PART 3
The Community of Men and Spirits

Is it necessary or even possible for an autonomous history of New Guinea society to be written? The answer to this question seems crucial for understanding what is happening in contemporary New Guinea. I doubt whether anyone would deny the reality of the revolutionary changes that are now taking place in the country, particularly in the economic and political spheres. On the level of material culture, a stone-age technology has given way in most regions to one based on steel and other products of Western industry. The labour and skills involved in the traditional subsistence economy are being drawn gradually into producing for a money economy. Political opportunities and institutions of a breadth and complexity undreamt of in pre-contact days are in the making at the local and national level. Following on the process of 'pacification', through which the elements of Western administration and the instruments of law and order were implanted, the whole country is being woven together by a web of communications and government. This has made it possible for the establishment of wider economic networks and political associations than could have been achieved before 'pacification' outlawed tribal warfare. Early examples of these wider post-contact structures were the expansion of the Te exchange alliances among the Enga of the Western Highlands to take in new groups and the establishment by Hahl of 'unions' of luluais among the Tolai of the Gazelle Peninsula. In the light of such revolutionary changes, induced by the continuing presence of European government officers, missionaries and entrepreneurs, it could be argued that the only legitimate history to write is that of the European Age in New Guinea and its marvellous achievements there. Such a history could be written. Many of the materials for it have survived and are barely touched. But if it simply took account of indigenous New Guinea society as one factor in the narrative, it would be unbalanced and even distorted in its perspective, because it would not be giving sufficient weight to numerically significant participants in the events described.

It is true that after nearly 90 years of continuous European endeavour in some coastal and island regions there is now only a small westernized elite playing a role of limited responsibility and significance in the economic and political life of the country. However, this elite is growing in numbers and significance as a result of the expansion in educational facilities and widening horizons of opportunity in the last two decades. While many of the ideas and aspirations of this group, as well as the language in which they express them, may be products of contact with Europeans and of their western education, their identity and character as people come from their social origins within their particular New Guinea community. Albert Maori Kiki's recent autobiography is an explicit expression of this identity. It could be argued from his case, as well as from those of other members of this elite, that they are reacting as New Guineans to a rapidly changing situation. In this situation new social groupings or perhaps even new classes are emerging—for example indigenous entrepreneurs especially in the Highlands and in the Gazelle Peninsula. Recent studies show that some of these entrepreneurs exhibit a remarkable receptivity to economic innovation which can be seen as a continuation of traditional ideas and values about wealth and prestige. Indigenous trading networks and

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1 G. A. M. Bus, 'The Te Festival or Gift Exchange in Enga (Central Highlands) of New Guinea', Anthropos, 1951, Vol. 46, pp. 823-4
marketing practices did not develop to the point where towns evolved. These are characteristic products of European administrative and economic needs. Yet, in the short history of their existence as important entities in the New Guinea landscape, towns have become rapidly expanding focal centres for indigenous immigrant groups, some of whom recreate existing social networks in a new setting, while others maintain strong ties with their rural communities.5

In each of the cases cited (i.e. elites, entrepreneurs and town immigrants) when account is taken of the indigenous social structure and identity underlying the realities of Western development, the need and the possibility for an investigation of patterns of continuity and change, within New Guinea society as such, is affirmed. This recognition provides grounds for arguing the need for constructing an autonomous history of this society and culture. Here I am using ‘autonomous’ in the sense suggested nearly a decade ago by J. R. W. Smail in his challenging argument for the writing of an autonomous history of South East Asia in general, and Indonesia in particular:

‘This autonomy, therefore, exists first of all in the historian’s mind, because it is primarily a methodological proposition. But it must have a correlative in the objective historical scene for if the historical scene were essentially the same as, say, the European one, it would not differ sufficiently to require significantly different concepts and categories. It is important to see just where this autonomy of the Indonesian historical scene lies. It must lie in the social structure and the culture; ‘autonomy’ here must mean something like ‘to some extent unique socially and culturally’. It cannot mean autonomous in the ordinary newspaper sense; ‘to some extent independent, standing on its own feet’ for this is no longer a methodological proposition but an evaluation of relative strengths.’6

What was relevant for Indonesia in 1961 may not be so for New Guinea now, for there are many ways in which this country is different from its neighbours. Indeed some authorities have gone so far as to suggest that New Guinea is so unique that it is an unprofitable venture to draw parallels with other areas.7 However, it is this quality of uniqueness that makes the writing of an autonomous social and cultural history a necessity, and at the same time a hazardous enterprise.

From the records of the earliest European contacts with New Guinea, the enduring impression has been one of islands inhabited by a multiplicity of peoples of marked differences in languages, culture and racial origins. These impressions were later confirmed when outsiders acquired some knowledge of local languages and customs. Recently, two anthropologists, P. Lawrence and M. J. Meggitt, have echoed the view of their fellow anthropologists in this regard:

‘The anthropologist, the administrative officer, and the missionary ultimately all face the same problem: geographically random and inexplicable diversity. Years of experience have taught us that the pattern in one community will not necessarily be repeated in the next, and that beyond the next mountain or the next river—even in the next village—we must be prepared to record, analyse or come to terms with the completely unexpected.’8

This multiplicity of small-scale communities, speaking diverse tongues and living in isolation from each other, is a well-established feature of pre-European New Guinea. Indeed there are many indications that there is some continuity about this reality. While communications, pacification and government have made new associations possible, it seems evident that within this European framework a fragmentary mosaic of local communities persists.9 Lawrence and Meggitt’s proposal that ‘the anthropologist, the administrative officer and the missionary’ come to terms with this, also needs to be followed by the historian. The facts dictate that the task of writing an autonomous history would logically begin with local and regional studies in depth of the sort completed by Valentine for the Lakalai, Oram for the Hula, and begun by Salisbury for the Tolai of Vanumami.10 The span and shape of particular studies would come from the nature and historical experience of the communities involved. The task has been shown to be difficult by these studies, but only a history woven out of such local studies could capture adequately the rich complexity and unique character of the new social configurations emerging in New Guinea.

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7 P. M. C. Hasluck (then Minister for Territories) stated on 23 August 1960: ‘The New Guinea situation is unique and comparisons with Africa and Asia are inapplicable.’ Australian Policy in Papua and New Guinea, Canberra, 1960, p. 11.


There are two further barriers hampering the historian in his task of writing an autonomous history of New Guinea. They are largely problems of perspective which need to be recognised and confronted when analysing the existing written records. The problems associated with the use of oral testimony have already been discussed.¹¹

First there has been an image shaped by some Europeans which depicts traditional society as being in a state of stability and equilibrium, held together in an age-old and unchanging structure.¹² Because they discerned no dynamic qualities, Europeans subscribing to this view believed that this changeless pattern was necessary for the maintenance of the identity of indigenous society. It was also assumed that these societies had in them no capacity for adaptation and no real possibility for survival under the force of European impact. Out of this image and the beliefs associated with it two assumptions have developed: that the static stone-age societies characteristic of New Guinea are of no account, having few if any positive qualities; or, alternatively, that all changes of any consequence or importance introduced into these societies are expatriate in origin and orientation, because there existed no potential in New Guinea for the formation of a new society relevant to the twentieth century. For instance, it was held by some officials in Papua in the 1930's that Papuans racially had a lower range of abilities than Europeans. In 1934 Dr William Marsh Strong, Chief Government Medical Officer, expressed this view in his official report on a scheme for training Papuan medical orderlies in Sydney:

"... It is the fashion nowadays, I understand, to look upon all races of men as more or less equal in inherited mental capacity ... Personally I must admit that I cannot swallow this theory ... I quite agree that Papuan and European overlap—that is that the best Papuan is superior to the worst European—but I cannot think that they are equal, and I think that most residents of Papua will agree with me ..."¹³

Four years later, in his reflections upon the potential for the emergence of an indigenous elite, Sir Hubert Murray echoed this view.¹⁴

Distortions and prejudices like these have less currency now than they used to. Their existence and their effects upon the reporting and analysis of indigenous life need to be taken into account.

The second barrier is closely allied to this. It is clear that there are basic differences between European social, political and cultural institutions and those found in New Guinea. This has made the understanding and analysis of them a difficult task for Europeans. Quite often witnesses in the earliest stages of contact have composed distorted and incomplete reports because they had neither the capacity for recognising their own social and personal preconceptions, nor the skills for entering into an objective understanding of a different society. More recent reports have reflected the refinement of social anthropology as a scientific discipline. Hence there is more chance that these later studies may be more objective and closer to reality. But in each case there needs to be some sorting out of the record from its particular social and intellectual context. In addition, each account needs to be seen as an image of a particular society, frozen briefly into an understandable pattern at a given point in the process of its development. There may be at that stage, as Hogbin has suggested for Busama society in 1944, a durability about its basic social units and relationships,¹⁵ or the 'state of equilibrium' in Siane social groupings in 1930 suggested by Salisbury.¹⁶ But, as both these anthropologists would agree, to understand the place of particular communities within the history of New Guinea, we need to be able to fit that fixed and systematic pattern into the sequences involved in the development of that community both before and after that point in time. Thus it may be possible to see how a particular society has gone through a process of continuity and change in its response to the presence of European influences and institutions.

Three broad areas of inquiry have been chosen to explore in more depth some of the problems associated with the writing of an autonomous history of New Guinea society and culture. They are: patterns of social structure and politics, cultural life particularly as seen in some of its artistic and religious manifestations and language in its social and cultural setting. Some of the possible range of raw materials available for this enterprise will be illustrated. This is only a beginning, a most tentative one at that. Perhaps as we reach the stage of completing an autonomous regional or national history, then our perspective will be clearer and we may have transcended an unbalanced concentration on either a European-centred or an indigenous-centred image of New Guinea. This new historical image would be closer to the reality of the emerging pluralist society.

¹¹See above Part 1 'Living Voices of the Past'.
¹³W. M. Strong, 'Papuans Admitted for Medical Training at Sydney University', Papua Annual Report 1933-4, p. 15
¹⁶R. F. Salisbury, From Stone to Steel: Economic Consequences of a Technological Change in New Guinea, Melbourne, 1962, p. 208
If an autonomous history of New Guinea society and culture is to be written, then one of the most logical starting points would be to ask how the ‘new social configuration’, about which some anthropologists speak, has evolved and what elements of continuity and change can be detected in it. Another way of posing this central question would be to ask how alien institutions and ideas, imported by Europeans, become integrated into the lives of New Guinea communities and in what ways have traditional indigenous institutions been adapted or modified by the people in the process of social change brought about by the coming of the Europeans. This is necessarily an ambitious and far-reaching task requiring the historian to expand his vision and skills beyond his traditional ambit and demanding a clear knowledge of the state of traditional communities at the stage of first contact as the base from which continuity and change can be measured. One eminent practitioner has recently reaffirmed that history is ‘concerned with all those human sayings, thoughts, deeds and sufferings which occurred in the past and have left present deposit; and it deals with them from the point of view of happening, change and the particular.’

What then is needed is a manageable slab of the particular in this rapidly changing society. Perhaps a start can be made by choosing the village as the most manageable unit with which to deal. It could be considered either as a total unit within which various patterns of relationship and structure can be detected and changes in these elements traced, or a wider context could be seen in which a linguistic or ethnic grouping of ‘one people’ is woven out of clusters of villages. Oral traditions gathered in particular villages suggest that in pre-European times a people’s sense of their identity and history centred on groupings more basic than present day village units and sometimes cut across these. But the arena in which many of the significant events of their history took place was the village or villages where they resided. Their material life, their gardening, their land tenure systems and their economic, religious and political activities as a group were often enacted within their village territory or its surroundings. By taking the village as the most manageable unit we may also provide a means of assessing impact, interaction and change in the European age because both missionaries and administrators very often viewed New Guinea as an agglomeration of villages. C. D. Rowley has given some of the assumptions underlying the approach of the government officer to this situation:

‘...A village for administrative purposes is, at the minimum, a group assumed to have common interests, with which administrative contact is made at a particular place. But the difficulties are reflected in this most interesting compilation [the Village Directory]. Sometimes no such central place could be established to the satisfaction of the government officer; so that the Directory lists some people in their ‘census divisions’ only. Some names are common to three or four sites, which may be listed as separate villages, distinguished by numerals. Sometimes two, three, or even four names apply to what the officer had decided to form one ‘village’. For some highland areas, notation shows that the name given to a group is that of a central dancing ground—where those who live apart in clans, or even conjugal families, come together for ritual.’

Despite this use of the term as an administrative convenience, Rowley still suggests that it is perhaps a useful way of considering New Guinea society:

‘So, while using the term, I have to qualify it by conceding that a great number of New Guineans live under conditions where either the number of dwellings on one site, or the permanence of the dwelling place, does not justify its use...

Although so many may be regarded as living under ‘pre-village’ conditions, there are of course thousands of true villages, often made up of numbers of clans, and forming permanent centres from which people use the lands and waters which are by custom theirs...’

In some instances traditional patterns of residence within villages have been profoundly altered by government and mission influence. Finney mentions how in the Goroka area in cases ‘where mission pressures have been successful’ men’s houses have been removed from the positions which separated them from the houses in which women, children and pigs resided. He goes on to say:


Before pacification, villages were stockaded and located on ridges for ease of defence. Now many have been relocated on lower ground to be near roads and crops...7

Thirty years earlier among the Siuai of southern Bougainville Douglas Oliver noted a similar change in residence patterns brought about by Administrative decision:

'Village groups, numbering from fifty to a hundred and fifty inhabitants each, were created during the 1920's by Australian colonial officials; the aboriginal settlements were made up of tiny two—and three—house hamlets.'8

In a more dramatic case, Richard Thurnwald points up the profound moral and social effects of a government directive to one Buin community in 1920 to realign their village housing plan. This meant that aristocrats' houses were placed opposite those of commoners, thus infringing the village moral code for the sake of making the periodic census an easier task for the government officer. Thurnwald argues that there were tragic results from this directive. Tension grew to a point where some aristocrats were involved in plotting the death of a policeman and these men were hanged for their part in the plot.9

These and other cases raise the important issue that, once we accept the village as a workable unit for the construction of an autonomous social history in particularity and depth, we are faced with tackling the dynamics and changes in social structure and inter-group relations within the village communities studied. Here the historian needs to engage in some of the tasks of the social anthropologist in order to build up the narrative and sequence of continuity or change occurring in these communities. A sorting out of the elements making up the structure and the patterns and alignments of relationships would be a starting point. It would be necessary to adopt an approach like that suggested by Jan Vansina when he proposed the use of 'process-models' in the study of change in African communities.10 The conclusion drawn by Raymond Firth after his brief study of the changes which Koita groups had undergone between 1910 and 1951 in Kilakila village gives some indication of the analytical framework within which historians would need to build their study of such a community:

'This brief account shows that even in a village close to the capital of the Territory, and subjected to long European influence, some major principles of social alignment are still provided by traditional forms...

The old thesis put forward by Rivers, that in a situation of culture change the material culture and technological system is first affected; then the social structure and finally the religious system, does not hold in modern conditions. The religious system in its gross structural forms may be radically altered, and basic aspects of the social structure such as the kinship system remain. It may be put forward as a hypothesis indeed that as culture change in the technological, economic and religious system becomes intensified, there is a strong tendency to adhere more consciously to the system of kinship grouping in part as a symbolic representation of cultural individuality.11

Firth's companion study on Mailu communities between 1915 and 1951 proves equally fruitful (A 16).

