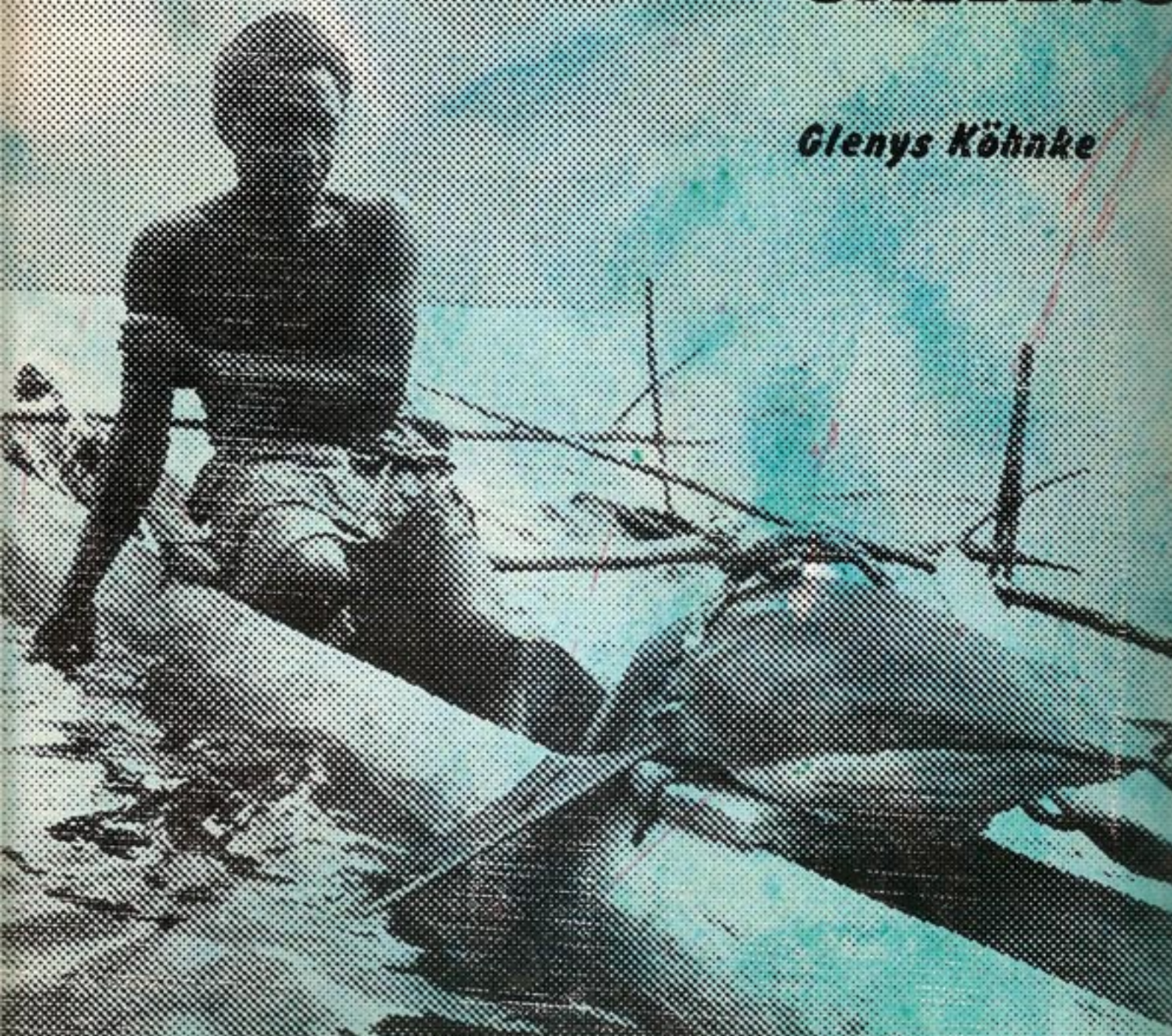


THE SHARK CALLERS

Glenys Köhnke



THE SHARK CALLERS

Cover and frontispiece: The maker of rain magic, from the house of Umin returning with lembe the shark.

Endpapers: illustration taken from Abel Janszoon Tasman's *Journal*, April 1643, off the west coast of New Ireland at 2°53' latitude, 168°59' longitude showing what the author presumes to be early shark callers in their canoe with two propeller snares. The inscription reads 'A view of a vessel of Noua Guinea, with the natives living there.'

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**an ancient
fishing tradition
of new ireland
papua new guinea**

**text paintings &
sculptures by
glenys köhnke**

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For my sister Joanne

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introduction

There is much magic. That intangible bridge of magic must remain the respected and guarded secret of the shark callers for as long as men go out to the deep sea in small outrigger canoes to snare sharks by hand.

In a small remote west coast village of New Ireland men still snare sharks as their ancestors have done for generations. The tradition of snaring sharks is an integral part in the daily lives of those who live in this community. A youth does not enter manhood until he has snared his first shark. After he returns with his first catch he will be attacked in a mock battle and be thrown into the water with the dead shark in order to kill the former self which did not know how to catch; the new self is born – he that catches sharks. This is a very important day in the life of every man in this community: the day when he walks from his canoe to his hut enclosure and is finally accepted in the community as a man and a shark caller.

The shark caller's equipment is simple but very effective. He has a dugout canoe with outrigger for stability and a wooden float carved from light kapiak wood to resemble a two bladed propeller. This has a hole burnt through the centre part through which a plaited cane rope passes to form a noose on the underside and a handle on the top side. This float called kasaman and noose is used to snare the shark. He has a cane lure stick, lenantulus, to which he attaches the lure fish. The lure stick is short and light and easy to manage with one hand. He also takes larung, the rattle made from half coconut shells threaded onto a cane hoop. He attracts the shark by rattling these in the water beside his canoe. He has one paddle, a conch shell trumpet to blow his calls of success or distress, a heavy wooden club with which to kill his shark, and a variety of fishing spears. The only sustenance he will take with him for his day's trip is a small portion of cooked sweet potato or kaukau and a green coconut.

The snared sharks are cooked and eaten. As well as providing the village with a meal, the act of calling and snaring sharks is a tradition whereby the men prove their strength, prowess and skill. It is a visible sign of the power of their magic and the continued contact with their ancestors. Sharks are caught and prepared as tokens of respect of the dead of other clans and of neighbouring villages. A man giving a new born baby a name puts a seal on the name by presenting the child's parents with a shark. Shark calling is a part of the order and balance which is kept in this small community.

