Petrus - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 354-355.

⁸ Yambiyambi elders including Siga and Petrus - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 368.

⁹ Obalasuk of Changriman – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 360/361

¹⁰ Ambunti Patrol Report no 5/1973-74 Appendix N page 50

¹¹ Councillor Marabika of Mensuat - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 339-340

¹² Councillor Marabika of Mensuat - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 340

¹³ Ex-Tultul Wapi of Indingai - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 334

¹⁴ Councillor Marabika of Mensuat - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 341

¹⁵ Aibom elders - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 321

¹⁶ Imamo of Mari - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 369

¹⁷ Imamo of Mari - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 368

¹⁸ Mawi of Big Mari - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 368- 369

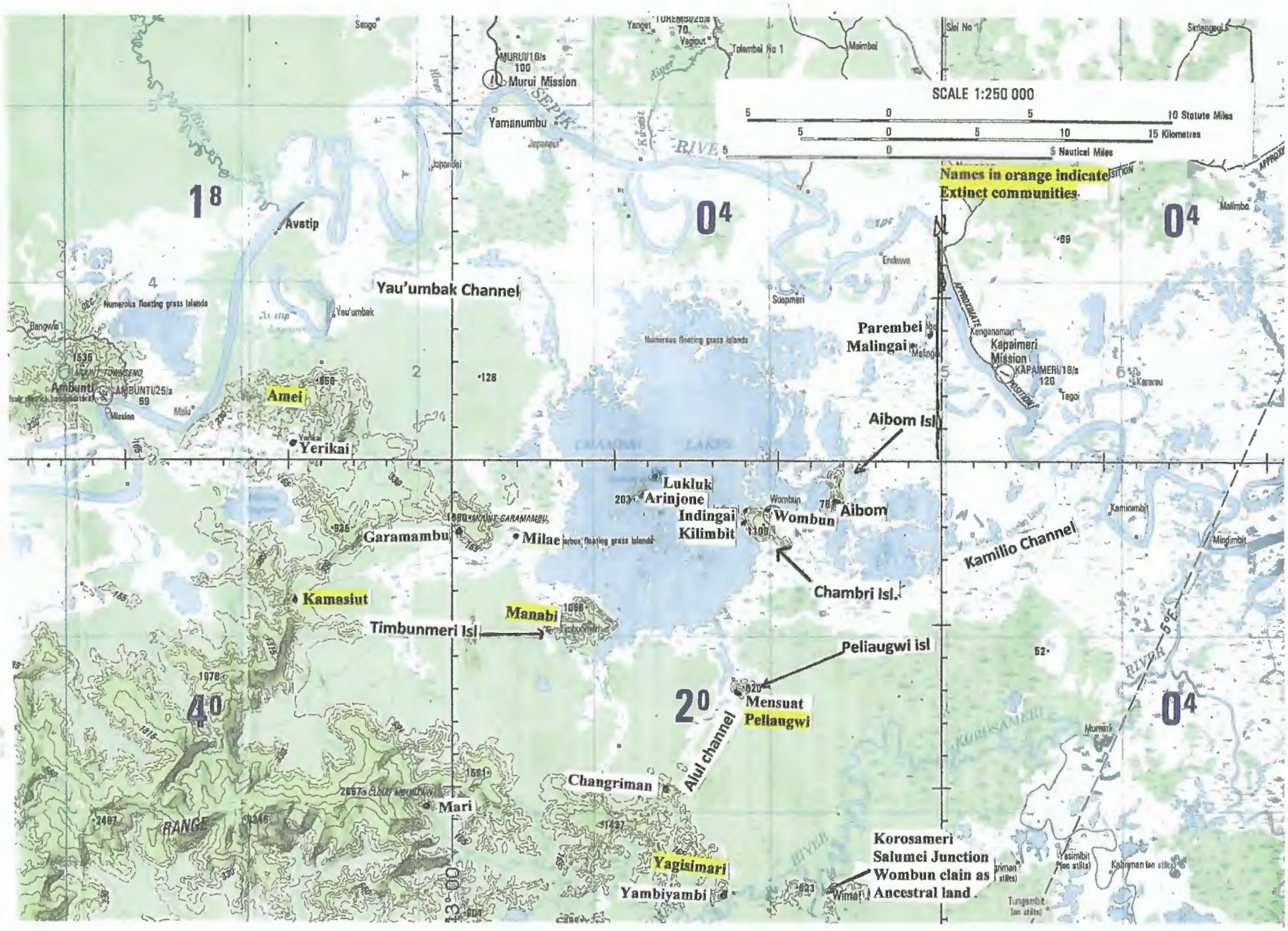
¹⁹ Menga of Milae - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 375-377

²⁰ Menga of Milae - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 372

²¹ Menga of Milae - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 372

²² Imamo of Mari - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 370

²³ Imamo of Mari - Bragge Sepik Research Notes Vol 19 Page 368



Sepik 1 Chapter 33 The Creation of Bisik World; The story of the god Gawatuk.

Writer's note:

Having written this chapter, I had difficulty in determining whether it belongs in Sepik 1 – Prehistory to first contact, or in one of the post contact volumes, because the story spans more than one era. It tells of the Yambiyambi myths, legends and prehistory as well as “the man from above”, which I interpret to mean the Christian God, and reflections of Sepik cargo cultism.

I have left the chapter in Sepik 1 because firstly, it contains important pre-history information and secondly. the post contact information is explained by Sepik 1 Chapter 6 in terms of cultural and religious borrowings. The story of Gawatuk reads like a rationalisation of traditional religion against a simplistic understanding of Christian beliefs, perhaps with the fairy-tale Jack and the beanstalk thrown in.