Within this framework of social relations there is an interesting historical question which could be pursued with some profit. It has been assumed for a number of generations among Europeans that New Guinea had little or no status differentiation between social groups on the basis of heredity. Like most generalizations about New Guinea society this one lacks precision. Besides the Buin case already mentioned above, where Thurnwald found distinctions between aristocrats (mumira) and commoners (kitele) and the well known Trobriands case where the highest ranking chiefs have come from the Tabalu sub-clan of the Malasi clan,12 there seems to be a number of other quite well-documented cases. These included such groups as the Tsumun of Buka Island,13 and the Tanepoa of Manam Island.14 The question which warrants some exploration in depth is the role of such groups of higher status in the post-contact history of their communities. Have they lost their traditional status or influence or have they adapted readily to the new possibilities for power and wealth created by the coming of the Europeans into their midst? Have the outlawing of war and the demands created by European government and economics contributed to the rise of new groups to challenge the dominance of the aristocrats? Vicedom and Tischner, who suggested that 'definite social stratification' traditionally existed within the Mbowamb of Mount Hagen, detected in 1938 the rise of new groups in the post-contact era:

'... The presence of Europeans not only led to an increased prosperity of the whole population, but also to an

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13R. Blackwood, *Both Sides of Buka Passage*, pp. 45-53
emancipation of the poorer people in this that they prefer to work for the Europeans rather than the NUIM. As the WUA NUIM are no longer able to act ruthlessly towards the poor because of the presence of the administration, a further improvement in the lot of the poorer people can hardly be prevented. We therefore notice in this province too, how the mere presence of the Europeans deeply influenced and transformed the life of the people.\textsuperscript{15}

Thurnwald also noticed a similar trend in Buin where a new class of wealthy men were on the ascendant challenging the position of the mamira.\textsuperscript{16} The evidence provided by C. H. Wedgwood in 1934 and by K. O. L. Burridge twenty years later about the Tanepoa of Manam suggests trends which may be explored with some profit when supplemented with material from other sources (A 17).

When we take our inquiry a stage further to consider aspects of political life, the relevance of making an analysis in terms of a unit like the village and its related groupings becomes even more apparent. First, however, it should be stated that the need for an autonomous history of New Guinea political life seems patent clear. This investigation is urgently demanded because an almost universal concern about contemporary political change and issues requires a background of accurate and systematic historical studies if it is to be meaningful and informed. A balanced study, incorporating indigenous politics, has now become feasible, because of a growing volume of excellent anthropological data and insights concerning this aspect of New Guinea society.

The most fruitful insight to emerge from anthropological investigations, particularly with reference to Highland communities, is the concept of ‘stateless society’ politics. Developed originally to characterize certain African political systems, it seems to provide a quite workable framework for analysing the patterns of traditional politics and the post-contact situation. The original formulation is to be found in the distinction Meyer Fortes and E. Evans-Pritchard made in 1940 between ‘primitive states’ and ‘stateless societies.’

‘... The other group, which we refer to as Group B, consists of those societies which lack centralized authority, administrative machinery, and constituted judicial institutions—in short which lack government—and in which there are no sharp divisions of rank, status or wealth ... Those who consider that a state should be defined by the presence of governmental institutions will regard the first group as primitive states and the second group as stateless societies.’\textsuperscript{17}

When this approach is applied to New Guinea it helps to reveal some of the essential dynamics and fluidity of indigenous traditional politics. Although as we have already found there is grave danger of distortion in generalizing about this society, R. F. Salisbury’s picture of the traditional system is a helpful starting point:

‘Melanesia is an area of multitudinous small-scale societies, all with fierce egalitarian and individualistic ideologies. A village, or collection of hamlets, comprising 150 to 400 individuals, was—indigenously and in the early stages of colonial administration—the effective political unit. It was independent of most other villages, with which it fought, arranged alliances, married or traded; it was an independent, sovereign unit. No village would accept the domination of another village, and wars were continually fought to avenge slights to village self-esteem, which usually involved the theft of pigs or the seduction of women.

Equally, within villages, no individual would willingly acquiesce to domination by individuals. This involved a virtual absence of defined political “offices” with occupants who were accepted as having legitimate authority ... Leadership was accepted, when the situation demanded, from individuals who had proved their abilities; and able leaders, with a sense of “brinkmanship”, could continuously produce power ... ’\textsuperscript{18}

Eighty years earlier, in 1885, Rev. W. G. Lawes, a practical-minded but scholarly missionary, writing in quite different historical circumstances and employing a very different frame of reference, described in similar though rather static terms, the political systems he had confronted in British New Guinea:

‘There is practically no government in New Guinea. Chiefs are numerous everywhere, but they have very little power. Here and there a chief of more force of character, or greater fighting powers than his fellows exercises authority over other chiefs or villages, but these are rare. We look in vain for chiefs like those in the South Seas, such as Pomare, Maafu, Thakombau, or King George of Tonga. There are different orders of chiefs: one is a feast chief who takes the lead at feast times, and has plenty of gardens, etc; another is a robber chief, whose office it is to plunder travelling parties, and make raids on small and weak villages; another is the fighting chief—he it is who organises and leads the warriors of his people. But the biggest chief, the nearest approach to real chiefainship, is one who stays at home, who is supposed to control and hold in check the more impetuous spirits of the robber and warrior. His word carries great weight in all the councils of the tribe, but he has very little control over individuals, and receives very little homage or respect. Every injured and aggrieved person has to seek his own redress or avenge his own insult. There are no chiefs competent to make treaties or agreements that shall be binding on the whole tribe. They cannot ensure that their provisions and conditions will be carried out...’\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{19} W. G. Lawes, ‘Memorandum on the Natives of New Guinea’, British New Guinea Report for 1886, appendix D, pp. 24-6
At first sight it may seem hard to believe that Lawes and Salisbury are describing similar political realities. In one sense of course they are not concerned about similar situations. Lawes, after nearly a dozen years' residence in the Port Moresby area, was reflecting on concrete evidence from the Moto-Koiai-Koitapu groups in this area and perhaps from other coastal communities east of Port Moresby. Salisbury, on the other hand, drew his data from his anthropological investigations among the Siane people of the Eastern Highlands in 1953 and among the Tolai communities in the Gazelle Peninsula in 1961 as well as from current findings by other anthropologists over a wide range of New Guinea. Nevertheless, while eighty years of intellectual and social history separate these two accounts (which may give a more objective and scientific sense of political realities to Salisbury's view) they both delineate basic elements of traditional politics. A sense of the contrast between the earlier and the more recent approaches to understanding the patterns of traditional politics can be grasped by comparing Dr Albert Hahl's 1897 report on the Tolai of Blanche Bay (A 18) with K. E. Read's description of village politics in the upper Markham Valley in 1945 (A 19).

Once this difficult task of establishing the nature and patterns of traditional politics is established there remains the central task in this historical investigation. What elements in the political structure have endured and what have changed under the impact of European intervention in the lives of these communities and in what ways have alien institutions been grafted into existing stateless society institutions? Again some guidelines are provided by anthropologists which may prove useful for investigating particular communities. But at this stage the work of historical investigation has not really begun. A brief review of some of the major anthropological findings may stimulate this necessary work for historians.

Paula Brown, employing evidence mainly from the Chimbu area of the Highlands, argues that the coming of Australian administration led to an expansion and transformation rather than a withering of indigenous political institutions. Pre-contact politics were in a state of anarchy in that each leader struggled for power without there being any clearly defined relations of subordination between one leader and another. It was only when the Australians came that these leaders gained powerful sanctions by which they could wield more authority. But in the process they became satraps in the new power structure. Her interpretation seems to suggest a lack of continuity between the old political order and the new.20 R. F. Salisbury proposed what he termed 'a supplementary interpretation' to this. He argued that 'despotism is a recurrent feature of New Guinea Highlands political structure' both before and after the coming of European government.

'Although the indigenous ideology was one of democratic equality and competition, the empirical situation ... was one of serial despotism by powerful leaders. The behaviour of lesser leaders involved competition and insecurity and is what has usually been described. It accorded with the ideology. But most important political decisions were made through other channels, and to regard the political reality as identical with the ideology is to mistake functional anthropological reconstruction for fact. Into this situation Australian administration, first by appointed headmen (lulua) and later through elective Local Government Councils, introduced many new factors. Once we recognize the existence of indigenous despotism, these new factors can be analysed in terms of their effects in promoting or reducing the arbitrariness of despotic control ...21

There seems good evidence to suggest that the almost legendary Chimbu big man Kavagl was one such despot (A 20).

Finally, the interpretation proposed by K. E. Read has given productive insights to most studies of indigenous politics since its publication in 1959. He suggested that there seemed at that stage a quality of durability about certain aspects of New Guinea political systems.

'... The qualities which distinguish the successful leader in the traditional sociocultural system are essentially the same as those possessed by men who occupy positions of influence in the changing system which includes both whites and blacks. It is, I think, a misrepresentation to conceive of the situation in New Guinea ... as one in which two entities which we call cultures are said to meet, with the implication that one of these entities exerts a constant pressure which the other resists. In New Guinea this may serve well enough to describe a situation of "initial contact", wherein native peoples become aware for the first time of Europeans. But with the subsequent extension of European influence the situation is no longer one which may be envisaged as the interaction of two discrete entities. It is more profitable to think of the situation as one where whites and blacks are participating in a developing social system. In this new social configuration there are status positions from both the traditional and the European systems, and the new status positions arising from the interaction of the two. To the younger people—those who are brought up under the changed conditions—there is seldom a one-to-one choice between maintaining "that which always was" or embracing the completely new. More frequently, many of the status positions and the avenues for achievement which were open to their fathers simply do not exist. But there are new positions and new opportunities for the individual with the necessary breadth of vision to perceive them. This is not to say that the "misfit" may


recent development of a centralized administration in the decades after the Second World War European influence flowed from scattered and decentralized pockets of control. This lack of cohesion and smallness of size must be taken into full account. Once more, we come back to the need to see things in their concrete particularity with all the problems inherent in this necessary approach.

But given these considerations Read’s second theme suggests the need to examine closely just what avenues for achievement were closed by the force of European presence. Why did particular aspects of political life such as warfare and dancing decay under the impact of pacification and missionary work? Can we trace the process of erosion and decline? But more significantly can we see the process at work by which new substitute institutions and activities replaced ones in the traditional order?

Beyond this phase of initial contact which is so important for assessing what avenues of achievement were closed as well as what new opportunities were opened, there are a number of other phases which need to be considered. Salisbury’s study of despotism examined two broad periods: that of government luluaia and that of elective local government councils. Another recent study of the Kuma of the Wahgi Valley adopted a similar approach:

‘I propose to analyse this changing system by describing three phases in their political development — firstly, the system that pertained when the first patrols entered the Wahgi Valley; secondly, the system that resulted from European efforts at control; and, finally, the patterning of present-day politics in terms of the interplay between the influence of these two earlier phases and political institutions of Western type which have been introduced in recent years.’

Like the guidelines given by such concepts as stateless society politics, these divisions into broad phases provide the historian with a framework within which to conduct his investigations. The validity and meaning of these insights and this framework will only finally emerge when historians have launched into studies of particular developments and changes in particular communities. Then the mosaic of the new social configuration will emerge to reveal some sense of perspective in time by which contemporary New Guinea may be understood.

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A16 Continuity and Change in Mailu, 1915–1951

These two studies give some sense of the changes brought to the social structure of Mailu villages through nearly forty years of contact.

a) Malinowski’s View of the Village Community, 1915

Bronislaw Malinowski arrived in Papua at the age of thirty in September 1914 and spent the next six months until February 1915 gathering material for a report on the Mailu people. He lived most of the time from December to February in a village on Mailu Island, although some of his informants had spent time in Mailu villages on the mainland opposite. Malinowski’s work was supported by the Robert Mond Travelling Studentship of London University, though he also received some assistance from the Australian federal government. C. G. Seligman, whose major work The Melanesians of British New Guinea had been published in 1910, suggested this as an area for study and A. C. Haddon also visited him while he was in the field. Rev. W. J. V. Saville of the L. M. S. and a local resident, Alfred Greenaway, also gave him some guidance. Seligman had put Malinowski in touch with Ahuia Ova (A 3) through whom he was able to acquire some knowledge of indigenous life while he learnt the Motu language. To Mailu he took a Motuan cook-boy, Igua Pipi, who acted as his interpreter. This language was his main means of communication with his Mailu informants and Igua Pipi became for him a “personified pocket dictionary” through whom he refined his understanding of this language. He drew his evidence from two main sources, direct observations and the questioning of informants. By 1915 the village community had begun to feel the effects of contact. Government officers had been working in the area from soon after 1888 and the L. M. S. had a resident missionary there from 1884. Rev. W. J. V. Saville has also left a description of the village community in his In Unknown New Guinea, especially chapters 2, 3 and 4. His letters to his family in W. J. V. Saville Papers, M. L. uncatalogued MSS., no. 328, also contain a few glimpses of village life in Mailu from 1903 to 1933. The personal background to Malinowski’s important field work can be drawn from B. Malinowski, A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term, pp. 3-98 passim.
PLATE 4: Lohia Maraga and other Koiari leaders
O. Stone, A Few Months in New Guinea, London, 1880

PLATE 5: Boi Vagi of Port Moresby
O. Stone, A Few Months in New Guinea, London, 1880
TYPE OF MAILU VILLAGE; ITS SURROUNDINGS; VILLAGE BUILDINGS

Perhaps the most important social division among the Mailu is that into village communities. These are the real political, economic, and sociological units of the Mailu tribe. The Mailu villages of the Western Papuoo-Melanesian type, consist of one compact group of houses, as opposed to the scattered villages of the Southern Massim. They are extremely regularly built, more so than the villages of the Sinaughako, which can be considered representative of the Western Papuoo-Melanesians of the Central District. They were all built on land, the houses standing on piles. All the villages with one exception—Gima—are now built on the shore, and they all represent the same type ... They consist of two parallel rows of houses, forming a street some 10 to 15 metres broad, and, usually, they are quite close to the beach. Thus in Mailu there is a belt of some 30 metres between the high-water mark and the houses. The same holds good with reference to Borebo, Loupon, Tselai, Banro, Giagia, etc. ... Some villages, however, like Kurere, are about 100 metres distant from high-water mark.

The fronts of the houses are always turned towards the street, so that the fronts of the two rows face each other, while their backs are turned to the sea and to the gardens ... There is again a space of 10 to 20 metres between the village and the gardens.

A village consisted in olden days of two kinds of buildings—the family houses and the men’s club houses, or Dibus. Nowadays the latter class has almost completely died out in the Mailu district though it still flourishes among their eastern neighbours, the Southern Massim. The houses and Dibus were differentiated by their position in the village. The former stand transversely, ranged in two rows, each house with its long axis perpendicular to the line of the street. The Dibus stood in the middle of the street, with their longitudinal axes coinciding with the median line of the street.

The style of building of the houses and of the Dibus was positively stated to have been also different, though this information refers to the village of Mailu only.

The difference in structure between the ordinary houses in Mailu village and a Dibu was that the latter was built in the Southern Massim style. That means that the ridge line of its roof was markedly concave, instead of forming a straight line sloping slightly downwards from front to rear. Again, the arrangement of piles which form the foundation structure is different in the case of the Mailu and in that of the Southern Massim ...

... As temporary erections may be mentioned the ceremonial platforms made during the feast for the killing and distribution of pigs and for the Giow dance; ... the small huts and shelters usually erected near the houses, on the beach, where people go to sleep during the stifling hot nights at the end of the dry season; and similar structures in the gardens and on distant points of the sea beach, which were used when gardening or fishing ...

