

**SCRIPTURE IN AN ORAL CULTURE:
THE YALI OF IRIAN JAYA**

by

John D. Wilson

*Adapted from a dissertation presented to
the Faculty of Divinity, of the University of Edinburgh
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Theology*

1988 (adapted 1999)

Table of Contents

Introduction

Maps showing the Location of the Southern Yali

Chapter 1 Ethnographic Overview

- *The Yali and Their Environment*
- *Yali Economy and Subsistence*
- *An Integrated Cosmos: Religion and Social Organization*
- *History of Contact*

Chapter 2 Oral Culture: The Nature and Function of Orality

- *Oral Culture Negatively and Positively Defined*
- *Orality: Transmission, Storage and Retrieval*
- *Oral Tradition: A Typology*
- *Orality: Limitations and Potentialities*

Chapter 3 The Orality of the Yali

- *The Sufficiency of the Yali Language*
- *Yali Oral Tradition*

Chapter 4 Scripture in an Oral Culture

- *Scripture: the Church's Literary Heritage*
- *The Communication of Scripture to the Yali*
- *Yali Literacy: Access to Scripture*
- *Bible Translation: Scripture for the Yali*

Chapter 5 The Creation of A Yali Hymnody

- *Hymns: A Medium for Worship and Instruction*
- *Indigenous Hymns: Appropriateness and Value*
- *The Emergence of a Yali Hymnody*
- *Yali Hymns: Their Structure and Performance*
- *Yali Hymns: Their Content and Function*

Conclusion

Appendix 1.

Appendix 2.

Bibliography

Introduction

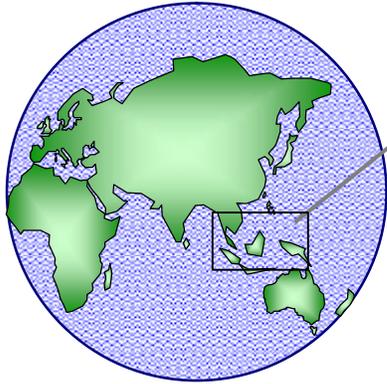
The Yali are an interesting case for the study of the communication and the place of Scripture in an oral culture. As one of several hundred primal peoples or tribes in Irian Jaya — in fact, of nearly one thousand throughout New Guinea — the Yali are a representative example of an oral culture, and, as far as Protestant missions in Irian Jaya are concerned, have had fairly typical exposure to Christianity.

I began to live among the Yali when, as a member of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, I arrived with my wife and first son at Ninia, in July 1972. Consequently, the data concerning the Yali which I present in this dissertation, have been collected in the course of both formal study of Yali culture and through casual observation, over the past sixteen years; but I still regard myself a learner. This paper aims to show some of the assumptions about Scripture which can limit or hinder its communication in an oral culture, and to examine orality (as opposed to non-literacy) with a view to demonstrating the capacity and capability of oral media for the effective transmission of Scripture.

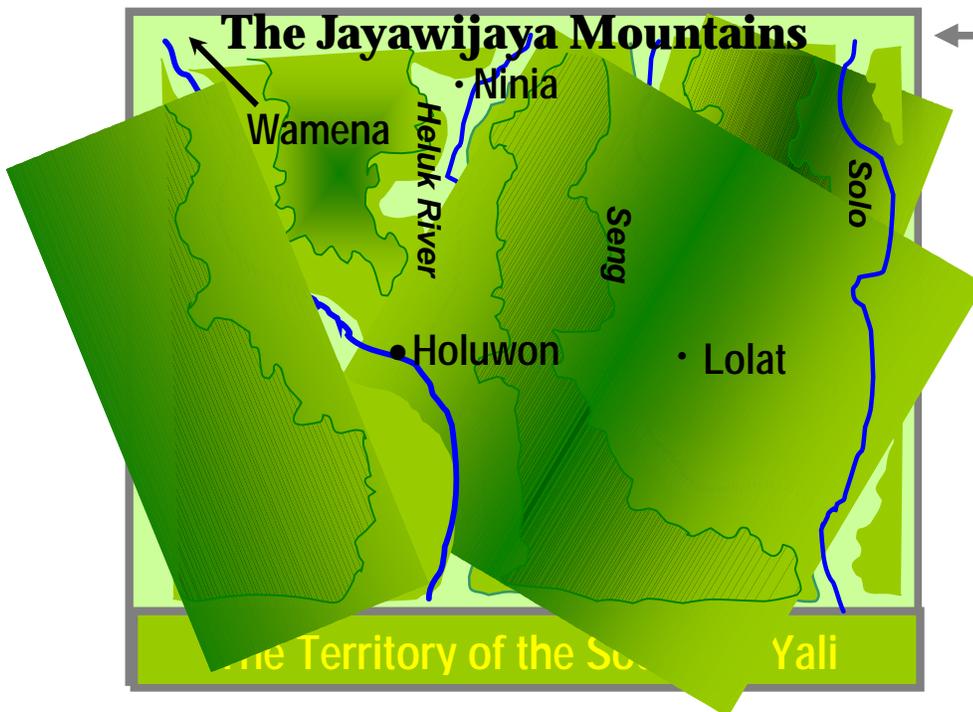
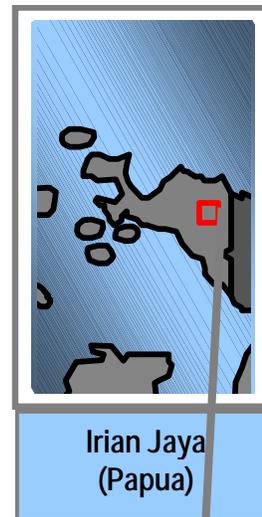
The Yali are taken as a case which exemplifies typical western approaches to the communication of Scripture to an oral culture, but also the potentiality of oral media, and the response of an oral society, in internalizing Scripture and its message. I commence with an ethnographic overview of the Yali with particular reference to their worldview, religion and subsistence economy and lifestyle, as being pertinent contextual information to the introduction of Scripture to this particular culture. Before proceeding to a study of Yali oral tradition, I describe, in the nature and function of orality in general — dealing with both methodology and typology of oral tradition, and discussing its limitations and potential.

Following this, I present the Yali as an example of an oral culture in which both the occasion and the opportunity exist to employ indigenous oral media for communicating Scripture. The Yali have the sufficiency of a language oriented to discourse and oral transmission of information, and also a variety of oral traditions which have the potential to reach every strata of society.

This is followed by a critical discussion concerning the methodology for the communication of Scripture; the aims, role and practice of literacy as a means of access to the printed text of Scripture; and the approach to Bible translation for an oral culture. Finally, I affirm the value of indigenous hymns as an effective oral medium for worship and the transmission of Christian truth, and describe how the Yali have employed their poetic skills and their delight in song for the internalization and transmission of Scripture.



Location of the Southern Yali



THE YALI: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Yali and Their Environment

The term “Yali” has come to be used to designate the people who populate the valleys of the northern watershed of the central Jayawijaya mountain range to the north of the “Grand valley” of the Balim river in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. It also applies to those who inhabit four valleys of the southern watershed of the same range, whose rivers, the Kwik, Heluk, Seng and Solo, feed the Balim river, near where it leaves the mountains and begins its devious course across Irian Jaya’s southern lowlands. Most published material on the Yali to date has focused on those who occupy a specific area of the northern watershed (comprising the Yahuli and Ubahak river systems), known as Yalimo (“place of the Yali”), located roughly between 139°15’ and 139°30’ east longitude and 4° and 4°20’ south latitude.¹ Nevertheless, the more extensive Yali grouping was earlier identified as a linguistic unit, one of the three sub-families of the greater Dani family, designated by the term “north Ngalik”² being a specification and application of the name given by many lower Grand Valley Dani speakers for those living “outside the rim” or “outside the ranges” that enclose this wide, isolated, highland valley.³

The term “Yali” itself is not a self-appellation, but is the application of one of two terms which those now so designated use of people in opposite directions of the east-west trade route; Yali means those to the east and is contrasted with Hupla, meaning those to the west. However, three distinct, major dialectical differences of the Yali language have been identified: the Pass Valley (Abenaho) dialect spoken (by +/- 5000 people) in the northern extremity of the Yali area around Pass Valley, Landikma and Apahapsili; the Angguruk dialect spoken (by +/- 15000 people) in the area known as Yalimo; and the Ninia dialect of (the +/- 9500) Yali of the southern watershed.⁴

The focus of this paper, with reference to the use of Scripture in an oral culture, is specifically this latter group, who inhabit the Kwik, Heluk, Seng and Solo Valleys of the southern watershed. The reasons for this are that my own experience and research have been limited to this area. Three different missions have worked and consequently, churches of differing ethos have been established, in the three dialectal areas.⁵ However, in terms of Yali culture, most of what has been described by Koch and Zöllner⁶ for Yalimo is true for the Southern Yali also, although there is one significant difference in that in the area of study, an additional, western, religious tradition has met and existed alongside the major eastern, religious tradition common to all the Yali.⁷

The four valleys of the southern watershed, which are the domain of the Yali focused on in this study, are located by the geographical co-ordinates of 139° 10’ to 139° 20’ east longitude, and between 4° 20’ and 4° 34’ south latitude. The area is extremely rugged. The northern boundary which separates this southern branch of the Yali from its Yalimo neighbour, is part of the central range of Jayawijaya mountains which rise to over 4000m

above sea level. Spurs from this central range descend in a space of a mere 40 kilometers to the lowlands, which form the southern extremity of Yali territory. The severity of the steep forested slopes and ridges is accentuated by numerous limestone cliffs and outcrops, which in places, constrict each of the four rivers into impassable gorges. In the past, travel from one valley to another, and from one side of a valley to the other, was quite limited, but this was perhaps more because of the restrictions imposed by hostilities and the rigour of scraping an existence in such an environment, than because of the difficulties of travel in rugged terrain.

The eastern boundary of the Southern Yali area is a high mountain spur separating the Solo valley from the Indol valley which is inhabited by the eastern neighbours — traditionally referred to as Yali but now known as Kimyal. The western border is the west side of the Kwik valley where there is considerable intermarriage with their western neighbours — members of an offshoot of Lower Grand Valley Dani. In the border villages of east and west, there is noticeable bilingualism or diglossalism. This is not surprising in the west, since Hupla and Yali are both closely related members of the Greater Dani family.⁸ However, Kimyal in the east belongs to the Mek languages.

Yali Economy and Subsistence

Because few level places exist, and because of the advantage of higher positions overlooking the approaches to a settlement in the event of hostilities, Yali villages are located on ridges between 700m and 2200m altitude. Villages vary in size from eighteen or fewer huts housing a population of perhaps 70 people, to much larger villages comprising several dozen huts accommodating 250 to 300 people. The huts are round structures with vertical split board walls, and conical roofs thatched with bark and usually topped with pandanus leaves. Central to the structure of the house are four *e fisingge* “house poles”, set vertically in the ground in the pattern of a square, which serve to help support a sleeping loft and the roof timbers. The ground floor is raised on beams several inches from the ground and covered with *bisi* pandanus bark. The sleeping loft is usually constructed from *findayo* bamboo reeds laid on and bound to the ceiling joists, which are in turn fastened with vine near the top extremity of the wall boards. Fireplaces are formed with clay in the square space demarcated by the house poles — one on the ground floor for cooking, light and heat, and one in the sleeping loft for heat. Access into a hut is through a small door, which can be closed by slotting loose boards into place.⁹

Most villages consist of several clusters of huts, each cluster or ward comprising a large men’s hut (*youa*) and its associated women’s or family huts (*homia*). In addition to the main or ‘base’ village, there are hamlets and homesteads which Koch defines:

A hamlet is a group of houses which are temporarily occupied during agricultural seasons by people who have their permanent residence in the ‘base’ village. A homestead, on the other hand, is the home of one man and his family who, for one reason or another, moved away from the village and established a permanent residence in one of his gardens.¹⁰

Traditionally, the *youa* was inaccessible to women, girls and uninitiated boys, but now is used in the evenings for informal Christian meetings for the associated families. The Yali are subsistence farmers involved in a continuous round of cultivation and other activities directed towards survival in a demanding and rigorous environment. A good rain- and wind-tight hut is essential for comfort at all altitudes, but especially in the higher villages, and this responsibility belongs to the male division of labour. House building is usually completed in a day, but prior to the introduction of the steel axe and bush knife, the preparation and collection of materials to build an average *homia* might take weeks — even months — if new wall boards had to be prepared.¹¹

Other male activities include making of implements such as the digging stick (*kisim*) for wives and daughters, adze or axe hafts (*yaha ombo*), bows (*sehen*),¹² and arrows,¹³ or other useful items such as water vessels (*ikwag*) made from gourds (*hobut*) or bamboo (*bohweap*), plaited pig tethers (*kumbi*), and sewn, pandanus leaf raincapes (*ilit*). Some of these activities can be carried out by firelight in the evenings, but the gathering of materials necessarily occupies the twelve hours of daylight.¹⁴

However, for Yali men, most daylight hours are occupied in gardening work and the husbandry of pigs. This entails the clearing of virgin or secondary forest by tree felling, and the cutting of undergrowth, grasses, shrubs etc; moving of heavy logs and poles to form crude fences and to demarcate sections of land for different owners and users; gathering branches, twigs and roots into piles for burning; and digging the soil with large pointed poles (*keam*) in preparation for planting. Fences are necessary to keep out both domesticated and wild pigs from those garden areas in process of cultivation or still being harvested. The men also build fences around pig huts (*wam obam*) and those huts which are used to accommodate pigs in the village. Domesticated pigs usually return to these pens each evening, where they are fed sweet potatoes and other vegetables as available, and then are shut into their huts for the night. In the morning they are let out to root (*ambiang wauk*) in the forest or gardens now left fallow. The men control the breeding of pigs by selecting the breeding boars and castrating (*ouhali wauk*) other young or runty males. The significance of pigs for the Yali cannot be overstated. It is not so much that the pigs provide nutrition or sustenance, but that they serve to constitute or consolidate social relationships, or are used for cultic-ritual functions.¹⁵

Labour responsibilities for women, apart from the bearing and rearing of children until they are introduced formally into the society of Yali males by initiation into the men's huts (*youa kwelap-enepuk* and *wit bal-enepuk*), mainly pertain to gardening and cooking. Often at first light, women leave for the gardens, which may be anything from twenty minutes' to an hour's walk away. Several net bags (*sum*) are suspended from their heads to hang down their backs. In one of these might be a raincape (*ilit*), a cooked sweet potato or two, and a length of bamboo tubing (*fili*). During the course of the day, lizards, frogs, grasshoppers and other edible insects will be collected in the bamboo tube, in which they will later be roasted. In her hand each woman carries her sharpened digging or weeding stick, and on her shoulders, or in a net bag lined with leaves, each mother will carry her unweaned child.

To the women falls the responsibility of planting newly prepared gardens, weeding and cultivation of the various crops, and the bulk of the harvesting. At dusk each day, the women trudge back to the village, up the steep slopes, where they have been working all day, whether in blazing sun or in rain. Sometimes a woman will add a pile of sticks or a bundle of cut firewood to the already heavy load of harvested vegetables plus the infant — sitting on her shoulders, or cradled in her arms in order to suckle as she walks along. Back in the village, the women set about preparing the evening meal, by cooking vegetables in the ashes of the fire, or by steam cooking with heated stones in a bark cylinder (*kou*) lined with moist leaves, or in a bundle of large *hulubi* leaves. In addition to these major responsibilities, the women snatch odd moments through the day or in the evenings, to roll string (*hekel soalduk*) on their thighs, from previously selected and prepared bark and plant fibers. The string is then used to weave net bags (*sum yihiruk*) or to make string skirts.

The staple crop of the Yali is the sweet potato (*siburu*) supplemented with yams (*beim*), taro (*hom*) and other vegetables. Animal protein intake is small and irregular, consisting of the small animals and insects caught and eaten by women, occasional pork (*wam ino*), marsupial (*bak ino*), or bird meat (*suwe ino*), or perhaps the eggs of some bird — especially those of the large megapode (*belak*). The diet is often inadequate as evidenced by cases of kwashiorkor and marasmus.¹⁶ This is probably partly due to deficiencies in the cultivated vegetables caused by low fertility of soil and aggravated by the heavy rains which leach the intensely cultivated slopes, which have gradients of 45-60°. General inadequacies of the diet are accentuated by periodic crop reductions and crop failures or losses caused by heavy rains, landslides and crop disease,¹⁷ or when the whole community has been distracted from making new gardens by revived hostilities or other events such as an unusually good yield of the mountain pandanus nuts (*werema*).

An Integrated Cosmos: Religion and Social Organization

Much of what has been written in general terms concerning Melanesian epistemology and worldview is applicable to the Yali and is worth repeating here in synopsis, by way of introduction to specific Yali religious belief and practice. Melanesians have an essentially holistic understanding of life, in which both empirical and non-empirical aspects are always closely associated and are seen to function in an integrated relationship. Thus the Melanesians' worldview is of an integrated cosmos including living and dead people, spirits, animals, plants, mountains, streams etc.¹⁸ The focus of Melanesian religion is the “continuation, protection, maintenance and celebration of Life, Life with a capital ‘L’”.¹⁹ The Melanesian is not concerned with just biological existence, but with cosmic life and renewal, where there is spiritual and physical well-being experienced in all aspects of the integrated cosmos. This is achieved through the ritual maintenance of right relationships with man and spirit, and with living and dead, and through the accumulation and balanced distribution of indigenous wealth. These are “technical means to a spiritual end” — a life of peace and harmony, and of general well-being of the group.²⁰ They are the Melanesian “Search for Salvation” where “salvation” is the realization of a cosmos in which all things and all beings are in perfect equilibrium. This religious worldview is generally based on myths which interpret or explain present

conditions in terms of historical-mythical events which disrupted the pristine past. These give rise to a hope of reestablishment of those lost conditions, or the expectation of an improved future situation which is, in effect, a recovery of that primeval age. What John G. Strelan writes in *Search for Salvation* about Melanesian cargo cults is generally applicable to Yali religion:

The salvation which is sought... embraces such things as deliverance from present troubles and oppression, peace, wholeness, healing, health and well-being. This salvation will be achieved, so it is believed, when the ideal models for man's behaviour and his social institutions which were established in the historical or mythical past are actualized and restored in the present age.²¹

Siegfried Zöllner, who worked for fourteen years as a missionary among the Yali of Yalimo, and whose definitive work *Lebensbaum und Schweinekult*²² is the only, but comprehensive, publication about Yali religion, has rightly focused on the Yali oral tradition of myths, as well as sacred formulae and songs, as the key to an understanding of Yali religion. He has observed that Yali religion consists of a two-layered structure:²³ The mythology of the 'primeval pig' explains the origin or creation of the Yali people through the killing of this primeval animal. This myth is realized in a series of rites in which the ritual killing of a pig is central, and the purpose of which is to recall the origin, and to confirm the existence, of Yali society. The second corpus of myths focuses on the Yeli, which Zöllner calls "Urbaummythik" (primal tree mythology), because in Yalimo this mythology narrates the felling of the Yeli tree, through which the primeval period of earthquakes was brought to an end. Among the Southern Yali much more diverse Yeli mythology exists: Yeli is also a rock pillar which is felled; a primeval pig (*wam*) or echidna (*dabi*) which is shot;²⁴ and in one version, a giant earthworm (*dung*), but the focus is the same as in Yalimo. Medicine men (*ap hwalon*)²⁵ realize this mythology in ritual treatment of sick people and in other ritual acts which are directed at preventing or countering adverse circumstances such as unusually severe inclement weather, which threaten the welfare of Yali society, which is always understood in terms of health and well-being of people, pigs and gardens. Thus the purpose of rituals, which are associated with this corpus of myths, is to stabilize the present life of society by focusing on particular threats to the *status quo*.²⁶ The central religious rite was known as Moroal; and the central healing ritual was called Selam.

Another myth, while not central in Yali religion, is worth mentioning here, because it is held in common with other members of the greater Dani family, and because it explains the loss of the pristine condition and also gives rise to the expectation or the possibility of the recovery of that state. This is the mythical "race" between a snake and a bird. One Southern Yali version narrates how in primeval times, before death was known, the message of rejuvenation was to be delivered to mankind by the *kaliye* snake. The message was simply: "Nabelal-habelal" (my outer skin your outer skin),²⁷ which would be valid and effective when pronounced by the snake in the hearing of man. However, the snake, forced to proceed on its belly along the ground around rocks and trees, was overtaken by the pied chat (*ebebulo*)²⁸ who flew directly through the air and called out his cry of mourning, "Fong! Fong!"²⁹ One of the recently composed Yali hymns alludes to this myth, reinterpreting it:

The message of *nabelal-habelal*,
 even while it was with us,
 The message of Nahamut-hahamut,³⁰
 even while it was in our hearts,
 We would have taken *nabelal-habelal* for ourselves
 But since Adam and Eve did wrong (we didn't get *nabelal-habelal*)
 We would have taken Nahamut-hahamut for ourselves
 But since Adam and Eve did wrong (we didn't get *nabelal-habelal*)³¹

The hymn goes on to claim that the message of *nabelal habelal* came through the message of Jesus, and that those who receive His message will go to heaven, implying that *nabelal habelal* will be realized there. This shows that the Yali believe that prior to the intended arrival of the snake, *nabelal habelal* was destined to be their experience, and that the bringing of the message was to effectuate it. But the untimely coming of the bird was the disruptive element which effectively denied them this blessing, and explains the presence of death in the present time. Thus this myth exemplifies the underlying concept that the present state is not as was experienced in the pristine age, and the lingering hope of the recovery or the realization of such ideal conditions.

Myth also explains the structure of society. A dualistic feature, which explains the origin and existence of the exogamous moieties and their associated clans, recurs in several myths: There are two large tree rats Houl and Hwesali, or the two primal ancestors which they represent, Siringon and Samahun, who shoot the Yeli animal; or there are a woman and her son — the woman orders the son to shoot and kill her, which he does and she becomes a pig. Or, in another version, the woman tells her son to look behind the hut, where he sees a big sow which he shoots. The son then butchers and cooks the pig and puts the different parts into two separate piles. In the morning he awakes to find that these have turned into people. Each of these myths, and others, support the exogamous moiety principle and explain the origin of the different clans. Sexual intercourse between members of the same moiety *babi* (glossed as 'incest') is the most heinous transgression known to the Yali. But *babi* is also used for any sacrilegious act — for example, trespass of a non-initiate (*kubilon*) inside the yard of a sacred hut (*ousabam*), or into the hut itself, or the disclosure of sacred knowledge (*ousale*), secret names (*luhuram*), or formulae (*hwal ale*), in the hearing of non-initiates.³² Any such act endangers cosmic stability, and therefore poses a serious threat to the welfare of Yali society. This might be manifested by sickness or infertility of people, pigs and gardens, and by unusually inclement weather, landslides or devastating earthquakes. Through the imposition of the severest sanctions (see previous footnote) the occurrence of these has been remarkably infrequent, and whenever, perchance, such has occurred, or is alleged to have occurred, ritual action has been taken to restore the *status quo* — to stabilize the Yali cosmos. From this it is evident that the established structure of Yali society is part of the structure of the "biocosmos" which must be preserved at all costs.