In the early 20th century the Bisik language group was unexpectedly thrust deep into Sepik tribal politics when it was swamped with refugees from the Chambri communities of Wombun Indingei and Kilimbit fleeing from Iatmul aggression. As explained in Sepik 2 Chapter 8 the formally all-important stone axe trade upon which the Chambri villages relied, was rendered redundant with the arrival of steel tools. Chambri had never previously needed to fight because of their unassailable trade position, and now the Parembai-Iatmul has nothing to lose in attacking Chambri. As refugees, the Chambri fled to their sago trade source among the Bisik people and apparently stayed there for a number of years.

ooo000ooo

The Bisik language group consists of the villages of Yambiyambi, Changriman and Mensuat which occupy the foot hills along the southern shore of the Chambri Lakes. The Bisik language and 15 other languages are classified as Sepik Hill languages, within the Middle Sepik Super Stock¹.

Siga Yambiyambi told the story of Gawatuk as follows:

Gawatuk was our god. Our fathers and ancestors honoured her. There was a big tree called Membi, that grew in the Yambiyambi ancestral place, on land called Luguturu. It was a low tree, [seemingly] sitting down. Two men were living in this place Andon and Sabobika, [and they] said to the tree “Carry us upwards”. They had some special knowledge, because the tree heard them. They sat on the top of the tree and it grew up and up until it [The sky?] opened above them. The two men looked around, and the man-from-above was standing there. He said to them “What do you want?”

The two men did not know anything about the man-from-above. They said “We want the black thing” The man from above said “You want the Black thing! Would you not prefer to have the white one?” “No, we did not come to get a white thing, we are after a black one” They argued back and forth until the man-from-above agreed and gave them the black one. Then he asked “Now do you want a shot gun?” “No, we want bows and arrows” and they explained about bows and arrows. The man-from-above said “If you do not want the white thing, and just want the black one you will run away from me. The two took the black thing [which was] Gawatuk, and the tree lowered itself with the two men and Gawatuk.

Qn. What is Gawatuk?

Ans. A stone, like cement. We do not know what the white thing was.

The tree lowered itself so the two men could step onto the ground, [carrying] Gawatuk and a huge Torembum [Green sea snail shell]. The tree was now very small. The men put Gawatuk out in the open with some flowers. The men then slept and they heard talk in their dreams – Gawatuk was talking to them. “You must not leave me out in the cold! No! make a small house with a table up which I can be placed.”

They dreamed this and they believed it, and in the morning, they got up and made a small temporary house and they placed Gawatuk in the house. Then on the third night she communicated with them again through their dreams. "you two can make some watch-men to surround me." Gawatuk communicated that she wanted them to carve two children. The men carved them from wood Dimi and Yombonk, these children, both male, each with a gam shell hanging from their hip. The Children stood either side of the table upon which Gawatuk was placed. Then she wanted faces to watch, so they carved masks and placed them around the walls of the house to watch over her. Gawatuk communicated the laws to the two men:

Young men must not see Gawatuk.

Sorcery was forbidden – Those who make sorcery will die

You may fight if you wish, but you must not initiate raids

If you are attacked you can defend and pay back later, but you must not initiate unprovoked attacks.

The two men heard the laws. Later when they were changing the haus tambaran to make it larger. Gawatuk instructed them to be silent. They had to wash for seven days. On the first day they prepared sago, firewood and tulip [edible greens] and assembled it all in the village. Then they said they would take Gawatuk inside the haus tambaran. Other laws, once inside the haus tambaran;

Men could only scratch themselves with a stick, not their fingers.

Men were not permitted to sleep with their wives.

As silence prevailed, to communicate, touch the other man with a stick to communicate.

Men could drink only water that had first been heated. They could not drink cold water.

Sago was cooked by women, but could not be given to the men. It was left hanging outside for the men to come and take. Special times were arranged for this

The Usopom [being the larger social group in the village] was to kill a pig for the Makisopon [the smaller social group]

All these laws were passed down in dreams. These [Gawatuk] laws were passed down through the generations until they reached us and we accepted them.

The tree that had taken the two men upwards, now twisted and shook and went around. The tree then went down into the ground, leaving a hole in which green water boiled. This hole was in our ancestral place, and the two men took a flat stone like a table and blocked off the water, which then finished.

At that time there was still only the two of them and they thought to themselves "What will we do now?" They were looking after the stone Gawatuk. I do not know how the population grew. That story was not passed on by our fathers and ancestors, but we assume the first two gave rise to the Yambiyambi population. What happened to those two we do not know – did they die somewhere? We do not know?

Qn. *Where is Gawatuk now?*

Ans. *Here. I will tell you the truth. They left her outside and the rain washed her the stone weathered and broke.*

Later, a woman of this place died. Her name was Yumbo, and she died at Luguturu. She died one day and the next, they watched over her house. [In preparation] they took vines with prickles on it. They buried her in a grave and planted a bamboo to ask her [spirit] how she had died – by sorcery or other means.

This was our wireless. The men talked in the haus tambaran. They decided to wrap two men in baskets, in preparation for them to hold the devil of the dead woman, and they hid the two men in the house. They were wrapped, so only their faces were showing. The two held the prickly vines that had been collected and they waited. Then at 6pm the people called "Yumbo, why did you die?" They

called and called. The people went and they called out on the road, asking the road. Then in the distance they heard her voice.

“What will I say? I am coming and I will tell you.” She had answered them! She went to into the house and onto the bamboo. The people went into the haus tambaran and ate betelnut and soon after they came out and surrounded her house. The two men remained hidden inside. They surrounded the bamboo [ol banisim mambu nau, banisim raun olsem¹] The devils filled the house. The devil of the woman was sitting near the door, wearing a new grass skirt.

Yumbo’s brother asked her through tapping on the bamboo “Hey Yumbo, I think you are there. I want to know now; did someone make sorcery against you? How did you die? I want to know now. Tell me clearly”.

She leapt up and sang and danced her way to hold the bamboo with her skirt swishing back and forth, she held the bamboo. Then the two [hidden men] leapt up and held the devil woman with the prickly vines, and they put ants into her ears, and called to those outside “Come in, we have held her.” They tied her up with the prickly vines. She struggled, but there were plenty of men holding her. She continues struggling, trying to get outside to escape. But they held her, and at dawn they put on fresh prickles and put more ants into her ears. This went on. They heated water and washed her several times. They saw that her flesh was moving and working. She was returning from the dead. This went on and on and the people said among themselves “She is coming back now”. Someone suggested digging her grave, they did and the grave was empty.