VILLAGE COMMUNITY AS SOCIAL UNIT

As said at the beginning of this chapter, the village community is a most important social unit in the tribal life of the Mailu. As a matter of fact, the village community is a body of people living perpetually, and normally, in very close contact, to the exclusion of all others—at least under ordinary conditions, feasts, trading visits, etc., being the exceptions. They see each other constantly, they co-operate in many ways, they are all on permanently friendly, and fairly intimate, terms, though the bonds between clansmen and kinsmen and those of personal friendship were very prominent within the village, and were by no means merged in the broader and looser ties of village solidarity.

Strangers are not often to be seen in the villages, even at present, and in olden days they must have been quite exceptional.

The difference between such a closely-linked village community, bound by permanent local proximity and by constant contact, and a community, even such as that of the Southern Massim who live in scattered hamlets, is undoubtedly very prominent, and although I had but a short time in which to study the Southern Massim, the effect of this difference was apparent.

Thus the village community is the local unit of the Mailu. It is also the real political unit. Both in aggressive and defensive warfare fellow-villagers would, of course, always fight on the same side, and in raids the whole male population would very likely take part as a single unit, though the war canoes were separately allotted to the various clans and sub-clans ... Again, in the economic sense, the village community was the joint owner of land as far as certain rights were concerned; it was also the joint owner of fishing rights and, though the hunting rights were subdivided among the clans, it was the village, as a whole, that possessed the final economic benefit of those rights, as far as actual consumption of the goods is concerned... In the legal arrangements and institutions the village very often functioned as one body, as one ‘legal person’ ... Again it was so in the giving of the feast, though the individuality of the clan then came strongly to the fore, especially in Mailu. The village as a body also played an important part ...

Thus the village was the real palaq of the Mailu man, and its limits formed the social horizon within which he moved.

THE DUBU (CLAN AND SUBCLAN)

Description of Clan, Subclan, and their Relation: the Clubhouse

The village community is not an entirely homogenous social body. It is divided into clans and subclans. These subdivisions possess a distinctly local character; the houses of a clan always form one block in the village, and usually there is a certain distance between the different blocks. The houses of a clan lie on both sides of the street, so that at one end of the village there is one clan, then after one has passed its houses one enters the next, and so on. In other words, the village consists of a series of local subdivisions ranged in a row. The native name for a clan is Aira, or Dubu. The first name is as a rule used with reference to the rather large clans of Mailu village, where the term Dubu is usually applied to the small subclans. On the mainland, where the clans are smaller than in Mailu, the term Dubu is universally applied to clan, subclan, and clubhouse, which last is the original meaning of the word. Originally the word Aira meant side, spot, direction—it had the same meaning as the Motuan word Kaha.

Each clan is, or more correctly was, connected with a house, or clubhouse, of the men (Dubu), which stood in the middle of the street: between the houses of the clan. The style of this building has been outlined in the preceding section. No women or children were allowed to enter the Dubu, nor was it safe for a stranger to go there without an invitation. The young unmarried men, after ‘initiation’ ...
used to sleep there, as also the widowed old men, and at times the married men made similar use of the Dābu.

Thus the clan was a local unit with the Dābu as a symbol, so to say, of its individuality and independence, and it is not merely a figure of speech to say that the village was not a texture of Dābus (clans and subclans), but a juxtaposition of these. The clans were fairly independent, and the forces of social cohesion in a village community which bound the different clans together were much weaker than those holding together the members of a clan. Thus, whenever there were emigration, colonization, or gregarious shifting of people, it was either a clan (or clans), or else a subclan (or subclans) that moved. Thus, for instance, in the two migrations which took place from Mailu, it was the clan of Orūdo that moved to settle in Table Bay. Again, when the village of Kurē was founded in Mailu, several subclans of Maradi Dū and Morū moved there, no men of Boys Dū or Uramiga joining them.

The clans of the Mailu are exogamous; they are also patrilocal and with paternal descent. In other words, the wife always comes from outside the clan; she joins her husband, moves to his home, and the children belong always to the same clan as their father.

There is, however, no tradition of a common male ancestor of the clan, and as genealogies are seldom remembered beyond the third generation back, it is, of course, impossible to ascertain how far the clansmen are really related by blood.

The number of clans varies, and so does their size. Historical events, such as a raid in which one particular clan suffered exceptionally, or such as the exodus to Kurē, for example, in which two clans furnished the majority of emigrants, easily account for the varying sizes of the clans and for their unequal number.

There are four Auras in Mailu village, each having had its Dābu-house in the olden days . . .

. . . There seems to be always a headman in each clan, or, more correctly speaking, perhaps, a man of greatest importance, whose opinion commands a certain amount of respect, and who would act as the authority and representative on all occasions in which the whole clan was concerned. The position of such a clan headman was, however, far from being clear and well defined, and I think that in reality there was no clan headman as such, but that he was rather the most important and influential among the headmen of the subclans or else the headman of the most important and influential subclan.

Each clan is subdivided into subclans, which are also local—that is, the houses of each subclan form a separate group within the clan's block. The subclan is also to a certain degree an independent social unit. As mentioned before, they are the units of cohesion in all cases when a village community splits up. Again, each subclan has its headman, whose position, functions, and authority within the subclan are very well defined; much better, indeed, than is the case with the headman of the clan.

It is obvious that the subclan is also patrilocal and patrilineal. But though I have recorded a considerable number of pedigrees, I was unable to ascertain the actual relationship, by blood, of the members of any of the subclans of Mailu village . . .

. . . In order to make clear the relation between the clans and subclans, it must be first remarked that the latter are always subdivisions of the former. The main difference between a clan and a subclan was, first, that a clan had an independent Dābu, whereas a subclan always had to share it with other subclans. Again, a clan would act as an independent unit in giving the big annual feast, Medina; hence also it was called Medina dābu, in distinction to the other meanings of the word Dābu (i.e. subclan and clubhouse).

Sociological Character of Clan and Subclan. — As in the case of all other social groups, it is only the study of their respective functions which makes clear the relation between the clan and the subclan . . .

. . . The social structure of the clan and subclan must be borne in mind; the subclan consists of a few houses, one of which is the 'chief's house,' and the house of the Dābu headman. The clan consists of a few subclans, of which again one is the most important, and its headman occupies the somewhat ill-defined position of the clan headman.

The subclan is, or was in the past, the joint owner of the large seawarding canoes, the headman being the owner en titre . . . Again, the large Giama nets are owned jointly by the subclan.

The clan is, as often mentioned, the joint owner of the Dābu and the real giver of the annual Medina feast. The master of the clan was also master of the Dābu. The feast was given by a clan as a whole . . . but the various headmen of the subclans acted in turn as masters of the Medina.

. . . Thus at feasts the individuality of the subclans was not entirely merged in that of the clan.


b) Firth's Study of Mailu, 1951

In October and November 1951 Professor Raymond Firth of the London School of Economics and Political Science spent a month in New Guinea doing field work. He states the scope and objectives of this research: 'I had little opportunity for detailed inquiry, but I was able to collect some information about the social conditions of a few communities, as part of a more general appraisal of social and economic change. In particular, I was interested in the problem of their retention or loss of major social alignment over the years since the last monographs describing the culture were published. By social alignment is meant here that part of social structure consisting in the series of specific groupings and gradings in which the people arrange themselves for social action. An important element of social alignment in this area is the system of kinship units commonly termed clans.' He built his study on the information about the village community provided by both Malinowski and Saville. Since their work Firth found that there had been great changes in the people's economic life. 'New standards of consumption are before them. Opportunities for individual differentiation in occupation, in wealth and in living patterns are open to them through increased European contact, in a way unknown in the earlier years.' Traditional art forms had almost vanished and ritual institutions were 'gravely modified', while mission
influence was profound. In this setting his portrayal of social alignments and the effects of contact upon them is instructive. He concentrated his study on Boru and Domara villages, both mentioned by Malinowski and Saville but neither previously described in detail. At the same time Firth conducted a companion study of the Koita people at Kila Kila, drawing on Seligman’s description of 1910 as a point of reference to analyse the effects of change. See R. Firth, ‘Notes on the Social Structure of Some South-Eastern New Guinea Communities, Part II: Koita’, *Man*, 1952, Vol. 52 (123), pp. 86-9. Firth’s studies, based on such brief field work, can only give some clues to the pattern of social history in these communities. Similar materials for the study of continuity and change in other communities can be found in the following: C. S. Belshaw, ‘Recent History of Mekeo Society’, *Oceania*, 1951, Vol. 22, pp. 1-23; H. A. Brown, ‘The Elema in Present-day Papua and New Guinea’, *Papua and New Guinea Scientific Society Proceedings*, 1962, pp. 27-44; J. Nilles, ‘The Kuman People: A Study of Cultural Change in a Primitive Society in the Central Highlands of New Guinea’, *Oceania*, 1953, Vol. 24, pp. 1-27, 119-31.

The village of Boru, as I saw it in 1951, approximated very closely to the ... traditional description. It was set just back from the beach in the centre of Baxter Bay. It consisted of 21 ordinary dwellings, 10 of them backing close on the beach and 11 more facing them across a narrow street. In addition to these was one vacant dwelling on the rear row, in course of repair. A London Missionary Society church and teacher’s house were at the eastern end of the village, and a large new house belonging to a mixed-blood trader stood some distance at the back. Socially, the community was divided into five primary patrilineal named clans (daba). These were cited in a routine way which suggested an order of precedence, as follows: Warata; Womong; Gundubu; Lap; Oriunu. It was stated that the clans are not exogamous, but that close patrilineal kin, e.g. those calling each other nahu, brother and sister, may not marry. The last wedding that took place, about three months before I came, was of a Warata man to a Warata woman. His father was dead, and his mother, a Womong woman had re-married, to a Womong man. For lack of ground the newly married pair were living temporarily on Oriunu ground ... There is a definite aggregation of dwellings of men belonging to the same clan, the grouping being according to precedence, from the eastwards of the village. But the blocking-out of houses into clan groups is approximate, not exact. If in earlier days the pattern was indeed invariable, then this is a feature where modification has occurred. But this is doubtful. Nowadays, for lack of a house site or other reason a man may sometimes build his house on his wife’s ground, and this may well have occurred also in the traditional culture. In all such cases, matrilocal residence does not affect the clan affiliation of the children. If a Womong man, for instance, marries a Warata woman and lives with her in her house, or on her land, their children are of Womong clan.
is probably less. But the exploitation of copra has led to some new ways of using labour and capital.

Mention has been made of the copra association in Domara. This controls a smoke-drier for copra, designed by three men of the village and built by village labour—a wood-and-thatch structure about 30 feet by 12 feet. The trade store, financed initially from the copra association, and with a turnover of about £320 in the nine months since its inception, carried a stock illustrative of the present-day consumption interests of the Mailu people; bags of rice, cocoa, soap, baking powder, kerosene, kgs of nails, enamel mugs and washbasins, cotton vests, waistcoths, leather belts. The position of the pig is an index of the conflict between traditional and modern cultural values. In the payment of bridewealth by the Mailu, one or two pigs are commonly given. But at Boru recently there has been discussion about the advisability of getting rid of their pigs. It is argued that they make the village untidy, and that they are uneconomic. When the people were persuaded by the Village Constable—a local Womong man—to put one cocoanut in the centre of the village for every nut given to the pigs it was discovered that each pig got about eight nuts a day. Considering the present high price of copra, it was concluded that this was waste. At a meeting of village councillors, opinion was divided between keeping the pigs in sties, and disposing of them altogether. If they are given up, then some substitute will have to be found for them as an element in the bridewealth.

But it is interesting that though the symbols of bride value may thus change, the notion that it is important to present concrete equivalents of bride value persists strongly, among the Mailu as among most other New Guinea peoples. Mailu bride values as quoted to me ranged from £5 and a pig from a poor man, up to £20 and two pigs from a rich man (at Boru), and to two pigs, 30 or so armshells, £80 and about 30 fibre skirts (at Domara).

Thus, while some aspects of the social organisation are modified by the new economic conditions, others are retained with considerable intensity. This is so with the values attached to armshells. These are still very important tokens of wealth, and are displayed with pride. They are used not only as an expression of the more symbolic elements of culture such as bride values, but also in ordinary commercial exchange such as the transfer of canoes. The people of Domara, for instance, play a significant role in the eastward trading movement of pigs and canoes, and a westward movement of canoes and armshells. A small canoe is sold for 30 to 50 armshells, a large one for about 100 armshells. A large armshell, a Conus ring five inches deep and more across, with an Ouala shell attached, is reckoned as worth from £4 up to £10. A large canoe is bought by setting out up to 20 of these large armshells in a row, and flanking them by about 80 smaller shells.

A further indication of the values attaching to some aspects of traditional social organisation is in the kinship system. A conventional working team is still a set of kinsfolk. When I travelled on Mailu canoes, twice, I inquired about the composition of the crew. In the one case it comprised the owner-captain, his small son, his young nabu (father’s sister’s son) and his young naiwana (wife’s brother). In the other case the pattern was more complex, but essentially the same order.

In retention of the kinship system as a basis of economic and social co-operation, of the armshell as a token of native wealth, and of the concept of tangible equivalents of bride value, the Mailu are implicitly indicating their intention to maintain a symbolic system which shall express values of their own, additional to anything they receive and incorporate from European culture.


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A17 The Adaptation of the Manam Island Aristocracy to European Contact, 1934 to 1952

By contrasting the evidence gathered by C. H. Wedgwood in 1934 with that of K. O. L. Burridge in 1952, some framework is provided to study the adaptation of the Tanepoa (to use Burridge’s term) to change.

a) The Tanepoa in 1934

C. H. Wedgwood carried out her fieldwork on Manam Island off the north coast of New Guinea between January 1933 and February 1934. She found it very difficult to win the people’s trust. They seem to have regarded her as a government spy. After about four months’ stay she was accepted by Tsogari and Waia villages. Her plan was to site her house on the road linking these two villages and to gain her evidence by accompanying the people on their daily routine of activity, listening to their gossip and observing their behaviour. She evidently made a deep impression since old people confided to Burridge in 1952 that ‘she knew how to plant taro. She dug the hole. She cooked the taro just as we do. If a man died she sat in the middle with all the other women and grieved for him. She was not like (other) white people. She was just like us black-skinned folk.’ For the first four or five months she spoke with the people in Pidgin and though she gradually acquired some use of Manam language she was never able to reach fluency in it. Contact with Europeans at this stage had mostly been intermittent and indirect. According to local traditions the first alien visitors came during the 1860’s or 1870’s when an unnamed European vessel anchored briefly off the island’s west coast. No other
contacts were made until the 1890's. Then, sometime afterwards, the people came under German control and their first luluai and tultul were appointed in 1913. However, there were no white residents until a catholic missionary came c. 1926 to establish his station. Some men and women brought in western goods and ideas after serving as plantation labourers in Rabaul and as the mistresses of European and Chinese traders. There was also oral evidence to suggest that smallpox came to Manam sometime before the establishment of German administration. The local explanation was that this was a consequence of sorcery purchased from mainland people by a vindictive Tanepoa. Miss Wedgwood felt that because their contact with Europeans had been largely indirect, the Manam people appeared for the most part 'self-respecting, proud of their past and hopeful for their future.' In her study, 'Women in Manam', Oceania, 1937, Vol. 7, pp. 401-28, she refers (pp. 408 ff.) to the social distinctions between Tanepoa women and commoners and their different marriage patterns. Other descriptions of stratified societies in this period and earlier include the following: B. Blackwood, Both Sides of Buka Passage, pp. 45-53, for the tsuana of Buka; R. Parkinson, Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee, trans. N. C. Barry, pp. 466 ff., 471, for the chiefs, priests and commoners of the Taau, Naguria and Nukumamu Islands; R. Thornwald, 'Pigs and Currency in Buin', Oceania, 1934, Vol. 5, pp. 125-34, for the mumira and kitere of Buin; G. F. Vicedom and H. Tischner, Die Mbovambo, trans. F. E. Rhienstein and E. Kletstadt, Vol. 2, pp. 63-71, and A. Strathern, 'Despots and Directors in the Western Highlands', Man, 1966, Vol. 1, pp. 356-74, for the distinctions between wuanum and lower strata of this society; as well as the studies by B. Malinowski, J. P. Singh Uuberoi and H. A. Powell, 'Competitive Leadership in Trobiand Political Organisation', J. Roy. Anthropol. Inst., 1960, Vol. 90, pp. 118-45, for Trobiand Islands Society.