Within the named moieties (Kobak and Bahabol) and their associated clans or sibs, which comprise Yali society, a complex Omaha type kinship system exists.³³ Typical of a Melanesian society, this system prescribes how people live and interact with one another

in respect of such matters as marriage, death, rites of passage, land tenure, conflict settlement and so forth. Yali kinship revolves around four groups or sets of relationships, and members of each group are bound to fulfil any obligations implicit in that set of relationships. Patrilineal relatives (*ori* and *erekwi*) who form the first group, tend to reside patrilocally, and the male members belong to the same men's house (*youa*). The men are expected to be loyal to each other and to assist one another in house building, land clearance and the making of gardens; to defend members involved in conflict, and to avenge the deaths of any of their number killed in conflict or reprisal.

Mother's patrilineal relatives (*amusi* and *amumsi*) comprise the second set, the significance of which is that it acknowledges the relationship of the child to the mother's clan, and the role the mother plays in giving birth to and raising children. The importance of the mother's brother, particularly in transition rites, is reflected in the mirror relationship of the third set, the sister's children, who are not terminologically distinguished from one's own children (*omaliki*). The fourth set comprises the affinal relatives through either wife or sister (*ombarikisi*). Husbands are obligated to provide pigs regularly for their wife's or wives' brothers.

Personal relationships are therefore maintained through reciprocity, that is, by helping and being helped, by giving and being given both goods (usually pigs) and physical assistance — both formally in ritual contexts and informally in a process extending over a long period of time, indeed sometimes over a lifetime. Reciprocity may be either negative or positive, and since a person is expected to assist his kin in relation to other people, he may become implicated in a process of negative reciprocity towards those outside his immediate community. If kin relationships are the building blocks of Yali society, then reciprocity is the mortar which binds each member together.³⁴

Yali social organization, as is basically typical of New Guinea highlands societies, can be described as egalitarian and unstratified,³⁵ and therefore leadership in Yali society is not clearly defined. In fact, both Koch and Zöllner state quite categorically that the New Guinea "Big Man" phenomenon, where a local group leader achieved his political status by personal power, and which is reported for other highland societies, is absent in Yali society.³⁶ However, both writers acknowledge the existence of those whom the Yali of Yalimo designate *ap souon* "big men". These are men who are able to assume an influential position within a fairly restricted locality, because of three identifiable characteristics: "Physical fitness, oratorical skill and assertiveness, and clever manipulation of pig exchanges."³⁷

This description is applicable to such leaders among the Southern Yali, but the term *ap humon* (Southern Yali equivalent of *ap souon*) is not used in this way. Rather, the term *ap nenowe unuk bogdeg* "the man our-older-brother-of-the-supported-name" is applied to those who have the three characteristics listed above. The three-fold definition is further amplified by the Southern Yali to acknowledge that such a person is a man of his word — that is, his oratory can be backed by his actions and wealth; he is a man of self-control — not easily swayed by others, nor reacting to hostility; he is not a thief in other words, he is not a likely source of social trouble through ordinary theft (*yoholi angge wauk*), pig

theft (*wam uwan angge wauk*), or wife-stealing (*homi balduk*). His sphere of influence might extend to two or three villages, but normally was restricted to his own locality where his advice and authority were directed for the common welfare, in such matters as pig keeping, gardening and conflict.

Since the introduction of Indonesian government administration, the term *ap nenowe unuk bogdeg* has ceased to be used in the traditional way, though the same characteristics are what gain respect for both government appointed local officials, and for church leaders.³⁸ but the Southern Yali always insist that *ap hwalon* were far more important than *ap unuk bogdeg*. This opinion is sustained by Zöllner's description of Yali religion, which emphasizes the centrality of the primary *selam* healing ritual and the significant role of medicine men.³⁹ Yali religion is concerned with the whole of life — man in his cosmos — whether it be in relationship to ancestors or to living kin; whether it be within the non-empirical or the empirical environment. *Ap hwalon* were therefore functioning at the heart of Yali life.

History of Contact

It is not known precisely when the southern Yali, as they are known today, had their first contact with the “outside world” beyond their “Hupla”, western, and “Yali” eastern neighbours. For the southern Yali, the earliest known contact occurred when members of an expedition, using a floatplane, landed on the Balim river just south of the mountains, and then proceeded up a mountain spur which separates the Seng and the Balim rivers. Their journey brought them near the village of Uwam, where some of the middle aged and older men vividly remember the encounter. One of my informants, a man named Belak, who was a small boy of six or seven then, to the consternation of his father and other kinsmen, was dressed in western clothing by the expedition members, who indicated by sign language that they wanted to take him away with them. Nothing further untoward resulted from that expedition, but an enamelled metal cooking pot and some steel knives were left behind.⁴⁰

I have been unable to determine with certainty when, or which expedition, this was, but it may have been in 1937. In May of that year, Dornier and Fokker floatplanes were used to explore for gold in the upper reaches of the Lorentz, Brazza and Digul rivers. Since the Brazza and Lorentz rivers flow south to the east and west of the Balim river, and thus bracket the area in question, it is quite likely that it was members of this expedition who were the first outsiders to enter Yali territory.⁴¹ Whether the above date is correct or not, it was about this time, and into the period of World War II, that the Yali began to see aeroplanes flying overhead or nearby. The phenomenon filled the Yali with trepidation and presentiment as to what such an event might forebode. The only concept to which they could relate it was the Yeli, which, according to myth, had flown through the air making a *bururum* noise such as was made by the aircraft. This evoked the disruptive activity of the primordial period — the earthquakes — which had to be stabilized by the shooting or felling of Yeli and, therefore, throughout the area rituals, which recalled and realized that stabilization, were performed by the *ap hwalon*. One informant who would have been quite a small child at the time, said that his mother pushed him into a hut and

hid him with a *kou* bark cooking cylinder, and then in the evening, brushed him all over with the feathers of a *konggou* "frogmouth" (a night bird), in order to ward off any sickness that might have been brought by the flying spirit.

Another possible early contact is one widely recounted and sung about by the Yali. This story originated not too far from Uvam, scene of the encounter mentioned above. When an expedition of white men appeared, wielding bush knives (*luhi*) and steel axes (*melahan*)⁴² with which they could easily cut down saplings and fell trees, the Yali begged to be given some, but the expedition members refused. A man called Yelibuk therefore organized and led a massacre of the white men, and the Yali took the knives and axes for themselves. According to my informants, however, although the song about Yelibuk mentions Fisikuruk, a place near Uvam, the incident occurred in an area a little south-west of the region presently occupied by the Yali, where a different language is spoken. Thus this account is not verifiable as fact, but it is nevertheless indicative of early contact with white people, and of the discovery to the Yali of a new dimension to the known cosmos.

Apart from some trade for salt into the Balim valley near Kurima, the Yali of the Heluk valley had no contact with the outside world until 1961 when Stanley Dale and Bruno de Leeuw of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union trekked in from Hetigima via the Mugwi valley. They arrived in the northern Heluk, and set up camp on a sloping plateau known as Yabironggoma, between the villages of Yabi and Balinggama, which at that time were involved in hostilities.⁴³ In some way, through Western Dani porters and by sign language, Dale was able to communicate his desire that the warring Yali should make peace. It was taken by the Yali as a command, and a traditional peace ceremony (*dog belapuk*, "to set down the war arrow") ensued on May 23, 1961, with the exchange of peace settlement pigs (*anggerang owam*, "kidney pigs").⁴⁴ From Yabironggoma, Dale and de Leeuw moved to a ridge called Yerino, not far from the sacred Kwalu hut at Ninia, and began to construct an airstrip with sporadic and reluctant help from the Yali. When the airstrip was opened in March 1962, the name Ninia was used for identification, probably as having wider application than Yerino. Dale was joined soon after that by his wife and family, and set about learning and analysing the language with a view to preaching. In his eagerness he was soon conducting "a daily Gospel meeting" for the men who came to work with him on the strip or in house building.⁴⁵ In this way, the Southern Yali began to experience increasing encounter with other peoples and other worldviews, that were to bring about far-reaching effects in Yali society. The peace that was established in the northern Heluk in May 1961 was never to be broken, and within relatively few years had gradually developed in both meaning and extent throughout the whole Southern Yali territory.

Endnotes for chapter 1

1. For example, see Koch (1967) and Koch in Cook and O'Brien (1980:233); and Zöllner (1977:16-18).
2. See Bromley in *Oceania* Vol. XXXVII (4) pp.298ff..
3. See Bromley in *Irian* Vol. II (3) pp.3-9.
4. See Silzer and Heikkinen in *Irian* Vol. XII pp.56-57.
5. The Netherlands Reformed Congregation in the Pass Valley area; the Gereja Kristen Injili with missionaries from the Rheinische - Missions - Gesellschaft and the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk in the Yalimo area; and the Regions Beyond Missionary Union in the southern area.
6. Koch (1967, 1974, 1980); Zöllner (1971).
7. See Wilson in *Irian* Vol. XIV, pp. 3-13.
8. Bromley in *Oceania* (1967) pp.289,303.
9. Some huts also accommodate pigs, and have an internal, partitioned pen, and an additional pig door. .
10. Koch (1967:45).
11. To fell a hardwood *sahai* tree necessary for durable wallboards would consume a full day when using the stone adze.
12. There are two types of bow: those made from a mountain tree called *suon* and those made from a palm called *sugnim* available in lower, warmer areas. The latter, highly prized, requires a lot of careful preparation. .
13. There are four kinds of arrow: 1. dog " *man arrows* " ; 2. *minggin* " pig arrows " ; 3. loun — " *animal arrows* " ; and 4. *soap* " bird arrows " .
14. Hours of sunrise and sunset vary very little at this latitude from approximately 5am. to 6pm.
15. Zöllner (1977:39), cf. Koch (1967:19).
16. These were identified to the writer by Dr. E M C Cousens OBE, and Drs. Spence and Jean Alexander during surveys in or near the area. Cousens (1977), S Alexander, J Alexander (1981).
17. See e.g. Zöllner (1977:10). In the Holuwon area in 1986, there was widespread occurrence of a sweet potato blight at altitudes below 1500m. A similar blight reportedly occurred in 1966/67.
18. See e.g. Whiteman (1983:64-68) and Whiteman in Mantovani (1984:87-97).
19. Whiteman in Whiteman (1984:91).
20. Whiteman (1983:64-68), and Whiteman in Mantovani (1984:87-97).
21. Strelan (1977:62).
22. Although I do not read German, I have gained access to this excellent publication through the kind assistance of Drs. Jan A Godschalk who read and orally translated the entire book for me. He also gave me a copy of his draft synopsis of Zöllner's book which is shortly to be published in the *Point* series of the Melanesian Institute.
23. A third element, the *Kwalu* transition rite, (of western origin) exists for some of the southern Yali, but all Yali acknowledge these two strands from the east as essential and central to Yali religion.
24. Informants who tell this version of the Yeli myth say that the tree/pillar versions are a parabolic or cryptic representation of the " true " (i.e. *their*) account. Adze blows to each side of the tree/pillar are, in fact, the arrows shot into each side of the animal by the two primal ancestors of the two exogamous moieties.
25. In Yali, *ap* means " man " or " people " ; *hwalon* consists of *hwal* from the stem of the verb " to take care of " or " to keep in order " , and *on*, a nominalizing suffix which can be glossed " type/kind " . In an article in *Irian* XIV (1986:3-13), I inadvisedly glossed *ap hwalon* as " shaman " . " Caretaker " might be an etymologically more appropriate gloss, but Zöllner's use of " medicine man " is quite apt, though *ap hwalon* did not generally use medicine *per se* in their healing rites.
26. See Zöllner (1977:46-64); also Kamma (1978:114-120).
27. *Abelal* is the outer skin shed by various reptiles. This ability symbolizes continuous rejuvenation, perhaps even " eternal life " .
28. The pied chat (*ebebulu*) has white shoulder patches which are compared to the mud which people daub on their bodies when mourning. In villages of lower altitude, the bird which features in the myth is Blyth's hornbill (*sibine*) which also has patches of white on its body.
29. *Fong watuk* is " to mourn " .
30. A synonym for " outer skin " .
31. Yali hymnbook no.81.

32. Richardson (1977:60-66) cites verifiable examples for each of these: Kilohe was executed for alleged incest with his daughter; Nindig-ameg was cast into the river Heluk when she unwittingly trespassed in the yard of the Kwalu sacred hut at Ninia (pp.31-43); and Bugni was hacked to death with a stone adze when he went berserk, calling out sacred *luhuram* words in the hearing of women and children (pp.82-87).
33. See in particular Koch in Cook and O'Brien (1980:233-279), and also Koch (1977:48ff).
34. Apart from my own research, I have referred to Koch (1967:46-51); Whiteman (1983:56-58); Whiteman in Whiteman (1984:106-110); MacDonald in Whiteman (1984:216-218); Koch in Cook and O'Brien.
35. See Koch (1967:53); cf Whiteman (1983:58).
36. Koch in Cook and O'Brien (1980:234); cf Whiteman (1983:58-63).
37. Koch (1967:54).
38. The Indonesian Government began to appoint or recognize local men as chiefs (*kepala suku*) in the late 1960s, without particular reference to traditional leadership characteristics or conditions.
39. See Zöllner (1977:213259; 332-387).
40. The cooking pot was already in a badly damaged and rusted condition when I saw it, but some steel knives — now without wooden handles — were still in use in 1982, when I bought one in exchange for a new knife.
41. Most accounts of the various expeditions are in Dutch, and I am therefore indebted to Drs Jan A Godschalk for the information on the 1937 expedition.
42. These were the terms coined then, which have since been replaced by *karog* (bush knife, from the verb "to slash") and *bosie* (steel axe — a corruption of the western Dani *mbuti*, from Indonesian *besi* "steel", and *ye* "axe").
43. Manning (1969:25-26); Dale (1969:11-12). At about this same time Gerrit Kuijt of the Netherlands Reformed Congregation entered Pass Valley (Abenaho), and Siegfried Zöllner of Rheinisch – Missions - Gessellschaft, and Dr Vriend of Nederlands Hervormde Kerk entered the Yahuli valley to base themselves at Angguruk.
44. Manning (1969:28); Richardson (1977:145-148). The Yali could only interpret the presence of white men as the return of spirits of Yali ancestors, thus Dale's request was taken as an obligatory command. Richardson's account is imaginatively graphic, and I only give here and elsewhere references which accord with what I have learned in conversation with Bruno de Leeuw and with Yali at Ninia.
45. Manning (1969:40).

ORAL CULTURE: THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ORALITY

At this point it is necessary to digress from the particular focus of this dissertation (i.e. the Yali) to consider in more general terms what is intended by the use of the expression “oral culture”, and to consider the potential of orality for transmission and retrieval of Scripture. However, this is a byway that will lead back to the Yali of Irian Jaya.

Oral Culture Negatively and Positively Defined

There are two ways of defining oral culture: the first is to describe it from the perspective and in the terms of a literate and literary culture; that is, with reference to its lack of writing. Thus Walter Ong has defined an oral culture as a culture before the introduction of script.¹ Elsewhere, he has written that “primary oral cultures” are those which are “untouched by writing in any form”.² The tendency to think of oral cultures in literary terms has also affected the way in which the corpus of oral tradition or oral testimony of such cultures is described, namely, as “oral literature”. For example, Foley describes oral literature as “literature composed without the art of writing”.³ Ong regards this as a “strictly preposterous term”.

[This term]. reveals our inability to represent to our own minds a heritage of verbally organized materials except as some variant of writing, even when they have nothing to do with writing at all.⁴

To him, the coupling of the term “literature” with “oral” is as absurd as “thinking of horses as automobiles without wheels”⁵ Wallace Chafe also draws attention to this juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory terms:

The term ‘oral literature’ seems, etymologically at least, to contain an internal contradiction. How can something be oral and written at the same time, if ‘literature’ implies writing?⁶

This etymological limitation on defining the products of orality was also acknowledged by Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature*, where they specifically referred to the art of “imaginative literature” in which aesthetic and utilitarian functions coalesce:

One of the objections to ‘literature’ is its suggestion (in its etymology from *litera*) of limitation to written or printed literature; for clearly, any coherent conception must include ‘oral literature’. In this respect the German term *Wortkunst* [“Wordcraft”] and the Russian *slovesnost* [“philology”] have the advantage over their English equivalent.⁷

However, the problem is not just one of etymological connotation, but that such terms carry judgemental overtones, and by the association of ideas, imply that orality is synonymous with illiteracy. In this way, the stigma of illiteracy, common in highly literate cultures, is applied to oral cultures, so that when such cultures are described as illiterate or preliterate, there is the inference of an inadequacy or deficiency of ‘culture’

and 'learning', which can only be compensated by the teaching of literacy.⁸ But on the other hand, oral cultures have their own devices by which information is not only transmitted, but accumulated for retrieval as the occasion arises. The importance and significance of these devices should be recognised by people involved in cross-cultural Christian communication, but oral skills and media tend to be overlooked or undervalued because of preoccupation with literary media.⁹ Hiebert in *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* has drawn attention to this tendency to denigrate oral cultures and to the need to appreciate and use oral media:

Although print is excellent for storing knowledge, it is not the only means. We often label those who cannot read 'illiterate' and thus ignorant. The fact is, non-literate societies have a great deal of knowledge and store it in other ways. They use stories, poems, songs, proverbs, riddles, and other forms of oral tradition that are easily remembered. They also enact dramas, dances and rituals that can be seen.

This distinction between oral and literate societies and the ways they store and transmit information is of vital importance for missionaries. Since missionaries have generally been literate people, they have often misunderstood oral societies and their forms of communication. Consequently, they have generally concluded that the most effective way to plant churches in the mission field is to teach people how to read and write.¹⁰

Therefore it is necessary to recognise that an oral culture is one in which both oral skills and oral media exist for the transmission, storage and retrieval of tradition and other forms of knowledge, and that within the parameters of such a culture, these can function effectively for the communication of Christian knowledge. This is particularly true in evangelism. As Hiebert says, people do not have to become literate before they can hear and understand the Gospel message.¹¹ However, it is also necessary to determine what skills and media exist in a given oral culture and to evaluate their capacity and effectiveness for the communication task envisaged.

Orality: Transmission, Storage and Retrieval

One of the basic characteristics of oral communication is that it is based on the interaction of a speaker and his audience. It is a social activity, in which the personality and skill of the speaker (or singer) is complemented by the participation of the listener(s), whether that be passive (that is, through shared experience in the event and in common understanding of the semantic field of meaning of the words and paralanguage),¹² or active (that is, by vocal or other response).¹³ The transmission may take place in a formal setting such as the passing on of esoteric knowledge in a transition rite, or it may take place informally, such as when a teller of tales or singer of songs enthralls a village with a performance from his repertoire. Simultaneous to transmission, storage is taking place through a process of listening, repetition and memorization. Through the practice of the same skills, the speaker or singer is retrieving what he has already stored. Orality, therefore, is a complex combination of these component skills, by which information is passed on and learned in such a way as to be possible of recall. Ong writes:

[People in oral cultures] learn a great deal and possess and practice [sic] great wisdom, but they do not 'study'. They learn by apprenticeship. by listening, by repeating what they hear, by mastering proverbs and ways of combining and recombining them, by assimilating other formulatory materials, by participation in a kind of corporate retrospection — not by study in the strict sense.¹⁴

However, some writers on oral tradition and orality emphasize that it must be understood that this is not rote learning,¹⁵ but the employment of mnemonic devices to fix the essential content in the memory and aid in recall and transmission. There is considerable "variability" according to Lord, if one understands by that term "that there is not the urge to use exactly the same words one used the last time that one expressed a given idea".¹⁶ In other words, in oral cultures, while verbal memorization skills are reputedly refined, verbatim memorization is limited, and apart from short expressions, "no clear-cut instances of absolute verbatim memory of any lengthy passages" are known to exist. Verbatim memory, in fact, is something that belongs within a literate culture, where "the illusion is widespread that if one has the exact words someone has uttered, one has by that very fact his exact meaning".¹⁷ But this is not true, because it is possible to record the words, and yet through loss of verbal, paralingual and situational context, fail to retain the meaning; and it is possible to learn words by rote and recite them verbatim, without understanding their import. Verbatim memory can only function where there is a written or otherwise recorded text, to which the memorizer can return as often as is necessary to test and perfect verbatim mastery. Moreover, its value must be questionable unless it is possible for a third party to test its accuracy against the original text and the validity of its employment against the original context.¹⁸ Memory, then, is not the same as a written or some other kind of record, which is not a remembrance, but an *aide memoire*. But memory seems to be the crucial factor in the ability of members of oral cultures to retain and retrieve oral tradition or testimony. According to Vansina, however, "there exists no proof that there is any inborn difference in cerebral faculties between the various races of man".¹⁹ We must, therefore, conclude that people of oral cultures have no innate physiological ability of memory, but that as Ong states:

[They] nourish among some of their members, and even to a degree among virtually all of them, memory skills which are beyond those cultivated in present-day technological cultures.²⁰

According to Ong, the key factor in memory skill is the ability to "think memorable thoughts" by the employment of mnemonic devices:

In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulatory expressions, in standard thematic settings. in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form. Serious thought is intertwined with memory systems. Mnemonic needs determine even syntax.²¹

These features identified by Ong as mnemonic devices are also identified by other writers on orality. Rhythm and pattern are developed through the employment of various connotative and emotive sounds and sound structures, sometimes assisted by paralinguistic symbols such as touch, smell, artifact, ritual and body movement.²² For example, Ong cites the Beatitudes as “ obviously mnemonically structured thought” probably recited with rhythmic rocking of the body, as is typical in “ verbomotor” cultures.²³

Each of the acoustic and structural devices which Ong lists (in the quotation above) contribute towards creating rhythm, which “aids recall, even physiologically”,²⁴ but each in their own right act as mnemonic aids. Repetition which is part of the rhythmic pattern, can be created within the “text” by use of assonance and alliteration; synonym and synonymous parallelism; and recurrent phraseology (formulae) and themes. The formulae and themes are themselves rhythmic and patterned compounds of smaller, or shorter, sonic devices. They are groups of words — stereotype phrases — which convey an idea and which are regularly employed under the same or similar circumstances;²⁵ and themes are groups of ideas in which the focus is on things and events rather than words.²⁶ Because of their efficiency as mnemonic devices, formulaic expressions occur with high frequency in oral cultures, and to some degree fulfil the same function as writing in literate societies. Ong points out:

In an oral culture, to think through something in non-formulaic, non-patterned, non-mnemonic terms, even if it were possible, would be a waste of time, for such thought once worked through, could never be recovered, with any effectiveness, as it could be with the aid of writing.²⁷

The business of facilitating retention and recall of “texts”²⁸ through the creation and employment of such mnemonic devices, is the goal of orality, and takes precedence over observance of the normal rules of grammar. Consequently, in some forms of oral tradition, and especially in poems and songs, modified phonological, morphological and syntactical forms occur. Lord calls this “the ‘grammar’ of the poetry, a grammar superimposed, as it were, on the grammar of the language concerned”. But this “special grammar within the grammar of the language” is not contrived by the composer, nor is it “memorized” any more than children memorize a language. It occurs and is used naturally and unconsciously through the constraints imposed by the necessity of mnemonic forms.²⁹

An additional mnemonic device not specifically mentioned by Ong in his otherwise fairly comprehensive list (above) is music, whether vocal or instrumental. He does acknowledge the control exercised by music over variation of the text: “Music may act as a constraint to fix a verbatim oral narrative”,³⁰ but as far as that goes, laws of scansion, rhyme, tone, morphology and syntax are inbuilt textual controls. Music — the melody and rhythm of voice or instrument — intensifies the inherent rhythm and patterning of the text, and a few bars or even notes of music may be all that is needed to aid recall of the text itself. “In all traditions that are sung,” wrote Vansina, “mnemonic aid is found in the melody and rhythm of the song. Throughout Africa drum rhythms are used as mnemonic aids”.³¹

Thus it is clear that in oral cultures, a number or series of skills has been developed to intensify the human capacity to memorize information and traditions in such a way that the whole cycle of transmission, retention and retrieval is facilitated. These skills form an integrated system built upon the fact that memory can be stimulated by various kinds of rhythm — whether the rhythm of acoustic patterning of speech, and melody, or the rhythm of the repetitive or antithetic juxtaposition of ideas, or the rhythm of formulaic and thematic structuring of the text. All these are somehow sensed physiologically and are employed intuitively as part of the subconsciously learned culture. In order to achieve this rhythm, the normal rules of grammar yield to the operation of a different law of syntax, which, in turn, enhances the mnemonic potential of the whole.