All the men and women surrounded her and she started talking in a funny language; speaking our language badly and brokenly. I can tell you it was the language of Bembei [cargo cult]. I do not know that language, but it is a language spoken as speakers choose to speak randomly [oli save mekin nabaut]. It went on and soon she was speaking better; speaking her own language.

They cooked food and leaves with scent and they fed her the soup. She was now coherent and she said “You can untie me. I am alright and I am here.” She could see and hear and comprehend. They cut a banana palm and put the trunk into her grave; the trunk taking the place of her body.

She told them to make a long string, so the women made a long string until it was as long as from here to the rest house. She said “Do not think I am going for ever. I shall go, and I shall come back.” She tied one end of the string to her hand and the other end to a host in her house and she told them “You watch the string. When the string is tight you will know I have reached the place. If the string is not tight that means I am still walking. She went and the string played out until it was tight, and the people said “She has reached the place.”

She told them to wait for five days, and on the fifth watch the string and you will know that I am returning. On the fifth day, when the string was slack it started to recoil itself.

At that time there was no fire and not plenty of food. The food they did have they put out in the sun to become strong, but it did not cook properly. Also, there were no flowers or decorative crotons – such things did not exist at that time.

The people waited for the day she was due back. There were expectations – would she come back alone? They watched and the string steadily recoiled itself. They watched and on the final day the sun rose sending its rays across the horizon and from her grave they heard a cock crowing. Then they saw the bamboo growing, everything then came up [germinated?]

¹ I have inserted the pidgin as there was excitement in the telling and I suspect my translation did not capture the full meaning.

Everything came with this woman. Fire came and all the good foods came. The people held this woman and they sat with her. She took properly cooked good food from something opened, that she had been carrying. She divided the food and gave it to the people to taste. They tasted it and spat it out saying "Yuck that is not good food." They all said this and threw the food away. They did not find even pig meat or ton fruit [Lei chi] sweet. She said "Alright, now take some water and wash your mouths out." They tried the food again. A man chewed the food and she told him "swallow it." And he said "Give me a little more." It went like that. She had to coax them in the beginning and then they liked it more and more...She explained "This is fire. If you bring food cook it on the fire."

Now, we have thought about this and we think that they bred and multiplied and so we are here now.²

ooo000ooo

The people decided that the hole which Andon and Sabobika had covered with the stone was a sacred place [a story place]. They cut planks from Membri trees and made a form to sit upon as they told stories. They built a haus tambaran called Mungrareka and the form was inside it. Mungrareka was the name of the hole, so they applied the same name to the Haus Tambaran.

The social structure of the group was revealed in dreams. The clans are Kwogombun, Baksim [Hornbill], Milang [Cassowary] and Maksei [Eagle]. The people sat on the form and talked of their ancestors and they Andon and Sabobika were told in their dreams what their social structure was to be in the future. They had a stick with a man's face on it and they tapped with this stick for all to be silent, to stop smoking and for the women around the houses to be silent and to watch the children and if a child opened its mouth, to put food in it to keep the child quiet. Then they started telling the story in the haus tambaran.

The first thing they talked about was sorcery and the huge prohibition that applied to it. Also "You must not steal women, and as mentioned earlier the prohibitions of fighting. Men who had stolen were not allowed to enter the story telling sessions.

...The story of taking Gawatuk into a new Haus Tambaran when one is built is like this. A special man carries the stone down between two lines of men, all of whom are armed and have their bows drawn and are grunting like pigs. They have ginger and they line to honour Gawatuk as she is brought into the new haus tambaran, thereby giving her strength.³

The Sugwopa stick

This stick [with the face on it] has fine carving. In the night the men met in the Mungra haus tambaran. The leader of the village held the stick Sugwopa. He is now like a Chairman and the other bid men are like his committee. The Chairman started the talk and tapped the stick to stop people talking smoking or chewing betelnut. With the people sitting in silence. Tap! Tap! Tap! "Forbidden is sorcery. Forbidden is stealing another man's wife. Forbidden for young men to desire marriage. If you think about marriage and sex, when you are a young man you will not become fat and strong to fight against other places. You would be killed quickly. Young men, you wait until the elders decide you are ready and buy you a woman. When you can see her vagina and understand how I produced you.

Forbidden is stealing of ripe fruit belonging to another man; fruit you might see along the track. It was thus they made the laws that must not be broken. Especially forbidden was sex between single people or adultery, as both cause men to die...These laws were laid down by the stick Sugwopa.⁴

Entropy.

Another law is that when you see Coconuts bearing fruit close to the ground, bananas bearing fruit low down, men who are no longer tall, but stout and numbers of men dying, betelbut

trees that are short, fronds on palms that are not neat and tidy, little women or girls bearing children when they are very young, young men becoming fathers before puberty. Then you will know as our ancestors knew, the ground is becoming strong. The ground is old and will have no water. All things will fail to reach maturity, then you must fear that as the ground is old that the end is near.

This story originated in the Mungra haus tambaran, a story that has been handed down. We can see that our fathers and ancestors were big fat men, and the white men are big fat men. The ground was young then. Now we are short and we think the ground is getting old. The houses of old had wide doors – for big men.⁵

The origins of ground or land

In the beginning the ground was not firm, it was like the grass islands that drift on the lake. A woman called Yaupoko held a piece of limbum called Doman and beat the ground and a big wind and rain came to spoil the place. The clouds were very low. He struck the ground and then she struck the clouds, and the clouds went up to where they are now and the ground went down and became strong as it is now. The ancestor Sobobika had his bow and arrows and he worried about the unfirm ground, and now the ground has become firm.⁶

The Moiety structure.