The natives of Manam occupy thirteen villages, which are established at intervals along the coast. Each village is composed of a large number of scattered homesteads, which straggle from the neighbourhood of the beach inland, up the lower slopes of the mountain. Today the Government is trying to make the people build more compact villages, but whether this is altogether a wise measure may be questioned, for not only does it run counter to the feelings of the people themselves, and increase quarrels between fellow-villagers, but it raises new problems of a practical nature, such as sanitation, and sometimes it leads people back to homestead sites which they have found in the past to be less healthy or in other ways less desirable than their present abodes.

Each homestead is usually occupied by a small group of closely related kinsfolk as, for instance, a man with his wife, unmarried children and married sons, together with their wives and children; but sometimes a single married couple with their young children are found living alone, and sometimes a man and his wife's brother occupy the same homestead.

The village may probably be regarded as the most important local group in Manam, and in it the most important man is the hereditary village 'chief'. In contrast to the practices of the mainland, there is in Manam a clearly recognized hereditary aristocracy in which primogeniture plays an important part. In theory, and usually in practice, the village 'chief', or tanepoa, is the senior descendant in the male line of the original founder of the village. His sons, his younger brothers and their sons are also said to be of tanepoa rank, and are spoken of as tanepoa tisiti'si (little tanepoa), and they, with the true tanepoa, enjoy certain privileges. Formerly these were much greater than they are today, for in Manam, as in other parts of the West Pacific where chieflyship flourished, the advent of the mission and of the white man's government has undermined the authority and prestige of the chiefs. In Manam the village tanepoa was not only the pivot around which all social and economic activities revolved, but he also had, it seems, a part to play in preserving law and order, for I was told that he used to have the power of life and death over his fellow villagers, had the right to arrange or forbid marriages, and sufficient authority to settle disputes within the village and to lead his people to war. I gathered from conversations with several elderly men that the loss of prestige by the tanepoa is to them a matter of great regret and in particular they seem to resent the fact that the white man expects the men of tanepoa rank to work, as though they were commoners (gadagada). As one man told me: formerly, when the tanepoa's garden needed digging or planting, all the men and women of the village came and worked for him; he did not work, but the people of the village worked for him, and afterwards he made a big feast, and there was plenty of food. Today this distinction still holds good to some extent, but I met several children who were in this respect iconoclasts, and a restiveness against the authority of the tanepoa is very apparent among men returning home after several years spent in working for the white man. With their money, their trade goods, and their knowledge of pidgin English, they bear themselves somewhat arrogantly towards their headmen of noble birth. That the tanepoa have not lost more prestige than they have is perhaps surprising, for the government village headman or 'luluai' is in perhaps the majority of cases only a tanepoa tisiti'si, and is sometimes in rivalry with the true tanepoa. Furthermore, the true tanepoa is not necessarily, perhaps not usually, the possessor of special magical knowledge such as might have given him an unique position of authority. Were it not for the pride which the people take in their culture, his influence would probably be much less to-day than it is. I was much impressed by thy fact that most of my information concerning the tanepoa and their importance was given to me by men and women who did not themselves claim to be of 'the blood royal'.

To all intents and purposes each village is an autonomous unit, but there is to-day, and probably was in the past, a general recognition of the tanepoa of Balaiu (the largest village in the island), as overlord of at least the western half of the island. Thus when nearly two years ago the eldest son and heir of the present tanepoa of Balaiu died, all the villages of the western half observed certain mourning taboos in his honour, and, because the death was believed to be due to sorcery worked by some men belonging
to one of the north-eastern villages, and since none of the north-eastern villages went into mourning, all contact between these and the other parts of the island ceased (in theory, if not strictly in practice) for about eight months. Nevertheless, the importance of this overlordship of Baliu must not be over-emphasized, for, about forty years ago, one of the western villages carried on an energetic blood feud with Baliu, and at some time before that, so I was told, the tanepoa of Dugulaba (the second largest village on the island) was tanepoa lubalaba tina ("the greatest tanepoa").

In addition to the village tanepoa and his brothers, there are in most villages other men who are also spoken of as tanepoa. Each village is divided up into a number of patrilineal exogamous clans, most of which are named after their human founder. Some of these are principal clans whose founders, according to tradition, came and settled in the village in times gone by, and each of these has a headman who is spoken of as a tanepoa. In the social and economic spheres they have most of the privileges, and fulfill for their clans the obligations which the village tanepoa fulfills for the village as a whole; but their status is definitely lower than that of the village tanepoa and his brothers who belong to the clan of the founder of the village. Other clans are offshoots of these major clans, and although the senior man of each of these acts as clan headman, he and his family have no claim to aristocratic rank.

In the arrangement of the village the homesteads of people of the same major clan tend to be grouped together, and there is also apparently a tendency for those of offshoot clans also to be localized, but it is not possible to divide up the village into "Quarters", each occupied by fellow clansmen. Every major clan has its own part of the beach for canoes, and the right to own an overseas canoe, and every clan, whether major or minor, has its own homestead sites (some occupied, some standing vacant) and its own bushland.


b) The Changing Situation in 1952

K. O. L. Burridge investigated cargo cult activity and ideology among the Tangu and on Manam in 1952. After completing field work on the mainland, he went to Manam Island for a fortnight in December of that year to find there a situation of tension, unrest and rather volatile expectancy. The extracts below come from a study in terms of traditional social structure and contact history of the activities of Irakau, reputed as a Tanepoa by his people. His view, though based on brief association with the Island, provides a complement and contrast to Wedgwood's earlier study in depth. Burridge, unlike Wedgwood, did not have time to acquire any of the local language; he used Pidgin only as a means of communication. He has also sketched the context of his Manam fieldwork in "Racial Tension in Manam", South Pacific, 1954, Vol. 7, pp. 932-8.

...Manam communities contain two strata: Tanepoa or those of 'noble birth', and commoners. Tanepoa are traditional bosses and organisers who derive their positions and authority in the community from their birth and parentage. Commoners defer to Tanepoa; only those who are Tanepoa may wear their badges of rank or live in their large, distinctive, and specially decorated dwelling houses. The rank of Tanepoa is inherited through the patriline, and though all who are thus Tanepoa enjoy superior status they are not all of them bosses. Rather do they form a pool from whom the Tanepoa, or chief (commonly Kukurai), of a village may be selected, and from whom also the minor bosses may be chosen. As between Tanepoa and commoner there are mutual rights and obligations which entail, generally speaking, responsibilities on Tanepoa in exchange for privileges.

Manam islanders are a notoriously proud and independent people; they tend to look down upon other Kanakas as inferior breeds. Their own notions of moral egalitarianism are drawn from their own social model. All men are equal, but some are bosses and others are bosses. The bosses have privileges, but in return for those privileges they bear the burden of responsibility. Manam islanders would like to draw Europeans into their own system either as bosses with a range of known and limited privileges together with defined responsibilities; or on a level with themselves, as Tanepoa or commoners with parallel limits and obligations. Manam islanders pay lip-service to the idea of Kanakatzi, but, unlike Tangu—who feel they are one with all other Kanakas, and who would like to be one with all white men—they cannot help thinking of themselves as a whole as the bosses or leaders of Kanakatzi.

Manam islanders knew Mambu: but they could not admit to being led or influenced by a mere bush-Kanaka. Tangu, on the other hand, not being able to admit to a leader among themselves, were ready to be influenced by a stranger. Manam islanders knew Yali; and Yali came from outside their own regular ambience. But Manam islanders were what they are, and whilst they could accept some of Yali's ideas the notion of being led by a stranger was still distasteful. Through 1951 and 1952 their own charismatic figure was emerging. In 1952 all the ingredients of a Cargo movement were present in Manam, but a definable cult did not seem to be crystallizing. Instead, Irakau, a Tanepoa of Baliu, was very shrewdly organizing his village into a commercial concern. All in Manam looked to him. He was planting coconuts, organizing the manufacture of copra, and exporting it in bulk on the European dominated market. It seemed, in December of 1952, as though a Cargo movement had been continuing, sotto voce, for many months.

Generally, in their own eyes if not in the view of Kanakas, administrative officers had put themselves in a position of support for Irakau. They felt that he was honest, hard-working, competent, and on the whole, an asset to his community... He was a starting point. Believing, too, that Manam society was divided into two rigid castes, Tanepoa and commoners, administrative officers were pleased that Irakau, reputedly not a Tanepoa, had achieved fame and made his mark through his own commercial ability. Democracy and Progress, it was thought, were on the march...

...It has been mentioned that the administration had it that Irakau was not a Tanepoa, that business ability had overcome caste restrictions, and the progressive Democracy had commenced to evolve in Manam. Yet, the islanders themselves regarded Irakau as a Tanepoa. It is true that Irakau was never a Luluai or Kukurai, but he lived in a
Tanepoa house, carried out the traditional role of a Tanepoa, and wore the emblems of a Tanepoa in Manam. In fact, he is the son of a younger brother of a Kukurai. Irakau’s father inherited the office from an elder brother because the latter had no other heirs; and the next in line was Irakau’s elder brother who took the office whilst Irakau was away on contract labour. Irakau is a Tanepoa because he was begotten by a Tanepoa: he is a boss, a traditional organisar.

Further, even without the genealogy Irakau would be regarded as a Tanepoa because he is a boss and an organisar—just as Jesus Christ, the Queen of England, and all Europeans in a role of authority in Manam are regarded, honorifically, as Tanepoa.


A18 Men of Power and Influence among the Tolai of Blanche Bay, New Britain, 1897

At the time of the publication of his enquiry into ‘the view on legal matters of natives in portion of Blanche Bay’ from which this extract is taken, Dr Albert Hahl (1868-1945), had been Kaiserlicher Richter (Imperial Judge) at Herbertshöhe (Kokopo) for eighteen months. He had already acquired fluency in the Tolai language and had been initiated into the local esoteric tubuan rituals. After three years as Judge, Hahl later held appointments as Deputy Governor of German New Guinea from 1899 to 1901 and finally as Governor from 1902 to 1914. With his combination of legal training and knowledge of local language and society he has produced what most authorities accept as an accurate description of Tolai political structure. Besides being one of the earliest accounts of this structure, this document is important in that it provided for Hahl a foundation for his experiments in native administration. A recent assessment of Hahl’s achievement is to be found in P. Biskup, ‘Dr Albert Hahl — Sketch of a German Colonial Official’, *Australasian Journal of Politics and History*, 1968, Vol. 14, pp. 342-57. Richard Parkinson, a contemporary of Hahl in the Gazelle Peninsula, has left another description of Tolai politics in his *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (trans. N. C. Barry), pp. 62-66, 121-24. He considered that the luluai had a status of secondary importance to the agala and that he wore no special insignia to mark this status. In these details his analysis differed from Hahl’s. Drawing on the evidence of Tolai informants, R. F. Salisbury, ‘Despotism and Australian Administration in the New Guinea Highlands’, *American Anthropologist*, 1964, Vol. 66 (4), pp. 235-7, added a fourth position of power to the three cited by Hahl, that of the luluai, a land manager. He also distinguished between the luluai na winarubu (fight leader) and the luluai, a term used to describe any man recruiting a following. Studies of Hahl’s development of a pattern of native administration are to be found in Salisbury, op. cit., and in C. D. Rowley, ‘Native Officials and Magistrates of German New Guinea, 1897-1921’, *South Pacific*, 1954, Vol. 7, pp. 772-81, and in his *The Australians in German New Guinea, 1914-21*, Chapter 16, pp. 213-32. Economic aspects of the Tolai political structures are discussed in B. Danks, ‘On the Shell Money of New Britain’, *J. Anthropol Inst.*, 1888, Vol. 17, pp. 305-7; R. Parkinson, op. cit., pp. 91-4; and R. F. Salisbury, ‘Politics and Shell Money Finance in New Britain’, M. J. Swartz, V. W. Turner and A. Tuden, *Political Anthropology*, pp. 113-28.

This short sketch of the cultural and economic conditions and the religious perceptions was indispensable before entering on to the sphere which we separate as being legally ruled by custom. Of a state community, by reason of belonging to the same district, there is no thought. The whole district certainly divides into a series of small provinces with individual names in which the separate settlements lie (a gana). As to the establishments of the former, the natives are able to impart no information. There is, however, no doubt that the members of each family at the time of the first settlement definitely associated themselves in an openly defined union. The settlement of a district by one family still predominates, while regarding the kinship of a person to a district, the succession to landed property respective to participation in the possession of land, the families decide. The nephew obtains the portion of the uncle on the mother’s side; matriarchy is generally prevalent. By the admission of strangers, leasing and sale of superfluous land, alien elements have probably found their way into every district. A generally recognised force outside the families does not exist. The main significance of the district lies rather in the establishment of mutual free trade between all the residents. In the case of a war, they divide, each going to his own family. The sons follow the uncles on the maternal side and take the field against the father and his relatives. The family is a society within which its customs and habits have found their development. The word for family (sippe) relationship is a niuruna. Positions of dignity or honor have been created in them. The head is the a gula na tutana, or abbreviated to a gula, the great master. He is the head of the family. His dignity passes through the uncle to the nearest related nephew through the female side of the family. The members of the family must obey him; he can order them to work in the preparation of the fields, for building houses or for fishing, but is then responsible for their maintenance. The young people must above all work to pay for the wives
which have been bought for them. He sells girls for matrimony, as he buys wives. He keeps the family’s Tabu wealth and is the representative of their landed property. He has power to chastise and even to kill. He may be deposed if unworthy, and his place taken by the next in line of succession.

The second dignity is that of Luluai, the leader in war. He gives orders in the field and the men who attach themselves to him must obey him. No right of succession exists. The rule is that the head of the family is also the first Luluai. Anyone, however, who has rendered special service on the field has a right to the title, even an alien who has been admitted to the district, and he does not lose the title even if he has run away from the field of battle. If he enjoys special respect he is called upon to give decisions between parties in civil disputes. The force of his personality ensures the carrying out of his verdict, for which he on his part may demand Tabu. His special prerogative is that he can save up his shell money for his individual use and is not bound to hand it over to the head of the family. The Luluai is distinguished by a special ornament. He wears a head band (a rara), on the head a bunch of white cockatoo feathers (a lokus), a belt (a vipi) and a neck band (a giti) of Tabu or of kuskus teeth (a kurkura). His face and breast are decorated with painting in black color prepared from a nut (a tuvoro) which is considered to be magic (a malira) against hostile weapons.

The third dignity is that of the rich man, the viana. The desired object of each one is to become possessed of the utmost possible amount of shell money. The possession of that wealth secures influence and respect from relatives, and also buys assistance in war. The spirit of the viana can, after death, fly freely to and from a water place on the Varzin (named Tavakue) from the Island of the Dead. The natives consider shooting stars to be such flying souls.

The position as head of the family always carries with it the dignity of viana.