Oral Tradition: A Typology

Jan Vansina in *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* has attempted to draw up a typology of oral traditions, and claimed that (at time of writing) no one else had previously done so.³² By using the criteria of purpose, significance, form, and manner of transmission he identified five categories which he subdivided into various types as follows:

i. Formulae

Vansina's definition of formulae is identical to that given above ("stereotype phrases used in various special circumstances"), but whereas other writers tend to apply this term to a device within a narrative, poem or song, Vansina used the term to denote formulae which can stand alone, such as a magic formula to drive away rain. Such formulae, he said, can only be effective if used correctly, and this results in their transmission with a "very great accuracy". Threat of sanctions controls the use and transmission of formulae, if only because of the risk that faulty pronouncement might result in failure to achieve their purpose.

He identified four types of formulae: Titles, which describe the status or office of an individual; slogans, which describe the character of a group; didactic formulae in the form of proverbs, riddles, saying and epigrams; and ritual formulae which are used in magical or religious rites. The texts of ritual formulae are often executed and learnt with particular care because of the fear either of "supernatural sanctions" or the risk of reduced efficacy when not recited correctly.

ii. Poetry

Under this category, Vansina included "all traditions in fixed form, the form and content of which are considered to be of artistic merit in the society in which they are transmitted. While formulae also tend to be composed in fixed form, they differ from poetry in that they have a purely instrumental or utilitarian function in the performance of some ritual act whereas poetry must fulfil aesthetic demands, both in form and content. Moreover, while some formulae tend to be used by specialists alone and thus are esoteric, poetry by its artistic nature becomes a tradition to be transmitted, and " formal expression of the content plays as great a role as the actual content itself".

Vansina subdivided poetry into four types: First, historical poetry, which may be used for propaganda purposes and therefore its contents will have been edited; or, historic poetry of a popular nature, which may become a folk-song. Secondly, panegyric poetry in which stereotype phrases, metaphors, synonyms and homophones³³ are employed to extol the virtues of the person praised. Thirdly, religious poetry, often in the stereotype forms of prayer, hymns and dogmatic texts. As such, religious poetry is similar to ritual formulae and may be limited to esoteric use by a specialist class, but on the other hand is also more likely to be transmitted accurately. Fourthly, personal poetry, which expresses an individual's attitude to, and experience of, life. By nature it is open to wide variation and distortion.

iii. Lists

Lists, place names and genealogies are generally transmitted with care because of their political or social significance. However, Vansina also observed that "genealogies are sources in which distortions are very prone to occur, because they form the ideological framework with reference to which all political and social relationships are sustained and explained".³⁴

iv. Tales

In this category, Vansina placed all text which is in free or narrative form, with the sub-categories of historical, didactic, artistic and personal function. In addition, he classified these according to type: History may be general, local or family history. Of didactic narratives, he said:

[They] attempt to explain the world, the culture and the society. When such explanations are given in terms of religious causes, the tale in question is a myth. Myths are often recited during a rite which recalls the myth itself. Most myths concern events which are not thought of as having happened in the past, but in a time which is sacred and which exists beyond or side by side with profane time.³⁵

Vansina listed aetiological myths as a separate type, with four sub-types (local legends, tales about natural phenomena, popular etymologies and tales about cultural traits), and distinguished these from the former because they do not incorporate religious factors. Tales of artistic merit and those which are composed simply to please and entertain the listeners, and personal tales recount personal experiences within the family or neighbourhood.

v. Commentaries

In this category, Vansina included recitations of legal precedents, explanatory commentaries associated with recitations of histories, and occasional comments which reiterate facts in response to casual enquiries.

Vansina's categorization is a useful one to which I will return when I come to describe Yali orality, and in particular, the various types of oral tradition still remembered or employed by Yali today.

Orality: Limitations and Potentialities

Despite the obvious skills employed in an oral culture to transmit, store and retrieve tradition and other oral texts, from a literary perspective, orality has inherent limitations. The question might be asked, particularly by those concerned to communicate the Christian message in the context of an oral culture: How serious are the limitations of orality to the communication of what has largely become a literary tradition? The illiteracy or non-literacy of an oral culture is an obvious obstacle to the communication of a message, which through centuries of conditioning, has come to be viewed as capable of effective and permanent communication only in literary form. This sort of viewpoint is reflected by Frank C. Laubach in *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion*:

Teaching illiterates is a means of extending the gospel, moreover, because every Christian needs to read his Bible. Wherever a church contains many illiterates, it feels weak and unhappy until it has taught them to read. It finds that illiterates just emerging from non-Christian habits need constant personal attention to keep them from sinking back into the old life. They could gain new power to overcome if they could read the gospels, and hymns, and Sunday School journals, and prayerbooks.³⁶

Support for such a viewpoint may be adduced from the knowledge that oral cultures have no verbatim memory and no mnemonic device which functions as a permanent record, in the way that writing or print do. Moreover, in oral transmission, according to Vansina, original form is lost and content becomes “fluctuating and blurred”.³⁷ Since it is not possible in an oral culture to record the words of a text verbatim, then it is assumed that literacy must first (or, early) be taught. But this assumption is based on the premise that the authentic meaning of an original message can only be accurately preserved when the words *per se* are recorded.

In a literary culture, because of our “chirographic-typographic squint”³⁸ we tend to think of words as a record, and that if we have captured the exact words in writing, we have also recorded the meaning of a message or utterance. As already observed, this is a fallacy, and verbatim records themselves have a different and limited function. Therefore, it can be noted that orality and literacy have different functions and therefore different values. One recent writer brings out this antithesis:

It is generally acknowledged that written and oral communication involve very different kinds of strategies: what works orally does not work in print, and vice versa. We know the reasons for this discrepancy, at least in part: oral communication works through the assumption of immediacy, or spontaneity; writing on the other hand, is planned, organized and non-spontaneous.

Overlaid on this distinction is a problem of judgement. For the past three thousand years, more or less, literacy has been in competition with non-literacy (or rather, perhaps, orality) for minds and souls: many commentators are not so much interested in the different values, the different advantages, of each medium, as in perceiving the two as locked in deadly combat.³⁹

The Christian communicator with his literary mind-set, therefore, needs to be aware of his prejudiced perception of orality. Instead of viewing written forms of communication as basic, or more valid than oral, he must appreciate the potentiality of orality as an alternative means of communication, of different, not lesser, quality.

There is, however, another dimension of limitation in orality which needs to be considered. It has to do with cognitive and noetic processes possible within an oral culture on the one hand, and the increasing exposure of oral cultures to literary culture on the other. Ong, one of the leading proponents of orality, writes:

Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, *without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials*, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, *orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing*. Literacy... is absolutely necessary for the development not only of science but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, and indeed for the explanation of language (including oral speech) itself. There is hardly an oral culture or a predominantly oral culture left in the world today that is not somehow aware of the vast complex of powers forever inaccessible without literacy.⁴⁰

On the basis that writing is a derivative of speech, Ong brings out the almost inevitable tendency of orality towards literacy. Nevertheless, this has not occurred in many cultures in the course of history. Ong says, “that of the many thousands of languages — possibly tens of thousands — spoken in the course of human history”, a relative few has been “committed to writing to a degree sufficient to produce literature”.⁴¹ Before writing can be created, there must be a need for it, or at least the motivation to pursue fresh dimensions of thought that are not possible without writing. That need or motivation seems to be linked in some measure to association with other cultures, and with literate cultures in particular. This is implicit in Ong’s statement that literacy is necessary for certain kinds of development, for existing oral cultures have functioned in a self-sufficient manner, unaware of the existence, let alone the need for such, until coming into contact with literary cultures through colonial expansion, missionary outreach etc. Moreover, the assumption that oral societies are incapable of logical, linear cognitive processes, and that literacy is necessary to enable complex and scientific thought, is questionable. Lakoff says that there is no empirical evidence for that opinion.⁴²

The limitation of orality, in the realm of cognitive development, therefore, is, if not questionable, at least relative to the proximity to, or degree of contact with, literary cultures.

If literate peoples overvalue literary skills, it is also true that they tend to undervalue, or even fail to appreciate the value of orality. When Christian communicators do this by heavy dependence on literacy, they do themselves, the receptor culture, and the Christian message a disservice. Oral cultures have effective means of communication which can be employed, and in some cases may need to be employed, apart from literacy. Oral societies are usually face-to-face societies where the immediacy and warmth of speech,

and the social and participatory characteristics of oral communications are both understood and esteemed. Oral media of communication, moreover, are receptor oriented. They involve interaction between speaker and audience, and part of their function is their capability of transmitting for retention. Even the perception of what words are in an oral culture is significant. According to Ong, members of such cultures “consider words to have great power. Sound cannot be sounding without the use of power”, and, therefore, oral utterance is itself “dynamic”.⁴³ Moreover, speech is perceived to emanate from the very heart and being of a person, expressed by the vital breath of life itself.. In short, orality is a culturally appropriate and effective method of communication within an oral culture.

Herbert V. Klem in the introduction to *Oral Communication of Scripture* writes:

Approaching oral communicators with indigenous media reduces resistance to literacy and Christianity in several ways. The use of indigenous media allows the people to approach the material with existing skills. An indigenous definition of learning allows those who expect to memorize what they learn to feel fulfilled. This allows them to become teachers of the material relatively early in their experience with the new material. It allows for continuation of indigenous patterns of leadership and existing patterns of leadership are not disrupted by a demand for new communicative skill among Christian leaders.⁴⁴

From this, it is evident that the ramifications of the potentialities of orality go far beyond the business of transmission of the Christian message *per se* into areas of contextualization and indigenization of Christianity within the culture. Christian missionaries and evangelists need to give serious consideration to orality for more reasons than merely as a means of communication.

Endnotes for chapter 2:

1. Ong (1967:22).
2. Ong (1982:9).
3. Foley (1986:3).
4. Ong (1982:11).
5. Ibid p.12.
6. Chafe in Tannen p.49.
7. Wellek and Warren (1949:11).
8. See e.g. Lakoff in Tannen p.259.
9. See e.g. Goody in Tannen p.201; cf Lakoff in Tannen p.239-240.
10. Hiebert (1985:32). In section 4, I will return specifically to this issue *vis-a-vis* the communication and function of Scripture in an oral culture.
11. Ibid p.135-136.
12. On paralinguage see Hiebert (1985:145ff), and cf. C. Kraft (1979:147ff).
13. See Lord (1960L25); Ong (1982:42 and 45); and Meyer in *NOTES ON LITERACY* No.51 (1986) pp.2-4.
14. Ong (1982:9).
15. E.g. Lord (1960:5); Ong (1967:31-32).
16. Lord in Foley pp.19-20.
17. Ong (1967:32).
18. See Ong (1982:57-63).
19. Vansina (1973:40).
20. Ong (1967:23).
21. Ong (1982:34).
22. Hiebert (1985:143).
23. Ong (1967:30). The term “ verbomotor” was coined by Marcel Jousse to describe “cultures in which, by contrast with high-technology cultures, courses of action and attitudes towards issues depend significantly more on effective use of words, and thus on human interaction and significantly less on non-verbal, often largely visual input from the ‘objective’ world of things.” See Ong (1982:68); cf Ong (1967:148).
24. Ong (1982:34).
25. Cf Lord (1960:4 and 30); and Vansina pp. 143-144.
26. Lord (1960:4 and 69); Ong (1967:57) where he cites Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*.
27. Ong (1982:35).
28. While “text” like “literature” by usage has literary connotations, I follow Ong who writes: “‘Text’, from a root meaning ‘to weave’, is, in absolute terms, more compatible etymologically with oral utterance than is ‘literature’, which refers to letters etymologically.” Ong (1982:13).
29. Lord (1960:35-65), cf Vansina p.54.
30. Ong (1982:63).
31. Vansina p.39.
32. Ibid p.142.
33. Cf Vansina pp.69-72.
34. Ibid p.53.

35. Ibid p.157.
 36. Laubach (1961:16).
 37. Vansina p.5.
 38. Ong (1967:22).
 39. Lakoff in Tannen (1982:239).
 40. Ong (1982:14-15).
 41. Ong (1982:7).
 42. Lakoff in Tannen p.258.
 43. Ong (1982:32).
 - 44 Klem (1982:xxiii).
-

THE ORALITY OF THE YALI

The Sufficiency of the Yali Language

One of the aspects of highland cultures in Irian Jaya, which is noticeable even to the casual observer, is the almost total absence of decorative, non-utilitarian crafts or art forms. There is very little carving or painting, for example, and what little does exist, usually is functional, such as the carving of barbs on arrow heads, or symbolic, such as the designs on the wall-boards of Yali sacred huts (*ousabam*). One reason for this that might be postulated for the Yali case is that they had no time in their subsistence economy for any activity which had no utilitarian or ritual function. On the other hand, oral art and linguistic ability among the Yali is both evident and highly esteemed: there is a wealth of oral tradition; oratorical skill is highly respected; the *suahal* “verbal dispute”, an accepted form of conflict management; and linguistic awareness and bilingualism are not uncommon. Furthermore, contrary to the popular assumption by some people in so-called developed countries, that the “primitive” languages of primal peoples are simple and of limited vocabulary, the Yali of Irian Jaya have a highly ordered grammar and an extensive vocabulary capable of application in any and every situation and activity of their everyday life.

The verb system comprises ten classes of regular verbs and three irregular verbs conjugated in six time-person forms which consist of a verb stem denoting the action, and a suffix denoting time and person. The time aspects are: the remote past, beyond the lifetime of the present generation; the past, prior to yesterday; the recent past, from night till the moment of speaking (when it may be used factively of an event about to happen, or already happening); the present or habitual; the near future, from the moment of speaking till night; and the future, from tomorrow on. There are numerous other forms and compound forms of verbs, which encompass a wide range of possible activities.¹

Some of the verbs must also carry prefixes and infixes for indirect objects, so that what translates as a complete sentence in English can be conveyed in a single, one-word Yali verb. Where in English one verb covers a wide field of meaning, there might be two or more in Yali, which differentiate contrastive or distinctive characteristics of the same or similar actions. Conjunctions function as more than connectives, since they also indicate whether the same or a different subject is responsible for the action of the succeeding verb, and in addition, numerous clitics and other grammatical particles contribute to the pattern of discourse structure, denoting subjects and topics and providing other information that signpost the oral text for the listeners. There is no indirect discourse (as normally defined), only direct; therefore each speaker and participant must be clearly marked, and transitions from one speaker to another are always distinctly indicated by the syntactical form.

Another interesting feature of Yali discourse is that it is always from the deictic perspective of the speaker. This is reflected in the fact that the Yali language has a

plethora of directional words — nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs — which relate to the nature of the terrain, rather than cardinal points as we know them, and which are used from the speaker’s standpoint. In addition to the general directions, up-valley and down-valley (which in effect are north and south, since the main river systems flow south from the central ranges), and *Yali fil* (“in the direction of the Yali” that is, east) and *Hupla fil* (“in the direction of the Hupla”, that is, west), there are direction words which refer to directions and relative positions up and down the slopes of the valley sides, along the contours of the valley sides, across the valley or re-entrant ravine, and beyond the mountain or horizon. Even when relating a story that originates from another location, such directional terms are necessary in order for listeners to conceptualize the locations and movements of the narrative.²

The Yali preoccupation with speech and the efficacy of words (even if generally, though not always, subconscious) is manifest to some degree by the number and variety of terms that are used to denote oral activities. The word *ele* “speech” is used for any sound that is actively or consciously produced whether by human, animal or inanimate object, which in some way characterizes the source of the sound, and is differentiated from *aplohok* “noise” that results from passive or unconscious movement such as the rustling of leaves in the wind, or the crashing of rocks in a landslide.³ Another term associated with speech is the word *wene* “utterance” where the field of meaning encompasses “message”, “information”, “story”, “words”⁴ and “social problem”, such as in the expressions *wene bilingguruk*, “to relate/recount a problem”, where the focus is on each of the parties involved stating or relating his side of the story; and *wene bombalduk* “to unravel a problem”, where the focus is on disentangling the complexities of different or conflicting versions of an incident. Some other expressions are *wene hweag-utuk* “to tell a message to”; *wene uruk* “to say something”; *wene balduk* “to cut words” (i.e. to talk about or discuss something); *wene hulumno lauk* “to go and tell tales”/“to be a tale bearer” *wene komoruruk* “to admonish” *wene yonggo foruk* “to send a message” , and numerous others.⁵

Yali Oral Tradition

Zöllner identifies two basic categories of Yali oral tradition, which he describes as “myths” and “fairy tales”.⁶ The former can be subdivided into two sub-categories which are differentiated to some extent by the amount of secrecy which surrounds them. The first sub-category, origin myths, coincides with Vansina’s category of myths with religious implications, and these have traditionally been kept secret. The other sub-category would compare with Vansina’s “aetiological myths” — local legends and tales that explain natural phenomena.⁷ Zöllner’s categorization is right if by definition “oral tradition” is restricted to include only ancient traditional narrative. However, for the purpose of this paper, it is useful to use Vansina’s definition and categorization of oral tradition. He wrote, “Oral traditions consist of all verbal statements concerning the past,”⁸ and he pointed out that “the truly distinctive feature of oral tradition is: transmission by word of mouth”⁹ With the understanding that “past” does not necessarily refer to the primordial or ancestral past, but to any past events, real or imaginary (even as

recent as today's past), it can be stated that the Yali have a wide variety of oral tradition which basically accords with Vansina's typology:

i. Formulae

The only formula which I know of, which accords with Vansina's first type —titles —is the expression *ap nenowe unuk bogdeg* “the man our-older-brother of the supported name” which was applied to the locally influential “big men”. Under Vansina's third type of formulae are a number of didactic formulae which may have been known and used in a fairly restricted locality, or else occurred in various forms. Among these are *hwenaroho wene* “cryptic sayings” by which people avoided being explicit, but where the implicit meaning was clearly perceived. For example, the Yali equivalent of “There is no smoke without fire” is, “Where the tree is felled, a man has been” (or some variation of that). And rather than say, “Someone has stolen potatoes from my garden,” a person might say, “A marsupial has eaten the tops of the potatoes”. Other didactic sayings, *komo ale* “admonition/advice words” are passed on to young people and children by their fathers, such as, “Don't shoot uphill”, (since those above you are in an advantageous position, where gravity aids their arrows), and similarly, “Always escape uphill”, (because that is where there is forest where it is hard to shoot, and where pursuers would be fearful to go, lest you turn into a marsupial or bird). Such formulaic sayings may be used by anyone and are passed on informally.

Ritual formulae — Vansina's fourth class — are known as *hwal*, *hwal ale* or *hwal ebe* and used only by the *ap hwalon* “medicine men”. These esoteric formulae were taught formally by *hwal erat on* (“*hwal* of the [tree] stump kind”) — medicine men recognised as having extensive knowledge of the rituals and formulae — during the initiation of candidates to the office of *hwalon*, (*hwal sum sukni-enepuk* “hanging on them the *hwal* netbag”, or *hwal kwelap-enepuk* “to put them into *hwal*”).¹⁰ The Yali differentiate between two kinds of *hwal* formulae: *kembu hwal* that is, formulae used in the initiation rites, and *selam hwal* which are formulae used in the *selam* body of “healing” rituals — covering treatment of a variety of physical ailments, and rituals to ward off or counter anything that endangered the “health” or welfare of society and the environment (such as following alleged incest *babi*, or to drive away from a garden area the *kerag* “spirit of a killed person”).¹¹ In addition to these formulae, there was a body of secret words *luhuram*, consisting of names of places, peoples and objects associated with the myths realized in the initiation rites, and often listed in a recitation, thus possibly fitting into Vansina's third type of oral tradition.

ii. Poetry

In line with Vansina's typology, I include here all categories of Yali songs as being oral texts of fixed form, of which both the form and content are recognised by the Yali as having artistic merit. In other words, all Yali poetry exists as songs. The Yali love to sing and have an abundance of songs ‘ancient and modern’, and as Koch observed “an admirable talent for instant composition of new lyrics to go with their old tunes”.¹² While some songs are sung only by specific people or in ritual contexts, a vast number of songs are composed by both men and women, and are sung without restriction.