Niamei and Niaui are Sepik names – ours are different Niamei is the same as our Baksim and Niaui is the same as our Milang. We have four clans as discussed earlier.⁷

End Notes Chapter 33

¹ D.C.Laycock – Sepik Languages, Checklist and Preliminary Classification ANU 1973 Page 75

² Siga of Yambiyambi – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 349-352

³ Siga of Yambiyambi – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 353

⁴ Petrus of Yambiyambi – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 353

⁵ Siga of Yambiyambi – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 353

⁶ Siga of Yambiyambi – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 353

⁷ Siga of Yambiyambi – Bragge Sepik Notes Vol 19 pages 353

Sepik 1 Names of people, spirits, gods and others as they appear in Sepik 1 part 1

Chapter 1 In the beginning: the geology, land forms and geography of the Sepik Basin

Krakatoa eruption 1883

Pacific Ring of Fire

Mt Toba [Sumatra] eruption 74,000 years BP

Mt Lamington, [Papua] eruption 1951 killed 3,500 people.

Chapter 2 The Arrival of Map 1. – the Papuans

Professor Peter Lawrence

Sir David Attenborough.

Professor Sachiko Hatanaka

Chapter 3 The Arrival of Man 2. – The Austronesians

Paul Gorecki – Anthropologist and Archaeologist

Robert Blust – Hawaiian researcher

Theresa Samuel nee Vanua – Photo Austronesian facial features

Mai Raka Bragge – DNA test – Austronesian past

Kemen of Yenchan – informant

Naven – sex role reversal -Iatmul

Attachment 1 An oral history of Austronesian migration and settlement

Interpreter and informant Lawrence Iaubihi of Bolubolu patrol post -Goodenough Isl.

Hiviweto/Toinaga elder of Kalikatabutabu village Goodenough Island

Maboa - Hiviweto's Great-Great-Great- Great-Grandfather

Manabutu – mythical leader killed by giant women Vinetaune

Yolele, his dog Kafuuoie and pregnant daughter [unnamed]

unnamed daughter's unnamed twins

Bwlugaluga – the mythical two - pointed spear that killed Vinetaune

Goodenough Isl. Moieties Bunebune and Magisubo.

Chapter 4. Tracking New Guinea's now vanished “archaic civilization”

W.J.Perry – Author of “The Children of the Sun” London 1923.

James Taylor and the Leahy Brothers – highlands explorers

Ernest W.P.Chinnery – Government official in Papua

Chapter 5. The Anthropology of Religion.

Te Rangi Hiroa [Sir Peter Buck] author of “Anthropology of Religion.” 1939

Tane, Rongo, Tu and Tangaroa – Polynesian gods, believed to have been navigator Ancestors.

Oro – son of Tangaroa

Ta'aroa - the Creator

Another creator called Io – in New Zealand

A creator called Kio in The Tuamotu Islands

Chief Pomare of Tahiti

Rongo – God of Mangaia

Numangatatini – regarded as chief of Mangaia

Chapter 6 Of Cultural and Religious Borrowings

Te Rangi Hiroa [Sir Peter Buck] author of “Anthropology of Religion.” 1939

Parak - the Sissano name for Tambaran

Mai'imp Sawos cult hero and creator of sago

Batali a mountain in Chambri Lakes hinterland origin of three Ancestral Spirits listed below
#1 Kamamu – spirit ancestor of Milae
#2 Wahikwa – spirit ancestor of Kamasiut
#3 Ambarandimi – spirit ancestor of Garamambu
Endafis, mother of #1-3 above and sister to head hunting victim of Ambarandimi
Dokworokwa – spirit ancestor of Big Mari
Wudito – spirit ancestor of the place Wudito – Big Mari
Gwamogwa – Spirit ancestor of Big Mari
Dipianbol – Gwamogwa’s sister

Chapter 7. The nature of pre-contact land tenure

Nicholas Mikloucho-Maclay 19th century Russian scientist and explorer of Madang.
Mai – The writer’s Motuan wife – reflecting upon Motuan customs
Miit – The Min social structure - differentiated from clans
Professor Laurence Goldman
Nuwepmin – small community driven off their land by the Unamo
Suwana – small community – Men killed and eaten women captured by Mianmin
Owininga stone adze quarry on Saniap Creek - May River area
J.K.McCarthy – 1930 patrol officer – later Director Dept of Native Affairs

Chapter 8. The illumination of Sepik ancient time lines by modern science.

Willard Libby – developer of radio carbon dating technology
de Young Museum, San Francisco – Jolika collection
Marcia and John Friede – donated the Jolika collection
Kara-mbanga – the great creator ancestor – cultural hero
Sotkaman-Agwi – the Sawos creator mother figure
Koanggingge “Mother of the men’s house”
Aripe – male and female Ewa figures Karawari River
Dunegatsir – fragment of aa cut Karawari figure
Garea or Gra – Mask from Gahom, Hunstein Mountains

Chapter 9. Of Human and cultural reincarnation, the psychology of endurance and the immortality of stone.

Gregory Bateson – Anthropologist
Mai’imp [Mai’impdimi], Not Jesus was the religious leader/cult hero
Yogonduma – The sun, a man at the Sun was the creator.
Stone is the skin of Mai’imp – immortality
Gwolai of Tego - Informant

Chapter 10. Sepik religion, Initiation, Age Class, Female skin cutting and Moieties.

Ndakwul Wapi – a Manambu spirit.
Clement of Namangoa, a Sawos informant.
Douglas Newton – former curator New York Museum of Primitive Art – author of
Crocodile and Cassowary 1971
Gorisipma – uninitiated Parembei dialect youths
Kambaral – warrior class Parembei dialect.
Bandi or Bandiarambandi – elder class Parembei dialect
Bombunku and Ositali – two additional classes of elders
The age classes of several villages listed no need to repeat here

Chapter 11. Haus Tambarans - the churches of the people

Nambaraman – the first ranking haus tambaran in Parembei
Pai'ambit – the second ranking haus tambaran in Parembei
Andimbit – the third ranking haus tambaran in Parembei
Nangarambi – Yenchan's haus tambaran, influenced by Parembei's Pai'ambit
Dengaraman – Garamambu's first ranking haus tambaran
Womburaman – Garamambu's second ranking haus tambaran
Borei, Tiga, Gego - Lesser houses associated with haus tambarans
Damagego – Face side of the orator's chair – a portion of the haus tambaran
Gumbungego – Back side of the orator's chair – a portion of the haus tambaran
Ninjingego – the middle area of the haus tambaran where the elders sit
Warandu – The internal posts supporting the haus tambaran's twin peaks

Chapter 12. Sepik Haus Tambarans

Karambo – the Abelam word meaning haus tambaran
Dr. Hauser Schaublin – Anthropologist
Dr. Walter Behrmann – Geographer
Wolbi ward of Swagup with haus tambaran Kokombauwi
Dogoshua ward of Swagup with haus tambaran Amuwasi
Nggraiyp ward of Swagup with haus tambaran Kaukauwul
Nukuma – a dialect of Kwoma language.
Wongamusen – an Upper Sepik census division
Bahenimo – The language of the people of the Hunstein mountains
Amawk – The Bolivip word for haus tambaran.