The village is broken up into eleven major groups, each being governed by a shark caller's enclosure. These enclosures are small plots of land fenced by a stone wall, accessible only by a forked tree trunk doorway. The seat of government is the shark calling hut which is a small woven walled, thatched roof place with no windows and only one low doorway. These enclosures are inhabited by one man who has inherited the

right through his maternal uncle. Inheritance is matriarchal. The village is divided into two bird totems, those of the Sea Hawk and the Eagle. A child, male or female will automatically belong to the bird totem of the mother. So in this way the enclosures, or seats of government, for the eleven groups which make up the community either belong to one bird totem or the other and all the members of one group belong to the same bird totem. A young boy will not be of the same totem as his father as it is forbidden for man and wife to belong to the same bird totem. First cousins are not permitted to marry, so in this way the minimum of intermarriage takes place in this closely knit community.

The life of a person in this village is governed by strong beliefs in good and evil spirits and in the ancestors. The world around the individual is full of visible and invisible spirits or masalai. The deceased have not disappeared entirely for they walk and talk in the dreams of the living. They can be called upon to help their progeny on earth.

At the turn of the century shark calling was widespread in New Ireland, the Duke of York and Tabar Islands. Today, to the best of my knowledge only one village remains where sharks are called and snared. This village is on the remote west coast of New Ireland. There exists in this village only one old man who knows all the magic and secret rites pertaining to shark fishing. He is very old. He has witnessed the colonising by the Germans, the war with Japan, and the administration of the Australians. As is traditional, he has passed on much of his knowledge to his nephew. This nephew has no one to whom to pass the knowledge. All his sisters' sons have left the village and gone to live in other parts of Papua New Guinea.

It is more than probable that the traditions of this last remaining shark calling village will also be lost except for the record of them in this book and others in which shark fishing is mentioned (see bibliography). The old man who is called the 'one who knows the way of the shark' wishes to remain anonymous and he wishes the correct name of his village to be substituted with the name 'Lorolargun' which has been used throughout the book.

I have told the story of the shark callers as the Old One told it to me. Magic songs and words which he told me have not been included, at his request, as they would destroy his magical powers.

After years of searching New Ireland for a village where shark calling was still actively carried out I finally found 'Lorolargun'. It was only by living with the people that I gained the confidence of 'the one who knows the way of the shark' and began to learn of the magic rites associated with it. One of the strictest traditional tambu of shark calling is that it is forbidden to women. A woman must not travel in a shark calling canoe nor her hand touch any of the shark calling equipment. Traditional magic says a canoe or equipment which has been touched by the hand of a menstruating woman will be immediately detected by shark. Shark will always retreat from a canoe touched by a girl or woman in her menstrual years.

I was a woman and an outsider. I sat with the 'one who knows the way of the shark' many evenings, talking of the tradition of shark calling. We spoke of the spirits of the ancestors, of magic and tambu. One evening as we sat smoking I told the Old One of a kind of magic of our doctors. I told him of a medicine which could cancel out a woman's menstrual cycle. It prevents women from becoming pregnant and perhaps, I suggested, the shark would not recognise me as a woman. The Old One thought for some time. He said 'Orait, you can come with me. You will be the first woman that has ever been out to the deep sea in a canoe with shark callers. We will see if Lembe the shark recognises you!'

I accompanied the Old One and other shark callers many times after that. They called and snared sharks and the magic was not lost nor any tambu broken because of my presence.

It seems inevitable, however, that the magic will be lost and shark calling disappear. Part of the Old One's magic rite is to call the names of the ancestors in a direct line of nephew uncle back fifteen generations. The present living shark caller can call the names of fifteen generations of ancestors. That the New Irelanders were calling sharks in 1643 has been verified in Abel Tasman's Journal. The reproduction of the etching in the endpapers shows three stylized men in an outrigger canoe. The man in front is blowing a conch shell, an important piece of the shark caller's equipment. The two pieces of equipment lying across the canoe look very much like the propeller floats except that the artist has not drawn the handle or noose. In Andrew Sharp's translation of the *Voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman* extracts from the sailor's journal show clearly that many of the canoes met far off shore carried these 'shields'. It was also noted that on April 7, 1643 a shark was bartered for three strings of beads. In another canoe the islanders carried nothing except their coconuts, one of which was exchanged for a string of beads. They also carried a number of small fish which they threw to Tasman's ship but they proved not worth eating. It seems highly probable that these were the small day-old bait fish used to lure the sharks into the noose! So taking these suppositions as accurate, the old man's claim to call his ancestors back fifteen generations seems valid.

The coming of the shark callers to New Ireland remains a mystery but if we take legend as history, it is said the shark callers come from the east long, long ago and settled on the Tabar Islands. Gil Platter recorded and wrote of the Tabar shark callers in 1954. Other written accounts by German travellers and early missionaries also mention shark calling. Powdermaker in *Life in Lesu* gives a short account, but does not give much thought or space to the shark fishing, and certainly did not witness it first hand. Other writers include W.C. Groves in an interesting article to the Anthropological Society (1936), and Bengt Anell in his book *Contributions to the History of Fishing in the Southern Seas*.

The method of shark fishing is unique to New Ireland, the Duke of York and the Tabar Islands. Although shark fishing is carried out in parts of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, no other area has the remarkable innovation of the shark propeller or float. This is, according to Anell, a local innovation and not a lost tradition from other areas. The shark rattle is widely used in the above mentioned areas. It is usually a rattle made from cleaned, pierced half coconut shells threaded on a cane hoop. However, in Oceania rattles made of mussel shells are also used to attract sharks. In parts of Polynesia small sharks are attracted to the canoe and caught by the dorsal fin and clubbed. In other areas they are speared. The shark snare is used throughout these areas. This consists of a noose made from various plant fibres. Generally the shark is attracted to the side of the canoe with the rattle and lured into the noose with the bait fish. The slipknot of the noose is tightened and in some cases, if the shark is small enough, immediately clubbed and hauled aboard. A larger snared shark securely fastened, will tow the canoe until either the shark is exhausted or the canoe is overturned. It has even been recorded that in the Loyalty Islands fishermen dive with the snare and put it around the tail of the resting shark. However, it seems to me unlikely that sharks, the vigilant cruisers of the ocean, would allow anybody to approach undetected and slip the noose over the tail.* The safest and most successful method of shark fishing belongs to New Ireland. There the sharks are attracted to the side of the canoe with the coconut rattle and lured into an open-plaited cane noose. The noose is attached to the wooden propeller-shaped float. The shark caller holds the float above the surface with the noose underwater. The man passes a lure fish on a pole through the noose and offers it to the approaching shark. As the shark advances, the man draws the fish through the noose and the shark follows.