When one of the dignitaries dies, everybody within a wide radius breaks into an audible moaning dirge. Men and women blacken their faces and breasts for a long time as a sign of mourning.

The exchange of views of the members of a district takes place at meetings. These are called by the respected of the Luluai by the beating of wooden drums (a garamut). Every farm passes on the signal. Immediately and with the utmost haste, all the warlike men congregate at the appointed place which is generally in front of the Luluai’s house. He explains to the meeting the reason for the call. Every man has the right to speak and to free opposition. The meeting can reject the convener’s proposals, and simply put him out and depart, or agree to a third opinion expressed during the deliberations... The conference decides disputes between the members of a family, also as between the persons of the district themselves, or between them and strangers. Equity by judgement and forceful punishment only exists within the families on
whose members the decisions are binding. Entanglements with third parties must be adjusted by payment of Tabu. If that is not possible, cause for war exists. The very smallest matter can lead to it. Should the sufferer not receive the necessary assistance from his family, that is to say, that his cause is not considered to be just, or that his influence is insufficient to find enough friends for revenge, various methods of obtaining satisfaction have come into practice which all have in common that by a series of injurious actions interference by a third party becomes necessary. These customs which are still practised in Weberhafen and in the east of the Gazelle Peninsula, come under the term kamara. That word actually means the destruction of property, then plainly leading to war, it also serves to identify the fighting places debarred by the settlement. If, for instance, someone has lost his wife by abduction, an extremely common case, and cannot succeed in obtaining help, he takes up his fighting spear, goes into the bush, and strikes down the first person he meets. The latter's relatives spread the news of the misdeed and a general murdering and reign of terror ensues over a wide district, until the original miscreant has expiated the crime. His possessions have then to pay for the entire damage. The particular name for this procedure is sinirwa, to be killed with regard to another. The worse crime is incest (a pula), next to which demanding revenge are murder, bodily mutilation, as well as destruction or deprivation of property. For these latter cases, and for deception, fraud, and theft, there is only one term, a nilog. Every offence, however, can, as already indicated, be expiated by the payment of Tabu.

Only in the case of incest is the death of both the inevitable consequence.

The Dukduk organisation when at the height of its prosperity, probably also served as a substitute for a general power of punishment. The institution of Dukduk is always an influential man and therefore to be feared. To him all the members of his Dukduk who need protection turn, and they must obtain admission into this community with Tabu. The master of the Dukduk sends out at certain times the Tubuan, the dancers, who bring the fines from the houses of the debtors. Their safety is assured by fear of their master's revenge. Dukduk in its present form fulfils this task only very poorly and is in many ways perverted, and is used for instance, to extort Tabu, from the weak or from enemies.

Whether the society of the Injiet also serves or served a similar purpose cannot be stated. The members are pledged to the greatest secrecy and thoroughly maintain this. One can only learn that eating of certain animals, the pig, certain fish and birds, is forbidden. The feasts of Injiet are celebrated with communal dances and festivities. The participants must purchase admission with Tabu. It is said that obscenities take place at these festivities. The Injiet is not everywhere the same; in fact, there are several circles each with special customs and particular food prohibitions.


A19 Village Politics in the Ngarawapum Area of the Markham Valley, 1945

K. E. Read lived among the Ngarawapum people from September 1944 until May 1945. At the time he was carrying out fieldwork for the Directorate of Research of the Australian Military Forces with the object of understanding the response of these people to the Pacific War. He also prepared reports on their social and political organisation. This extract comes from that on social organisation. Ngarawapum was made up of five villages, Gainaron, Maianzarian, Tofmora, Gutsuwap and Yanuf, inhabited by 600 people and situated approximately 120 road miles from Lae. Despite the existence of a Lutheran mission station and an Administration patrol post nearby at Kaiapit, these people had not, in Read's view, greatly changed their traditional way of life by 1945. Warfare which had been an important sphere of political life had been curbed through government pacification. Read communicated with his informants in both Pidgin and the local language. His description is important as a clear study of some major features of a particular system of New Guinea 'stateless society'.

Village Politics in the Ngarawapum Area politics soon after contact. It also has significance because it provides some of the evidence for Read’s later analysis of leadership and consensus in New Guinea politics—a major contribution to our understanding of the workings of politics at the local level. His sensitive portrayal of Makis, though set within the political life of the Gahuku-Gama of the Asaro valley almost a decade later provides a concrete and precise instance of some of the broader issues sketched in this study of the Ngarawapum. (See K. E. Read, 'The Political System of the Ngarawapum', Oceania, 1950, Vol. 20, pp. 185-223; 'Leadership and Consensus in a New Guinea Society', American Anthropologist, 1959, Vol. 61, pp. 425-36; and The High Valley, 1966, Ch. 2, pp. 56-94.)

LEADERSHIP

There is no hereditary system of chieftainship, and anyone with the necessary qualifications may become a leader. The variable factors of physique and temperament are important, for the weak and the indigent have little chance
of aspiring to authority. Each village possesses a few individuals who are notoriously lazy, but the improvident—partly dependent on the generosity of relatives—invariably occupy a position of inferiority. Industry is given social emphasis in education. The young man who is assiduous in helping his relatives earns their respect; but he must also look to his own gardens. The man who has large plantations occupies a position of eminence and points to this fact with no little pride. ‘When I come to me,’ one man explained, ‘I sit them down and call to my wife to bring them food. Here, there is always food for them. They see my banana gardens and my yam gardens which are not like those of other men. They say: “Bangragin knows more than others. This manner of his is good.”’ Then their bellies are warm towards me. ‘This is a true man,” they say.’

The man with extensive resources is able to win the approval of his relatives by giving them food whenever they visit his house. If a hunt takes place, the wild pig is carried back to the village, and, as he is able to supply the bulk of the vegetables and other foods, bananas, yams and taro, the meal is made at his house. The prestige of the host is his, and the villagers are in debt to the extent of the additions which he has supplied. At the same time, he secured the approval of his ancestors, for the spirits of the dead are believed to share the meal; he has honoured them as well as himself. Prestige is also acquired from the part he is able to play in the dance festivals following yam harvest. These originate in a single clan, but the whole village takes part and the man whose industry has enabled him to gather a large herd of pigs may receive honour by supplying the bulk of the flesh essential to the feast. The dance is then held in the vicinity of his dwelling. The food display, which necessitates the erection of a ceremonial post termed mugus, is placed near his house, and the house itself is decorated. The festival over, the mugus remains as a visible reminder of his generosity. ‘People will see the mugus near his house, and know that this man is not as other men: the man who has many mugus near his house, he is a man who knows much,’ it is said. Provided he has the necessary resources in pigs and food, he may also place a temporary taboo on some minor activity such as fishing. When the period has expired, the village as a whole goes to the streams. The catch is brought back, and a feast is held at his house, his pigs and garden produce again forming the bulk of the additional food.

But wealth is not the sole qualification of leadership. It is important to a man’s social stature, for it brings him the support of his clansmen and gives additional weight to his opinions; it brings him their assistance in his undertakings, and they, in their turn, benefit from his generosity. But it does not give him legal claims to their obedience; it does not bring him absolute authority over others.

Authority, in fact, is vested in the genealogical heads of the various family groups comprising the clan. Such men are known as the garam tzira, big men, a term which I propose to use here.

Mere seniority, however, is not sufficient to create and support leadership. The term garam tzira implies not only age but also warlike prowess, industry and generosity. Thus the lazy and the ineffectual, no matter how old, never attain the respect which is due to the garam tzira. But seniority, as one criterion of leadership, means that the qualities on which authority is based are not directly observable or operative at the present time. The garam tzira are not the most powerful warriors or the most industrious men; such qualities necessarily demand the stamina of youth. But respect is due to them because in former years they were the men who displayed these qualities to a marked degree. When they rise to their feet at village gatherings to harangue the people, they shout: ‘Do you think I am nothing? Did I not kill men of many places before? Was I not strong in bringing human meat to the village? Did I not fight the men who attacked us? How is this that you think you need not heed me? Am I of no account?’ In other words, the garam tzira of clan and village are notable elders, those who command the most allegiance on kinship lines, a fact which explains why the young man cannot assume a position of authority by reason of his wealth and ostentation alone. The prestige the young man derives from industry—and in former times from warlike prowess—is of first importance in winning the approval of the garam tzira and raising him nearer to their level. It is not sufficient to supplant them in the respect of others, but it forms a basis on which respect is built, a basis on which authority is carried over from generation to generation.

THE PLACE OF THE WARRIOR

Without exception, the present garam tzira of Ngaraupum are former warriors. Prowess in warfare is the quality which is stressed when their abilities are under discussion, and it is this to which they themselves draw attention in public when their powers of correction and coercion are called into play. Success in warfare was of first importance in a society where friendship was confined to the people residing in the relatively small area occupied by the district group, where hostility to outsiders carried raiding parties from one end of the valley to the other, and where attack was likely to come from any direction. In these circumstances the function of the warrior received explicit cultural emphasis, and the training of the young included preparation for their role in warfare.

Present at all adult activities, the child was aware of this from his earliest infancy. He witnessed the return of raiding parties and shared in the ensuing celebrations, joining the dances and eating the flesh of the slain. He and his brothers were harangued at festivals and insulted by the garam tzira. He was told that if the village must depend on him to defend it, then all its inhabitants would surely die. He learned that until he had killed a man he could not use the red dye of the warrior on his body and hair, nor could he cohabit with his wife. Then one day, when he was about seventeen, he was formally inducted to the warrior life.

On this day he was led away from the village by the elders while the women waited in the background. At a secluded place in the bush his penis was incised with a bamboo knife and his forehead marked with his own blood. A long period of seclusion followed, during which he fasted and saw no one but the elders. No specific instruction was given him, but the time was one of trial and test in which he was cut off from the normal life of the village, his future status receiving emphasis by the abnormal circumstances of his segregation.

On a day appointed, fires were lit, in the house where he lay, and to the accompaniment of shouting and the beating of drums the elders broke open the doors. They fell on the almost insensible youths and beat them about the chest and shoulders, knocking them to the ground. Then one by one the boys were carried outside and placed on a row of banana leaves. The elder who had performed the magic over the knives at the ceremonies of mutilation passed down the row striking the breast of each with a bunch of bespelled leaves.
From a resemblance of death they rose up of their own accord or were lifted by the garam tsira and carried to the streams to wash while the conch shells sounded and the women danced.

The villagers in the afternoon prepared a large communal meal. Though the initiates were not yet allowed to eat their fill, they sat with the elders, who now taught them spells of physical attraction and showed them the leaf which was chewed before going into battle. Supported by others, for they were still weak, they later went at the head of the villagers to a dance in some neighbouring settlement.

After these ceremonies, the youth took his place among the ranks of the warriors. It was in all probability some considerable time before he killed an enemy, but participation in warfare was expected of him as a man. Even when his spear had drawn blood, and he was allowed the distinction of using red dye, he had to remain assiduous in killing. The consistently successful warrior acquired a respect which raised him almost to the stature of a legendary figure, and the men of to-day speak of their grandparents in glowing and exaggerated terms. 'He was taller than anyone now,' they say. 'His thigh was as thick as a cocoa palm. If he placed his foot against a tree he could push it down. When he was tired of sitting in the village he would rise up and say he was hungry for meat. He would take his spear and go forth and kill.'

These aggressive qualities formed the basis of authority later, but they were not sufficient to raise a person to a position of leadership at once. The young and vigorous warrior—just as the young and industrious man of to-day—remained subservient to his seniors.

THE PRIVILEGES OF AGE

The dependent and inferior role of the young is brought home to them by certain prohibitions. The chief of these relate to diet, certain foods being set aside for the elders. Most of the favourite dishes, the luxuries, which seldom appear on the daily menu, are reserved for them, a fact which on certain occasions gives rise to a good deal of murmured irritation. At the same time, the prohibitions serve to emphasize the corrective and coercive powers of the elders, their right of surveillance and their ability to give rewards to those who conform to accepted standards of conduct.

Of these dietary privileges, the reservation of meat is the chief. The youngsters are forbidden to eat flesh in public, but the shortage of meat means that it is only on demand that flesh be provided for the guests, and certain ceremonies cannot be held without it. In other words, the prohibition is most frequently operative when large numbers of people are gathered together for some form of celebration, and the public nature of the occasion draws attention to the differentiation.

In addition to meat, yams, when cooked in a certain way, are reserved for the elders. The dish, called monsisiz, is prepared with cocoonut cream, the ingredients being stirred over the fire until they are of the consistency of thick porridge. When finished, the mash is turned out on banana leaves and allowed to cool into a solid cake not unlike our cocoonut ice, very pleasant to eat but also very rich. At dances monsisiz is tied in bundles, wrapped in banana leaves and distributed in six to eight pound blocks to the guests. Once again, it is only the elders who consume it at public gatherings. I invariably received a bundle at the dances which I attended, and on my return to the village my house became a meeting place for the young men who had been less fortunate.

The privileges are important means of social differentiation in themselves, but in addition they draw attention to the chief public function of the garam tsira as arbiters of conduct.

As a general rule, the Ngaraupum feast takes place during the morning. Food for the meal is collected and arranged for the display beforehand, and on the day itself the village rises early. The area where the meal is to be held is a bustle of activity, men and women sitting down in their respective groups, peeling bananas and preparing other foods for the cooking pots. The first dishes are ready by ten o'clock. Banana leaves are placed on the ground to receive the boiling food. There are no stringent rules of etiquette—though a man will not sit down with his wife's father—but a marked degree of grouping on kinship lines is maintained, relatives sitting together and eating the food which they have prepared themselves. The major portion is consumed by midday, but additional dishes keep arriving until evening. The ideal feast is that in which the quantity allows continued and almost uninterrupted consumption all day and where it is impossible to dispose of all that is prepared and displayed.

But the afternoon's activities are somewhat desultory when compared to the morning. People are replete and retire to the shade to chew betel and gossip.

This period is chosen by the garam tsira to address the company. The man who has some complaint or some matter to discuss which he feels that all should hear, rises to his feet and stands in the space between the men and the women. Whatever he has to say is shouted at the assembled people, the words being often accompanied by violent gestures and every indication of anger. If he makes some accusation, or broaches some controversial topic on which opinions differ, his place is taken by someone else who has something to add or a reply to make. A series of opposing groups are often formed, and the cross-fire of imprecation and counter-imprecation becomes intense; at any moment, it seems, the gathering may degenerate into a fight.

The subjects discussed on these occasions vary, but invariably include tirades against the younger members of the village with a recital of their faults, either in general terms or with reference to particular cases. With some justification, it can be said that nothing escapes the eyes of the elders, and the lengthy harangues, the individuals and the social transgressions singled out and commented upon, give a valuable picture of required attitudes of behaviour. The man who has been remiss in helping his relatives, the man who is lazy or who has been guilty of hiding the pig which he has killed, the man who has flaunted his disrespect for his elders, all are marked for public chastisement. Awan is told that men have noticed how he is loath to work: he is reminded that Wansa procured him his wife and to think of the help he owes in return. Impega berates his father's brother's son's children: he has heard that they have been asking why they should work hard for him, and now he enquires who it was that gave them food when they were small. Gurmai has spoken disrespectfully of Sagum: he is reminded that Sagum is a man of note and that if he continues in this manner he will find no one to help him or give him support. Collectively, and in general terms, the younger generation are exhorted to think of their relatives, to work hard and to give food to those who come and sit with them. If they do as the garam tsira say, others will be pleased with them. But if they persist in their evil ways no
one will visit them or want to talk to them; they and their wives will have to sit down in their own houses with no one to think of them.