Chapter 13 Headhunting

Mbwatangwi – a Iatmul doll figure featuring a re-modelled human skull
Biatnumbuk the father of ancestors – Gambanga, Baimaligumban and
Walindambwi – who in Nyaula myth started head hunting.
Sondmbwi – [Nyaula] mythology's first headhunting victim
Magisaun – Nyala tambaran/god figure
Margaret Mead – author of Sex and Temperament in three primitive societies
Kaiapun – Yambiwambi ancestor
Siningamango – Kaiapun's daughter
Wandan and Bambwan – ancestors at Garamambu twins born to Kolobwi and
Barawes – see page 146.
Asapariwan – Wandan and Bambwan's mother's brother, who they killed
Ekos- mother of Wandan and Bambwan
Wudito – the Mari ancestral spirit
Kamamu - the Milae ancestral spirit
Wahikwa – the Kamasiut ancestral spirit
Ambrandimi – the Garamambu ancestral spirit
Dokworokwa – ancestral spirit, presumably of Mari
Gwamongwa – ancestral spirit of Big Mari and his sister Dipiambol
Bibiowa – ancestor of unspecified origin
Kolobwi – a mythical Yerikai woman
Barawes – a mythical eagle

Chapter 14. Cannibalism

Des Clifton Bassett – Patrol Officer in charge Telefomin 1948
Lawrence R Goldman -Anthropologist, author of The Anthropology of Cannibalism

William Ahens – Theory that cannibalism never existed
 Daniel Carleton Gajdusek – Nobel Prize winner
 Donald Gardner – Anthropologist who studied the Mianmin people
 Thomas M Ernst – Anthropologist who studied the Onabasulu people
 Father G. Zegwaard – missionary in the Asmat area
 Namguliap – a Kmbulian [Wogamush] woman killed by the Japanese
 Namguliap's child was cooked and eaten by the Japanese
 Nau'rurihunium haus tambaran & Kombuliap village burnt by Japanese
 Mert. Brightwell, ADO Ambuni investigated the Yellow River massacre 1956
 Wangap haus tambaran at Wanimoi village May River
 J.R.Rogers – Patrol Officer in Telefomin 1949
 Arthur Marks – Patrol Officer at Oksapmin 1963
 Miit – a unique form of “” social structure.
 Barbara Jones – Anthropologist – Faiwolmin
 Dan Jorgensen – Anthropologist – Telefomin
 Garu/Jam of Yambon, informant
 John McIntyre – Patrol Officer May River.
 Tony Pitt - Patrol Officer May River.
 Fitz J.P. Poole - Anthropologist – Bimin/Kuskusmin
 Frederick Bath author of Religion and knowledge among the Baktaman of New
 Guinea 1975
 Denys Faithful Patrol Officer Ambunti 1956
 Waniambu of Warasai – allegedly killed by sorcery
 Omanaji of Beglam – proof of innocence sorcery – charged with interfering with
 a corpse.
 Woimau of Naukwi/Amasu received the largest portion of human flesh.
 Nesio of Wogamush – informant
 Sanokwion/Duduk ward of Swagup annihilated
 Olu – leader of Souli Moganai/Kompong Nggalla
 Nauwi Sauinambi – Informant of Bangwis
 Sibiauwi of Kauiembi eaten by Swagup – ceremonial cannibalism to get strength
 Wolion of Yamuk – Informant
 L.B.Steadman – author of Neighbours and Killers – Hewa beliefs 1971
 Mingin – informant of Chambri.
 Yenak/Yenak of Oum – informant
 Crown Vrs Noboi/Bosoi -Section 241[b] Queensland Criminal Code as adopted –
 interfering with a dead human body – cooked and ate parts of a man – acquitted.
 Justice Prentice PNG Supreme Court
 Montaigne – essay “On Cannibalism in the 16th century.”

Chapter 15. Sorcery and Magic

Professor Peter Lawrence.
 Sir E.E.Evans Prichard – Anthropologist, and author.
 Bronislaw Malinowski – Anthropologist and author.

Chapter 16. The Creation Myths of the Ndu and Ancient Migrations to populate the world

Yapi of Torembei – informant [Sawos language]
 Ambusuatgu – God was a big man who gave rise to all things
 Gwolai of Tegoi – informant [Nyaula dialect of Parembei Iatmul language]
 Dr G.Wassmann – Anthropologist
 Mebinbit – the place of the creation

Sororogwi, Gripma and Walima – ancestral villages close to Mebinbit
Sondambwi – a man sacrificed in ancient times
Samako/Farumu – Informant of Masalaga history

Chapter 17. Ndu social structure and reflections of an ancient Matriarchal past.