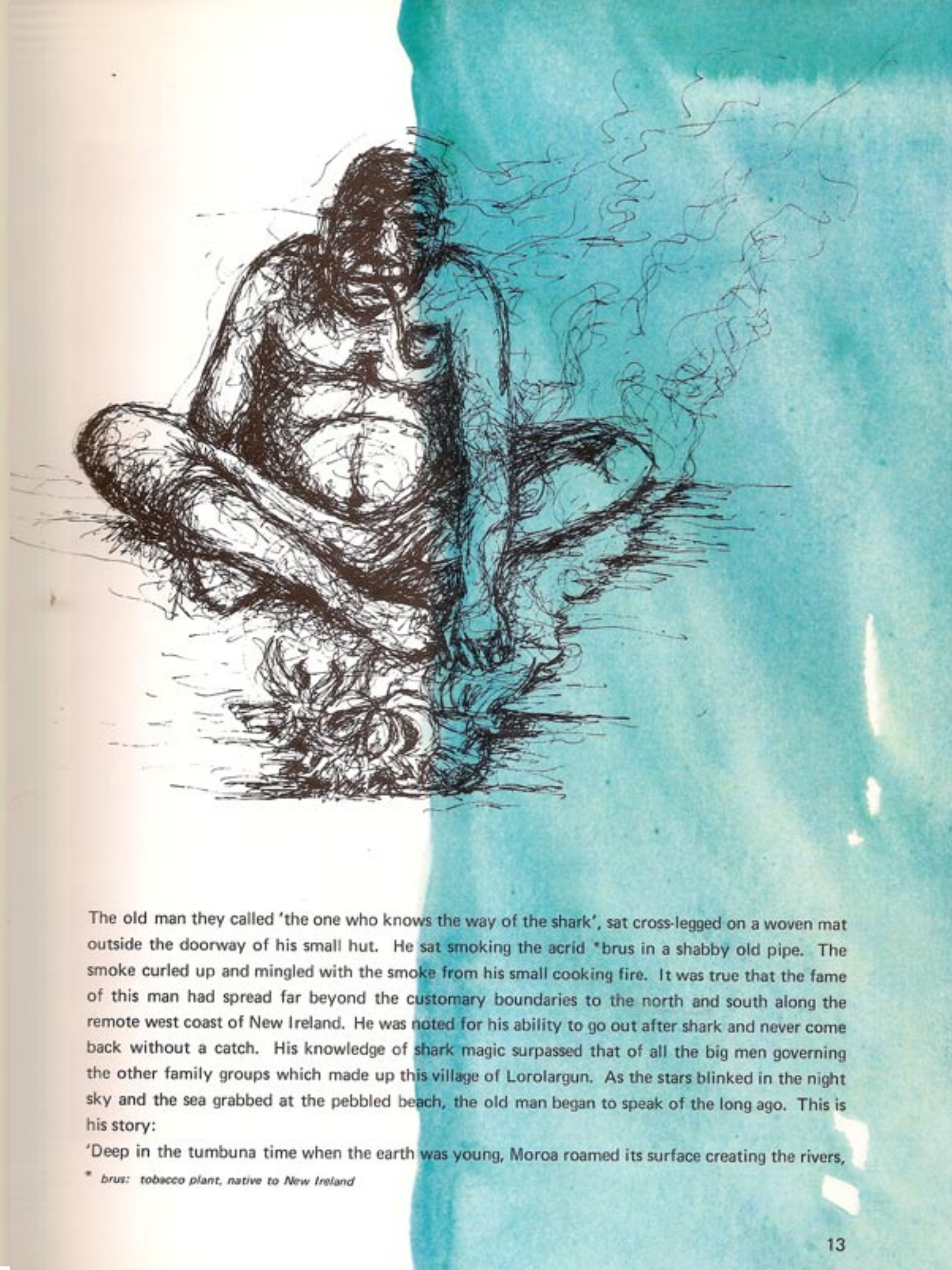
* See C.S. Ramsey *Simmande Brevbåre*

When the shark is through the noose up to his pectoral fins, the shark caller drops the float onto the shark's back and tightens the noose by jerking the cane handle on the top side of the float, upwards. Then he casts the shark away to fight the propeller float. The float does not spin, but offers a great deal of resistance to the shark which tries to dive or scrape it off along the surface of the water. This tightens the noose around the shark. When it is exhausted the light kapiak wood float will bring the shark to the surface. The shark caller will paddle up to it. With some species of shark he first spears the eyes, but the actual killing is done with a solid wooden club. The float is also used to protect the man's hands, arms and thighs as he clubs the shark. This method of snaring with the use of the propeller float is exclusive to New Ireland, Tabar and the Duke of York Islands. It is now limited to the one village — 'Lorolargun'.

The most significant aspect of the New Irelanders' association with sharks is that it is an intimate one of long standing. They have been using the rattle to lure sharks for generations. They know that sharks are attracted by underwater vibrations. They know that these carry further on smooth surfaced ocean currents (shark roads). They have an excellent knowledge of the feeding and fighting habits of sharks. The Old One names twelve species of shark and gives descriptions of their physical appearance and their habits. 'All of this knowledge,' he says, 'has been passed down since the time of Moroa, the creator of sharks and man. These men of the shark calling village have no fear of sharks and will quite readily take a dip in the sea while out shark calling. They know the shark will only come with the sound of the rattle and its associated magic and they know that the Old One has fastened all the evil sharks to the ocean's floor. So they are safe.' In the memory of the Old One there has been only one fatality. A man was dragged from his canoe into the water by a shark he had snared and loaded into the front of the canoe. The shark was a Lebeatle, the shark that fights and whose eyes must first be speared so he can no longer see. The cause of death was the fault of the man who did not obey the traditions, which say a Lebeatle must first be speared in the eyes. The death of the man who did not obey only reinforced the fact that traditional instruction must be strictly followed. Legends tell of those who did not obey, they also come to a gruesome end.

The shark callers have a superb knowledge of the sea and its creatures, especially sharks. It is sad that the shark callers and their knowledge and traditions are disappearing on the eve of the Western world's awakening awareness of sharks and their habits.

Glenys Köhnke
Port Moresby, 1974



The old man they called 'the one who knows the way of the shark', sat cross-legged on a woven mat outside the doorway of his small hut. He sat smoking the acrid *brus in a shabby old pipe. The smoke curled up and mingled with the smoke from his small cooking fire. It was true that the fame of this man had spread far beyond the customary boundaries to the north and south along the remote west coast of New Ireland. He was noted for his ability to go out after shark and never come back without a catch. His knowledge of shark magic surpassed that of all the big men governing the other family groups which made up this village of Lorolargun. As the stars blinked in the night sky and the sea grabbed at the pebbled beach, the old man began to speak of the long ago. This is his story:

'Deep in the tumbuna time when the earth was young, Moroa roamed its surface creating the rivers,

* brus: tobacco plant, native to New Ireland



MOROA MADE THE SUN AND HUNG IT IN THE SKY

mountains and trees. There were no men and no sharks in this time. Moroa made the sun and hung it in the sky. Then he made the moon to hang in its place when the sun was asleep. Moroa made the sea and filled it with fish. He made Lilom the dolphin and he made Lembe the shark. Moroa started making Lembe in the time of tulait, that time between the end of the night and the beginning of the new day.