The young men sit in silence while the flow of abuse and instruction continues, and only rarely do any of them rise to answer the charges. Should they do so, several of the elders leap up and shout them down. The wisest policy in such circumstances is obviously to sit still and say nothing, and the young men usually do just this. ‘We sit and hear them; we have nothing to say; we do not answer,’ they remarked to me afterwards.

Wherever controls are exercised, there is likely to be a certain amount of dissatisfaction, and in private—and among themselves—the young men chafe against this continual surveillance by the elders. ‘We do all the hard work and the big men eat pig all the time,’ is a statement frequently heard. ‘They are angry with us and tell us what to do, but do they work in the gardens all day like us? All the good food is theirs. What do we get after hunting all day? Is it we who eat pig at dances?’

Such points of conflict are expressed too frequently to be ignored. There are times when the young men feel that their relationship with the elders is one-sided, that they are asked to give without receiving anything in return; authority, and the duties that go hand in hand with it, do not appear equally beneficial on all occasions. Yet the number of really anti-social individuals is but a minute fraction of the total population.

In the first place, public opinion is marshalled on the side of authority, and in a tiny village this may have a chastening effect on the would-be recalcitrant. The number of wrongdoers at any one time is small, and those whose actions have not been subject to reproach are unlikely to associate themselves with the minority. The young man may voice a collective disaffection on these occasions, but individually they are equally ready to draw attention to the faults and transgressions of others among their number. Furthermore, the publicity with which faults are aired means that the maximum effectiveness of public opinion is attained. Ridicule is a powerful weapon and the ridicule of the assembled village is something which the young man does not willingly encounter. Whenever an harangue took place the majority of the young men whose conduct had been found wanting confessed afterwards to me a feeling of shame.

Respect and affection for the garam tzira also act as deterrents. Obvious material disadvantages face the person who sets out to flout authority, and in most cases those are sufficient to restrain him; but in addition, a sense of loyalty is apparent. The true garam tzira, the handful of really senior men, are either one’s great-grandfathers, tafan, one’s grandfathers, tafun, or one’s fathers, ramang, and respect is due to them by reason of their kinship status alone. Rivalry, which might be a factor of some importance if the chastisers were of the same age as the chastised, does not enter the situation.

In clan and village affairs, the garam tzira are the final authorities. Activities which demand the co-operation of large groups of people depend on them almost entirely. They are the repositories of magic and custom, and in ceremonial affairs it is they who know what is demanded and what must be done. ‘We do not know these things,’ other men remark on these occasions. ‘If we did them they would be wrong.’ In the ultimate analysis the material benefits which accrue to clan activities derive from the garam tzira in their capacity of organisers of the work. The man who places himself beyond the orbit of their authority must face the fact that he has put himself beyond the reach of these benefits. In economic matters he loses the advantage of their superior knowledge, their magic and their organizing abilities; moreover, he forfeits the support of others. His share in the prestige and wealth which derive from clan ceremonialis is insignificant; being unable to give, he does not receive. On the other hand, the man who is industrious—who he adheres to the accepted rules of conduct—is rewarded by the good opinion of the elders. Not only does he secure support, but the garam tzira themselves may very well reward him by passing their knowledge on to him.

The benefits which derive from this knowledge are in life overlaid by a great deal of extraneous activity. A mass of detail must be sifted before they become apparent; but at death it is the debt owed the elders which receives explicit cultural expression. Then, when a garam tzira dies, the mourners bid him farewell as a warrior. In lament, and ceremonial, dancing and wailing, it is his position as a generous patriarch which is emphasised. Women cry his name, demanding who will look after them now. His role as the provider is remembered, his magnanimity with food is recalled, and the whole village gathers for four days beside his body to do him honour.


A20  Portrait of Kavagl, a Chimbu Despot, 1938

R. F. Salisbury, writing in 1964 about the interaction between local politics and the Australian administration in the New Guinea highlands, described Kavagl as a despot.1 Paula Brown has suggested that pre-contact Chimbu politics were in a state of ‘anarchy’.2 This portrait comes from the pen of Fr. Alphones Schäfer, one of the first Catholic missionaries to work in the Highlands. He knew Kavagl ‘the man with the fence post club’ after he had held sway as a ‘big man’ among his people for nearly twenty years. In fact, Kavagl escorted the missionary when he moved from Bundi in the foothills into the Chimbu region in 1933.3 He enables us to sense the power of the man

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before it was contained by government pacification, although his violence was already somewhat tempered by the influence and teaching of the missionary. Kagavl was already in his mid-forties when Fr. Schäfer wrote this first-hand portrait. Matoto of Abiera in the neighbouring Eastern Highlands, also left behind him a reputation for despotic violence after his death in 1930 on the eve of the European era. J. B. Watson in his study 'Tairora: the Politics of Despotism in a Small Society', Anthropological Forum, 1967, Vol. 2, pp. 53-104, has successfully reconstructed Matoto the man and his image from the oral testimony of his kinsmen. This portrait of Kagavl could also be given more perspective by a similar enquiry into oral testimony concerning him. Composite first-hand portraits of other leaders also exist, including those of Bumbo of Busama by H. I. Hogbin in Transformation Scene: The Changing Culture of New Guinea, 1951, esp. pp. 151-63; of Konangil the Kuma by M. Reay in 'Present Day Politics in the New Guinea Highlands', American Anthropologist, 1964, Vol. 66 (4), pp. 244-9; and of Soni of Turunom Village by D. L. Oliver, in A Solomon Island Society, 1955, Ch. 13, pp. 422-39. Portraits of significant leaders from an earlier stage of European contact can be gleaned from the writings of a number of Europeans in touch with them. These include such legendary figures as Koapena of Aroma (see T. Bevan, Toil, Travel and Discovery in British New Guinea, 1909, pp. 62-3, 155-7 and J. Chalmers, Pioneering in New Guinea, 1887, pp. 198-203), Talili of Blanche Bay (see G. Brown, Autobiography, 1908).

There are no real chiefs in the Chimbu population; however, one who stands in high regard among the Korogu and to whom they listen as if he were chief is Kagavl. I saw him for the first time four years ago in Bundi on the north side of the Bismarck Range and he then made the impression of not exactly an old man, but still one who through age and experience had grown quiet. At that time he was living as a refugee in foreign parts where he had to keep a hold on himself, but back in his own home-land he became youthful, wild and agile again. He would be a man in his middle forties. He is of average height, but his heavy bones and strong muscles reveal him as an athlete. His round head rests on a powerful bull-neck. He does not have much beard; so one can still see the blue tattooing which he had cut in his face as a youth. His forehead is high and somewhat retreating; deep creases are impressed upon it. His eyes are small; there is always a wild look in them, but they twinkle uncannily when he is in a rage. He has strongly protruding cheek bones, a broad nose and a large, broad mouth. His voice has a somewhat high tone and sounds hoarse mostly, but nevertheless he can make himself understood over distances. His trunk is broad and strong as are his legs. Also his hands are broad and sometimes he balls them up into dangerous fists. Once I was witness when he almost strangled a young man with these strong hands had my dog not prevented it. But when the young man got a little free it became apparent that where Kagavl by his firm grip was superior to the other, he was not with regard to fleetness of foot. Kagavl can run well, but he is too heavy and is soon out of breath, groans and sighs — still his rage lends him a certain amount of additional stamina. For these reasons he is not a good mountain climber.

By his physique Kagavl claimed the attention of every white man who has been through here, but even for kanakas he is the prototype of a strong man. Just as he stands out due to his physique and strength, so he does, too, by his attire. In the entire Wagi valley there is no man apart from Kagavl who wears a loin-cloth (mali) drawn between his legs. Such dress here is regarded as indecent; but Kagavl had seen it on the north side of the Bismarck Range and for the last three years he, too, wears this clothing which has earned him the nick-name Dem jaya yagl, which means 'the man with the naked behind'.

Normally he goes about without any ornaments but when in public, when anything is going on, he mostly wears a large bush of feathers on his head, one to two gold-lip shells on the chest and one widely cut out gold-lip shell around the chin. In addition he carries a large axe, the largest iron axe in the Wagi valley, which he never lets out of his hand, so-to-speak.

That is Kagavl as one sees him. He is superior to most of his tribes-men not only in physical strength; but he also is cunning; he reflects how this or that might be caught; he often has good suggestions. He does whatever appears good to him and he is absolutely independent. If someone makes difficulties he simply roars him down or goes on in his own ways. A typical example of this was shown at an initiation ceremony where all men wanted to go somewhere else from Kagavl. The latter remained calm and said only: 'I am going on, come on after me.' At first he had probably to walk a part of the way alone, but afterwards all fifty men followed him. However, he is after all not a tyrant, since he discusses with his colleagues, but he regards himself as the man who still knows everything best. This is also so in what concerns fighting. Recently a few young men of his group stole a pig. A dispute ensued. Kagavl said to me and the owners of the pig that there was nothing to get excited about; he was going to see that the pig was given back, since he had given no orders for the theft.

He considers it to his credit to have brought the first missionaries, the first expedition into the Wagi valley and he claimed the responsibility for it before all other people and tribes and probably inflated it out of proportion with the actual facts. However, in this way his name became famous and whoever anywhere speaks about the mission, also names Kagavl. If there is a task to perform he does not say to me: 'Do that this way', but rather uses the dual form: 'We two do this or that.' He has a large opinion of himself and for this reason does not trouble himself much about other people; he believes only he counts, and because he is so strong and can get so angry, no one dares to contradict him lightly. Also he sticks doggedly to his opinion. Recently he intended to murder a Nauru man who was absolutely innocent for the death of his favourite wife. And he kept this intention, although I threatened him that the Kiap (District Officer) would come and imprison him and have him hanged. He said: 'That does not matter, I will first have my revenge, and if in the process I lose my life, even that does not matter, since I have a grown-up son who can represent me.' Only hen, when in public I gave him a piece of my mind, such as he had really never heard it before, did
he become docile, he reflected and told everyone afterwards, Father was angry with him and he would not kill any Nauru man.

This self-confidence of Kavagl does not allow, either, that he can be ignored. Once I was in conversation with another white man. Kavagl was coming our way and broke into the conversation in such a way that in consideration of the white man I could not answer immediately. Kavagl turned around and went his way. Likewise he cannot beg; something most kanakas are good at. Although he has helped a lot around here he will not beg. If he is given something he is pleased, but to beg importantly like so many kanakas is not in him; he may be very likely too proud for that.

His behaviour towards the mission further shows his free and easy way. The truth which we bring is absolutely new to these people, who only five years ago learnt of the existence of white people through my arrival and that of my brother in the Bismarck Range. Since I have been preaching he has always been in the church, listens attentively, then gives great speeches afterwards outside, and once he got up in the church and said publicly: 'You all know what I did formerly. I have killed many people, I have stolen many pigs and robbed many valuables, I have had many women; I hear that the reward for these deeds is the great fire. I am so afraid that I feel as if I have to make water. I won't do it again; you, too, do as I will do.' Admittedly, that was only a speech, but Kavagl tries to do what has said publicly. So he talks wherever he can against stealing, against murders, and against fights, which were passions with him previously. He has done a volte face. The kanakas say: 'Formerly Kavagl was like Pug, my dog, who is enemy of all living things and bites everyone whom he can grip — now he is a good man.' I was told that he had attacked formerly everyone whom he had met and who was carrying anything he coveted: pigs, shells and such things. At that time he had killed many. He had been a regular highwayman.

As warrior he was less dangerous in fighting over distances with arrows; instead he had crept during the fight to some weak point of the enemy and had attacked them then roaring. The enemies then only needed to see him and they had fled.

The Vauagla do occasionally laugh at him when they tell how he once had fled from them. But Kavagl said that there had been six Vauagla men, they had had bow and arrows, he had been alone and only armed with a fence post.

Because of his fighting with a fence post he had received the nickname togi kumba yagl. Togl kumba yagl means as much as 'the man with the fence-post-club'. It was customary here — and still is — to fight the unprepared hand-to-hand combat with fence posts. Because of his quick temper he took when opposed, just the first available stick from the fence and wielded it with success. From that his nickname. Once he had a quarrel with his brother-in-law who had come with me from the north-side of the mountains. Kavagl attacked him and shot an arrow through his arm. The brother-in-law, strong and agile as a cat, leapt at him and hit him on the head that Kavagl had enough. That his skull took the blow shows that he has a strong skull. I asked later why his fellow tribesmen had not helped him. 'Oh,' they said, 'at that time we would have been glad if he had been quite beaten to death by him; Kavagl had too much on his conscience.'

Since Kavagl had an axe it was his dangerous weapon. I was able to observe him twice during a fair sized fight. When his axe hit a shield somewhere it was audible at a great distance and the people said 'Listen to Kavagl's axe.' Of course he got also various injuries in the many fights he participated in. He still often shows his scars with pride and says that if someone else had received these injuries he'd probably be a corpse. That actually may be true.

One could respect him for his heroic deeds in honest fights, but he is so terribly quick tempered and he forgets in his anger what he does and kills those whom he loves, whom he would like to bring back to life afterwards with his tears. Once I saw myself how he had nearly beaten to death his then about four-year-old son, because he had lost his shell-string. When Kavagl is in a rage he is dangerous and frightening, therefore most people take care not to irritate him. The description of his family life will show that even more clearly. As a young man Kavagl married a Vauagla girl; he married earlier than other young men. He had met the girl at a dance (sing-sing) at night and married her against the will of his parents — a love match.

They lived together happily for some years; the woman bore him a son, Kutne. Then a time came when the Koruga waged war against the Vauagla. Kavagl ordered his wife to tie up the pigs so that they would not be stolen. A piglet must have got away nevertheless. Kavagl therefore scolded his wife. She answered back; Kavagl took a big stick and hit her on her temple. The woman was immediately dead. He mourned her vehemently.

Later he took a Naragu wife, big, strong and red. She bore him three children. But the last one died young. As it sometimes happens among the kanakas the wives get sick of their all too important husbands and deny conjugal rights to them. Then they come to blows. This is called kigl biurika. In this way Kavagl fought with his wife, took an axe and killed her.

He took a third wife; she died during pregnancy when they were both in Bundi on the north side of the Bismarck Range. The husband of Kavagl's sister was supposed to have caused this, therefore Kavagl attacked him when the opportunity came.

Then he took two other wives over whom he watched jealously. After the first one had been belaboured with the big axe on her thigh she became and stayed cautious. But the other, Chivikor, of whom he was specially proud did not know how to submit enough to his wife's nature and her will. Once, as they were going somewhere he hit her on the head with the axe when she answered him back. She was lucky that the blow was not fatal. The wound healed after some dressings. Another time she had answered him back in the garden. He took a big stone, threw it after the fleeing woman and hit her on the back of her head so that she was unconscious for several hours.

Another time the two fought again and Kavagl abused his wife with filthy language. She ran away from him to her father's house. Kavagl came with the young daughter of this woman to the station and told me that Chivikor wanted to marry another man, he would go and kill her. Then he gave the little daughter to a school boy to look after. He had said that with external calmness, but I noticed his suppressed rage, for his face twitched and his eyes flickered strangely. He casually went back, his hands with the axe behind his back and went to the house of Chivikor. He looked suspicious and I asked the school boy what Kavagl was intending to do. He said he is going now to kill Chivikor as he has killed his two wives before. I followed him with some workers and Pug.
Chivikor trembled and wept and defended herself. Kavagl wanted to get at her, but the old father had placed himself between them and tried to mediate. But he could not hold Kavagl back. When Pug’s presence was made known, Kavagl desisted. I talked quietly to him, and told him that the little Ninnmongo would die without the mother’s milk. But he loved Ninnmongo very much. This made him think. Then I told the woman to be obedient to her husband and after ten minutes she took her net-bag and went to her husband’s house. ‘But,’ Kavagl tells everywhere, ‘once Ninnmongo does not need her mother’s milk any more I’ll kill the mother.’ He told me this on an occasion, too, when the woman was also standing there. But he did not have to do it after all as his wife was struck around that time by lightning. But then Kavagl lamented as seldom a man did. He certainly loved her much, but as his temper knew no limits he was jealous and wanted to make her subservient to him by force. Two more times he had injured her with an arrow on her thigh.