Jurg Schmid – Anthropologist
Sawos and Iatmul moieties Niaui and Niamei
Boiken moieties Samawung and Lubuging
Manambu moieties Gla:gw and Wulwi-Nawi and a third group called Nabal-Sablap
Chambri moieties Pombiantimeri and Yambuntimeri
Non-Ndu villages of Garamambu and Yerikai recognise Niaui and Niamei moieties
Garamambu's Wamp moiety equates to Niaui and Sinameri moiety to Niamwi
Mai'imp – Sawos cult hero, creator of sago and trade. Equated with Jesus.
A woman called Bribarai – ancestor of Yerikai people.
Mauraba – Ancient clay bowl at Yambiyambi
Terere – ancient clay flute at Yambiyambi

Chapter 18. Sawos legends – Sago/Fish trade – a necessity of Middle Sepik survival

Suat and Kaman – ancestral sister spirits – mythical originators of sago fish trade.
Mai'imp – [also known as Mai'impdimi] cult hero who originated sago fish trade
Boimandalagu – ancestral women with hair on their bodies [Papuan?]
Kwanigalaktu – ancestral women with no hair on their bodies [Austronesians?]
Gumai'imp – son of Mai'imp

Chapter 19. Sawos – From Mebinbit to Gripma to Nogosop and Gaikarobi.

Marakumban alternate name for Mai'imp's son [Gumai'imp]
Sangi, alternate name for Marakumban, now a water spirit
Alternate names for Jesus – Mai'imp. Marakumban, Kurumban, Nogosop,
Nogusime, and Nondimeri.
Kwanjigatur – the side of the market for women with hair on their vaginas
Beimatur – the side of the market for women with no hair on their vaginas
Weikaviiandu of Parembai banished and returned home to introduce sago
Biat and Ganja established a market with Kanganaman
Lutuman of Kararau established a market with Nogosop
Dambwi – Mai'imp's equal.

Chapter 20. Sawos – Wereman mother, daughters and related villages

Tumu – a stone head of ancient origin.
Domagwa – spirit mother figure with miraculous powers

Chapter 21. Sawos - Torembai mother daughters and related villages

Kabogabi and Kauawali – brothers fought causing men of Kanimbit haus
Tambaran to migrate to Kanimbit.

Chapter 22. Sawos – Magro, an ancient community and its demise.

Samanbo a woman of Torembai
Gunumbuk a man of Magro
Ururai, Samanbo's husband

Chapter 23. Sawos – Yamuk mother, daughter and related villages

Kumbianmeri – Introduced fish trade to Yamuk
Biogwa – a Yamuk woman with whom Kumbianmeri conversed and ate the offered fish
Mondomeri – an ancestral group who were allied with Suapmeri

Amen of Parembei used a cassowary bone to make a channel to Suapmeri
 Yambunei – an ancient community associated with ancient Suapmeri
 Olibinabi and Tondugumban – Ancestors of Yakiap
 Dumasau – a market place, where an ambush occurred in ancient times
 Gambenyagen of Torembei, knew of the planned attack and urged Torembei women to leave
 Maugan – former Luluai of Kimbian

Chapter 24. Other Sawos villages – Burui Kunai Division Ambunti sub District

Dr. Don Laycock former Linguist of Sepik Languages
 Wesibu – ancient camp of the migrants from the place of creation.
 Pangan channel into the Yamuk area
 Kambungwat – a haus tambaran of ancient times [Marap area]
 Luwingei – a camp of the migrating people
 Wumbunke – The younger brother from the two-brother myth. settled Marap 2
 Bumbia – Marap’s current market site
 Numbunkai, Kubuguta bush and Tinut camping places of the Migrating Sawos
 Kwonji – ancestor marked out the land of sago [Nogusime] clan of Namangoa
 Kurangambi [now abandoned] the local name for the village known as Sle
 Kinbei and Nyagala – Sle ancestors who lived at Kutangambi
 Mebinbit is the direction East {Sle informant}. To others Mebinbit was the place of creation
 Nimbuk of Sle – informant
 Ambiatkei of Yamuk came and settled at Sle
 Omeikon – son of Ambiatkei captured by Yamuks with his mother and taken to Yamuk
 Kaliaatju sago stand – belonging to Yamuk
 Yambiwus of Yamuk took a warning to Magro
 Wanbinoli haus tambaran of the Magro people
 Ambarap – former Sawos community
 Wakauwi family of Yakiap
 Sarum village is in a “mother relationship” with Yakiap

Chapter 25. Other Sawos villages – Sepik Plains Division Ambunti sub District

Nungwaimo, a former Sawos settlement near Burui -former owner of Burui lands
 Three Nungwaimo survivors [in 1970s] = living in Burui with their off-spring:
 Yiakamben of Cassowary clan
 Wangi of Limbum clan, and
 Suambo of Yam/Mami clan
 Nongumoli, a former small Nyaula Iatmul place near Pagwi – people now live at Japanaut
 Kwonji – Burui informant and Townsend’s interpreter
 Yembeli – Kwonji’s mother captured as a girl to be sacrificed to the haus tambaran, but
 raised by captors instead and eventually married in Japanaut.
 Anjik – Burui mythology’s first woman and originator of all foods.
 Simbrae, Kwonji’s ancestor came from Bugumbalikim – Wosera area
 Waimo – the place of the Jama ancestors
 Bowdimi of Bangwingei – informant and former prisoner at Ambunti gaol
 Keiwan – mythical place in the south from whence all man-kind’s ancestors came
 Tusola – means “Everything burnt” a reminder that at least one man must always guard the
 village against enemy raiders.
 Lai’imbia of Tibando/Jigaba [ancestral enemy opposite Avatip] ambushed by Moi people
 Pugunuk - Manja’s market place with Avatip
 Wasangu – a warrior of Moi
 Masember of Moi and his wife Winjinimbik, mother of their sick child.