Lembe the shark that Moroa made was not like other fish. Moroa had thought much about how he would make shark and during the time that Moroa made Lembe he thought of the belly of the shark and he thought of Man whom he had not yet made. Moroa made the belly of the shark in two parts. In the left hand side Moroa gave Lembe the shark the power to sense danger. This side of the belly told him to retreat from all unknown dangers and especially never to approach lesim, the canoe. Then Moroa made the other side of the belly of the shark. This was the side that told Lembe to approach a canoe without fear. This magic Moroa made in the two halves of the liver of the shark which he put on either side of the belly. So the right hand side of the shark's belly would tell him to go and look closely at the canoe, the man and the day-old bait fish which the man would carry. That is how Moroa made it.'

'Orait, when Moroa had finished making the inside of the belly of the shark he made the head, the eyes and the teeth. On the other side of the body Moroa put long fins and on top of the back he put two more fins, one large and one small. All these fins – the wings of the shark – Moroa made to help the shark swim through the water.'

'Then Moroa thought much about the tail of the shark. Moroa made the tail and then he held the shark at the base of the tail, between his thumb and forefinger. Even today, man can see where Moroa held the shark. The imprint of his thumb and finger can still be seen. Whenever a man catches a shark today he can see where Moroa held him when he had finished making Lembe, the first shark. Moroa held Lembe while he talked to him. He held the shark at the base of the tail and looked at what he had made. Moroa was very pleased with the shark that he had made. He knew at this time that he would make Man, so Moroa told Lembe the shark, of all the things in the sea, that he must especially beware of man in his canoe with the day-old bait fish. Moroa told shark to listen closely to his words. Then he told him not to play around in the sea like Lilom the dolphin for shark must always swim or he would not get the wind he needed for his belly. Shark answered Moroa that he understood these things, then Moroa said that there was just one thing more and he told shark that he would make Man and teach him how to catch fish and sharks. Then Moroa said that he was going to give man many tambu and customs. He warned shark to keep away from any man who had broken the tambu which Moroa would make. He told shark to listen to the left hand side of his liver which would tell him if the man in the canoe had broken the tambu which Moroa had given him. Moroa told the shark what the tambu were. He told him never to go near the canoe of a man who had made play with a woman; never to go near the canoe of a man who had eaten the foods which it was forbidden to eat if man wanted to catch shark. He could not eat the flesh of pig, lizard, prawn, crab or *kapul if he wanted to catch shark. If shark came up to a canoe of a man

* kapul: small marsupial animal of Papua New Guinea

who had slept with woman or eaten those foods, the left side of the shark's belly would tell him and he would immediately turn and swim away from such a man. Just as wild pig, lizard, prawn, crab, and kapul always run from the sight of man, Moroa told shark to copy the action of those animals and swim away from a man that had eaten of their flesh. So Moroa explained that he must not go up to the canoe of a man that had broken Moroa's tambu. Moroa spoke much of man and the tambu and told the shark that he could approach the canoe of a man who had obeyed them. The right hand side of the belly of the shark would tell him that this was a good man who had not made play with a woman or eaten the forbidden foods before he pulled out to sea in his canoe. Shark could go close to the canoe of such a man.'

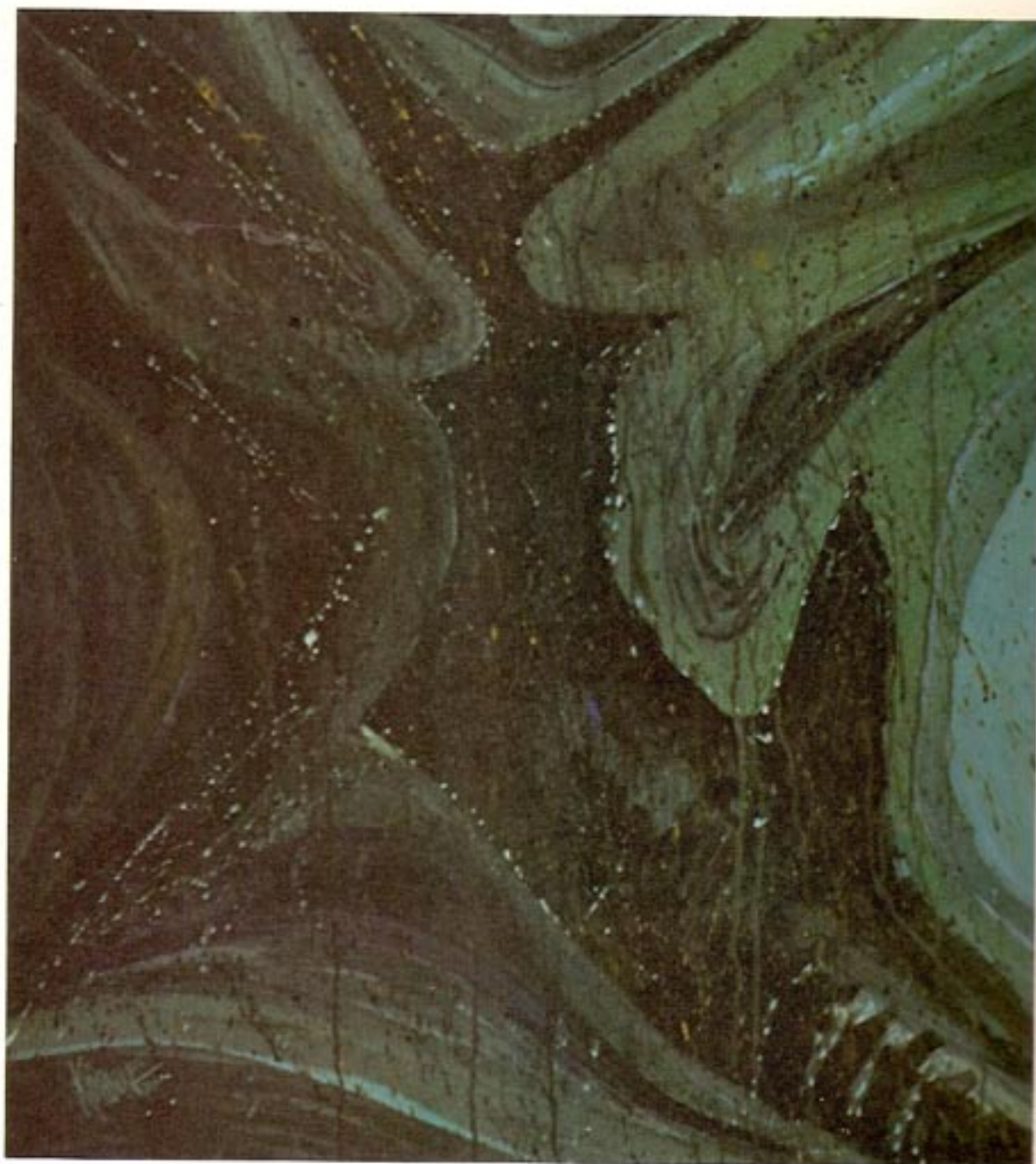
'Now, at this time Moroa still held Lembe the shark between his thumb and forefinger at the base of the tail. Shark was tired of listening to Moroa's words but the creator had not finished giving his instructions. Moroa had not told Lembe the shark about the day-old bait fish which man would use to lure him to the side of the canoe. The shark did not want to listen so he jumped out of Moroa's hand and into the sea. Moroa was so angry at the shark who did not want to listen to his warning that he bent and picked up a handful of white sand and threw it at the shark. The sand stuck to his wet skin for the rest of time. When Moroa had first made the shark he had made his skin as smooth as pearl shell but the sand that Moroa threw in his anger, stuck and that is why all sharks have a rough skin today. Moroa threw his hands in the air and yelled after the disappearing shark that he was truly stupid. For now that his skin was rough man would be able to snare him in a specially prepared noose which Moroa would show man how to make. Shark's new rough skin would prevent him from wriggling free of the cane noose. The shark did not look back to see his angry creator standing on the beach or hear his words about the noose which would snare him or the day-old bait fish that would lure him to the canoe. Shark had disappeared into the deep sea.'