The two latter women would not have got other men of his age, for young women want to marry young men. The first of the two, Yua, had been married for some time to another man, but had run away from him and Kavagl had got her rather easily. Chivikor had had a husband perhaps for only one month, from whom she also had run away. She then had taken up the nightly sing-sing like all other girls until Kavagl had courted her. He must have been at that time like a wild bull. Kavagl got the girl, and Chivikor was very proud. The two let themselves be seen in public like a couple in love in Europe, which is otherwise not done here. And what also happens seldom here, which is that young couples have children right in the first year of their marriage happened with them; Kavagl had children in the first year of these marriages from both women.

Other men also usually sleep at night in the men’s house. Kavagl is far and wide the only exception, because he sleeps at night in the women’s house. The other people joke about it. But that does not bother Kavagl. The reason he himself has given for not taking many wives, three to four, like other rich and great men, was that he then would have to make too many houses, fences and gardens. However, he does not feel like working. But nevertheless he recently maintained seventeen pigs. These two women just have to work more.

Although Kavagl showed himself so far only as a wild man of force, he does have some traits which make him more agreeable.

Firstly he is a great orator. There is no man in the whole area who appears publicly so often and talks like Kavagl. At every important occasion, so-to-speak, he feels obliged to talk. And he speaks well. He does not have to search for words. Everything bubbles from his mouth, and mostly forcefully. For this reason I have once heard that people did not like to hear him because he talked too wildly. But he is not always so wild. He also includes jokes in his speeches, so that he himself laughs heartily, and so does his audience. Sometimes also with particularly strong sentences his audience roars with enthusiasm. I admired him most during a speech when his voice was first like a hurricane, but came like a quiet rustle out of his mouth, and the several hundred wild listeners hang on his words without the slightest noise so that one could have heard a pin fall. He usually walks up and down during a speech. He uses many rhetorical sentences, also sentences which other, lesser men could not say in public. He knows how to exaggerate well, and in this way he carries the people away. I had to admit that it was due to him that the people came in crowds to the hard and tedious work on the air-strip which we had to do because of the difficult terrain. Not only did he enthuse the nearest living groups for it, but also the people from far away, and even the worst enemies of the Korugu, the Bandie and the Nauru. Through his talks and behaviour he got so far that the Nauru joined with the Korugu and their friends, so that Kavagl could bridge over their enmity which went back to the legendary primeval ages of this population.

But also otherwise, in normal conversation is Kavagl an interesting raconteur. He has all sorts of ideas, and when the conversation sometimes stops he fills his bamboo pipe and has again found a subject. He can laugh heartily at jokes, so that his shoulders and his entire muscular body shake. With the happiest look he once laughed when a candidate at the big ceremonies at an initiation cried and called for his mother. Then Kavagl nearly laughed convulsively. They are mostly uncouth pranks which make him laugh exceedingly.

Kavagl looks most pleasant when he is together with his little daughter. He carries her carefully in his strong arms; then he sits down with crossed legs and the small Ninnmongo sleeps quietly on his lap. When she awakes she crawls all over him, pulls his beard, and Kavagl never becomes impatient. When Ninnmongo cries he tries to fulfil her every whim. He even lets her have small bamboo flutes which she blows like the grown men in honour of the spirits. She must be the about the only child with her brother who has ever seen the spirit flute and may play with it. Kavagl laughs at it.


A21 Secret Societies as Realms of Power in the Gazelle Peninsula, 1882-1907

Richard Parkinson arrived at Mioko in the Duke of York Islands early in 1882 and established plantations in the Gazelle Peninsula during the next eight years. He died there on 24 July 1909 at the age of 65. He travelled widely in the Bismarck Archipelago and northern Solomon Islands as a trader, labour recruiter and a collector of ethnographic data. This data he assembled into his study of indigenous life and customs in this area, published in 1907 under the title Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee (Thirty Years in the South Seas). This detailed description of the workings of the Duk Duk, Tubuan and Inget men’s secret societies is taken from that volume. These institutions played an important part in Tolai political, economic
and religious life. Perhaps for a European resident the political aspect was the most significant. Hence this is the side he emphasises most clearly. He also suggests that some modifications have occurred under pressure from missionary and government sources. Elsewhere in his book Parkinson theorized about Melanesian secret societies in general (see N. C. Barry’s translation, pp. 499-503). Two Wesleyan missionaries in the Gazelle Peninsula at the time also recorded their impressions of secret societies. They are B. Danks, ‘Secret Societies in New Britain’, ed. W. Deane, Mitchell Library, MSS. Meth. Ch. O. M 238 No. 14; R. H. Rickard, ‘The Duk Duk Association of New Britain’, Royal Society of Victoria Proceedings, 1891, Vol. 3. (N. S.) pp. 70-6. A German official, Graf Joachim von Pfeil, presented his interpretation in ‘Duk Duk and Other Customs as Forms of Expression of the Melanesians’ Intellectual Life’, J. Anthropol. Inst., 1898, Vol. 27, pp. 181-91. Though rather coloured in some of the attitudes they express, these reports provide supplementary evidence for evaluating Parkinson’s account. No indigenous accounts of the inner workings of the societies at this period seem to have survived. Interest has not waned in secret societies since these early studies were completed, even though the societies themselves may have undergone transformation as a consequence of contact. Among the more important accounts are the following: F. L. S. Bell, ‘Sokopana: A Melanesian Secret Society’, J. Roy. Anthropol. Inst., 1935, Vol. 65, pp. 311-41 (a brief account of the activities of a society imported into Tanga from Namatanai around 1913); A. Chowning and W. H. Goodenough, ‘Lakalai Political Organisation’, Anthropological Forum, 1965-6, Vol. 1, pp. 412-73 (contains a brief study esp. pp. 468-71 on the Valuku society of warriors); C. H. Wedgwood, ‘The Nature and Functions of Secret Societies’, Oceania, 1930, Vol. 1, pp. 129-45 (an early attempt to find some general patterns in the societies known about that time); and F. E. Williams, The Natives of the Purari Delta, Chapters 6, 7 and 10, pp. 64-84, 110-19, discusses the relationship between the men’s house or Ravi and local political organisation.

The Duk Duk Society of the northeastern Gazelle Peninsula is among the best known secret societies in the Bismarck Archipelago. The society is an exclusively male one, though there are certain old women (tumbua) here and there who are allowed to enter the union and take part in the dances outside the taraiu.

This taraiu, feast place, may not be entered by non-members; strangers, white people especially, have always been an exception, and even my wife was finally allowed in, though not without a murmur from the old mystery-mongers. The situation of a taraiu is known to all the uninitiated, who always take great care not to walk over it, as this would entail a heavy fine. If an uninitiated relative of a member should step on the taraiu, either accidentally or on purpose, the member whether he likes it or not, must make atonement to the society by payment of a fine; how he reimburses himself is his own affair. I remember one such occurrence which happened a few years ago. A man from Ralauna, just west of my home, had come to an understanding with a woman from Keravai not far away; she ran away from her people and met her lover on the beach at night in order to go to his home with him. But the flight had been noticed, and her relations-hurried in pursuit. In order to get safely away with her beloved the native had to cross the taraiu. This second offence was a far greater one in the eyes of the pursuers than the abduction of the girl. The pursuit, which was merely a matter of form, was broken off, and the matter was reported the next day. The man, who was himself a member of the Duk Duk, could do nothing else but pay the customary fines of thirty fathoms of tambu.... The uninitiated rationally avoid the taraiu for this reason, and members make the taboo all the more strict as they, as a rule, are the ones who must pay on behalf of the transgressors what in the eyes of the native is a very heavy penalty. In former times women who walked on the taraiu were sometimes killed. I recollect two such cases during the first years of my stay here; nowadays the offence is not so severely punished from fear of the strong arm of the Administration.

The taraiu is so laid out that what goes on inside is not visible to the uninitiated; it is in the forest, under trees and surrounded by thick bushes and branches; where necessary, at the times of the festivities, it is screened with a high fence of coconuts to prevent the face of the curious. One or two hats are built on the place, and are used by the members as a shelter, and as a place to keep the Duk Duk masks and leaf dresses. As there are often many masks belonging to members who have come in from neighbouring villages, the hats will not hide all. For them posts, tagor, about one metre high, are let into the ground, and the rings of foliage, which form the dresses, and the masks hang on them. The taraiu is kept clean and tidy by the members; even during such time as no festivities are held the old men gather there to enjoy a little undisturbed sleep or to discuss current events.

The taraiu is the official meeting place for the members of the society. In addition, on the occasion of dances and festivities which are staged outside the taraiu, there are places temporarily fenced off on the ground where the feast is held, and these enclosures enable the costumes to be passed from one member to another unseen by the crowd. These temporary sanctuaries are thickly surrounded by cocoanut leaves, so that the spectators sitting in front cannot see what goes on; they are called by a particular name, manamananung, and only have the significance of the taraiu for the moment.

All the preparations for the Duk Duk feast by the members are made on the taraiu, more particularly the fashioning of the mask-dresses. These consist of two sections, the one a leaf covering the upper part of the body, which completely covers the head. The masks, or upper portions of the dress, are of two kinds according to whether they represent the Tumbua or the Duk Duk. The former is in the shape of a short cone like a candle extinguisher crowned by a tuft of cockatoo feathers; the second is also a cone, but runs up into an extension, often up to two metres long, and decorated with small, painted wooden carvings, bunches and wreaths of feathers, coloured fibre strings and the like...
The whole outfit, especially when new, is heavy and uncomfortable, the wearers change over from time to time, or slip into the bush to relieve themselves of the mask occasionally. In the latter case, they are always carefully guarded by members, to prevent the approach of the uninitiated. One frequently sees natives with sore shoulders and hips during the Duk Duk festivities, and these wounds are caused from the pressure of the heavy masks.

The low conical hat of the tumbanu is always marked by two great eyes kiok. The long point, tautkane, of the Duk Duk mask is always fantastically decorated, each man trying to outdo his neighbour, and there is no limit to the variety in the arrangement of the feathered crown, pono, and the small wooden figures.

All members of the Duk Duk are called a umana lele as opposed to the non-members a umana mana; candidates for initiation whether young or old, are called a umana kalamana during their novitiate. The Tumbuan, supposedly a female spirit, is the highest dignitary of the society. Only certain natives, who have acquired the right to make a Tumbuan appear by family inheritance or purchase, can own one. Each Tumbuan has its own feminine name...

The owners of the Tumbuan are the great men of the society both in influence and wealth. To-day the possessor of a Tumbuan may still sell the privilege to other natives who do not own one. But the buying of one is only possible to rich men; not only is the original outlay in procuring one very considerable, but great quantities of tambu are required at the festivities connected with the handing over, and it may well happen that the purchaser realises that the Tumbuan, instead of enriching him as he had hoped, has, on the contrary, cost him a great deal of money. Once the possessor of a Tumbuan, a man undertakes the obligation to keep it up in a suitable manner, and his neighbours see that this is done; should he shirk his obligation the privilege may be withdrawn.

In the neighbourhood from Blanche Bay to Cape Gazelle and the country behind it, the institution of the Tumbuan and the Duk Duk is not very old yet. The late Tobate introduced the Tumbuan around the Ralum district a few years ago, having brought it from the native Tobavillu in Talvat, on the slopes of the South Daughter; he had acquired it in the Duke of York Group. In and around Raluna the Tumbuan had been brought from the island of Kerawarra in the Duke of York's about the same time. In Kinigunan and the Cape Gazelle District it had been brought from inland country around Kabakadai. On the Duke of York's they obtained the Duk Duk from Birarra; on those islands they understand Birara to be the settled district of the Gazelle Peninsula on the St. George's Channel. A native named Tarok, from the district of Virien on the small island of Mioko, bought the Tumbuan from the native Taltatul in the coastal village of Londip on the St. George's Channel. From Virien, on Mioko, the Duk Duk Society quickly spread to the other islands, as we have already seen, and from there to parts of the Gazelle Peninsula which were in communication with this group.

The introduction of the Duk Duk into Virien must have taken place about the first half of the nineteenth century. In Mioko there is still an old man living who knew the native Tarok who introduced it there. The native Topile, who died in 1901, told me that his grandfather had bought the Tumbuan from Tarok to Virien; other Duke of York people said that when they were small boys the institution was regarded as something of an innovation. I think, therefore, that one may assume that the Duk Duk was introduced into the Duke of York's from 1820 to 1830 at the earliest, and from there to the Mother Peninsula and the villages and neighbourhood of Blanche Bay in years 1840 to 1850.

The original Tumbuan of Tarok in Virien was called Ia Marinair, and, as far as I know, is still called that to-day.

From Virien the society spread to Laur. The Duke of York's natives understand this to be the coast of New Ireland lying the other side of St. George's Channel. They still have the Tumbuan and Duk Duk to-day; the activities of the society would only appear to cover a limited district as there are only two Tumbuans known, Ia Kabange and Ia Pitlaka.

The natives of Londip originally acquired the Duk Duk secrets from a place called Kottokotto. The district inland from Kabangza and Londip appears to be the place where the society originated, at least all the results of my investigations among the tribes at the foot of Mount Varzin and around Kabakadai point that way. There the natives say that the institution of the Tumbuan is very old, but with the reservation that there was a time during which their forefathers did not know of the secret union. The origin cannot be traced back beyond five generations...

But we can hardly assume that the society originated in the village communities of the Channel without outside contact, and I do not doubt that such took place, though I am not in a position to prove it at the moment. The similarity of many of the customs of the Duk Duk to those of secret societies in the Solomons, as well as to those of societies in other parts of New Britain, points to a stimulus from one place or the other. It would not be correct to say that natives who are shipwrecked, or driven off their course to strange lands, are killed in every case. Such strangers from other districts may have introduced the societies partly to win themselves prestige, and partly from a desire to maintain their own customs. Such new notions may have found approbation and have become embellished by additions, new ceremonies, and festal rites to accord with local conditions.

The Tumbuan is still called Turadawai (tree-top) by the old people, and one also hears the Duk Duk referred to as Beo (bird). I have not been able to ascertain anything regarding the origin of these two terms. They may be rudiments from a local district from which the Duk Duk came originally. Perhaps they are only the names of the Tumbuan and Duk Duk used in the presence of the uninitiated, for the members have names for everything connected with the masks, the meaning of which is unknown to outsiders. This is especially notable in songs sung by the members of the Duk Duk at the dance of the masked figures when they appear in public. Words are then made recognisable by special endings which replace the customary names of objects in daily use, and sound strange and terrible to an audience which knows nothing of the matter. I have never been able to trace any deep meaning in these songs.

The initiation ceremonies are the same, on the whole, on the Duke of York's and on the Gazelle Peninsula. Little differences have crept in here and there where members or owners of Tumbuan have more or less possessed a sense of the mysterious. In the district around my home the initiations are made in the following way.

If a male child, boy or youth is to be received into the society, the father or uncle announces this to the owner of a Tumbuan. The latter will usually have reported beforehand that he intends the Tumbuan to appear at this or that time in order to give members who intend to introduce
novices time to make the necessary preparations.