Masember kill in an ambush
 Kangia of Muik
 Nungwaia village community– in a mother relationship with Moi villagers
 Kalgwa, Yagimi, Wegra – Moi men killed in fighting with Jaminja
 Kwimba ancestors came from Kringambi
 Kworowi – Kwimba’s enemy – Kworowi population disbursed. This clan was also the first to settle Aurimbit.
 Kwimba community’s true name is Sauwungei
 Kulombo a community near Moi and Manja described as “sort of nomads”
 Tangemdaua. A Kwimba woman speared with others in a Kampupu ambush
 Palipa [Tangemdaua’s husband] felled Simbukubi wife of Walgei with a spear
 An allied group attacked Kampupu in response
 Kwimba Widow Gambien and her daughters Gwiala, Ugwoli, Gwoli and Gumalma were Sent to Kampupu to buy peace.
 Kurungambi – ancestral of Kosimbit
 Sangiwomburei – An ancestral place of Aurimbit
 Jikambanagwa, a pregnant woman of Nogotimbit speared by Kambu people

Chapter 26. Iatmul Pre-history

C.G.Littler a/ Secretary of DDS&NA
 E.G. Hicks District Commissioner East Sepik District
 Dr. Jurg Smidt Anthropologist met at Yenchan
 Maliaimanga [alternate name Nogusimei was raped – causing the great flood.
 Naua [Noah]
 Masam -Naua’s brother who was responsible for resettling the people
 Gubat and Ginjit – men of Parembei established daughter village Malingai
 Yentchanmoro and Fulindu clans established daughter village Yenchan
 Kemen of Yenchan informant – relations between Nangarambi & Pai’ambit haus tambarans
 Damdagwa and Mabisaunogwi – Sengo girls accidentally left at Yambon
 Coffier – Anthropologist
 Gai, of Parembei involved in establishing daughter village Indabu in 1947
 Tangweiyabinjua of Nyauarengai
 Ambalangai – first ancestor of Japandai, a daughter village of Nyauarengai
 Pikwali ancestor of early Japandai
 Kambaramau – old Japandai
 Gumbeli of Maiwi migrated to Japandai and the first Japandai migration river
 Yaugusambi land between Japandai and Yambunumbu.
 Mamandai of Kandingai established Nyaula daughter village Yambunumbu
 Yabisaun of Japanaut a person of infamy 1923-1945 period
 Yentchanmangua – daughter village of Nyaula was a guard post against Parembei
 Samiangwat clan at Yentchanmangua fled, established Nyaula grand-daughter village Tego
 Timbunmeri a grand-daughter village of Nyaula
 Arinjone a grand-daughter village of Nyaula

Chapter 27. The Nyaula gods Tangweiyabinjua and Magisaun.

Tangweiyabinjua – Tambaran or god figure – Kandingai village.
 Magisaun – Tambaran or god figure – Nyauarengai village.
 Beisaligumban – father of Magisaun.
 Pamela Swadling – archaeologist and historian
 Douglas Newton – the late curator of the Rockefeller collection

Chapter 28. The origins and early history of the Manambu and the demise of Maumi [also known as Ngginyap, Mondigo and Tibando-Jibaga], Amei and Wankainkaiuk.

Alexandra Y Aikenvald – Linguist

Olu Manambu ancestor establisher of Manambu daughter village Yau'umbak

Ingimanok of Yau'umbak informant

Ingimanok [himself a grandfather in 1970] was Olu's five greats, grandson

Asiti, Mogombo and Garakoli Manambu villages of the past

Kwanamp and Maintapi – Manambu ancestors who were resident at Asiti

Simon Harrison – Anthropologist author of *The Mask of War*

Ngginyap – Manambu's enemy on the opposite bank of the Sepik

Ngginyap – known to Japandai people as Mondigo

Ngginyap – known to Manja people as Tibando-Jibagal

Yelindu and Angaji – Yama ancestor participants in the war against Ngginyap

Harold Woodman – pre-war ADO at Ambunti

Karandaman of Malu – important elder and informant of Malu

Apengali – ancestral figure from who the bush spirits [Mei] stole and were banished

Meimgauai – the mei bush spirit who stole pig meat and sago.

Mai were the forerunners to Humans

Apo [also pronounced Yapo] of Amei dressed and fought like a man.

Apo and Wulwei – Amei women survivors of the Amei massacre, went at Garamanbu.

Wabitok – Amei's and Ulo's market place near the Sepik

Labumo – an Amei settlement

Karowabi and Karagabat – Manambu warriors who led the raid against Amei

Kambai, a clansman of sympathiser with the Amei

Mondikumban of Amei escaped the massacre

Wapi and Maimai – sons of Mondikumban.

Mondikumban also had two daughters [no names] married at Avatip

Walmau – alternate name for Yau'umbak lagoon

Wankainkaiuk – annihilated by Amei warriors with Olu's support

Waan kany kaiuk “The Kaiuk with ears like bamboo” Translated from Iatmul

Mukun [presumably the Souli Moganai from Mt Ambunti]

Sibalawan – informant of Yau'umbak

Tamunt and Mindaman of Manambu led the raid against the Mukun

Gutubi of migrated from Mogombo at the time Avatip and Malu were established

Lisundu [a grand-father 1970] of Malu – informant, and great-great-grandson of Gutubi

Ianambunimber hill, ancestral place of Yambon

Malingot of Brugnowi – Informant

Nauwi Sauinambi MP and informant of Bangwis.

Chapter 29. The pre-history of the Lower Sepik communities

The Jolika collection de Young museum San Francisco

Chapter 30. Origins and early history of the Chambri lakes pottery, stone adze blades, stone monoliths and mosquito basket industries.

Kwonjigumban – a monolith at the Pondambit haus tambaran site at Aibom

Koronbelabun – stone face at Aibom

Angungwinjoa – stone face at Aibom

Tangwanauwi – stone monolith at Aibom

Mananganauwi – inscribed stone at Aibom
 Dougual – an ancestral – an early Aibom settlement near Mari & Changriman
 Kumbranggaui – the southern of two world hemispheres
 Apiangai – the northern of two world hemispheres
 Wereman haus tambaran of a pre-Aibom population
 Kambarameri – a spirit which caused the division between Aibom and Chambri
 Yambiyur – the Aibom ancestor who led the break with Chambri
 Aunumbuk – the name of Aibom’s ancient language
 Kurunumbuk – the name of the Chambri language, according to Aibom
 Yambiyur and Abran – Aibom ancestors involved with Parembei influence
 Patricia May and Margaret Tukson – authors of Traditional Pottery of PNG 1982
 Mwintumbangge – An Aibom male deity
 Kolimangge – An Aibom female deity also known as Yuman, Wusmangge,
 Ntshambeyaintshe, Wiremangge and Mempintshaua.
 Deborah Gewertz – Anthropologist
 Arank – Mosquito baskets
 Sungwinimei – mythical man who first made Chambri adze blades
 Eimasui – Sungwinimei’s pig
 Abangei – another ancestor credited with making the first adze blade
 Kanau – the name of the first adze blade
 Sumbuksaun of Chambri killed Yabiela of Parembei causing warfare.