In Vansina's sub-category of historical poetry are a number of songs which recall or recount events from the past such as the one composed following Yelibuk's attack on the exploratory expedition in the foothills of the southern extremity of Yali territory. A large, probably the largest, body of songs is associated with war and revenge killings and recounts or alludes to famous incidents:

Songs heard at every dance keep alive memories of battles and ambush killings. Many stories are cast into a traditional syntactic frame, often changing only the names of people and places to describe similar events that occurred in different wars. The verses exalt the valorous feats of one's own side and deride the enemy's recreancy and humiliating defeats.¹³

Many of such songs were sung in the context of dancing (*yunggulduk*), which sometimes formed part of a cycle of reciprocity between allied villages. For example, the person or persons responsible for initiating a revenge killing — *dog andohalem on* ("those at the source of the war arrow") — would sing for their allies, *kino-kino asuni*, expressing desire for a revenge killing from among their mutual enemies, *eneseleion*. After a successful killing, those who had executed the revenge might be asked to come and collect a pig in payment. On the way to collect the pig and on arrival in the village of the *dog andohalem on*, songs about war or even about the recent success (*wat-esauk kwit suni* "songs about killing for them), were sung by the victors. If it was felt that one pig was not sufficient payment a song asking for additional pig payment (*hengdeg suni* "request song") was sung as they danced. The hosts would respond and after a satisfactory conclusion would send their victorious allies home with their pigs by singing *monde feseruk suni* ("valedictory songs"). As part of the oral tradition of the Yali, these dance songs (*yunggul suni*) help preserve their knowledge of past events in the local history.¹⁴

Similarly, there were a number of peace songs (*yeti* or *yeitei suni*) which were sung in a responsorial manner by members of each village, as the party seeking peace drew near to an appointed place to make their overtures prior to formal peace settlement.¹⁵ Koch describes the situation:

Apparently, the group fearing a revenge killing usually makes a formal peace offer. Group members perform a dance within shouting distance of the enemy village and sing a series of traditional peace songs. These songs bemoan the loss of men and pigs and express regret over the cessation of trade between the two sides, and they often blame a third group or a particular man for the hostilities.¹⁶

Still largely associated with war and also frequently sung in the context of the dance cycle, were a number of panegyric songs extolling the skills of outstanding warriors or war leaders, who led their company out in successful warfare and brought them back without loss of life. Such songs were called *apne wauk* or *mot-enepuk suni* ("praise songs").

Within the scope of Vansina's third category of poetry — religious songs — there is a number of esoteric songs and *hwal* formulae sung only by the *ap hwalon* medicine men.

The songs recall the central myths and the formulae are simply a variety of the spoken *hwal* recitations used in healing rituals. This accords with what Vansina wrote:

The characteristic feature of this kind of poetry is the care which is taken to ensure that it is transmitted accurately, together with the fact that it usually belongs to an esoteric tradition. Another fact worth noting is that this is a form of literature produced by a class of specialists — the ministers of religion in question.¹⁷

Personal poetry, Vansina's fourth category of poetry, is one where the Yali delight in song, and ready aptitude for composition gives scope for a wide variety of texts in which individuals or groups can express their feelings and attitudes to life. For example, the *sual* altercations, which usually occur in the late afternoon, when people return from their gardens or the forest, might result in the composition of a song of complaint sung in the men's hut in the evening. The content of the earlier *sual* is usually toned down by circumlocutory or cryptic allusions (*hwenaroho wene*), but they "communicate a grievance in a way that obviates the necessity of a face-to-face confrontation". Koch makes this interesting observation:

Since the texts and tunes conform to traditional stanzas and compositions, to sing them together with other well-known songs subdues their potentially offensive content even more, especially because some verses change only the names of localities, which then alone give the clues to their interpretation.¹⁸

In a similar way, when someone dies, people quickly compose or modify existing laments (*oba suni*), and mothers will comfort their children with known or spontaneous lullabies (*malik onggonduk suni*, "songs to comfort the child").

Another group of songs that can be classified as personal poetry are the *kelem* songs which are sung in responsorial fashion by groups of boys and girls during dancing. These songs aim at enticing the girls whom the young men desire, and vice versa, but their invitations and hopeful overtures are often parried by verses conveying scorn and contempt, couched in periphrastic or cryptic language. An interesting application of this was made in the translation of Luke 7:32, where the children are playing singing-games and call out:

We sang *kelem* songs to you, but you did not respond (with *kelem* songs) to us.
We sang laments for you, but you are not crying.

The use of songs in this quotation gives insight into a prominent feature of Yali song. Apart from the esoteric songs restricted to use by *hwalon* medicine men, songs of all types are sung by men and women, and boys and girls in all places and on all kinds of occasions: in the huts at night, at work, on the trail and at play. There seems to be no limit to the variety of song, nor restriction on composition, or on when and by whom they may be sung.

iii. Lists

As mentioned above, the only lists which the Yali use are the lists of esoteric *luhuram* names used by the medicine men. I have not discovered any other kind of list or genealogy.

iv. Tales

The Yali are not lacking a variety of narrative texts, which conform to Vansina's fourth type of oral tradition, though at first sight one might be distracted by the number of terms. The fact is the Yali do not seem to differentiate between the three types of history or personal recollections, which Vansina outlines, all of which are covered by *dindil ale* ("tales" — the verb *dindilduk* means "to relate" or "recount"), but which are also recognised as *debag ale* ("what people did" in the remote past), *duswa ale* ("what people have done" in the ordinary past), and *duruk ale* ("what people do" habitually). *Dindil ale* tales are always reckoned to be true stories of real life experience, which originally may have been first hand, but are taken and repeated as hearsay to others. Vansina contrasts such free form narrative with poetry:

The very words of a poem belong to tradition, whereas in the case of a narrative, they are a contribution made by the narrator, and only the general outline of the narrative belongs to the tradition. Nevertheless, a testimony consists of words spoken by the informant, whether it be a narrative or a poem.¹⁹

The tradition is thus interpreted through the personality of the teller of the tale. Each teller contributes a touch of his own, and since each person hears according to context and his own perspective, each new narrator interprets or accentuates some aspects of the text.

As mentioned above, the Yali have two kinds of myth, both of which are included in the Southern Yali term *wene mulik* ("ancestral stories") or its alternative *wene febag* ("the stories/messages they placed" in the remote past). As Zöllner observed, the two categories of Yali myth are largely differentiated by secrecy, thus those that are *ousa* ("sacred" or "taboo") are restricted, while others are freely passed on informally by men to their children. In fact, some of these are the instructive lore that is expected to be passed on to all one's children — whether male or female. And some are the aetiological myths which account for natural phenomena: why the cassowary cannot fly, where fire came from, why men have beards, and so forth. The *ousa* category includes the origin myths which were passed on formally to men in the various transition rites.²⁰

Into Vansina's category of "tales with artistic merit" — the object of which is to please and entertain the listener(s) — fall the *nunung* "fairly tales". These are imaginary stories (*wenggel-heheg wene*) created and passed on by both men and women, to while away the evening hours, by the firelight in the huts, or perhaps, in dry weather, around a fire in the open air. The *nunung* stories are about imaginary people and strange beings, such as people with wings and people who visit spirits; they are about love, sorrow and adventure.

Children and young people soon learn who are the good story tellers and ask, as they do all over the world, “Tell us a story” (*Nunung yag-nesamihin* — literally, “plant for us a *nunung*”). The story teller begins with the formula, “Do you know the one about...?” (using a key phrase such as, “...the man who broke his leg”). It may be that some already know the story, but like it so well they invite the narrator to tell it anyway. Sometimes a visitor, who is a good story teller, will be invited to “plant a *nunung*”.

The *nunung* is always told using the recent past (today’s past) tense, which enhances the immediacy and excitement of the story. A good story teller knows how to spin his tale, and in the firelight the expressions on his face and the movements of his hands contribute to the narration. It is impolite to presume to help the narrator or to add to his story, but it is quite in order to ask questions, exclaim, or laugh as appropriate. As the tale concludes, the narrator closes with, “*Nunung-nunung, derag-derag*”, (which cannot be translated, but can be glossed “So ends my story”). The listeners thank the story teller, and if the night is young, and even if it is not, if their appetite has been whetted, they ask for more.

Nunung stories were learned and memorized from the repeated telling by the best story tellers, who were those skillful at composition, *wenggel-heheg hweag-esauk* (“to tell them while thinking to oneself”), or who could take a good story and improve it by embellishment (*dopnoruruk* — “to add on to”). There might also be a moral or application drawn for the young listeners: “Now don’t you be like that or the same thing might happen to you.” For some of the *nunung*, songs were composed which might be sung during or at the end of the tale, and thereby serve as a mnemonic for the story. Traditionally, men told *nunung* stories to boys and men only in the *youa*, and women told them to the girls and women in the *homia*; but there was at least one renowned woman story teller called Birisiag whose tales drew men and boys to listen to her when she told them out of doors by firelight on a dry night.

As there are no Yali commentaries according to Vansina’s fifth type, this concludes my synopsis of the categories of oral tradition for the southern Yali. Of oral texts open to general public transmission, the numerous songs used during *yunggulduk* dancing or on other occasions, and the popular *nunung* tales, told of an evening, comprise an extensive oral tradition, which has not been lost or discarded through the introduction of Christianity or literacy, and which are media of considerable import for the communication of Scripture and the internalization of Christianity in Yali culture.

Endnotes for chapter 3.

1. For example, there are a subjunctive; a six person immediate imperative; a delayed imperative; a reflexive; a completed action; a repeated action; an action in conjunction with verbs of motion; a serial action, and other forms.
2. This information is drawn from my unpublished papers on the Yali language, and compares with what has been reported by Zöllner for Angguruk, and Fahner for Pass Valley, dialects of Yali. However, Southern Yali differs from the other two dialects in that the remote past only has a third person form, since it always is used of events outside the lifetime of the speaker or his peers, whereas in Angguruk, for example, it is used for events as recent as ten years ago. This difference in tense usage, and also the directional terms are significant for Bible Translation.
3. Ong (1982:32).
4. Very rarely is *wene* applied to mean “word”, and in fact, I suspect such usage has arisen through post-literate awareness of word breaks in speech, whereas traditionally the term *unuk* “name” would be used for a specific expression, or else an individual expression could be identified in a verbal phrase, “We say ‘...’”
5. Some other important expressions are: *enele matuk* “to sharpen their speech” (converse or discuss); *seiale uruk* “to lie”/“to tell a lie”; *suahal uruk* “to have a verbal altercation”; *sunu uruk* “to sing”; *dindilduk* “to recount a story or event”; *nunung yatuk* “to plant a *nunung*” (i.e. to tell a fairy tale).
6. The Yali term for these fairy tales in Yalimo is *suwit*; but in Southern Yali they are known as *nunung*.
7. See Zöllner pp.46-57.
8. Vansina p.19.
9. Ibid p.21.
10. I have described this in “Steps Towards Knowledge”, in *Irian* Vol XIV 1986 pp.8-10.
11. See for examples of the formulae Zöllner pp. 275-285.
12. Koch (1974:15).
13. Ibid, p.85.
14. Ibid p.86.
15. Zöllner p.291.
16. Koch (1974:83).
17. Vansina p.150. N.B. In Zöllner’s careful study of Yali religion, he has recorded a large number of *hwal* formulae and what he calls “healing songs”. See Zöllner (1977) particularly chapters 6-7, pp.213-295 and 548-641.
18. Koch (1974:71)
19. Vansina p.23
20. For examples of these myths, see above (i.e. the Yeli and snake myths) and Zöllner (1977:461-522).

SCRIPTURE IN AN ORAL CULTURE

Scripture: The Church's Literary Heritage

The Bible as Scripture has come to be a fact of life for the Christian Church. Although Scripture clearly had its origin in oral tradition initiated by God in the revelatory Word,¹ and even although after it came to be written down in scrolls and parchments, it was read or expected to be read publicly or orally,² nevertheless, "The Bible has come to us as a book, and we tend to study it as a written document."³ But it was no accident that God's Word came to us in written form:

Various Bible characters such as Moses, Jeremiah and St. John were specifically instructed to write *fixed records* of the Word they received (Ex. 17:14; Ex. 34:27; Num. 33:2; Isaiah 8:1; Jer. 30:28; Hab. 2:2; Rev. 1:3,11,19ff). This fact indicates that *it is God's desire that there be a written text.*⁴

There are also pragmatic reasons for a written text. The written Mosaic laws were preserved for succeeding generations and were expected to be, and were, referred to; parts of Old Testament Scripture were used in worship; histories served didactic or propagandist purposes; and prophecies were recorded to caution, challenge and comfort future generations.⁵ With respect to the New Testament, A. M. Chirgwin noted in *The Bible and World Evangelism*, five reasons for a written text: 1. There was a need to record eye witness accounts faithfully; 2. There was an urge to pass on the Christian message to others; 3. There was a need for the propagandist literature of a missionary movement; 4. The young churches needed counsel; and 5. There was already the Hebrew custom of oral reading of Scripture in synagogues and homes.⁶

Chirgwin went on to state that Scripture reading continued to be a common practice in the life of the early church, and that the text was used authoritatively in evangelism. By the Middle Ages the Bible remained a widely read book, but "it never seemed to reach the people. It was confined to the cloister and the clerics." In the Reformation the Bible was rediscovered and was given back to the people, as their rightful heritage.⁷

Included in this heritage is the assumption not only that all Christians have the right to read Scripture for themselves, but also that they ought to (be able to) read it for themselves. Frank C. Laubach in *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion* wrote:

The belief that everyone has the right to read and write is modern; it came out of the Protestant reformation. In ancient and medieval times, perhaps one in twenty, perhaps one in a thousand, could read. It varied in different countries. When the leaders of the Protestant reformation taught their followers to search the Scriptures instead of consulting a priest, reading became a practical necessity for anybody who tried to be a first-rate Christian.⁸

Thus the unfettering of the Scriptures for the common man also entailed the assumed necessity of literacy. As Klem says, “we have assumed that if people were to *learn the Bible* they must first learn to read it for themselves.”⁹ In other words, literacy is presumed to be the only and necessary access to the message of Scripture. This presupposes, by inference, the inadequacy or invalidity of orality as a medium for transmission of the Bible’s message, even though in Biblical times this was not the case.

There are several problems that are likely to arise in an oral culture if we adhere rigidly to such a position. For example, there may be overt resistance to literacy as a foreign, and non-cultural form of communication.¹⁰ In face-to-face societies, where communication is event-oriented and participatory, written media may be perceived as impersonal and lacking in relevance to everyday life.¹¹ Moreover, emphasis on literacy and education may lead to the development of a new elite which results in the usurpation of traditional leadership, and also the denigration of non-literate members of society as “unlearned.”¹² The reaction against literacy may, by association, also result in a negative response to Christianity: not only the medium is rejected as foreign, but also the message.¹³

Apart from these and other cultural factors, there may be practical factors that militate against a successful literacy programme such as a dawn-to-dusk subsistence lifestyle, where “daylight hours are consumed by daily work and poor light at night isn’t conducive to for a tired body to sit down and read.”¹⁴ Even if literacy can be introduced in such a way that the programme is self-sustaining, statistics indicate that there will always be a number of non-literate members in each society, either through lack of motivation in the first place, or reversion through lack of reading matter and contrary social factors.¹⁵ Moreover, in order to have a successful literacy programme, certain criteria must be met: There must be a sufficient supply of a variety of graded reading matter and indigenous writers capable of, and motivated to, write additional material in any given language. — ideally, the mother tongue — plus those people prepared to teach, even without remuneration, if necessary.¹² In order to ensure such a literacy programme being successfully sustained, it has been estimated that a society would need approximately 65% of its members to be literate.¹³

Since total literacy in an oral society is a remote, if not impossible, prospect, and since the reality is often quite a high degree of illiteracy or inadequate literacy, one must conclude that in terms of the Protestant tradition, the Bible as Scripture is not the heritage of every man in an oral culture. As H. R. Weber pointed out in *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates*, despite the historical view of the Bible as an essential tool for the independent indigenous church, and despite every effort to translate and distribute Scripture, “the Bible is still a closed book to more than half of our brothers — to the illiterates, and to most semi-literates as well.”¹⁸ The question may then be asked: Do non-literate peoples need the Bible as a book, or are the Scriptures the heritage of only the literate peoples? The answer must be a qualified “Yes” to both parts of the question, because, on the one hand, God gave His Word as Scripture, but yet, on the other hand, it was originally communicated orally, and must still be communicable to those who are not literate, and in particular to members of an oral culture.

We recognize in the Bible the canon of divine revelation which has historically been regarded as the norm and absolute by which theology and Christian tradition must be tested. As the Kenyan theologian John S. Mbiti said, when writing about the African situation where many oral cultures exist, “*Biblical* Theology must be the basis of any theological reflection.”¹⁹ In *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Mbiti therefore emphasizes the importance of the provision of the Scriptures translated into the vernacular languages, and he quotes, “The Bible is the basic source of African theology, because it is the primary witness of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. No theology can retain its Christian identity apart from Scripture.”²⁰ Without the Bible available in their own language, a people will be limited to what can be taught by a foreign missionary or evangelist (whether expatriate or national from another tribe or culture). Even apart from linguistic considerations, an outsider cannot possibly communicate and apply effectively the whole “counsel” of Scripture to the needs and situation of a host culture, but “the vernacular Scriptures are a powerful tool both for providing answers to problems and questions which missionaries have not been aware of and for building up the faith of Christians.”²¹ The indigenous church needs Scripture as a book which it can refer to, study, and apply to its own cultural situation.

However, it is not a purely verbatim knowledge of the Book which is needed. A literary perception of Scripture conditions one’s apprehension of its contents to its written, verbal form, rather than to its message and import, which is what can be, and must be, communicated in an oral culture. Weber stated that what to many seems “an impossible postulate” — to bring the Bible and non-literate together — can be realized as we get to know and use, the channels through which they communicate.²² In the following sections I will show how Scripture was communicated to the Yali, and how despite the shortcomings of the foreign missionary to consciously capitalize on indigenous channels of communication, traditional oral media have been employed by the Yali themselves, thereby enabling further transmission of Scripture to non-literate members of their society.

The Communication of Scripture to the Yali

According to Richardson, the Australian Stanley Dale, Christianity’s first cross-cultural messenger to the Yali, was a “confirmed disciple” of the view that Biblical proclamation “does not adapt to culture but demands total change.” He wrote that Dale perceived Yali religion as “nothing more than a monstrous satanic deception” which he fully expected to be “totally incompatible with Christianity.”²³ If this is a true picture, then Dale was clearly predisposed against any conscious attempt to communicate the Christian message through culturally appropriate means. It is true that he abhorred the traditional Yali greetings which are couched in etymologically scatological phrases, and failed to appreciate their cultural implications and functional validity,²⁴ yet, with the training he had received at the Summer Institute of Linguistics, he devoted himself to systematic analysis of the Yali language in order to preach and with a view to translating the Scriptures in the vernacular.²⁵

It is also true that other cultural traits and practices were outlawed by Dale, including the singing of Yali songs, many of which, indeed, were sexually explicit and obscene, or recounted sagas of war and extolled the prowess of the victors. Yet he valued music as a medium for teaching and wrote a number of hymns and choruses to help embody Christian doctrines in easily remembered form, some of which are still used in Yali worship today alongside traditional compositions.²⁶ Some of these hymns were composed to western tunes and were sung somewhat clumsily because of the impossibility of matching Yali word stress to the rhythm and tone of western tunes.²⁷ Modification of the tunes developed and syntactic structure was adjusted in order to make them both easier to sing and more meaningful. But some of Dale's compositions were well-suited to Yali expression both musically and structurally, and of these a basic creed in a repetitive style was one of the most popular and effective.²⁸ In giving the Yali church hymns to sing, he had ventured into a realm of immense potential, but by his prohibition against traditional songs, he unwittingly impeded the exploitation of this aspect of Yali orality.

Despite his apparent hostility to some aspects of Yali culture, according to his own testimony, Dale frequently sought and used indigenous illustrations and motifs in his preaching, such as the *nabelal-habelal* concept from the myth about the snake and the bird.²⁹ His initial emphases in preaching were on God as creator, the Fall of man, stories from the Pentateuch, the Ten Commandments, and the life and work of Jesus Christ drawn mostly from the Gospel of Mark. When I first arrived at Ninia in 1972, many of the Yali could recite the Ten Commandments and were able to retell the basic stories which Dale had taught them. His favourite evangelistic tool was a "Two Way Chart", based on Matthew 7:13-14, which he drew himself and used extensively wherever he went. He also used Bible picture charts and trained a number of young Yali Christians to use these pictorial aids and translated Scripture portions, to teach their own people.³⁰ After two years, the first fruits of his preaching were evident in the attendance of about 250 people at the daily "Gospel Service" and 400 on a Sunday.³¹

Dale was convinced of the need for an iconoclastic "power encounter" to ensure a decisive and conclusive break with traditional Yali religion. In 1965, on his return from furlough in Australia, he wrote:

We discovered that none [of those who professed faith in Christ] had parted with his fetishes and it has been abundantly proven in this land that a complete break with the past in this matter is necessary as a safeguard against backsliding into the old pagan ways. No one can wholly follow the Lord while he still has his fetishes, just as he cannot be really the Lord's while he still has idols. We felt the time had come when the Heluk Valley should become the valley of decision. The time had come for the professing believers at least to finally choose between Christ and Satan.³²

Consequently, he gave additional instruction to the believers and challenged them to separate themselves from evil. One of the first to respond to Dale's exhortations was Dongla, son and heir to a leading *ap hwalon*. Dongla told me that goaded by Dale's persistent teaching, he resolved to put God to the test, and soon after an opportunity presented itself. A wild, forest dog (*olo mene*) had attacked and killed one of his

father's pigs. Believing that a spirit or ghost (*mungguat*) incarnate in the dog had claimed the meat for itself, the pig would normally have been cremated. However, against all tradition and counsel, and to the consternation of their peers and older relatives, Dongla and some others of Dale's young disciples, cooked and ate the pork. They were among the first to collect and burn the sacred *kembu* stones, shells, and other objects of clay, pig fat, etc. at the end of May, 1966. In December of that year, eighteen Christian men and women were baptized, of whom some are today pastors and evangelists, and one, Luliap, became principal of the vernacular Bible school at Ninia.³³

Apparently, Dale did not appreciate the impact that this iconoclasm would have among the Yali. The *kembu* "sacred objects" could not be regarded as the property of individuals, and moreover, their destruction threatened the stability of the cosmos as perceived in Yali religion. While Dale held "meeting after meeting to reassure the Christians that what they had done was right in the sight of God", and compared their action to that of Moses when he destroyed the golden calf,³⁴ throughout the surrounding area, particularly in the villages where Dale had visited less frequently, there was growing alarm and hostility. This led to the deaths of two Yali evangelists, Yeikwaroho and Bingguok, in 1966, and eventually to the deaths of Dale and an American colleague, Philip Masters, in 1968.