'Then in this time, when Moroa had finished making the shark, he made Man and he taught him how to catch fish and especially Moroa taught him how to catch shark. Moroa told man when he wanted to catch shark that it was forbidden to make play with a woman or to eat the flesh of pig, lizard, prawn, crab or kapul. Moroa explained that shark knew these things were forbidden to man and the left side of his belly would warn him and shark would never approach the canoe of a man who had broken the tambu. Moroa told man if he wanted to catch shark, the best of all the sea creatures to eat, he must follow Moroa's words. He should not wander around the village if he wanted to catch shark but sit down quietly in his own enclosure and think of all he must do when he pulled his canoe far out to sea. Moroa told man about the two sides of the shark's belly. The one side would tell shark that man had not obeyed the tambu and the other side would tell him that the man had obeyed, and shark would approach the canoe and go close to smell the day-old bait fish that would trick shark into coming close to the canoe.'

'So in that time of the first tumbuna Moroa told man how to make kasaman, the float, and attach the noose to catch shark; and Moroa told man how to make larung, the rattle from half coconut shells threaded on a cane hoop; and showed him how to rattle them in the water beside the canoe



MOROA CREATOR OF SHARKS AND MEN



so shark would come to man. All the things Moroa told those ancestors of the tumbuna time are followed today. That is how there came to be men and sharks and that is why we men of Lorolargun still go and catch the shark who swim in Moroa's sea.'

The old man rose slowly complaining of his stiff back. He took a piece of coconut husk from the fire and relit his pipe. Shrouded in his smoky dream he began to tell of the coming of the shark callers.

'A tumbuna had spoken of the distant nearly forgotten homeland far away over the horizon called Paru. Here men had carried on the tradition of catching sharks since the beginning of time. No one knows the name of the ancestor who lay on the shores of that unknown land and dreamt the magic to lure the shark to his canoe. No one knows what mysterious happening caused those men of the sea to leave their legendary homeland and travel towards the setting of the sun. Tales survive of that long journey — tales that the men snared and ate sharks raw, and drank the blood to stay alive. Then on they continued, always facing the setting sun until they reached the *Tabar Islands. Here they settled because they had journeyed far enough. It was the first place they had rested since they had left their homeland. They bred pigs to feed the sharks, in order to encourage the sharks to swim near Tabar.'

The old man uncrossed his legs and took another ember from the dwindling fire to relight his pipe. The smoke from a thousand such fires had burnt the rafters black and the strange smell of dried sago roof mingled with the smoke inside the small hut. Once again with the pipe in his mouth and the smoke almost hiding him from view, the Old One told of the eventual break-up of the Tabar community; of how branches of it moved out to settle on the mainland of New Ireland.

'The small, dark men of the mainland did not welcome the coming of the shark callers and many battles took place. They were not men who were easily afraid, those tumbuna who lured Lembe the shark to the side of their canoes, but they moved from the original landing place Rouen to the more northerly Lavongarurun, which means "beside the stream". Which stream we do not know today, the name is spoken only in legend.'

'Again they moved north and settled at **Paruai named after their legendary homeland. This village still exists. It lies on the east coast of New Ireland beside the sea. The days when men caught sharks are still remembered. The people of Paruai married with those who were there before them and went out to all corners of New Ireland taking with them the tradition, secrets and magic of shark calling. They went as far north as Lavongai, "that faraway place". They went north, south and west.'

'They came and settled here in Lorolargun and married into the family of the giant pig Lungalunga and sharks have been lured and snared in Lorolargun since that time.'

* *Tabar: this word means 'my father' in a language now almost forgotten*

** *Paruai: from Paru*



In Lorolargun when the sun stands overhead, men and children and pigs and dogs and chickens pick out a cool, shady spot in which to hide from the merciless heat. Only the women, whose task it is to provide meals for their families work on in the gardens, high up in the hills behind the village. The old man sat on the beach in the shade of the huge *lawatbulut tree. Those trees, in their knotted splendour, have played sentinel to the shark callers' enclosures since the beginning of time. Their large branches like the muscle-bound arms of a wrestler stretch out over the beach toward the water, their waxy leaves casting ample shade on the pebble beach below. The old man in lazy distraction was gathering small handfuls of discarded lawatbulut nuts and throwing them into a smouldering fire. The crackling explosions they made in the fire did not disturb three or four

* *lawatbulut*: a large, old, magic beach tree

figures sleeping on the beach. They lay huddled together in the shade of the tree.

Tarangau, the sea bird, flying in large circles above, distracted the old man's attention from the fire and he began again to speak. 'The Tarangau or Larangam is the bird totem of my mother. She belonged to the clan of the small bird and my father belonged to the clan of the large bird maningulai the eagle, called Lamalon by my people. It is forbidden by tradition for Tarangau people to marry Tarangau, or Maningulai to marry Maningulai. The children in the family always belong to the clan of the mother and when they marry, must marry a man or woman from the other clan. This is a very strong custom which has been followed since the time of Moroa except for once long ago when it was broken.'

'In this time of the ancestors, long before the time of anybody now living in Lorolargun, there lived a strong young shark caller of the Larumbi family called Kambaron. He belonged to the big bird clan of Maningulai. The woman who carried him was of the clan of Maningulai so Kambaron followed his mother. At the same time there lived a beautiful young girl from the Banos family, called Aramun. She belonged to the big bird clan of Maningulai, as did Kambaron, because her mother was a Maningulai. Both Kambaron and Aramun understood the strong custom which Moroa had given to the first tumbuna: two people belonging to the same bird clan were not allowed to marry. This was a strong custom the ancestors followed and it is still followed today.'

'So in this time before, Kambaron and Aramun knew of this strong custom but they did not want to observe the tambu given to the tumbuna by Moroa. One day the couple walked up into the big bush behind Lorolargun and hid under the shade of a *kapiak. They hid from the eyes of all in the village. They made play, they broke the custom of their village.'