Chapter 31. Origins and early history of the Chambri Lakes pottery, stone adze blades and stone monolith and mosquito basket industries.

Yundunmp and Weremunump were the first clans of Indingai
 Wamba of Indingai – informant
 Sumbuksaun – mentioned above
 Yembeli of Parembei speared by Sumbuksaun and beheaded
 Kiganmank a Chambri woman was killed and beheaded in pay back
 Yambungowi is the original name of Chambri Island.
 Sibinai on Timbunmeri Isl is where Kilimbit fled to avoid Parembei raids.
 Simindangwan on the Timbunmeri Ridges is where Garamambu positioned themselves
 Tibe and a woman called Kurunkurei of Indingai were killed in a Garamambu raid
 Koromogi – fight leader escaped pay back raid
 Karik. a leader killed when Parembei raided Chambri Isl again.
 Retreat to Mensuat, but Mensuats killed Yambundum, Meibia, Amin and a mother & child
 Retreat to Komambo in Changriman area
 Yumol – Yerikai’s ancestor
 Ulban and Kirimbank – two mythical wild pigs
 Yuaimeri – Yumol’s elder brother
 Dr. D.C.Laycock – Linguist.
 Bribaraiwent caught a stick with faces on it – Yerikai’s tambaran Mongoromeri
 Dau people of Mogutei
 Amei people of Narump
 Gar of Amei disappointed when rejected by Dau woman.
 Councillor Luman of Yerikai
 Mongoromeri and Pifien – two tambarans
 Wakgamur – a Yerikai big man
 Tumbul – Yerikai haus tambaran
 Kafus of the Cassowary and Sun clans – ancestor of Garamambu

Moon/Pig moiety equates to Iatmul/Sawos Niamei and is called Moiel at Garamambu
Sun/Cassowary equates to Iatmul/Sawos Niaui and is called Sengebi at Garamambu
Kamadei and Karandi ancestors of Garamambu Speared in a Chambri raid
Meimeminwan of Chambri struck by Oram with a stone axe
Oram of Garamambu leader of a raid against Chambri
Kwaru, Tungwa and Aribien Chambri were killed in this raid
Mobun of Milae killed by Garamambu

Chapter 32. The Sepik Hill Language communities of the Chambri Lakes

Dr. D.C.Laycock – Linguist.

Dr. Sachiko Hatanaka – Anthropologist

Meibarawan – fight leader of the Manabi people – killed at Nyaurengai

Koromogi – Garamambu fight leader

Tami – the 1973 leader of Mari's Karabio hamlet on Timbunmeri Island

Obalasuk of Changriman – Informant

Mambau, a Wanabi survivor who sought refuge at Mensuat

Tafukol of Garamambu angry when his daughter was sold by Tufui of Garamambu

Kapukurim of Chambri killed by Tufui to make amends for stolen daughter

Gawatuk – God of the Bisis people

Kaiapun – Yambiyambi ancestor

Luguturu – Bisis ancestral place.

Sinigamango – Kaiapun's daughter born of a swelling on his leg

Wandan and Bambwan of Yimbanagwan mountain at Garamambu

Elos – Wandan and Bambwan's mother

Asapariwan Elos' brother who was killed by her sons

Wudito of Mari

Bamata – ancestor of Manabi

Obalasuk informant – great-great-great grandson of Bamata

Kwamban and Yambageta – ancestors of Manabi

Wulo, a Yambiyambi ancestor

A'Andauwis, Kwamban & Yambageta's sister – given in marriage to Yambiyambi

Bagana and Mandambo – children of Bamata

Mumbunul and Kenjalu – the ancestors who established Changriman

Genap the first-born child at Changriman

Taumbo [of Niamei moiety] and Weitei [of Niaui moiety] and wives Selis and Bitawei – the original inhabitants of Mensuat. All emerged from a hole in the ground nine generations before 1973.

Kwakan of Mari landed on Peliugwi and liberated women dogs of mythology

Kabiagwi, Minginuri, Sangwabi, Sabinandimbit and Woliabi [all men] escaped when Peliugwi killed five Chambri women [remains of skulls photographed]

Maribika – Local Government Councillor – informant.

Yangaraman – Peliugwi's haus tambaran.

Maindandu – Aibom's mythical haus tambaran on Peliugwi Isl.

Bagadia – a Mari spirit which came from the Korosameri River. Bagadia became a Mari tambaran, a wooden Hunstein hook. "Bagadia" was also a war chant

Badia a man of Mari

Apsas – sister of Bagadia

Sebudas, an old woman of Small Mari, whose daughters' offspring populated Mari

Bobio and Babiowa of Mari originated under ground and were discovered by Aparu.

Kamamu – ancestral spirit of Milae

Wahikwa – ancestral spirit of Kamasiut
Abrandimi – ancestral spirit of Garamambu
Endafos mother of the three ancestral spirits
Wudito and Dokwawkwa of Mari
Gwamogwa of Big Mari and his sister Dipiambol
Wifianga of Manabi fled to Milae
Akei – Wifianga’s great great granddaughter could still Manabi language in 1973
Menga – informant of Milae

Chapter 33. The Creation of the “Bisis” World; the Story of Gawatuk.

Gawatuk – the God of the Bisis language communities
Luguturu – ancestral village of the Yambiyambi people
Andon and Sabobika – Spirit ancestors of Yambiyambi
Yumbo – ancestral woman of Yambiyambi
Bembe – Cargo cult
Baksim and Milang moieties at Yambiyambi
Atabogmon – The Changriman haus tambaran of ancient times
Kaiapun – Bisis ancestor – also see page 144
Mansau – Kaiapun’s equal
Bamata ancestor of the Baksim moiety