When the day arrives for the Tumbuan to make its appearance, loud cries are heard in the taraui, and this is a sign for the novices to be led in. Once inside, they are ranged in a circle and the Tumbuan, armed with a light staff, dances in the middle, shouting and gesticulating, striking the novices with the stick; the members standing outside the circle do the same. They are considerate when dealing out blows, children and small boys get off lightly, bigger boys and youths receive a sound chastising, which has every appearance of being a good beating; this ceremony, bakatia therefore seldom ends without weeping and wailing. While this is going on, the mothers and female relatives sit at home and weep and wail too.

After the bakatia, the sponsor, father or uncle, distributes small pieces of tambu, about a span long; the Tumbuan, of course, gets its share though his piece is never over a metre long. The novices are then given a meal, specially prepared for the occasion, rang davai, consisting of fish, baked taro etc.

When this meal has been eaten, the initiates must again sit around in a circle, and the Tumbuan again comes into the centre. He then takes off his head-dress, then one of the rings of foliage, then another and so on, until he stands quite naked. Pointing to the dress he cries 'What will you do with that now? Put it on, put it on.' But he has previously removed the shoulder bands, talat, which holds the foliage in position, so that the novices shall believe that the whole affair, honogul, hangs by itself with the aid of the spirits.

After this little comedy the men dance on the taraui and the novices are instructed how to make the steps and leaps of the Duk Duk dance. The whole ceremony is named palatatan.

Meanwhile the initiates are enjoined to disclose nothing that goes on in the taraui, and are informed what penalties for such disclosure will be. A big feast, given by relatives of the initiates is then eaten by all present.

This is actually the end of the initiation, though a series of ceremonies follow. If the initiates are still small children, they must wait a number of years until they receive the Duk Duk; but if they are twelve years or over they receive only the masks and go through all the attendant ceremonies.

The granting of a Duk Duk takes place on the day following that on which the Tumbuan gives birth to it.

On the day of the actual birth of the Duk Duk, vâkua, the fathers or uncles bring the Duk Duk dress, which has meanwhile been made in secret, to the taraui, from where the Tumbuan shouts its loud call, i pungo, accompanied by the loud droning of the drums, kuddu, and the birth, kinaoai, of the Duk Duk is then announced. The initiates also gather on the taraui, where they remain all night.

Early next morning the Tumbuan presents itself in public with its new born child, the Duk Duk. If the taraui is on, or within easy reach of, the beach, the Tumbuan and the Duk Duk climb into a gaily decorated canoe, and are slowly paddled along the shore by masked members of the society, dancing and singing to accompaniment of beating drums .... this is the matamatan. The appearance of the Tumbuan with his new born child is called a bung na kinaoai or Tumbuan i kakanw. Occasionally the canoes in which the masked figures have been paddled are demolished. As soon as the masked figures have left their vessels the members of the Duk Duk hurl themselves on to the canoes, and break them up, strewing the fragments around on all sides.

At these feasts there is only one bearing Tumbuan, one may see several at the one time, but these, with the one exception, are just visitors from another district.

When the parading of the Duk Duk is completed, all those taking part, the old members as well as the new comers, proceed to the taraui, and from there form a procession, consisting of all the masked figures and other members, and set out for the feasting place of the owner of the Tumbuan. The Tumbuan go ahead, striding and leaping behind them press the throng of members, shouting, singing, beating the drums, and throwing lime into the air with both hands. On the feast place dances are carried out by the masked figures, and these are witnessed by one and all, initiated and uninitiated, women and girls and children, all sitting round to watch the spectacle that many of them have come from miles around to see.

After the dances a little by-play follows; this is to give the uninitiated an idea of the power and strong internal discipline of the society. The Tumbuan present seize fairly thick, young, banana stems, and the unmasked men spring forward to receive a mighty whack on the back. The sappy banana stem resounds on the bare skin, and the blow may be quite painful for the moment; but the pain soon goes, and the blow leaves neither swelling nor abrasion. Those who have been hit suppress any manifestation of pain, laugh and joke and give friendly, neighbourly blows which are always returned. All this is to give the impression that they are proof against pain, and think nothing of such trifles. The women and female relatives of those hit shriek loudly during the scene, and for a moment or two the noise is deafening.

When the buffoonery is finished all the Tumbuan and Duk Duk range themselves in a wide circle, and the owners of the active Tumbuan place themselves in the middle. At once there is a deep silence, tambu is now brought and handed to those standing in the middle. The masked figures then sit on the ground, and each new born Duk Duk is handed three or four metres of tambu. This also is a little comedy for the spectators to show what advantages accrue from being a member of the union. At the conclusion of this exhibition naulo or nalo, the members, including the newly initiated go back to the taraui, where the masked figures remove their costumes, and refresh themselves after the day's toil with food that has been provided by the relatives of the initiates.

The next day the Duk Duk begin their collecting of tambu. The initiates, together with their friends and relatives, who must all be members, accompany the Duk Duk, manifestly to control the takings; if the Duk Duk becomes weary he slips into the bush, quickly removes the costume which is at once donned by another man, who goes leaping on and announcing his advent by the loud peculiar cry. The initiates do not put on the mask during this time, though they always accompany their Duk Duk, and sleep with him on the taraui at night. Day after day the different hamlets are visited, and everywhere gifts of tambu, small and large, are pocketed. This usually goes on for a month, but in some circumstances it may last twice as long.

A rich native will sometimes prepare a special feast for the Duk Duk on the taraui; he then takes him to his house and hands him over the customary present of tambu, a tambu na duk-duk (in contradistinction to the money paid to the Tumbuan and called a tambu na tumbuan).

During the time of the collection of tambu things are very active on the taraui; there are always a great number of members gathered there, and the father, uncle and relatives of the initiates must see to it that there is always plenty of
food on hand. This is supposed to be for the Tumbuan, and consists of special delicacies, fish, fowl, baked taro over which coconut has been squeezed, and all kinds of green vegetables. These festal foods are called kirip.

After the amassing of tambu has gone on for a month or two, the owner of the Tumbuan announces the end of the feast. All the members, masked and unmasked, gather at the feasting place of the owner where, after a short dance, all squat on the ground. The fathers, uncles and male relatives of the initiates bring them, or more correctly, bring their Duk Duk presents of tambu. Fathers and uncles bring one to two metres, more distant relatives a smaller piece which, bound to a coloured bunch of dracaena, is laid before the Duk Duk. The women send great bundles of delicacies which are later sent to the tarau. This day is called a bung dok tarauki. When the distribution has been made all repair to the tarau and the Duk Duk is now dead. The Tumbuan, on the contrary, never dies; it is immortal.

On the tarau, the masks are taken to pieces, everything of any value in the eyes of the natives, like coloured feathers, wooden carvings etc., is kept, the remainder, especially the leaves of the dress and the framework of the headpiece, are stuck under the rafters of the house, and in other places.

Now that the Duk Duk is dead each goes to his house. But the affair is by no means over, for after a few days the actual settlement of accounts takes place. On the third day after the death of the Duk Duk, all those who have co-operated during the time of the feast, gather at the house of the newly initiated; everyone receives a gift which varies according to how much the Duk Duk has collected. The maker of the dress receives a piece of about two to three metres in length, the people who have worn the mask during the feast receive the same. The distribution is called svar ma mono. A big meal, dodoro, follows, of course.

The following day all the members gather at the tarau; the day and the feast which takes place on it are called tar kulau. This latter consists in the father or uncle of the newly initiated stepping up to him and giving him a certain number of young coconuts, kulau; each nut represents ten fathoms of tambu. Therefore if the uncle gives his nephew three nuts, this means he must pay back thirty fathoms. Often the father, or uncle, will take one or more nuts back, and silently drink them; this means that the initiate must supply the relative number of fathoms, but that the drinker will contribute as many fathoms of tambu as the nuts he drank. The more tambu the initiate has to pay the higher his rank in the society. Rich people present one hundred fathoms on settling day; but this is only idle vainglory, as the shell money is returned later. Duk Duk bought with a large sum are called a rakvak, they sit on the feasting place next to the Tumbuan, and receive the daintiest morsels at the banquet. The others, which cost the usual twenty or thirty fathoms of tambu, are called a ni kore.

As a rule the initiates have not collected enough tambu to cover all the expenses of their sponsors, and in this case they must work to obtain the requisite sum. If the father, or uncle, has money to furnish a contribution, and has possibly borrowed the outlay from richer natives, it may be two or three years before the initiates are able to amass the whole sum. They must therefore lay out gardens, fish, and in short, earn money any way they can. When after long months of toil, the initiate is finally the happy possessor of the whole sum, then comes the great day of settlement, a bung amido. Father or uncle prepares a great feast which is brought to the tarau. The members foregather, and the whole sum in tambu, bound together with dracaena leaves, is delivered by the initiate to his sponsor. As already mentioned, the latter often give a great part of the tambu to enhance the regard in which they are held by their nephews or sons. But they take the whole sum, and keep it as tambu na duk duk of the initiate.

On this occasion the banquet is of so rich a nature and so plentiful that the feasting goes on at the tarau for ten days on end. During this time the Tumbuan also appears and receives a present, one length of tambu, of from one to two fathoms, from each initiate. The remains of the Duk Duk costume, till now kept in the houses, are burnt (va pulung or pulung) and the initiate is from then on a full member of the society.

The knowledge of the whole of the initiation customs detailed above will make clear much in the behaviour of the native which formerly appeared to be without motive or reason. We now understand why the uncle or father hire their nephew or son to strangers, and later take receipt of his wages; we also understand why the young people are not allowed to go here and there at will, and thus shirk their obligation. All this is to ensure to the relatives the repayment of their outlay. A youth who has been admitted into the society can never be expelled from it, he enjoys all the advantages to be derived from membership all his life, especially that of attending numerous festivities which would otherwise be inaccessible to him. In case of need there stand behind him the Tumbuan and the whole society which will take him under their powerful protection should such be necessary. It must not be overlooked, moreover, that the society exercises quite an educating influence, and inculcates into the young people a sense of duty, discretion, obedience, and work. This fact alone, in my opinion, could be developed and used by both government and mission as an educational force.

The position of the Duk Duk is clear from what has been said; it is a subordinate member to whom membership gives certain privileges. The chief, to a certain extent the principal member of the society, is the Tumbuan. It now remains to define the position and significance of the Tumbuan in relation to the other members and non-members.

From the fact that it is only possible for rich natives to possess a Tumbuan, it follows that such a native must derive considerable advantage from it, in spite of the fact that ownership entails the distribution of tambu with apparent liberality and the assumption of other expenses. The avaricious character of the native would not allow him to do this if there was not the prospect of not only covering expenses, but also of making a good profit. The apparent open-handedness is founded on the fact that the outlay will return to the coffers with generous interest. We have seen that during the initiation ceremonies many pieces of tambu fall to the Tumbuan and its owner, but this income alone would not suffice to reimburse the costs incurred. The Tumbuan has many ways and means not only to clear expenses but to make a pecuniary profit; this power is bestowed on the Tumbuan by public opinion.

Firstly, the Tumbuan has the right to impose punishment which as a rule consists of the payment of tambu which goes into his own pocket. Tambu is extracted from people who slander or speak slightly of the Tumbuan or the society in general, and it is women and non-members who more especially feel the heavy hand. Non-members who have in any way offended against the canons of the society are brought to justice and silently submit, as we have seen, for behind the Tumbuan stands the Duk Duk society which forms a structure representing, to a certain extent, public
opinion, against which individual influence is powerless.

The Tumbuan represents the principal in the social order and law of custom in a district, e.g. the north-east corner of the Gazelle Peninsula, and sees that such law is maintained. Now the native's conception of law and order is often very vague, and are in many cases outweighed by the feeling and consciousness of power and authority; probably nowhere else is the maxim 'might is right', so scrupulously observed as in the exercise of the prerogative belonging to the Tumbuan. This, of course, makes him feared, but each accommodates himself to his orders because insubordination would lead to yet more violent repressive measures, and perhaps the loss of life. If the owner of a Tumbuan is a liberal thinking man, which is to say a little less avaricious than his neighbour, the regime of the Tumbuan is comparatively mild. But a grasping Tumbuan makes things so severe that it may happen that even members grumble at the weight of the burdens imposed, and finally bring the matter to the notice of the Tumbuans in the neighbouring districts. On the whole one can say that excesses are rare, and to-day this is more true than it was twenty years ago. The influence of settlers, government and missions has had a corrective effect on the Tumbuan, and his behaviour must now be deemed to be very moderate. Our conception of right and wrong is so entirely different from that of the native's that we often regard the punishment imposed by native on native as hard and unjust. In spite of this we hear no murmur on the part of the native punished because he regards the punishment meted out as right and just according to his standards. The justice of white people, on the contrary, often appears to the native to be a flagrant injustice, and he only accommodates himself to it because he knows the judge has the force of the law on his side. The government, therefore, is in the eyes of the natives a cove- tous and hard-hearted Tumbuan against whom nothing can prevail.

The Tumbuan also has ways and means of protecting property and is, so to speak, a court of appeal. He protects taros, yams, and bananas, certain trees and big groves of palms, and all this is done by simply putting a sign, consisting of a bunch of grass, a plait of coconut leaves, a painted coconut shell etc., on the object to be protected. This is the 'taboo sign' of the Tumbuan and is respected from fear of consequence. The owner of the tree or other object pays the Tumbuan a certain amount of tambu for his trouble.

In the case of the death of a rich or influential native, or of feasts in honour of the dead, the Tumbuan must always appear; he glorifies the feast or ceremony by his dances, and his secret appearance and disappearance create wonder and awe; but he sees to it that his trouble is well paid for.

Now although the Tumbuan in the first instance snatches tambu for his owner, his children, the Duk Duk, are not forgotten; the principle of 'live and let live' here comes into play, and many odd bits of money fall to the lot of the Duk Duk; this is more especially the case when candidates are admitted and when fines are paid.

Outrages on women and girls formerly occurred, though no such case is known to me. Old members also deny this, and in any case no such crime happens these days.

From what has been written it will be seen that the Duk Duk society actually communicates no secrets or extraordinary knowledge to its initiates, unless it be that they succeed in convincing the novices that all that goes on inside the tarau under cover of the Tumbuan and Duk Duk masks is not the work of the spirits but of quite ordinary men, a disclosure which of itself may be astonishing enough.


 IMAGES OF TRADITION AND IDENTITY: DOCUMENTS A22 to A28

From the beginning of sustained European missionary and government contact with New Guinea peoples, two conflicting groups have been evident in many indigenous communities. One group, sometimes dominated by younger people, moved towards embracing the new life they saw embodied in the Europeans. In this process the 'new' men quite openly rejected the old way of life, the traditional ways of their ancestors. For instance H. A. Brown, a missionary - anthropologist, who had worked for a number of decades in the Eastern Elema region of the Papuan Gulf, reported in 1959 that the rich artistic heritage of these people had almost died out after a history of contact with Europeans going back to 1880:

'The younger generation generally speaking knows nothing of it. The art is regarded as belonging to the dark past, and in these days of enlightenment it is dismissed, as one young fellow did in my hearing, as "New Guinea rubbish"...'.

Eight years earlier, a modern poet from the Meko area, A. P. Allan Natachee, had castigated the darkness of his ancestors in these terms:

'What sort of wealth did he possess for you,
And his knowledge of ability?
None but worthless heathen rubbish for sure,
Is now the cause of stupidity.'

1H. A. Brown, 'Elema Traditional Art', Papua and New Guinea Scientific Society Proceedings, 1959, p. 21
2A. P. Allan Natachee, 'Mekes Poems and Legends', Oceania, 1951, Vol. 22