'Maningulai, the big bird of their clan, was not tricked by the couple. Maningulai the eagle, sees everything that the men, women and children of his clan do. Maningulai went and told all the big men of the Larumbi family and of the Banos family that he had seen Kambaron and Aramun making love and breaking the tambu in the big bush behind Lorolargun. So the big men of both families were very cross with the two young people who broke the custom of the village. They went up into the bush to find Kambaron and Aramun but they did not find them. The big men whose bellies were hot with anger returned to the village to wait for the man and woman.'

'When the sun went down they came back and did not know that the old men of their families in the clan of Maningulai knew what they had done and awaited them. The old men grabbed Aramun and locked her away and they tried to catch Kambaron but the strong young man was too quick for them. They threw spears at him and finally caught him. Early next morning they killed the young girl Aramun. They were ready to kill Kambaron but Kambaron was a strong young man, a man who caught sharks. He got up on a coconut stump and yelled out to the men gathered around him. He yelled that he would eat the excrement of any one strong enough to try to kill him. Not one man was strong enough. Kambaron stood on the coconut stump and nobody was brave enough to fight him. Kambaron had won, but the custom was also strong, so the old men of Larumbi took an old

* kapiak: breadfruit tree



woman, mother of Kambaron a woman of Maningulai and they killed her.'

'Maningulai was very angry at Kambaron who had broken the strong custom of Lorolargun. That was long ago in the time of *tudak. Now we do not kill those who break this law. But the power of the custom is strong and not many attempt to break it. If they should do so they must pay for their wrong by giving of their pigs for a feast.'

He paused awhile before he went on. 'When the shark callers pull ashore after a successful day of catching, they sing together the songs of the ancestors, the songs called Lesiliman. There are many Lesiliman which tell the stories of the past. Sometimes when each canoe is weighed down by carrying a shark, the men pulling back towards Lorolargun will remember Kambaron and Aramun.

Then they will sing the Lesiliman of those two who broke the custom. The song will be accompanied by the shaking of larung, the rattle in the water beside the canoes. The sound will drift across the sea to the ears of those in the village and the women will run to the beach to await the return of the men with the sharks. The women love the sound of the Lesiliman of the shark callers.'

The old man picked up his canoe-shaped basket and rummaged amongst the contents for a **betel nut. Everybody in the village carried one of these baskets of various shapes and sizes. When the old one is worn out and discarded a new one is quickly plaited from the stem and fronds of the coconut palm. Some baskets were woven so they could be worn on a man's upper arm. Others were carried in the hand.

'Before, in the time of much evil magic, no man let another touch his basket. It was tambu to ask for a betel nut from the basket of anyone other than wife or husband. In those days men made poison against one another and if they could get something from a basket they could work evil magic on it. That magic was strong – †nawanem – strong enough to kill a man. Now men ask one another for betel nut from each others baskets and it is given. It is only forbidden to give betel nut, tobacco, matches from the basket or fire from the hut before a man goes out shark calling. During this time he is not to give anything, nor to accept betel nut, tobacco, matches or fire from another hand. The shark would know and not approach the canoe.' He had found a betel nut in the bottom of his basket and he cracked its hard green outer husk between his teeth. Those teeth, broken and stained from many years of chewing, were still strong enough to crack the husk in half and extract the small round nut from inside. He chewed the nut into small pieces. It was not this that would make the mouth turn red, nor have an intoxicating effect, but the addition of ††kabang, the white powdery lime, with dakka, the pepper stem of a native plant, all chewed together which produced the effects of euphoria. The white kabang powder is made from a seaweed collected on the reefs at low tide. It is left to dry on the beach and then it is wrapped in banana leaves and baked in the earth ovens. Then it is rubbed into a fine light chalky powder called kabang. If a man has no stem

* tudak: pidgin english, in this context, the distant past between the Tumbuna time and the present

** betel nut: Areca (nut)

† nawanem: of course (pidgin)

†† kabang: burnt coral lime (g. halimeda)



of dakka plant then he uses the mature leaves rolled up like a cigarette. The Old One pulled a small pouch from his basket. The pouch was made from the woven fronds of the sago palm. It was small and neat and fitted into the palm of his hand. The top of the pouch folded over and was kept in place by a piece of string which the old man untied. He shook the white powdery contents to the opening of the pouch. He moistened the end of the dakka stem and dipped it into the kabang. Then he bit off a portion of the dakka covered in the powdery lime and chewed them in with the betel nut. As he chewed the betel nut, dakka and kabang, they mixed into a blood red paste small particles of which occasionally escaped from his mouth. He wiped his chin with the back of his hand and grinned a large red smile. Some teeth were missing and the juice swam around the black stumps of the remaining teeth.

The betel nut trees were ever present, growing between the coconut palms with shorter, more slender trunks, their dark green fronds spikier than the palms. It was as though some over-industrious giant had trimmed them off with great sweeps of his *sarif. Small nuts grew in clusters at the head of each palm.

When the Old One wanted more nuts to chew he would send one of the small children up the palm to pick a couple, or he would take a long dried-out stick of bamboo and knock a few nuts down. The old man pursed his lips and spat some fluid onto the ground beside him. The rich red juice was like spilt shark blood on the grey pebbles of the beach. 'Ah, **buai is good! Wiski bilong kanaka! The old men who have chewed buai for many years do not like to be without it. Old Logwos son of the carver of paddles is a great chewer of betel nut. If he hasn't got any, he sits on the beach like an angry tarangau calling out to everyone who passes by to bring him buai.' He folded his sago pouch together and fastened the string. 'Kabang is a good paint too,' he said. 'The same coral seaweed is gathered from the reef and dried in the sun. Then it is mixed with sea water and rubbed onto the canoes. When dry, it will leave the canoes coated with white particles. This stops the canoes from drinking in the sea water when men pull in them far out to sea.' He stopped speaking, took another bite of dakka and gazed trance-like out to sea. He sat absorbed until he had chewed the last of his betel nut. The eyes were glazed. He began to speak again: 'Lawatbulut is full of magic,' he said, without taking his eyes from the horizon. The giant tree looked as if it held many secrets locked fast in its twisted trunk. 'Larangam-lawatbulut is a strong magic to help men catch sharks. It is the magic of tarangau the sea bird and it is a tightly guarded secret. If a Maningulai person were to hear the magic songs of Tarangau the power would be lost.' He cast his eyes quickly up and down the beach and noted that the only people in the vicinity were those of Tarangau. Then he began to chant. His voice was faint and high pitched. Gradually it became louder and louder as he sang the magic song of Tarangau, the sea bird. In his song was the sound of the sea and all the wild screeching of birds. He broke off. He shook his shoulders in the manner of a bird. Then he began to explain: 'A tarangau always returns to the lawatbulut after a hard day of searching the open sea for fish. If