In 1969, Bruno de Leeuw and his family were allocated by the mission to Ninia, but soon were forced to return to Canada for a medical furlough. A Greek missionary, Costas Macris with his family, took their place. Following the deaths of Dale and Masters, a subtle change had begun to take place at Ninia, and Macris found considerable openness to the Gospel in the Heluk valley. He seized the opportunity to place Christian evangelists from the Western Dani tribe in seventeen villages.

The conversion of the large Western Dani tribe to Christianity in a "people movement" is another story,³⁵ but out of that movement grew an enthusiastic missionary outreach, as young Dani Christians volunteered to work alongside expatriate missionaries in pushing forward the frontiers of Christianity in Irian Jaya. The important fact to note here is that these Dani evangelists to the Yali were men of like mind; people with a similar worldview and economy, capable of close identification with the Yali in many spheres of daily life;³⁶ people with an oral tradition, and accustomed to the use of oral media for communication.

In his monograph *Missionaries in Bare Feet*, Douglas Hayward gives insights into the ministry of these Dani evangelists including the core of their teaching. Of one, he writes: "Beginning with the stories of creation, he began to build a picture of God as creator, as all powerful, as all knowing, eternal and loving".³⁷ Of others, he writes that they dwelt "a great deal on the lessons in the book of Genesis and Exodus where God reveals Himself so dramatically as the God of Creation who continues to be involved in the ongoing of that creation."³⁸ John Dekker in *Torches of Joy* mentions one Dani in particular who ministered in a village in the southern Heluk valley, a man called Pubunggarit, who became the most proficient in the Yali language of all the Dani evangelists.³⁹ According to the Yali from that area, he too taught extensively from the

Pentateuch but also from the Gospel of John, the repetitive style and thematic content of which the Yali found easy to memorize, accustomed as they were to such features in their own tradition.

It may be that much of what the Dani evangelists preached in terms of choice of topic, reflected what had been taught by the missionaries. However, they obviously will have filtered it through their Melanesian worldview, and the foci and emphases which they made in their preaching must have been significantly more relevant to the Yali than the preaching of the expatriate missionaries. They also used translated Dani hymns to reinforce or aid memorization of what they were teaching, and though the style differed greatly from Yali songs, they were easier to learn than translated Western hymns, because of the more limited tonal scale and the repetitive and rhythmic structure of the compositions. The Dani evangelists also emphasized the learning of memory verses from Scripture. Sometimes these seemed (to an expatriate) to be either totally irrelevant to the message, not being an obvious choice of key phrase or sentence, or to be meaningless recitations. However, very often, the “memory verse” was a mnemonic device to aid recall of the full story, rather than a focus on didactic content. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, rather than choose Luke 10:36-37 for memorization (i. the application), the Dani evangelist would choose Luke 10:30 (the introduction). On the other hand, there was a tendency to see memorization of verses as, in itself, efficacious, and in this way many verses were learned almost as religious formulae, without perception of intrinsic meaning.

Another important feature of the preaching and teaching of Scripture to the Yali was the way in which it began to take over a cultural slot in Yali life. As interest in the Christian message grew, the Dani evangelist would be asked to tell a Bible story in the *youa* in the evening, in exactly the same way that the story teller might be invited to “plant a *nunung*.” Or someone who had been to a village where an evangelist or missionary lived, would be asked if he had heard any new story, and if so to tell it in the hut. The importance of this story-telling approach to communicating Scripture is that it is indigenous and as one Papuan has said: “It is better to tell a number of stories about what God’s salvation means in the lives of people than to try to give a theological definition of what salvation is.”⁴⁰ This feature has continued to the present day, so that on any day of the week, time is given each evening to those with the skill (or training) to tell a Bible story or pass on some teaching from Scripture. One important change has occurred, however. Women now gather with the men in the *youa*, and a few women, as with the *nunung* story tellers, who have the respect of the men, will contribute from their store of knowledge of Scripture when no competent male teacher is present. But, whereas the *nunung* were known and recognized as composed and imaginary stories, Bible stories are acknowledged as true, and where *nunung* stories were told in the recent past tense, Bible stories are recounted using the remote past, or ordinary past tenses.⁴¹ Similarly, where the corpus of myths once explained the origins and existence of man and his world, the accounts of creation, the fall, the flood, Babel, etc, have superseded and even reinterpreted the traditional myths.⁴²

In addition to introducing Western Dani evangelists to the Yali area, Macris also gave opportunity for some promising young men to take formal training at vernacular Bible schools in the Dani area. Since they had quickly learned a modicum of the Dani language through contact with the evangelists, they spent only one year in a Dani village prior to entering the three year Bible School programme. With two of these men, de Leeuw opened a Bible School at Ninia in January 1981. Since 1983, the Yali have run the Bible School on their own, and two of the present staff have had further Biblical education in the Indonesian language. My impression is that the substance of their teaching strongly reflects the western approach to the teaching of Bible content, systematic theology and church history, which they learned from American and Indonesian staff in the schools they attended. When I see them in action, however, it is evident that they still retain and use some of their traditional oral skills and that there is more student participation than one might find in a western school. They need to be encouraged to use their traditional skills even more, and to ensure that their students will consciously employ them among the non-literates in the villages.

Attention ought to be given, therefore, to the traditional learning styles, which are “context-oriented” and by apprenticeship — “learning by example through experience”⁴³ — and to design of the curriculum. The typical residential Bible School does not compare well with traditional, practical, non-formal education. The only indigenous models that might be seen to have some similarities, are the *Moroal* and *ap hwalon* initiation rites where *esoteric* knowledge and formulae were transmitted in a closed, formal situation. But, in practical terms, *ap hwalon* (who are now compared with church elders) received their essential training by apprenticeship to their fathers. Training of church leaders by “discipleship” would be more appropriate, and has in fact been done quite effectively among the Kimyal (the eastern neighbours of the Yali) under the direction of an American missionary, Orin Kidd.⁴⁴ In the area of curriculum also, not only in the Yali Bible School, but in others in Irian Jaya,⁴⁵ there needs to be radical amendment or re-designing of courses in order to make the teaching more relevant to the local situation, by focusing on the local expression of the Melanesian worldview and expectation of “Salvation” as evident in the corpus of myths. These oral traditions reveal the spiritual heartbeat of the people and “can be an avenue for locating key themes and forms for genuinely Melanesian Christian worship and theology.”⁴⁶ There must therefore be an holistic application of Scripture which deals with such basic themes as “Kinship in Christ” or “the Church as Community”; “Biblical Ancestors and the Christian’s ‘Adoptive Past’”;⁴⁷ “Reconciliation”; “God and our Gardens”, and so on — the themes of Life in an integrated and stable cosmos.

However, there is now increasingly felt national and social pressure to “upgrade” the educational standards of vernacular schools and to make them conform to typical “Indonesian” (in fact “western”) patterns. It may, therefore, be too late to make major adjustments in the formal education programme, but one hopes that some changes might be made, at least in the non-formal Biblical education at the village level of Yali society.

Yali Literacy: Access to the Scriptures

In keeping with the Protestant tradition, and that of evangelical missionaries since William Carey, members of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union have been firm believers in the importance of vernacular Scriptures for the qualitative growth and establishment of an indigenous church — a view which presupposes literacy.⁴⁸ In a *Regions Beyond Missionary Union* Irian Jaya Field policy paper it is stated:

The Word of God is the very foundation of faith, and availability of vernacular Scripture is absolutely necessary for the ongoing nurture of an established church.

and it goes on:

Literacy is considered a parallel ministry with translation, contributing towards the goal of planting a church through the training of vernacular readers and the preparation of creative writers who will be able to produce culturally appropriate teaching and reading materials in the vernacular.⁴⁹

Although the above statement was formulated quite recently, it basically ratified what had in fact been practised in Irian Jaya since the 1950s. Dale was no exception to the norm and he soon had devised a working orthography, which he employed to begin to teach literacy to the young men who attended his class. However, his orthography was not compatible with Indonesian, which superseded Dutch as the national language, and which inevitably would be learned by some (if not many) Yali.

Following his death in 1968, therefore, Macris who had a flare for languages, after only a brief time at Ninia, made an orthographical revision and produced some basic literacy materials in small sheet form. In theory, each page consisted of one lesson which could be learned in a day or two, and quick progress through and accumulation of the page lessons would stimulate the motivation to read. Indeed, from that point of view they were successful, but the programme had two basic weaknesses: First, the method was syllabic with little or no word- or sentence-building drill. Secondly, there was no inbuilt, or follow-up, reading material and the result was inefficient, hesitant reading with little comprehension of meaning.

In 1971-2, Siegfried Zöllner, in consultation with missionaries in the other Yali areas, devised a new series of primers. These incorporated vocabulary and stories from each of the three dialects, with a view to the eventual preparation of a multi-dialect translation of the New Testament, intended to be useable by all the Yali. As far as the Southern Yali were concerned, these primers proved to be a sad failure. Firstly, though they were an improvement on the Macris lessons on account of their reading content, they were quickly rejected as not being “our language.” Moreover, a major difference in tense usage between the Yalimo and Southern Yali dialects was discovered, which basically necessitated a separate New Testament translation, thus obviating the need for multi-dialect primers. An additional complication was that, after the printing of the primers, the Indonesian orthography was revised in August 1972. While this was of no immediate consequence to the Yali, it later became significant as youth made the

transition from vernacular literacy to Indonesian primary schools, and brought pressure to modify the existing orthography.

Growing concern over the Yalimo primers came to a head when it was realized that many literacy programme graduates were not effective readers. That is to say, they read with little fluency and without adequate comprehension, both of which created problems for personal study and the public, oral reading of the Scripture. This seemed to exacerbate the tendency to treat Scripture like sacred formulae, where the recitation or sounding of the words was thought to be in itself efficacious, and there was little or no focus on meaning. It was therefore decided to seek the assistance of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who, being unable to allocate personnel, invited myself to participate in a literacy seminar in 1980 and a workshop in 1981, which resulted in the production of new literacy materials which were based on the “Gudschinsky method.”⁵⁰

There are many definitions of, and goals in, literacy, but for those who are concerned to promote literacy in an oral culture, for the purpose of meaningful Bible reading, the aim of the Gudschinsky method is particularly appropriate. Sarah Gudschinsky’s definition of the literate person is as follows:

That person is literate who, *in a language that he speaks, can read and understand anything he would have understood if it had been spoken to him; and who can write, so that it can be read, anything that he can say.*⁵¹

It is important to note that this definition recognizes the importance of the vernacular language of the target person or people, and that literacy is seen as an extension of orality; that “writing is a derivative of speech.”⁵² It is also significant that it focuses on reading for meaning, since “understanding and reacting to what a person reads is essential to the exercise of the reading skill”,⁵³ and particularly the reading of Scripture.

Two kinds of lessons feature in the Gudschinsky method and contribute to the attainment of this goal. The one teaches “contentives” and the other teaches “functors.”⁵⁴ The contentives are taught in systematic drills which analyse a key word, identify a particular phoneme, which is then contrasted with others already known, and then synthesizes phonemes into useful syllables, “built-words” and phrases. The functors are introduced in sight-drills. Every lesson also includes reading practice (even if only a sentence, in the earlier lessons), which incorporates the new words — both contentives and functors.⁵⁵ Gudschinsky explained the role of functors in teaching reading for meaning:

If the learner knows the functors, he can put his energy into reading the content part of the sentence. Until a person recognizes the bulk of the functors without hesitation, he will not read fluently. He can slow down a bit for the contentives without losing his train of thought, but *if he has to struggle for the functors fluency is lost, and with it much of the meaning.*⁵⁶

Since the Yali language has a vast number of functors, many of which are verbal prefixes, infixes and suffixes, one could expect to find, and indeed it was found, that these were the stumbling block to efficient reading. This was especially noticeable in the

Gospel narratives where the verb “to tell/say to” carries two sets of functors — one marking indirect object, and the other both subject and time. Until readers learned to master these through the new primers, they proved to be the bane of reading Scripture for meaning, and made public, oral reading of Scripture a fruitless exercise. But those who have been taught to read with the new materials have shown greatly improved ability in personal and oral reading, and are also making a more efficient transition to reading of Indonesian.

Literacy, using the Gudschinsky method, has therefore proved quite effective in terms of improving the quality of Scripture reading with understanding. There has also been a marked increase in the number of literates in the villages where the programme has been introduced through trained indigenous teachers.⁵⁷ However, despite this success and the fairly strong motivation for literacy on account of the desire to read Scripture, one must question how quantitatively successful the programme will finally prove to be, due to contrary factors such as: the dawn-to-dusk subsistence lifestyle; the increasing pressure for part of the population to support, by their industry, those who pursue education in the Indonesian education system etc.; the fact that the gifted teachers give up teaching for various reasons (usually further education, but also lack of remuneration or family commitments); the competitive attraction of Indonesian primary schools where literacy, taught without a vernacular foundation, is often ineffective or inconsequential and results in frustration and loss of motivation; and not least, the vitality of orality itself. It must also be acknowledged that despite efforts to make the programme self-sustaining, the stimulus of missionary input, particularly in the realm of training and practical assistance with production of literature, is helping to maintain the impetus of the growth of literacy among the Yali, and it is fairly certain that the optimum figure of 65% literacy will not be achieved before the present missionary staff withdraw. It is impossible to predict whether literacy will then decline, but what is certain is that a large percentage of the population will continue to be dependent on oral media for transmission of Scripture.⁵⁸

Bible Translation: Scripture for the Yali

As mentioned above,⁵⁹ *Regions Beyond Missionary Union* is committed to the principle of the provision of Scriptures in the vernacular for the “ongoing nurture” of an established indigenous church. Dale’s own commitment to this view was expressed in a sermon he preached in 1950, in which he cited Tyndale’s efforts to give the Bible in their own language to the English, which resulted in his martyrdom, and Dale declared:

And so today also, hundreds of young men and women count it worth any sacrifice of time, money, or life itself to give God’s Word to all of earth’s tribes in their own languages. Restless millions await the Word that makes all things new.⁶⁰

Working with Yali language helpers, Dale quickly sought to translate Scriptures into Yali for use in teaching and preaching. His first major product was a mimeographed booklet of miracles from the ministry of Christ, then he devoted himself to a translation of Mark’s Gospel. Following the attack on his life in 1966, he pursued this task “with a sense of desperate urgency” and moved on to the translation of Luke and Acts.⁶¹ The final draft of Mark was completed just prior to his fateful trek into the Seng valley in September

1968, when he left the manuscript and the blank stencils with his wife to commence typing. Following his death,⁶² Pat Dale, in her grief — “hardly able to see for her tears”⁶³ — continued to type the stencils so that her husband’s work could be mimeographed and given to the Christians at Ninia. It was the first complete book of the New Testament to be made available to the incipient Yali church.

The translation work was then resumed by de Leeuw who had meanwhile been working at Kanggime in the Toli valley, where he had learned quite a bit of the Western Dani language. Since Western Dani and Yali are related languages within the greater Dani family, and therefore have similar syntax and a number of cognates, and since some of the Yali had learned Western Dani from the evangelists, de Leeuw resolved to take advantage of Scriptures already translated into that language. With the help of Luliap Bahabol and others, he made a transferral into Yali of Philippians and the Epistles of John (in 1972), and later the Gospel of John (in 1973). When he and his family left for an extended furlough in 1974, I was requested by the *Regions Beyond Missionary Union* Irian Jaya field executive committee to continue the translation of the Scriptures into Yali with invaluable help from Luliap Bahabol, Enggiahap Bahabol, Foliek Balingga, and others.

It was when I became involved in the Scripture translation project that I noted that my predecessors had used the remote past tense in the Gospel narratives. However, since the writers of the Gospels were either eyewitnesses, or at least peers of the eyewitnesses, the use of the remote past tense was inappropriate. Rather, it implied that the writers did not belong to the same generation as the people in the narratives, and that the events belonged to a more distant, even primordial past. This was discussed with the translation helpers who readily agreed to a change to the ordinary past tense, excited by the realization that what they were now hearing, was a first-hand record of the oral testimony of Jesus and others of his day. This important feature of the language, which had somehow been overlooked, was crucial to a translation method which aimed to use the Yali idiom and to be dynamically meaningful to the readers and listeners.

The approach to translation espoused by the translators of the Scriptures into Yali, has been that propounded by Nida, and by Nida and Taber, known as “dynamic equivalence.”⁶⁴ Nida and Taber define dynamic equivalence as:

The quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially like that of the original receptors.⁶⁵

The importance of the dynamic equivalence principle of translation is that the focus is on transmission of meaning rather than on the form of the original, and, moreover, meaning as perceived by the receptor. However, since some translators misunderstood “dynamic equivalence” to refer to “anything which might have special impact and appeal for receptors”, the term “functional equivalence” is now preferred.⁶⁶ This is defined as “thoroughly understanding not only the meaning of the source text but also the manner in which the receptors are likely to understand it in the receptor language.”⁶⁷ Beekman and Callow of the Summer Institute of Linguistics chose the term “idiomatic translation” to

describe basically the same approach to translation but with attention to the accurate and natural transferral of meaning from the original into the form of the receptor language.⁶⁸

In an oral culture, where no written style of language has been developed, initial translation will reflect the natural discourse structure,⁶⁹ and such naturalness will make public, oral reading of the Scriptures more meaningful. De Waard and Nida comment on this aspect of translation in *From One Language to Another*:

Bible translators are increasingly concerned with the hearers of the text, since in general far more people hear the Scriptures read than read them for themselves. One of the important ways in which the text can be better prepared for the hearers is to introduce hearing into the translation process. For example, it is valuable for a draft translator to translate orally, either as he types or writes down a text.⁷⁰

Important discourse markers if omitted or misused can make nonsense of the text to both reader and listener, but “oral translation” and reading aloud of draft translations soon reveal such deficiencies and other discrepancies which distort both naturalness and meaning.⁷¹

Philip Noss has shown that oral form must not only be the model for written form, but that “the significance of an oral perspective” needs to be recognized. This bears out the need for sensitivity of translators (and other Christian communicators) to the nature of oral cultures and their media — respecting the different functions of the various types of oral tradition. Noss wrote:

Being aware then of the literary context within which his message will be received, the translator must make every effort to translate with maximum clarity, using to the fullest possible extent the literary devices and the grammatical structures of the receptor language. In this way he may at least lighten the burden of the receptor who is not only receiving new information, but who must at the same time modify his oral perception to accommodate the new information that is being presented to him through new use of an old form.⁷²

Noss went on to point out that a translator’s decision to follow an oral model will put certain constraints on his work such as “grammatical patterns and literary devices employed in the oral corpus”. If these make for vernacular Scriptures that are pleasing to read and to listen to, as well as making sense, then attention to the oral perspective and acceptance of its constraints will have led to “functional equivalent” translation.

However, once literacy has been introduced, and a translation programme undertaken, a written style will develop. Written language lacks paralinguistic features normal in oral communication such as voice quality, loudness, speed of utterance, body movement and facial expression, and must compensate with literary conventions or other devices. On the other hand, oral language carries greater redundancy through repetition, less careful sequencing, and extensive use of topic, domain, and other signalling devices (which apparently are less necessary in the written form).⁷³ The written form cannot ever be a replica of the spoken narrative, and an attempt to adhere too closely to oral style could result in translations that are hard or tedious to read privately, though effective, say, as

cassette listening.⁷⁴ However, these differences between oral and written styles are not so much questions of form as questions of degree of use of certain linguistic or paralinguistic features, and they do not negate the points made by Noss.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, choices might have to be made between oral and written styles depending on the stage of literacy or translation and the state of the development of written style, on the one hand, and on the aim of the translation on the other. A translation designed for public, oral reading or cassette recording could tend more towards correspondence with oral style than one designed to be used basically in personal Bible study.

In an article entitled “The Bible in the Church: Some Implications for the Translator’s Treatment of Background Information”, William Wonderly emphasizes that the Bible has historically functioned as a “*book of the church*: produced, under divine guidance, *by* the believing community, and *for* that community to use in its proclamation and teaching ministry.”⁷⁶ He goes on to point out that as a result of the Protestant Reformation and the 18th century Enlightenment there has been a trend towards “emphasis upon the *use of the Bible by the individual*.”⁷⁷ These comments seem *a propos* of the use of Scripture in an oral culture in Melanesia, where kinship and community solidarity are so important, and should be reflected in the life of the church. Scripture must be primarily for the church as community, and in an oral culture should therefore be translated with its oral use in view.

In aiming to produce a translation of the Scriptures which can be meaningful to the entire Yali Christian community, the literacy programme has had a significant role. With Gudschinsky’s definition in mind — in which she brought together the idea of being able to read anything as if it had been spoken, and to write anything one can say — the goal has been to train people to read the Scriptures orally.

The concept of oral reading of Scripture for non-literates lay behind an experimental dramatized recording of the book of Acts. Some adjustments were made to the text, mostly in the area of linkages between sentences or paragraphs, and to make clear which character was speaking.⁷⁸ The text was not read by the person taking the part of narrator or character. Instead, a section of text was read aloud two or three times until the person was familiar with the content, context and the atmosphere or emotion. Then following the re-reading of two or three sentences, the person spoke his or her part naturally for the reel-to-reel recording. The recordists⁷⁹ later spliced together all the different recordings and transferred them on to a series of cassettes. Using hand-cranked playback machines, the cassettes were used extensively throughout the area, in parallel with the published text of Acts, and are still used as long as there are undamaged tapes and functioning playbacks.⁸⁰ From one village, a Yali elder reported that each night the *youa* men’s hut was crowded to the door, with people outside under the eaves, listening through cracks in the walls. Although they recognized the voices of those who recorded the various parts, that did not seem to detract from the impact. The elder commented that as one elderly listener left the hut one night, he said, “God has spoken to us in our own language!” The recording of Acts had an unquestioned aural impact, and in addition, helped readers to grasp the contents of the entire book, whereas their personal reading normally is limited

to a few verses or small unit of text at a time. It may also have helped stimulate motivation to read.⁸¹

Another use of cassettes was made when a Yali, Erariek Balingga, translated into Yali the Indonesian text of *Kabar Baik* (“Good News”) which was then recorded.⁸² The recording is accompanied by a large hanging picture book which can be displayed while the cassette plays. With the added visual impact of the illustrations, this recording also proved both popular and effective in communication of Bible content to Yali society as a whole. But the main drawback of the cassette is that, while it can be used to communicate effectively to an oral culture, it is highly dependent on the products and skills of a technological culture.

The main lessons these two apparent successes teach us are that oral media are effective and appropriate in oral cultures, but for a continuing programme of Scripture transmission, non-technological media, that is to say traditional oral media’ should be employed. One such medium, which is totally indigenous and which is proving to be both popular and effective, is the developing Yali hymnody, to which I now turn.

Endnotes for chapter 4:

1. See Hebrews 1:1, about which Bruce comments: “Our author is not thinking of that general revelation. but of that special revelation [God] has given in two stages: first to the fathers through the prophets and finally in His Son. These two stages of divine revelation correspond to the Old and New Testaments respectively.” Bruce (1964:1-2). Also see Klem (1984:49-93).
2. See e.g. Neh. 8:2; Lk.14:16; Acts 13:15; Col. 4:16; 1 Tim. 4:13; 1 Thes. 5:27; Rev. 1:3.
3. Klem p. xix.
4. Ibid p. xxi (my emphasis).
5. See e.g. Deut. 17:18ff; 2 Kings 22:10-11, 23:1-2; Neh. 8:2-8; Pss. 96 and 105 (cf. 1 Chron. 16:7-36); Lk. 24:44.
6. Chirgwin pp. 13-15. A written record of the eyewitness accounts became especially important after the deaths of the apostles. See e.g. Lk. 24:45-48; Acts 1:8,21-22; 1 Cor. 15:3-7. Luke-Acts is itself both propagandist and evangelistic.
7. Chirgwin pp. 23-29.
8. Laubach p. 16, cf. Shacklock, who in *World Literacy Manual* wrote, “In the Middle Ages the churches preserved learning. The Reformation brought a renewed emphasis on education, proclaiming that every plowboy should be able to read the Scripture. Op. cit. P. 2.
9. Klem p. xiii (my emphasis).
10. Ibid pp. 5ff, 26ff.
11. See Mogre in *NOTES ON LITERACY 2* (1985) pp. 16-19; Hiebert pp. 134-5; cf. Weber pp. 47-50.
12. See e.g. Klem pp. xiv, 35, 39ff.
13. See e.g. Klem pp. 37,98.
14. Olson in *NOTES ON SCRIPTURE IN USE 6* p.3.
15. See e.g. Klem pp. 9-10, 14-18.
16. See e.g. Shacklock pp. 28ff; Bendor-Samuel in *Read 22(2)* pp. 79; Gudschinsky pp. 4-5, 17-19, Macdonald in *Read 18(2)* pp. 24-26.
17. Cited by Klem from Amir Nasution, in Klem pp. 14-15.
18. Weber pp. 33-34.
19. Mbiti (1971:189).
20. Mbiti quotes from the final communique of the 1977 Conference of African Theologians; Mbiti (1986:28, 59).
21. Weymouth in Flannery pp. 205-206 (Weymouth here refers to Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy*).
22. Weber pp. 36-37.
23. Richardson pp. 230-231.
24. See Richardson p. 217. When Dale perceived the etymological association of Yali greetings with faeces, he refused to use them and later enjoined the first Yali Christians to abstain from using them. However, the greetings continued to be used outside his hearing, and when they were later “rediscovered” by his successors, they brought a release to Yali self-respect and cultural identity. Yali usage of these greetings indicates that the underlying significance is: I admire you so much, that if by so doing I might acquire your attributes (or even *mana*), I would eat your faeces. Ironically, Yali abhorrence of faeces is at least as great as Dale’s was.
25. Manning pp. 21ff, 39; cf. Richardson pp. 120, 217 etc.
26. See Manning pp. 49, 76.
27. Nketia in *International Review of Missions* 47 (1958:3).
28. “Yesus at amu indip on” (“Jesus alone is the source”), no. 9 in Yali Hymnbook
29. Dale p. 18.
30. Manning pp. 65ff, 76, and Richardson pp. 267ff, 286.
31. Dale p. 18.
32. Ibid p. 23.
33. Richardson pp. 259ff.
34. Ibid p. 264
35. See e.g. Hayward (1980:126-139).
36. What happened among the Yali was similar to what happened elsewhere in Melanesia. See e.g. Tippet (1977:312-333); Paton (1913:73ff); Gunson (1978:319; 357ff).

37. Hayward (1982:70).
38. Ibid p.83.
39. Dekker pp. 175-178.
40. Waida in *Catalyst* 11(1) p. 29.
41. I will refer to the use of tenses below in the section on translation.
42. For example, Babel is viewed as the fuller account of the felling of Yeli and of the migration of people.
43. Stringer in *Read* 19(2) pp. 4-5; cf. Frank in *Read* 21(2) pp. 19-20, and Stringer in *Read* 20(2) pp. 8-12.
44. At the village of Holuwon also, the writer has conducted a non-formal programme of eldership training which is context-oriented and thematic in content, but the success of this must be judged by others.
45. From a questionnaire circulated to mission leaders and members of The Missions Fellowship in Irian Jaya, from personal communications with other missionary staff or from personal observation, I have learned that most schools in Irian Jaya basically run on the western model with no conscious attempt to adjust to Melanesian learning styles, worldview, or use of traditional oral skills.
46. Flannery in *Missiology* VII (4) p. 448; cf. Dawia in O'Brien (1980:20-23).
47. cf. Walls (1978) in *Mission Focus* p. 12.
48. See e.g. Weymouth in Flannery (1984:196-198); also cf. Tippet (1977:63-64, 75ff, 83).
49. "Philosophy of Ministry" *Regions Beyond Missionary Union* Irian Jaya (1988) p.3. (Unpublished paper).
50. Sarah Gudschinsky, whose name was given to the method she devised, was the SIL International Literacy Consultant for a number of years until her death in 1975.
51. Gudschinsky (1973:5 my emphasis); cf. Shacklock pp. 3ff.
52. Ong (1967>21).
53. Shacklock p. 3.
54. "A contentive is a word or stem which belongs to a large open grammatical class such as nouns, verbs or adjectives and whose meaning usually has reference to the real world", and "a functor is a member of a small closed grammatical class whose primary meaning is a grammatical relationship" — such as conjunctions, prepositions, suffixes marking person, place or time. Gudschinsky p. 50.
55. All of the reading matter is native-authored and in the style of *dindil ale* narratives. Additional material using *mulik* myths and *nunung* stories is also in preparation in order to provide graded reading matter in addition to Scripture, and to help preserve the oral tradition for the literate section of the population. See also Lake in *Irian* XV, 1987, p.39
56. Gudschinsky p. 51.
57. In three villages, in a two year period (1985-86) there was an increase in the number of literates of about 10% of the population. Presently, literacy for the entire area is approximately 10% of the population and 30% of church members. [Since writing, this level has risen to over 50% of the population.]
58. From information I have collected through mission leaders and missionaries in other areas, this is the picture for many language groups in Irian Jaya. [Since this dissertation was written, literacy has continued to grow. After the New Testament in Yali was published in 1992, almost 5000 copies were purchased, indicating literacy well in excess of 50% of the Yali population.]
59. See the opening paragraph of this chapter.
60. Richardson p.121.
61. Manning p. 89.
62. 25 September 1968 — see Manning pp. 91ff.
63. From an oral account to the writer by Luliap Bahabol, one of Dale's major informant-helpers.
64. See Nida (1964) and Nida and Taber (1969).
65. Nida and Taber p. 200.
66. De Waard and Nida (1986:viii-viii).
67. Ibid p.9.
68. Beekman and Callow (1974:20-25).
69. Noss in *The Bible Translator* 32(3) 1981 p. 301; cf. Brown in *The Bible Translator* 19(1) 1968.
70. De Waard and Nida p. 199.
71. See Euan Fry in *The Bible Translator* 30(2) 1979 pp. 215-216.
72. Noss in *The Bible Translator* 32(3) 1981 p. 310.

73. See Nida in Shacklock pp. 156-157, Carl in *Read* 21(1) 1986. I suspect signalling devices are less necessary in written form because visual reference, both retrospective and prospective, can confirm topics, focus etc.
74. Eckert in *Notes on Translation* 85(10) 1981 pp. 127ff.
75. Kilham, "A Written Style for Oral Communicators?" in *Notes on Translation* 123(12) 1987, pp. 36-52, brings out these distinctions between oral and written modes, but acknowledges the views of others who see value in translation oriented to orality, and summarizes three possible categories of translation: 1. Those intended for reading but modelled primarily on oral style, therefore difficult to read; 2. Those intended for oral use, patterned primarily on oral styles; 3. Those modelled on a written style developed by mother-tongue speakers which could be both readable and possible of parallel oral communication.
76. Wonderly in *The Bible Translator* 37(2) 1986 p. 212 (author's emphasis).
77. Ibid p. 213 (author's emphasis).
78. On text adjustments and other features of recording Scripture on cassettes, see Hope in *The Bible Translator* 31(4) 1980 pp. 412-423
79. The recordists were Gail Berryman and Vangi Guenter of *Regions Beyond Missionary Union*, who had received training from Gospel Recordings.
80. For discussions on the merits and disadvantages of cassettes, see Ovuoba, and Hoekstra in *Notes on Scripture in Use* 6(9) 1983 pp. 6-12, and 13-19; Bower in *Read* 17(1) 1982 pp. 25-27; Meier and Meier in *Notes on Scripture in Use* 2(1) 1982 pp. 16-21; Howat in *Missiology* 11(4) 1974 pp. 437-453.
81. See Klem p. 185.
82. *Kabar Baik* is a narrative of the accounts of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, Abraham and Isaac, the Commandments, etc, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ etc, prepared by Lembaga Rekaman Injil (Gospel Recordings in Indonesia).

THE CREATION OF A YALI HYMNODY

Hymns: A Medium for Worship and Instruction

Hymns have played an important role in Christian worship and witness at different times and in different places since the birth of the first century church. The first Greek-speaking Christians “responded to the preaching by worship; they sang the work that God had done for them in hymns”¹

To sing their faith, the Hellenists and the communities they had created, not only translated the Psalms that were beloved of the synagogue and were the treasure of the primitive church. They also composed hymns themselves, and we find these hymns more or less faithfully quoted by the New Testament writers — Paul in particular, but also the authors of Hebrews, 1 Peter, and the Apocalypse.²

One of the New Testament passages (Col. 3:16) which points to the importance of hymn singing for the early Church, also makes a link between worship and Biblical instruction — that is to say “the word of Christ”. Although the punctuation of the sentence is disputed, “the collocation of the two participial clauses... suggests that the singing might be a means of mutual edification as well as a vehicle of praise to God”.³ A possible explanation of this dual function of hymns may be seen in Tertullian’s description of the love-feast at which, “after water for the hands and lights have been brought in, each is invited to sing to God in the presence of the others from what he knows of the holy scriptures or from his own heart”.⁴ Since the hymns were probably sung antiphonally, in this way, both praise and mutual edification were offered in song. Since Scripture or creed was presented in this manner, not only would hymns have had an instructive function within the church fellowship, but, when overheard, or sung in public places, the hymns would have served as a medium for transmission of Christian truth to others.

The watershed of the Protestant Reformation saw not only the release of the Bible for the common man, but it also led to “the creation, adaptation, and use of hymns in the local languages”.⁵ But this trait was not confined to the Protestant church. Roman Catholic missionary friars in Latin America saw the value of music and song as a medium for transmission of Scripture and Christian tradition. For example, in Guatemala in 1537, Bartolomé de Las Casas and his companions composed ballads in the Indian language of Tzulutlan. These narrated the history of Christianity, the creation, the fall of man, and the life and miracles of Jesus. The ballads were then taught to native traders who entered the inhospitable “Tierra de Guerra” and after a day’s trading, sang the Christian message. The songs had immediate appeal, and prepared the way for an invitation to the friars to go and give further instruction.⁶

Hymn singing and indigenous music was also highly effective during the Christian expansion of the 19th century throughout the islands of the Pacific. Tippett gives an example from the history of the church on Fiji:

The Fijian people always had their own forms of music. Every public occasion had its chanting. In the Christian Church a hymnody soon developed. There was a fine collection of hymns at an early date. John Hunt and Richard Lyth had prepared a hymn book *based on scriptural theology but using native tunes*, and these were used for many years.⁷

One effective hymn in Fiji mentioned by Tippett was the *Te Deum* which was “clothed in Fijian form and style” and has survived to the present time. When Tippett heard it used, he said, “The effect was terrific — the audience was completely empathetic.”⁸ In addition, the Fijians adopted the traditional religious chant for the lyrical and poetical passages of Scripture. “The congregation participated and learned the passages by heart,” and in this way indigenous music contributed to the spiritual life and growth of the Fijian church.⁹

In Andhra Pradesh in South India, Luke and Carman found that the local Christians — most of whom were illiterate — stored their beliefs and communicated the Gospel in songs, which had such good theological content that Luke and Carman referred to it as “lyric theology”. Both in church and at home, they would sing as many as ten or fifteen verses of a song, one after another.¹⁰

In 1961 Bruce Olson, then only nineteen years old, entered the territory of an infamously hostile tribe of Indians, the Motilone of Colombia. There he befriended a young man called Bobarishora with whom he sought to share the Gospel. Olson did not fully realize how much “Bobby” had absorbed of the Christian message until at the tribal “Festival of Arrows” his friend Bobby was challenged to take part in a singing contest, and sang the Gospel. Olson wrote of his own reaction:

Inside me... a spiritual battle was raging. I found myself hating the song. It seemed so heathen. The music, chanted in a strange minor key, sounded like witch music. It seemed to degrade the Gospel. Yet when I looked at the people around me, and up at the chief swinging in his hammock, I could see that they were listening as though their lives depended on it. Bobby was giving them spiritual truth through the song.¹¹

When the contest concluded after fourteen hours, a spiritual revolution swept over the people: “God had spoken. He had spoken in the Motilone language, and through the Motilone culture.”¹²

The efficacy of indigenous hymns as a communication medium was recently tested in Nigeria by Herbert Klem, when he had been working, in association with Living Bibles International, on a paraphrastic translation into Yoruba of the book of Hebrews.¹³

Nigerian composers were sought to set the text of Hebrews to music, and the compositions were then sung by choirs and recorded. Some textual adjustments had to be made in order to create poetic rhythm, but nowhere was the sense of the text altered. Some parts were cantillated, rather than sung, and a variety of Yoruba music styles was used. “Both the choirs and the choir directors were amazed at the ease with which the choirs learned the music and memorized the words.”¹⁴

An interesting by-product arose from the choir practices. A carpenter who was working near the church was overheard singing some of the songs. When questioned about it, he said he had learned the songs from hearing the choir rehearsals while he worked. He hadn't realized that what he had memorized was from Scripture.¹⁵

Once the recordings were completed, the translation of Hebrews was used in four Bible teaching classes under controlled conditions, including selection and pre-testing of participants. The basic format was that of a Bible study under the direction of a teacher, but with the following differences: One group used the written text; a second used the written text plus a recording of a reading of the text; the third group had the written text and a recording of the *sung* version of the text, but no teacher; and the fourth group had no *written* text, but had the recording of the sung text. The results of the post test revealed that the most effective learning of factual knowledge was achieved in the third group where both written and sung text were used. The fourth group's achievement was better than that of the first (traditional) Bible Study group but poorer than the other two. When comparing the third and fourth groups to see how effective oral communication alone might be, Klem suspected that the result was probably consequential upon the difficulties the teachers experienced in teaching without a written text.¹⁶ However, it may also have been that the literates in the group had become accustomed to the visual aid of a written text and that the absence of this frustrated their ability to learn from traditional oral media alone. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Scripture in song was evident.

From this brief, and incomprehensive survey, it can be seen that hymns, both translated and indigenous, have been not only a meaningful way for churches in every age and in differing societies to worship God, but an effective medium of communication of Christian truth — both of Scripture and of theological expression.

Indigenous Hymns: Appropriateness and Value

While use of hymns in Christian worship occurs widely around the world, often they have been, or are, translated hymns from the western tradition such as were produced by Dale for the Yali at Ninia. In other parts of Irian Jaya, this has been common, and with the spread of the use of the Indonesian language, Indonesian hymns — themselves translations of western originals — are also being introduced. At a recent church retreat in June 1988, when participants were invited to sing indigenous compositions, only the Yali and Hupla members obliged.¹⁷ Some of those present could have sung indigenous hymns, but were perhaps reticent to do so in a basically Indonesian context; however, there were other participants present who were unable to contribute because they came from tribal churches where no indigenous hymns are composed or used.

Does this matter? In an article about the development of indigenous hymnody, Albert Friesen wrote:

Western music historically has been used for evangelism within the national churches in non-Western cultures. This has been detrimental to evangelism, the growth of an

indigenous understanding of Christianity and an independent Christian church in these cultures.¹⁸

Among the negative aspects of translated western (or other) hymns is the fact that the borrowed tunes (and structure forced by those tunes) violate indigenous rules governing tone, stress, rhythm and other factors. Apart from the distortion that invariably occurs to the original tune, a much more serious distortion occurs in the receptor language where stress is forced by the foreign rhythm onto the wrong syllable; rising and falling tones are misdirected by the unsuited music; and vowels are lengthened arbitrarily by sustained notes, until the overall result is loss of meaning.¹⁹

Moreover, to use foreign tunes is also to attach to the message of Christianity a foreignness that need not be there — the foreignness of cultural form. If it is appropriate to use the idiomatic form of the receptor language to communicate the Gospel in the first place, and if Christians are expected to pray in their own language, “should we not expect them to sing in the musical language they understand?”²⁰ By introducing western hymns, or by stifling in any other way the composition of indigenous hymns, not only does a sense of foreignness result, but Christianity is inhibited from taking root, or “feeling at home” in the host culture — even the indigenous motivation to worship God can be suppressed.

Indigenous hymns, on the other hand, embed the Gospel within the culture and — especially in face-to-face oral cultures — are both a naturally corporate expression of feeling about God, and a “participatory didactic”²¹ medium for communication and witness. When the Lutheran missionary Christian Keysser asked his Papuan pupils which subject they enjoyed most, “singing was named unanimously without hesitation, partly no doubt, because here *everyone could join in strongly*”. He conceived of switching from translated hymns with German melodies to new compositions to native tunes. The new songs were practised tirelessly and “flew from village to village”. Keysser concluded that “songs of the people” were necessary if Christianity was to become “really indigenous and the very own concern of the congregation”²² With the widespread acceptance of such a medium, hymns, readily memorized, become an effective way of communicating Christian teaching and Scripture, both within the community of the church and in society as a whole. The participatory nature of indigenous hymns, often antiphonal or responsorial, aids memorization and transmission, and also internalizes the message.

Weber called this “partnership in communication”²³ Thus when indigenous hymns, which incorporate Scripture, are accepted to be sung by the group, the relevance of Scripture and the Christian message is thereby simultaneously endorsed and transmitted to others.²⁴

The problems of the acceptability and value of indigenous music in the church tend to lie with foreigners rather than the members of the host culture. The reason for this is not that the indigenous musical system is an inappropriate medium for Christian worship or communication, but that it is “an avenue of communication closed to the uninitiated outsider”²⁵ Music, like language, is intelligible only to those within the compass of a

culture.²⁶ While it is possible for people with the appropriate training and skills to enter into the spirit of a culture and learn to understand and appreciate its music, and even learn to compose in it, the “ideal source of indigenous hymnody in both words and music is the indigenous composer”.²⁷ Only someone born into a culture, and who understands the forms and functions, and the contexts and connotations of the various song types, can effectively evaluate them and utilize existing forms where suitable, or capitalize on indigenous techniques to create a new musical heritage. If missionaries or other foreign Christians do not like the product, that is not sufficient reason to question its value or suitability, but may, in fact, simply confirm the appropriateness of the indigenous medium.²⁸

The Emergence of a Yali Hymnody

For a number of years, the Yali church only had the hymns translated by Stanley Dale, and one or two others taught by Bruno de Leeuw and the Dani evangelists, but as the church continued to grow both numerically and spiritually, there was an increasing desire for more hymns to enhance their worship. On several occasions during the late 1970s, though they requested de Leeuw and myself to write or translate some hymns for them, they were encouraged to compose their own in the traditional medium. Their initial reaction was that their own tunes were “bad”. The reason for this was not entirely due to Dale’s prohibition against traditional songs, for as the Yali Christians matured in the Faith, they had begun to recognize in their traditional songs those features that were incompatible with Christianity. Although two completely indigenous hymns were composed as early as 1972, there was a reticence to use them because of former associations and a lack of confidence about the appropriateness of their traditional media.

Another reason for judging their indigenous tunes as “bad” was on account of their exposure to western hymn tunes which they found attractive to the ear because of the tonal range and variety. However, through the respect of the missionaries for other features of the culture, such as their traditional greetings, and with the encouragement to compose hymns in the traditional form, there was eventually a sudden burgeoning of hymn composition (*sunī felalduk*) in 1981. Two crucial factors in this were the commencement of the vernacular Bible School at Ninia and the increasing availability of trial editions of translated portions of the New Testament.²⁹

Initially the new Yali hymns were composed by Bible School students as various passages of Scripture from which they were being taught were opened to their understanding, and gripped their imaginations. Later as the new hymns were welcomed in the churches throughout the community, others — all literate men or women with access to the mimeographed Scriptures — began to compose new hymns.