* sarif: tempered steel used to cut tall grass

** buai: pidgin english for the betel nut



THE SHARK CALLERS HUT

he is unsuccessful in filling his small belly he flies back home and sits on a top branch and ruffles his feathers. After the tarangau has sat in the lawatbulut tree and shaken his body and ruffled his feathers he will be successful in catching fish. It is his own magic. So those men who catch sharks in the clan of Tarangau know the magic of their bird totem. If a man goes shark calling and doesn't catch any shark he will come to me. This old tarangau knows how to make the next catch successful! He lowered his voice. 'This old man climbs into the branches of the lawatbulut tree and sits like a tarangau and shakes his shoulders. He sings the song of tarangau the sea bird and loosens the bind which prevented the man from catching a shark. Only this old man from the house of Langle, clan of Tarangau, knows the magic song which he sings up in the lawatbulut.' He faded into the strange bird song again, his voice lifting and falling like the small waves on the shore. He sang in the soft musical language of the shark callers repeating from time to time 'larangam, larangam, sea bird, sea bird.'

Then suddenly he was silent. Perhaps he had told too much of the secret magic song which his line of ancestors had passed from uncle to nephew for generations. His eyes were fixed on the sea. A fish jumped out of the water and softly he named it. He could name all the fish and all the birds and he knew the names for every different kind of shark which men brought ashore. If there was ever a discussion as to the kind of shark that had been caught it was always the Old One who had the final word. He was the village authority on the sea and its creatures and on sharks and the magic men used to catch them. No one surpassed him.

He began to search in his basket for his pipe. It was home made, of bamboo. From a plaited strip of brus he pulled enough to fill the bowl and rubbed the plug of tobacco in the palm of his left hand with his right. The small crooked fingers were amazingly deft. He struck a match. Before he could light up a gust of wind had blown the flame out. 'Ah, the wind is turning from lavat, the season of winds, to lamat, the season of the dry reef,' he said. 'Soon it will be the time for men to catch sharks.'



A gentle breeze blew from the south-east and heralded the beginning of lamat. In its indecision whether or not to change from lavat to lamat the breeze sent the fronds of the coconut palms into a frenzied dance. Young children were sitting on the beach with the old man. He was making them small windmills. Firstly he removed the stem from a single frond of a coconut palm and from this single frond he cleverly folded a four-bladed windmill. Then he took the stem and made a loose knot at the slender end. He poked a hole through the solid centre of the windmill and threaded it onto the stem. The little four-bladed windmill sat against the knot in the stem and whirled around and around. He made these with amazing speed and it was not long before every child sitting on the beach had one. The children had to face their windmills directly into the prevailing wind for them to spin most successfully. So, by altering the angle which they held the windmill to the breeze the children could inform the old man who was winning the argument between lavat and lamat.

After some days the wind decided to blow from *lamat*, a south-easterly, and the sea was calm. The tide fell low and returned much further up the pebble beach than it had in the previous season. As he sat and made windmills the 'Old One who knows the way of the shark' spoke of the seasons. 'Unlike quiet *lamat*, *lavat*, the north-westerly, is an angry man whose temper is sudden and violent. His morning seas can be calm and inviting, but the shark caller who trusts him might find himself tossing on a wild sea in the afternoon. Only those old shark callers who know the ways of *lavat* go shark calling during the months when his north-westerly winds blow. Even they have been trapped by sudden falls of heavy rain. Ah yes, the rain comes down and drags heavy black clouds with it. These cover the land and the sea. It becomes dark and cold and before the man has time to pull for shore the sea can be whipped into anger and the land can be completely hidden in black cloud so that the man at sea does not know where his village lies. He is surrounded by waves and cloud and his canoe fills with salt water from the sea and fresh water from the sky. His canoe dances like *tambaran* **Lesombes* this way and that.'

'This old *tarangau* has been caught in so many rough seas that he just sits in his canoe and bails the water out with the *pandanus* leaf bail and drifts until the storm has passed. Then he may go ashore in some village way to the south of *Lorolargun* where he will sleep in the house of a *Tarangau* at that place and return home when the storm has passed. Some men lie in the bottom of the canoe so they cannot see the waves. Others whose bellies turn and are filled with fear blow an urgent cry for rescue on *taur*, the conch shell which shark callers always carry. The *taur* has a small hole in the narrow end and the cry which it makes when men blow on it travels far over the sea. *Taur* has many cries.' He sent a small child off to his enclosure to fetch the *taur* from where it hung next to the doorway of his hut. When it was brought he removed the woven coconut frond cover from the shell and put his top lip over the little hole. He blew a long, deep note, followed by two shorter blasts. 'Ah, *taur* cries *puuuuuu-tesim, puuuuuu-tesim*, which means "come canoe, come, canoe!" Those who hear the cry of the *taur* in the village know that a man is in trouble at sea. The signal *puuuuuu-tesim* is not only used in the season of *lavat* when man is lost at sea, it is used whenever man is in trouble. If a young shark caller cannot club the shark he has caught he will call on his *taur* and someone will pull out to help him. Sometimes *Lembe* the shark will become angry with the man in the canoe with the bait fish and he will lash the canoe with his tail. Or perhaps, after he is caught in *kasaman*, the float he will swim under the canoe and rip off *saman*, the outrigger in his frenzied fight.'

There was a click of his tongue. 'Ah, all these things have happened. Then the man in trouble will call on his *taur* and those hearing his cry in the village will take supplies of food and *kulau*, the green coconut, and pull out to help him. Many things have happened in the season of *lavat*, many things. Once long ago, a man, a shark caller from the *Tabar* Islands was carried far, far away to the islands over there.' He pointed in the direction of the *Solomon* Islands where it is known that a man once drifted in a small outrigger canoe.**