The procedure is as follows: They try out their compositions in the *youa* or *homia*, and verses which do not flow right (*up ap angge lauk*)³⁰ are modified with the input of the participants, and when they are happy with them the hymns are committed in writing to paper. The next phase is the introduction of the hymns to the whole congregation at the main Sunday service by the composer and his friends, and if the song is a good one —

easily memorized, and with captivating melody and meaningful words — it soon spreads throughout the community through formal and informal use.

By January 1987, there were nearly 150 new compositions being used throughout the area, and at the church synod meeting that month it was decided to appoint a committee to review all the hymns then available in written form, including those introduced by Dale, and to compile them. The revision committee first reworked some of the translated hymns to make them more meaningful, and adjusted the vocabulary in order to help match it to the constraints of the music. When they turned to the new traditional compositions, they had a twofold objective. Firstly, they scrutinized the Biblical content for accuracy, modifying or discarding verses as necessary. Secondly, they focused on the text for its ease of singing, quality of style, and use of Yali terminology. Some Indonesian loanwords were eliminated wherever it was felt that these were unnecessary, but some were retained where a circumlocution was unwieldy, or where synonymous parallelism could not be sustained without them. The final compilation includes 137 hymns, both old and new, both translated and indigenous. It was decided that several more recently composed hymns should not be included in the compilation because more time is needed to test the songs in usage. It is interesting that the Yali Christians have displayed this discernment and caution. It coincides with Friesen's comments:

Regardless of how the indigenous hymnody of any culture is developed, it will have to be tested by being distributed to local congregations. Their response will determine the value of the song. If it is sung in worship and while the people are engaged in tasks where they sing, the song will live. If the song is ignored either immediately or after some time, it is wisest to reject it as either not sufficiently relevant or well-written [composed] to merit appreciation and use. This process takes time so one should not be too anxious to have the song live or die.³¹

In the meantime, composition of Yali hymns goes on apace and what has been noted about the Yali love of song is borne out by this blossoming use of a traditional oral medium for worship.

Yali Hymns: Their structure and Performance

The most noticeable feature in the structure of Yali songs is the use of synonymous parallelism, or “thought rhyme”.³² This clearly has a mnemonic function and yet the need for repetitiveness to create this is not allowed to hamper style through monotonous patterning. Variety is maintained by the use of synonym or almost synonymous phrase and by the repetition of words as used in common speech, but with compulsory and predictable vowel changes. Sometimes, however, the parallelism is maintained with a contrastive or antonymous idea. Exact repetition also features in addition to parallelism, both in the form of reduplicated hemistich, as well as the iteration of an entire line. A repeated hemistich seems to add focus, but when it is an entire line that is repeated, the syntax is usually incomplete — the stich ending on a conjunction — and the intervening line, between the repetitions, completes the sense. Another tactic for ensuring variety in

the face of repetition or parallelism is the use of a different tense in the second or reduplicated line, such as a move from the regular future tense to the near future; from the remote past to the ordinary past; or from the ordinary past to the recent past. Not only does this create variety and colour, but it also adds immediacy which can be very effective in the message of the song.

Equally important in the structure and also in the presentation of a song are the vocalics (sometimes referred to as nonsense syllables),³³ which in Yali are called *up*. However, *up* is much more than a refrain of vocalics. It is also the tune and rhythm which they recall. In other words, vocalics are an essential part of the song, functioning as a mnemonic prompt — first for the tune, but also for the words which it evokes. The vocalics used in Yali hymns are usually, but not always, etymologically meaningless. In the *up* refrain of hymns it is popular to include reference to “God the Father” and to “Jesus our older brother”.

There is considerable variety in the structure and tunes of Yali hymns. Most of the tunes are completely new compositions — the composer preferring to employ old techniques rather than the old tunes which have, or might have, inappropriate connotations. However, not all the new hymns are composed to original tunes, but those compositions which have made use of traditional tunes have not created any problems of acceptance as is evident since they have passed the test of time. Of course, new vocalics for those in the old *up* “refrain” may have helped in promoting acceptance of an old tune.

In selecting or composing tunes, attention is given to the need to match the music to the physical or emotional import of the message of the song. Generally, it is hard for an outsider to detect or differentiate the moods of music, but some are obviously apposite, such as a sad tune when singing of the death of Christ, the use of a lament for a Christian funeral song, or the employment of an enthusiastic tune for a hymn about the birth of Christ.

The performance of Yali songs also shows considerable variety. In some, the song leaders play a prominent role, and in others, the whole group quickly picks up from the initial leader(s), and sings harmoniously together.

Artur Simon, a German ethnomusicologist who conducted research in 1975-6 in a Mek language area east of Yalimo, and who had opportunity to record a few northern Yali dance songs, made the following observations:

The Yali have a distinct polyphonic style. There is virtually no lead singer except at the beginning of the songs, whereas in the neighbouring Mek culture the lead singer plays an important role and transmits the text. This is done in the case of the Yali by the whole group.³⁴

However, from the limitations of his data, I am sure he did not experience the full range of Yali song. Nevertheless, it is a feature of Yali singing that participation of the group is paramount, and contributes to the memorizing, preservation (even apart from writing) and transmission of new hymns, and also to the sense of community or fellowship in faith

and worship. The role of leaders, however, has become more prominent in the formal church setting. There, usually three or four men — and now, occasionally, women or girls — are invited to the front to lead the hymn singing. Each in turn introduces a hymn, giving explanations about the meaning, or the reasons for the choice, or an application of the message of the song. The hymns are usually sung in three parts: an upper or descant (*isa*, sometimes with personal idiosyncratic embellishments known as *isa ele unggut*); a supporting part (*ahoreg on*); and the main lower part (*sebeleg on*), which the main song leader takes. If the hymn is a new one, before the main singer leads out with the song (*sun i ebe wilipuk*), he introduces the tune and vocalics (*up diroho uruk kah* — “we sing the *up* like this”), and invites the gathering to take it up (*Hiren up leg hakiyug* — “You all lift up the *up*”). Some of the songs are sung antiphonally, some responsorially by leader and group. In many, the entire group participates in most of the body of the song, but in a few they only respond with the vocalics. In some songs, the group steps up the pace (and sometimes the volume too) until a climactic final verse. Then the song ends neatly, but somewhat abruptly, on a loud, final vocalic — with a precision that could not be improved on with the help of a conductor.

Obviously, due to their structure, with their strong mnemonic content, including the vocalics (and the tune and rhythm which they invoke), Yali hymns lend themselves to oral transmission of Christian truth. Because of the importance of group participation, they are not only easily memorized, but easily recalled, and are passed on within the society. Although song leaders feature prominently in the formal church occasion, they are not essential to the performance of the hymns, which are often heard being sung by small groups or by individuals, by male and female, by young and old, at any time and in any place.

Yali Hymns: Their Content and Function

Taking a selection of 100 indigenous Yali hymns from the recent compilation, I have made a study of the content and have noted the following statistics: By deduction from the content and sometimes confirmed by indication from the composer, sixty-six per cent of the Yali hymns are overt restatements of Scripture passages. I use the term “restatements” because they are not verbatim, or near verbatim “Scriptures in song”, but contain the essential narrative or content of the passages concerned, reformatted in traditional Yali poetic form. Sometimes, it has been possible to reproduce the exact words of Scripture (from the existing Yali translations), but this is not necessarily so. Sometimes, part of a narrative is omitted.

However, even where the “restatement” is incomplete in any way, the entire hymn itself functions as a mnemonic for the passage of Scripture on which it is based. The remaining thirty-four per cent of the selection are still strongly based on Scripture, and clearly allusive. The most obvious difference between the two groups is that those closest to Scripture in terms of content mainly deal with narrative passages, which obviously lend themselves to retelling in poetic form, while those which are allusive are mainly based on didactic passages.³⁵ This reflects in some measure the fact that narrative form, particularly the myths, has been the main medium of instruction for Yali “truth”,

and is therefore the easiest, and perhaps the most effective form for transmission of Christian truth.

It is also important to note the themes which have been covered in this initial selection of indigenous hymns. Recognising that the predisposition to narrative passages will have affected choice, apart from those hymns which feature the life and work of Jesus Christ, which dominate the hymnody, other prominent themes that emerge are: the second coming and end time (17 hymns), with which might be included hymns that deal with the frustrations and hardships of earth and the future hope (11 hymns); the life of the early church (8 hymns); the giving of the Holy Spirit (4 hymns); and the remainder covering a wide variety from tithes to the Lord's Supper.³⁶

It would be useful to do further analysis of a wider selection of hymns, using Tippett's work in the Solomon Islands as a model to study the hymns as a "theological index" of Yali faith, and to combine this with a study of Yali sermon texts, after the manner of Turner in West Africa.³⁷ Such a study would surely indicate which of the Bible's great themes are particularly relevant to the Yali (and other societies in Irian Jaya), and also show up possible areas for need of teaching or emphasis. However, it needs to be noted at this stage that availability of Scriptures in Yali has been a governing factor in the selection of material for hymn composition. Most of the indigenous hymns in this first compilation were composed when only the Gospels and Acts were widely available outside the Bible School. Perhaps in a few years time, when the entire New Testament becomes more generally available and more of the Old Testament is also translated, a more comprehensive study can be undertaken of a much wider selection from this indigenous hymnody.

Nevertheless, at this stage, one can say that Yali hymns are entirely given to the transmission of Scripture, and with further exposure to Bible content and teaching, can be expected to continue to be a highly effective "participatory didactic" medium for the communication of Scripture, to all strata of the society. Moreover, as such, they demonstrate the potentiality of this and other traditional oral media for communication of Scripture and the internalization or accommodation of Christianity in an oral culture.

Endnotes for chapter 5:

1. Von Allmen in Kraft & Wisley p.330.
2. Ibid p. 331.
3. F. F. Bruce (1984:158).
4. Ibid p. 158.
5. Nketia in *International Review of Missions* Vol 47 (1958) p. 271.
6. Hanke (1965:78); and Fernandez in Friede and Keen pp. 89-91, cf. Van Oss pp. 19-20; Popp in *Missiology* VIII(1) 1980 pp. 61-69; cf Dye (1979:104).
7. Tippett (1977:73 my emphasis).
8. Tippett (1980:12); cf. Tippett (1977:73).
9. Tippett (1977:73-74).
10. Hiebert (1985:32, 162); Luke & Carman pp. 73ff. .
11. Olson pp. 152-153.
12. Ibid p. 153.
13. The experiment took place between 1973 and 1975. See Klem pp. xxiii-xxiv and pp. 167ff.
14. Ibid p. 169.
15. Ibid p. 169.
16. Ibid pp. 170-176.
17. From a personal conversation with Michael J. Webb who shared in the organisation of the retreat at the coastal town of Sentani, Irian Jaya.
18. Friesen in *Missiology* X(1) (1982) p.83.
19. Cf. Klem p. 117; Pike in *Notes on Scripture in Use*, 5, p.29; Weman p. 144-145.
20. Chenoweth in *Notes on Translation*, 115(10) 1986 pp. 29-34.
21. Van Oss pp. 19-20.
22. Keysser pp. 90-93 (my emphasis).
23. Weber pp. 41, 48, 50.
24. On indigenous hymnody, apart from references already cited, see Dawia in O'Brien pp. 23ff; Bosscher in *Notes on Scripture in Use*, 115 (1980) p. 29; Klem pp. xiii,107,147ff; M. Kraft (1978:148ff); Reitz in O'Brien pp. 115ff; Shaw p. 280; Tippett in Kraft and Wisley p. 415; Chenoweth in *Notes on Translation*, 115 (10) 1986 pp. 29-34.
25. Chenoweth and Bee, quoted by Friesen in *Missiology* X(1) 1982, p. 84.
26. Chenoweth (1972:9).
27. Friesen in *Missiology* X(1) 1982, p.90.
28. Cf. Smalley in Winter & Hawthorne pp.498-500.
29. During the period 1980-81 a revision of Mark, and the epistles of John, and first drafts of Luke, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and 1 and 2 Peter were added to John, Acts, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. .nl
30. The term *up* refers to the compound of tune and vocalics. In this idiom *ap* is a reiteration of *up*, and the phrase glosses as "the tune/rhythm goes awry".
31. Friesen in *Missiology* X(1) 1982, p.91.
32. This feature has significance for translation of poetic passages of Scripture and has already been applied effectively. See Lake in *Irian* XV p.40; and cf. Noss in *The Bible Translator* 27(1) 1976 pp.110-118, and Wonderly in *The Bible Translator* 38(2) 1987 pp.206-213.
33. Chenoweth (1972:25) emphasizes the need for the ethnomusicologist to record these. In a conversation in June 1988, she informed me that the preferred term is "vocalic"
34. Simon in *Ethnomusicology* 22(3) 1978 pp.449-454 (my emphasis).
35. The narrative passages were mainly from the Gospels and Acts, and several also came from Revelation. See Appendix 1.
36. See Appendix 2 for a selection of a variety of Yali hymns.
37. See Tippett (1967:269-352,) and Turner (1965).

Conclusion

As an example for the study of the communication and place of Scripture in an oral culture, the Yali are a useful case. Not only are they representative of hundreds of similar cultures in New Guinea, but also of hundreds more in Melanesia. More than that, as the comparison of Yali oral tradition with Vansina's typology shows, the orality of the Yali is indeed typical of oral cultures generally. It is a culture where daylight hours are mainly occupied in the needful activities of a subsistence economy, and the few hours of darkness given to social activity are spent in light-less huts, where written literature perforce has limited use. In such a culture, there must be the occasions and the media for oral communication and preservation of didactic information, histories and beliefs of importance to the existence, welfare and functioning of society. This is the case with the Yali.

The occasion in Yali culture which became the natural opportunity for initial and continued transmission of Scripture — basically in the form of Bible stories — was in the evening hours which traditionally were given to *nunung* and *dindil ale* story telling. Here was a time when the community was used to gathering, and ready and eager to hear a new story. Unintended and unbeknown to the missionary, Biblical communication found an appropriate moment and place for acceptance and transmission within the culture.

While the function of the *nunung* and *dindil ale* was mainly to entertain, but also to instruct, the Bible story did this and more — to some degree also fulfilling the function of myth, which was now no longer restricted to other closed occasions and demarcated sections of society.

Also important has been the employment by the Yali of an indigenous medium for the storing, retrieval and transmission of Scripture. In a significantly receptor-oriented, participatory manner, the Yali hymnody is internalizing Scripture for the people and is, in effect, the first unconscious expression of a Yali theology. Although the missionaries encouraged the composition of hymns according to the traditional model, the results went far beyond their expectations. The hymns not only enhance Yali Christian worship, but they effectively communicate Scripture to every segment of society: to old and young, to male and female, and, what is important, to both literate and non-literate.

Missionaries have made many mistakes in cross-cultural communication, or at least have failed to appreciate the inherent values and potentialities of oral cultures. The Western missionaries' approach to the Yali (and I do not exclude myself) was no exception. The same basic assumption that has been common in the Protestant missionary tradition — namely, that Scripture as a book, *with all that that implies*, must be given to each and every church in the vernacular language — also formed the basis for evangelism and church planting among the Yali. No conscious consideration was given to modifying the presentation of Scripture to conform to oral learning styles or by use of oral media. Nevertheless, lessons can be learned, and the Yali case shows the importance of understanding orality and of consciously using, or encouraging the use of, oral media.

As receptor-oriented and participatory media, they contribute to the effectiveness of communication *per se*. As indigenous media, they pave the way for widespread acceptance and accommodation of the message of Scripture, and enhance the cultural expression of corporate worship and the ministry of the church. As oral media — by natural design or intention, capable of memorization and ease of recall — they enable Scripture to be available to all, and do not limit it to the literate or other privileged members of society.

The availability of the Bible for all the people through literary means is neither a realistic possibility nor an appropriate objective in an oral society like the Yali. On the other hand, if the Protestant principle that the Bible should be accessible to all Christians — interpreting that for the non-literate in an oral culture as well as the medieval ploughboy — is valid, then the use of orality is a practical and effective means to attain the goal.

As a book, the Bible is closed to many, but through oral skills its contents, its message, can be transmitted and accepted in a culturally appropriate manner. However, it need not be to the exclusion of literary means. Rather, both spheres of communication skill should be employed, in order to reach every segment of society. The literate can benefit from the use of oral skills applied in education to help in the understanding and application of Bible content. He or she can also use oral skills to communicate what can be read. Through their common orality, members of an oral culture — both literate and non-literate — can participate equally and fully in the life and ministry of the Church.

Missionaries and other Christian cross-cultural communicators need to be aware of the tendency through literary pre-conditioning, to stigmatize members of oral cultures as illiterate — a communicational *tabula rasa*. Rather, they should appreciate the merits and potential of orality, and seek to understand and employ, or encourage the employment of oral media for the communication of Scripture and Christian teaching.

In the West, too, where there is increasing illiteracy, compounded by dependence on other communications media; where increasing numbers of people are becoming less dependent on written literature as a source of information or knowledge, the Church might learn some lessons from oral cultures. According to one writer, there is already a trend in the West towards the validation of the “oral medium” as a more intelligible form than written communication.¹ If this is so, then Christian communicators, wherever they are, must take note. Insistence on literacy and, or, a neglect of orality, restricts the use and public knowledge of Scripture.

¹ Lakoff in Tannen (ed) p.240.

Appendix 1

The following are Scriptures restated in the sample of 100 Yali hymns. Parallel passages have not been differentiated because composers frequently drew on more than one source.

Matthew 2:1-18(x3); 17:1-13; 19:13-15; 20:20; 24:31,36; 25:1-13; 26:26-29; 27:32-44(x2); 28:1-10(x2); 28:19-20.

Mark 9:2-13; 10:13-16; 11:20-25; 14:26-43; 15:29-31; 16:1-8(x2); 16:19-20.

Luke 1:26-45; 1:46-56; 2:1-20(x3); 2:25-32; 3:4-6; 3:21-22; 6:20-25; 9:10-17; 9:28-36; 9:57-59; 10:1-12 10:13-16; 11:20-25; 13:28-29; 14:15-23; 18:15-17,25-30; 22:54ff; 23:33; 24:1-51; 24:1-12(x2); 24:51-33.

John 1:19-33; 3:11-21; 3:31-32; 11:17-27; 14:1-4; 14:1-18; 15:1-11(x5); 18:1-11,15-32; 19:1-30; 19:34; 19:28-37; 20:1-10(x2).

Acts 1:6-11(x3); 7:54-8:3; 8:4-12; 8:26-40; 9:1-25; 10:1-48; 21:27ff; 21:40ff; 22:4; 23:1-3; 27:24ff.

Romans 12:1-2.

1 Cor. 9:8-12; 11:27-32(x2).

2 Cor. 5:1-10,14-15.

Gal. 1:11-13.

Eph. 1:3-6, 2:13-20.

Phil. 2:1-11.

1 Thess. 1:13-18.

James 4:14.

1 Peter 1:24.

2 Peter 3:10-13.

1 John 2:1-3.

Rev. 1:7-8(x3); 3:11; 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-17; 8:10-11; 9:1-11; 19:5-21; 21:1.

Psalms 32:1-5.

Malachi 3:8-10.

Appendix 2

A Selection of Hymns from the Yali Hymnbook

Vocalics and untranslated Yali words are in bold face.

39. [One of the earliest indigenous hymns from c. 1972]

We were in the condition we would have gone to the place of fire **i o i o hu**
We were in the condition we would have gone to the place of darkness
We were in the condition he came to save us
Our older brother Jesus with his blood
We were in the condition he came to save us.

Up (refrain)

i o i o hui hu our older brother Jesus
i o i o hui hu our father God

Even while listening to Jesus' good words
Even while receiving God's good words
He comes to divide our hearts (ie tempt)
The Devil just came¹ stealthily
He comes to divide our hearts.

In order for us to go to heaven
Come and listen to God's word
In order to go to the good place
The place where our older brother Jesus is
In order to go to the good place.

The place on earth where they say we would die
We will not remain (here) permanently
In this place where they say we would die²
We will not remain (here) permanently.³

¹A switch from the present to the recent past tense, used factively.

²A predictable vowel change on the verb "die".

³A synonym for "permanently".

40. [John 15:1-10]

The real tree is he Jesus, The branches are ourselves
The ones without fruit he will put in the fire
The ones with fruit he will put in heaven .

Up (refrain)

He will come to sort out good from bad
He will come to divide/separate
He will truly come, He will come in fulfilment.¹

The tree base/source is God, The branches are ourselves
If separated² from him, (one) becomes dead (wood)
If joined to him, (one) is alive.

If we ask of him, he gives to us
If we thank him, he saves us
If we forsake³ him, he does not give to us.

¹An adverb which conveys the idea of fulfilling what one said one would do; or doing what is expected of one's character.

²An attributive participle which here puts the blame on the person.

³Could imply failure to ask or thank.

43. [Ephesians 1:3-6, 2:20]

Before he made the earth **yehu**
Before he made this place
In order for us to be only good¹
God chose us for himself.²

Up (refrain)

Since God is praised **e hu yehu**
Since God is praised³
He is exalted, Jesus is exalted.

The message you heard, The message you received
In order for God to give to us
He promised it to us [ie the Holy Spirit]
In order for God to give us.

This stone (which you know about)
That stone (which you know about)
The foundation stone⁴ is he
Jesus is (he/it)
The foundation stone is he.

Though we are doing (the word we received)
Though we are receiving (ditto)
If we are not doing it (the word)
If we are not receiving it (the word)
We are as dead, We are as barren
Since we are not doing (the word)

¹“Only good” excludes any “badness” and implies holiness.

²The verb implies personal choice (election) not based on intrinsic merit.

³This synonym is the poetic form of the attributive participle of the verb in the preceding line.

⁴The term used is for the heavy, secure stone at the base of a stone wall on to which other stones are built.

48. [Luke 23:33; 24:1-51]

Because of our helplessness¹ Christ came² **o amin**
They killed him on the tree³ **o amin**
They put him in the cave **o amin**
After sleeping twice⁴ he stood up⁵ **o amin**.

He(or they) truly did it **o amin**
He(or they) truly did it **o amin**.
He went to Jerusalem **o amin**⁶
He went to the presence of his friends
He went having said, Let them see me
He said, You must not be afraid.

He went to Bethany
He put his joy on them⁷
He was taken up to heaven
His friends worshipped God.

After doing it for us⁸
After doing it for people
He is on the straight (right) side
He is in the clean (holy) place.

He will come quickly
He will come suddenly
We will be startled
Our bones will shake.

¹This idiom is used for “grace”.

²The ordinary past tense opens the song, probably without any significance apart from “sounding” right.

³The term “tree” also means “wood”, ie. the cross.

⁴The idiom means “after two nights”.

⁵The tense changes to the remote past through to the end of the second verse.

⁶The vocalics **o amin** (amin = amen) follow each line.

⁷The idiom means “He blessed them”.

⁸A completed aspect of the verb is used.

49. [A prayer in a unique style — apparently totally new]

Jesus, you are the path to go on
Jesus, you are the real path
On my own I do not know, Jesus, having come, help me.¹

The Devil my enemy is out to kill me
This is he coming near
On my own I am weak/helpless, Jesus, having come, save me.

Jesus, your name is completely lifted up²
(It is) spread everywhere
People are (by contrast) low³
Jesus, having come, help me.

Jesus, your blood is completely effective

It washes my sin
There is absolutely nothing else
Jesus, having come, wash me.

Jesus, you are the living water
Jesus, you are the light
People are mortal, Jesus, having come, take me.

This place is temporary
The earth is temporary
God, your home is the permanent place (of habitation)
Jesus, having come, take me.

¹The final plea of each verse is an indefinite imperative, which requires the action to be done at the appropriate moment.

²An attributive participle of the verb “to lift up”.

³An attributive participle of the verb “to put down”.

57. [A funeral song in the style of a lament. Yehei is a cry of grief or anguish. The hymn’s mood reaches a turning point in verse 3 and moves from hopelessness to hope: Christ has come! The hymn calls for commitment and gives the assurance of reunion].

What are our lives like? **Yehei!**
Our lives are like steam [rising from the cooking pit]
We are here now transiently
After becoming nothing, there is an empty space.

Up (refrain)
God says in His word, Jesus says by his words.

Our bodies are like leaves
Like what dries up in the sun
In the season when they (leaves) fall
Where he was, he is forgotten.

Jesus, if you had been here
Christ, if you had been here
My older brother would not have died
But now that he’s died, you have just come.

When a man is alive
When a man is still alright
If he receives my word, he will not die.
Like the pig that was **ousa** (taboo)
Like the pig that was **hwene** (dedicated)
In order for our characters to be put in order
Let us give our bodies to God alone.

We who are alive
And our friends who died
When Jesus calls us, we will go to be united in heaven.

[Scripture reference: James 4:14; 1 Peter 1:24 John 11:17-27; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:13-18]

62. [2 Peter 3:10-13]

When Jesus comes, he will not come like a man
When Christ comes, he will not come like a man¹
He will come destroying (as he comes)
To sort out people (good from bad)
He will come destroying (as he comes).

Up (refrain)

Yehei yehe hu o, We are in awe of Jesus
Hu o yehei yehe hu o, We are in awe of God
Hu o yehei yehe hu o.

By the coming of Jesus the heaven will become nothing
By the coming of Christ the earth will become nothing
What will remain are Jesus' words
God's word also will remain.

Well-formed and unformed **werema nuts**²
Continue to roast them indiscriminately
On the day I come to break them open,
I will come with "mallet" in hand
Continue to roast them indiscriminately.³

Forsake your sins now
If you do not forsake (them)
At the "tail end" of time
I will come to hit/kill you.

If you have become cold
If you have become lukewarm⁴
On the day when I Jesus will come
I will come and spit you out.

¹There is a vowel change on "man". The point about his coming is that it will be of a different character.

²**Werema nuts** are the nuts of the mountain pandanus. The author uses a cryptic metaphor for the mixed deeds of men.

³The words are the words of Jesus speaking metaphorically about coming in judgement (the "mallet" is used to break open the nuts).

⁴"Cold" and "lukewarm" are both used of water and of the heart. A cold heart has no enthusiasm; a lukewarm heart is one where familiarity has virtually bred contempt.

65. [John 14:1-18]

The path on which we go to God our father
That path is me, Jesus
Your hearts must not continue to swell
Keep trusting in God and in me
Your hearts must not continue to swell.¹

Up (refrain)

Yi o i our older brother Jesus
Hoi o i our father God.

In my father's house there, there are lots of divisions
If it were not like that
I would not have come to tell you
After I have made your homes ready
Later I will come to fetch you.

Thomas was saying to him
Our older brother, where are you going?
Since we don't know, just how will we learn?
Our older brother, where are you going? .

I am the truth, and the one who makes people live
That is I your older brother Jesus
Those who don't go on me the path
They will not go to the presence of my father.

Philip was saying to him,
My older brother **yei!** My father **yei!**²
We are doubtful, Show your father to us
My older brother **yei!** My father **yei!**

The Holy Spirit (whom you've heard about)
In order for him to remain with you
If I ask my father for him, he will send him to you
In order for him to remain with you.

Jesus was making a promise of a time to them
My friends **o**, my younger brothers **o**
I, having left you as orphans, will not go for good
But I will come again later to accompany you
My friends **o**, my younger brothers **o**.

¹The idiom for worry.

²**Yei** is a vocative term.

121 [This hymn is based on John 14:1-6; Philippians 3:20 and recalls Jesus' promise of a home in heaven, away from earth's troubles and suffering. It depicts Jesus re-issuing the call to discipleship, and ends with the disciple's expression of good, but failed, intentions]

Children of God, your home is in the good place up there
Younger brothers of Jesus, your home is in the real place up there
We are here in this-place bad-place earth; we are in the dying-place
We are here in the world temporarily; we are in the dying-place.

Up (refrain)

Let's go to where Jesus is **lil o laul o i**¹
Let's go to where God is **lil o laul o i**

You have experienced much suffering
You have experienced far too much pain
Come, come to the good place, come, come²
Come, come to the ideal place,³ come, come

Baptized ones, not taking anything with you
Jesus' younger brothers, taking absolutely nothing
Come lightly, like when you were born, come lightly
Come empty, as you came out (at birth) come empty.

I called you to come with me but. . . , I called you but.
I besought you to go together but. . . , I chose you but.
By forsaking (me) and going, you're on the way to the place of fire, you're on your
way to darkness⁴
By turning back, you're on your way to the bad place; you're on your way to the place
of death.

I followed you⁵ but. . . , I followed you but.
I came after you but. . . , I came after you but.
When I saw how hard it was, I turned back
When I saw how difficult it was, I turned back.

¹**Lil o laul o** is a repetitive form of “let’s go” with vowel changes “I” and “au”

²The reduplication of “come” is **minik manik** and many other vowel changes occur elsewhere.

³The “ideal place” contrasts with earth, which is far from perfect.

⁴The recent past tense is used factively — “You are as good as in...”

⁵The recent past tense is again used factively — the disciple still intends to follow.
His backsliding is spoken of in the past tense — it is a past event.

[This hymn — judging by the frequency of its use — is the most popular of all. Asked why, the Yali say it is because the *up* goes well, but also because the words express their real feelings — frustration with earth, acknowledgement of failings, and hope of a better world.]

134 [Psalm 32:1-5]

This is me David (whom you know about) **yi u we hu**
I sinned (as you know)
While I was not confessing (it)
Night and morning I cried
My body became sick.

Up (refrain)

Yi u e hu God my father, I'm “dead”

Yi u e hu Jesus my older brother, I am lying down.

The wrong that I did
You God were watching me
And because you caused me to suffer
When drought comes, just as the ground dries up
All my strength has gone
Night and morning I cried.

The wrong that I did
When I told you God about it
You wiped it out completely
I put my joy on you (I bless you)
You wiped it out completely.

Bibliography

- Alexander, Jean. "Nutrition and General Well-Being of Pre-School Children", (Irian Jaya). Medical Elective Report presented to the University of Aberdeen. 1981.
- Alexander, Spence. "A comparative Study of the Incidence of Thyroid Disease in the Soba Area of Irian Jaya". Medical Elective Report presented to the University of Aberdeen. 1981.
- Beekman, John and John Callow. *Translating the Word of God*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 1974.
- Bendor-Samuel, Margaret. "Will They Go on Reading the Vernacular?" in *Read* vol. 22, No. 2, SIL, Ukarumpa, Papua New Guinea. 1987.
- Bosscher, Kathy. "The Shortest Distance Between Two Points? An Experience in Scripture Use Planning" in *Notes on Scripture Use* No. 7 (1), pp. 23-30. SIL, Dallas. 1982.
- Bower, Ruth. "Use of Cassettes: Some Problems and Possible Solutions", in *Read* Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 25-27. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1982.
- Bromley, M. "The Linguistic Relationship of Grand Valley Dani: A Lexico-Statistical Classification" in *Oceania* Vol. XXXVII, No. 4, pp. 286-308. 1967.
- "Ethnic Groups in Irian Jaya" in *Irian*. Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 1-37. 1973.
- Brown, H. "Oral Literature and Bible Translating" in *The Bible Translator* Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 17-18. 1968.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids. 1964.
- The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids. 1984.
- Callow, Kathleen. *Discourse Considerations in Translating The Word of God*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 1974.
- Carl, Richard. "Oral and Written Styles" in *Read* Vol. 21, No. 1 pp. 5-7. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1986.
- Chafe, Wallace L. "Integration and Involvement in Speaking, Writing, and Oral Literature" in Deborah Tannen (ed) *Spoken and Written Language: Advances in Discourse Processes*. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey. 1982.
- Chenoweth, Vida. *Melodic Perception and Analysis*. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1972.
- The Usarufas and Their Music*. SIL Museum of Anthropology, Dallas. 1979.
- "The Demands Upon and Expectations of a Field Ethnomusicologist" in *Notes on Translation* No. 115 (10), SIL, Dallas. 1986.
- Chirgwin, A. *The Bible in World Evangelism*. SCM Press, London. 1954.
- Cook, Edwin A. and Denise O'Brien (eds) *Blood and Semen*. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. 1980.
- Cousens, E. M. C. "Report on Village Health Survey at Soba". Unpublished report, Irian Jaya. 1977.

- Dale, S. *The Valley and the Vision. Regions Beyond* Missionary Union, London. 1969.
- Dawia, Alexander. "Indigenizing Christian Worship" in Helen O'Brien (ed). *Worship in Melanesia*, Point Series No. 1. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1980.
- Dekker, John, with Lois Neely. *Torches of Joy*. Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois. 1985.
- De Waard, Jan and Eugene A. Nida. *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating*. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. 1986.
- Dye, T. Wayne. *The Bible Translation Strategy*. Prepublication draft. SIL, Ukarumpa, Papua New Guinea. 1979.
- Eckert, Ann Curnow. "Analysis of Written Style— An Imperative for Readable Translations?" in *Notes on Translation* No. 85 (10), pp. 27-31. SIL, Dallas. 1981.
- Fahner, Chris. "Some notes on syntaxis in the Pass Valley language". Unpublished paper, Irian Jaya. 1971.
- Fernández, Manuel Giménez. "Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas: A Biographical Sketch" in Friede and Keen (eds) *Bartolomé de Las Casas*. North Illinois University Press, de Kalb. 1971.
- Flannery, Wendy. *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today* (3). Point Series No.4. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1984.
- "Symbol and Myth in Melanesian Cultures" in *Missiology* Vol. VII, No. 4, pp. 435-449. 1979.
- Foley, John Miles (ed). *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context*. University of Missouri Press, Columbia. 1986.
- Frank, Paul S. "Cultural Learning Styles" in *Read* Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 19-25. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1986.
- Friede, Juan and Benjamin Keen (eds). *Bartolomé de Las Casas*. North Illinois University Press, De Kalb. 1971.
- Friesen, Albert W. "A Methodology in the Development of Indigenous Hymnody" in *Missiology* Vol X, No. 1, pp. 83-96. 1982.
- Fry, Euan. "An Oral Approach to Translation" in *The Bible Translator* Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 214-217. 1979.
- Goody, Jack. "Alternative Paths to Knowledge in Oral and Literate Cultures" in Deborah Tannen (ed). *Spoken and Written Language: Advances in Discourse Processes*. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey. 1982.
- Gudschinsky, Sarah C. *A Manual of Literacy for Preliterate Peoples*. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1973.
- Gunson, Niel. *Messengers of Grace*. Melbourne. 1978.
- Hanke, Lewis. *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston. 1965.
- Hayward, Douglas. *The Dani of Irian Jaya Before and After Conversion*. Regions Press, Sentani, Irian Jaya. 1980.
- Missionaries in Bare Feet*. Regions Press, Sentani, Irian Jaya. 1982.

- Hiebert, Paul G. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids. 1985.
- Hoekstra, Harvey T. "The Scriptures on Cassettes — NOT Just for Readers Anymore" in *Notes on Scripture in Use* No. 6 (9), pp. 12-19. 1983.
- Hope, Edward R. "Scripture Cassettes" in *The Bible Translator* Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 412-419. 1980.
- Howat, Lois. "The Talking Bible" in *Missiology* Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 437-453. 1974.
- Kamma, Freerk C. *Religious Texts of the Oral Tradition From Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya)*. Part B. E. J. Brill, Leiden. 1978.
- Keysser, Christian. *A People Reborn*. Translated by Alfred Allin and John Kuder. William Carey Library Pasadena. 1980.
- Kilham, Christine A. "A Written Style for Oral Communicators" in *Notes on Translation*. Special Edition, No. 123 (12). SIL, Dallas. 1987.
- Klem, Herbert V. *Oral Communication of Scripture*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1982.
- Koch, Klaus-Friedrich. "Conflict and its Management among the Jalé People of West New Guinea". PhD. Thesis submitted to the University of California, Berkeley. 1967.
- War and Peace in Jalemo*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1974.
- "Jalé Kinship: Taxonomic, Semantic, and Ethnographic Analyses" in Edwin A Cook and Denise O'Brien (eds). *Blood and Semen*. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. 1980.
- Kraft, Charles H. *Christianity in Culture*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York. 1979.
- Kraft, Charles H. and Tom N. Wisley (eds). *Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1970.
- Kraft, Marguerite G. *Worldview and the Communication of the Gospel*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1978.
- Lake, Larry M. "Vernacular Literacy Programs in Irian Jaya: Ethnographic Perspectives" in *Irian* Vol. XV, pp. 37-46. 1987.
- Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. "Some of my Favorite Writers are Literate: The Mingling of Oral and Literate Strategies in Oral Communication" in Deborah Tannen (ed). *Spoken and Written Language: Advances in Discourse Processes*. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey. 1982.
- Laubach, Frank C. *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion*. Lutterworth Press, London. 1961.
- Lord, Albert B. *The Singer of Tales*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1960.
- "The Merging of Two Worlds: Oral and Written Poetry as Carriers of Ancient Values" in John Miles Foley (ed). *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context*. University of Missouri Press, Columbia. 1986.
- Luke, P. Y. and J. B. Carman. *Village Christians and Hindu Culture*. Lutterworth, London. 1968.

- MacDonald, Mary. "Melanesian Communities: Past and Present" in Darrell L. Whiteman (ed). *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*. Point Series, No. 5. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1984.
- MacDonald, Georgetta. "Reading Materials: Progression to Functional Literacy and Non-formal Education" in *Read* Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 24-26. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1985.
- Manning, Helen. *To Perish for Their Saving*. Victory Press, London and Eastbourne. 1969.
- Mantovani, Ennio (ed). *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*. Point Series No.6. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1984.
- Mbiti, John S. *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*. London. 1971.
Bible and Theology in African Christianity. Oxford University Press, Nairobi. 1986.
- Meier, Paul and Inge. "Cassette Ministry for Bible Translators" in *Notes on Scripture in Use* No.2, (1), pp. 16-21. SIL, Dallas. 1982.
- Meyer, Jim. "Literacy: Reading, Obviously, but Writing, too" in *Notes on Literacy*. No. 51. SIL, Dallas. 1986.
- Mogre, Salifu. "From Preliterate to Literate: Some Social Implications". *Notes on Literacy*. Special Issue No. 2. pp. 16-19. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1985.
- Nida, Eugene A. *God's Word in Man's Language*. Harper and Brothers, New York. 1952.
Toward a Science of Translating. E. J. Brill, Leiden. 1964.
"Linguistic Dimensions of Literacy and Literature" in Floyd Shacklock, *World Literacy Manual*. Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature New York. 1967.
"Translation" in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed). *Current Trends in Linguistics* Vol. 12. Mouton, The Hague. 1974.
"Poetry and the Bible Translator" in *The Bible Translator*. Vol. 33, No. 4. pp. 435-438. 1982.
- Nida, Eugene A. and Charles R. Taber. *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. E. J. Brill, Leiden. 1974.
- Nketia, J. H. "The Contribution of African Culture to Christian Worship" in *International Review of Missions*. Vol. 47, pp. 265-278. 1958.
- Noss, Philip A. "The Psalms and Gbaya Literary Style" in *The Bible Translator* Vol. 27, No. 1. pp. 110-118. 1976.
"The Oral Story and Bible Translation" in *The Bible Translator* Vol. 32, No. 3 pp. 301-318. 1981.
- O'Brien, Helen (ed). *Worship in Melanesia*. Point Series No. 1. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1980.
- Olson, Bruce E. *Bruchko*. Creation House, Carol Stream, Illinois. 1978.

- Olson, Ron. "Communicate by All Means" in *Notes on Scripture in Use*. No. 6 (9), pp. 3-6. SIL, Dallas. 1983.
- "God's Word for Whom?" in *Notes on Scripture in Use*. No. 5 (6), pp. 22-30. SIL, Dallas. 1983.
- Ong, Walter J. *The Presence of the Word*. Yale University Press, New Haven. 1967.
- Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Methuen, London and New York. 1982.
- Ovuoba, John. "Cassette Ministry: A Curse or a Cure to Bible Translation" in *Notes on Scripture in Use* No. 6 (9). SIL, Dallas. 1983.
- Paton, Frank H. L. *The Kingdom in the Pacific*. London, 1913.
- Pike, Eunice V. "Hymns and the Spread of the Gospel" in *Notes on Scripture in Use*. No. 5 (6), pp. 28-30. SIL, Dallas. 1983.
- Popp, Linda. "Music in the Early Evangelization of Mexico" in *Missiology* Vol. VIII, No. 1, pp. 61-69. 1980.
- Regions Beyond Missionary Union. "Regions Beyond Missionary Union, Irian Jaya Philosophy of Ministry" (In house paper). Regions Beyond Missionary Union, Irian Jaya. 1988.
- Reitz, Gerhard O. "Indigenous Tunes for Christian Worship" in O'Brien (ed). *Worship in Melanesia*. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1980.
- Richardson, Don. *Lords of the Earth*. Regal Books, Ventura, California. 1977.
- Schwarz, Brian (ed). *An Introduction to Ministry in Melanesia*. Point Series No. 7. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1985.
- Shaw, Daniel R. *Transculturation: Toward a Methodology for Translation and Other Communication Tasks*. Pre-publication manuscript. School of World Mission, California. 1987. [Expected to be published by William Carey Library].
- Silzer, Peter J and Heljä Heikkinen. "Index of Irian Jaya Languages" in *Irian* Vol. XII. 1984.
- Simon, Artur. "Types and Functions of Music in the Eastern Highlands of West Irian" in *Ethnomusicology* Vol. 22, No. 3. pp. 441-455. 1978.
- Smalley, William J. "Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church" in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (eds). *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1981.
- Strelan, John G. *Search for Salvation*. Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide. 1977.
- Stringer, Mary. "Traditional Learning Styles in Papua New Guinea" in *Read* Vol. 19, No. 2. pp. 3-15. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1984.
- "Cultural Aspects Related to Education" in *Read* Vol. 20, No. 2. pp. 8-12. SIL, Ukarumpa. 1985.
- Tannen, Deborah (ed). *Spoken and Written Language: Advances in Discourse Processes*. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, New Jersey. 1982.

- Tippett, Alan R. *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Church Growth and Obstruction*. Lutterworth, London. 1967.
- The Deep Sea Canoe*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1977.
- Oral Tradition and Ethnohistory: The Transmission of Information and Social Values in Early Christian Fiji 1835-1905*. St Mark's Library, Canberra. 1980.
- "Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity" in Kraft and Wisley (eds). *Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity*. William Carey Press, Pasadena. 1970.
- Turner, Harold W. *Profile Through Preaching*. Edinburgh House Press, London. 1965.
- Van Oss, Adriaan C. *Catholic Colonialism: A Parish History of Guatemala 1524-1821*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1986.
- Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex. 1973.
- Von Allmen, Daniel. "The Birth of Theology" in Kraft and Wisley (eds) *Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1970.
- Waida, Gideon. "Communicating Through Preaching in Melanesia" in *Catalyst* Vol. 11, No. 1. n.d.
- Walls, Andrew F. "Africa and Christian Identity" in *Mission Focus* Vol. VI, No. 7. pp. 11-13. 1978.
- Weber, H. *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates*. SCM Press, London. 1957.
- Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. Jonathan Cape, London. 1949.
- Weman, Henry. *African Music and the Church in Africa*. Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, Uppsala. 1960.
- Weymouth, Ross "The Bible and Revival Movements" in Wendy Flannery. *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today* (3). Point Series No. 4. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka. 1984.
- Whiteman, Darrell L. *Melanesians and Missionaries*. William Carey Library, Pasadena. 1983.
- "Melanesian Religions: An overview" in Ennio Mantovani (ed). *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka, Papua New Guinea. 1984.
- Whiteman, Darrell L. (ed). *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*. Point Series No.5. The Melanesian Institute, Goroka, PNG. 1984.
- Wilson, John D. "An Introduction to Available Verb Forms in the Yali Language". Unpublished paper, Regions Beyond Missionary Union, Irian Jaya. 1972.
- "An Introduction to the Yali Language" (Revision). Unpublished Paper, Regions Beyond Missionary Union, Irian Jaya. 1983.
- "Changing Leadership Roles Among the Yali". Unpublished Paper, Regions Beyond Missionary Union, Irian Jaya. 1984.
- "Steps Towards Knowledge: male initiation practices among the Yali of Irian Jaya" in *Irian*. Vol XIV, pp. 3-13. 1986.
- Wonderly, W. L. "The Bible in the Church: Some Implications for the Translator's Treatment of Background Information" in *The Bible Translator*. Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 212-216. 1986.
- "Poetry in the Bible" in *The Bible Translator*. Vol. 38, No. 2. pp. 206-213. 1987.

Yali Hymnbook *Allah mot-dukohon*. Gereja Injili di Indonesia, Irian Jaya, 1988.

Zöllner, Siegfried "Verbformen der Angguruk-Sprache". Unpublished paper, Irian Jaya. 1971.

"Syntax der Angguruk-Sprache". Unpublished paper, Irian Jaya. 1971.

Lebensbaum und Schweinekult. Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brokhaus, Darmstadt. 1977.