* *Lesombes*: a spirit of the bush

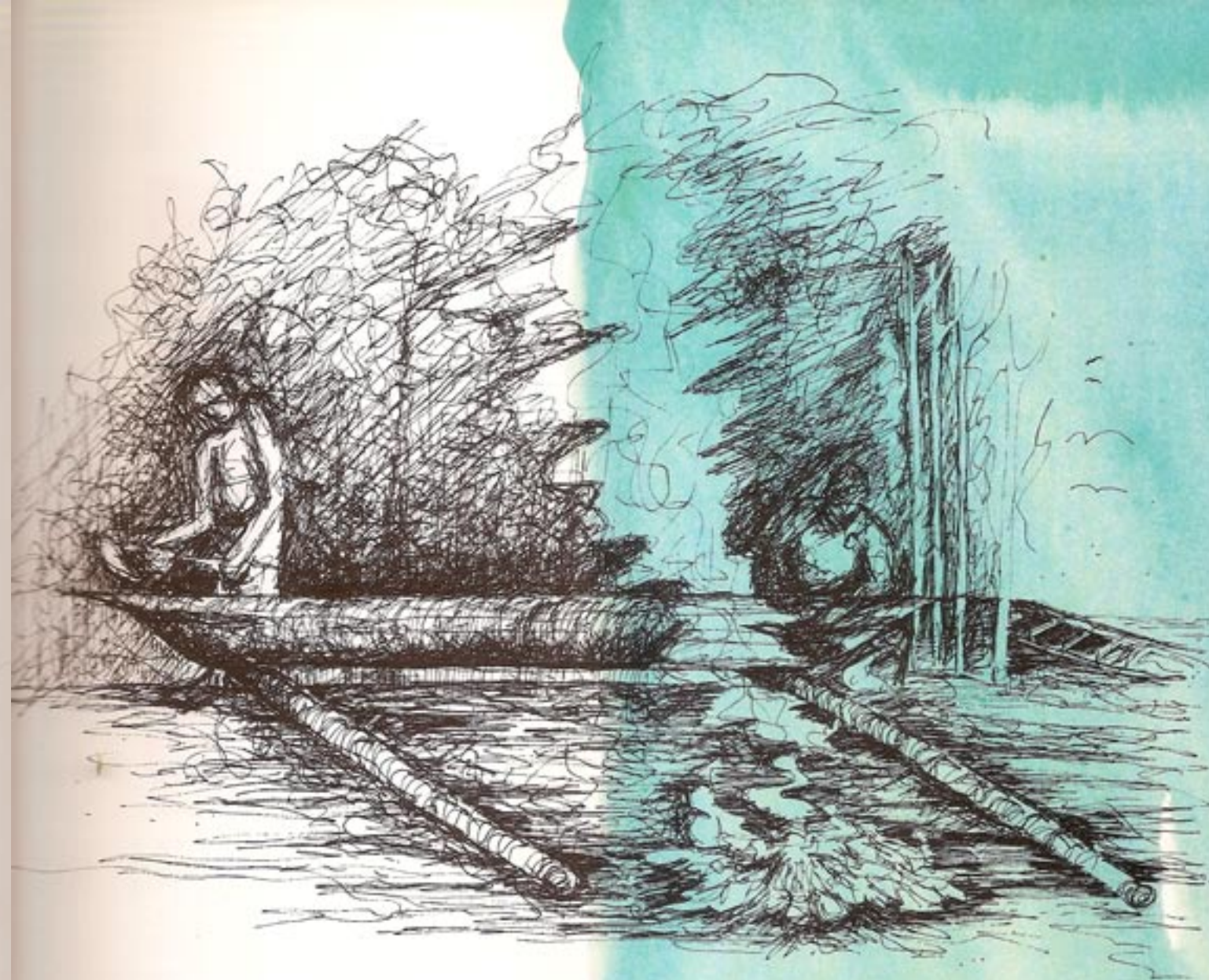
** *Plattern*, G.



Sometimes the cry of taur is not heard. This old man remembers long ago when a man cried for help and was not heard. The man had caught a shark. A shark of the family of Lebeatle. Those Lebeatle really fight. They are sharks that close their eyes and pull their heads back when a man goes to club them. It is always taught to a young shark caller that he must first spear a Lebeatle shark in the eyes before he clubs him, but that young man didn't spear the eyes of that shark so when he had clubbed him and pulled him into the canoe the shark was not yet dead and its eyes saw the man. That Lebeatle grabbed the man and they both fell into the water. The man fought the shark which was still held by the cane noose attached to kasaman. The man's arm was bitten off, but he struggled free and tried to call for help. Ah, it came too late. The man's brother went to his rescue, took him ashore in his canoe. But the man without an arm died on the beach. That Lebeatle was killed and brought ashore. His body was cut and scattered along the beach for the dogs, pigs and birds to eat. That was long ago when this old man was a boy. No man in Lorolargun has been killed by a shark since that time. Men must follow the customs which Moroa gave the ancestors.' He folded another frond into a windmill for a small child and continued: 'There are strong customs concerning the seasons of lavat and lamat. A man sitting in his canoe paddling out to sea always has saman, the outrigger on the left side. In the season of lavat when he reaches the deep sea and begins to shake larung, the rattle to call the shark he must always keep the nose of the canoe pointed away from land. As he drifts along and shakes larung he must occasionally use the paddle to turn the nose of the canoe away from land. In this way he will catch the shark on the right hand side, the side without saman, the outrigger which will be facing the north west, the direction of the wind from lavat. During lamat, the season of the south-easterly, the man in his canoe drifts along the shark roads of the ocean. He must keep the nose of his canoe pointed towards land. In this way the right hand side of the canoe, the side on which he always catches shark is facing the south-east, the direction from which lamat is blowing. This is a strong custom which all shark callers know. It must never be broken. A man breaking this custom will not catch shark. Lamat is the time to catch sharks, the time of the dry reef, of light rain and flat seas when the sound of larung carries great distances. The sharks are attracted from far off by the powerful vibrations and the magic of the shark-calling songs. It is in this season of lamat that many canoes will pull together and everyone catches a shark. Some men catch two. That man there, the maker of rain magic is a good shark caller and he often catches more than one shark on one day in this season. When everybody is ready to pull ashore the men start singing the Lesiliman. They may sing of Aramun and Kambaron or of any of the songs that tell the stories of the shark callers of long ago. The men's voices are accompanied by the shaking of larung. They sing all the way home until they reach Lima.' He pointed a crooked index finger to a nearby headland jutting out into a shallow reef. 'Men must always blow their signal of success on the taur as they round Lima. The deep throaty blasts signal to the whole village that man has caught shark and people flock to the beach from their houses and gardens to see the catch. All this is custom from the tumbuna time. Men who disobey the customs evoke the anger of the ancestors or a devil shark, nawanem,



something always happens to such a man. He would know if the shark broke the canoe with a lash of the tail that he had disobeyed the customs and angered the spirits, so that is why all customs are strictly observed. It is very important that sharks brought ashore in *lamat* be placed on the beach facing away from the water's edge. The dorsal fin is cut off and the shark must be turned over by the fin on the right side of the body and rolled over to the left side. This rolls the shark over with the force of the wind from *lamat*. The shark rolls over towards the north-west as if *lamat* itself had blown it over with a big gust from the south-east. During *lavat*, sharks are grabbed by the left wing and rolled the opposite way with the direction of the wind, from *lavat*.' The old man climbed to his feet and spoke to the now awakened figures on the beach: 'Mi go nau'. 'Orait, yu go.' they told him. They turned and chattered amongst themselves. Custom had again been honoured. The old man stated his purpose, the others gave their blessing. Perhaps this custom originated in the time of *tudak* when life outside the village was inhabited by enemy clans and evil spirits. A man on his way would be asked where he was going. Should he get into difficulty his fellow men would immediately know where to find him. Whether this be the reason or not, the custom has remained and the village like a close knit family guards every member against the unknown.



From the moment when the sun appeared over the top of the mountain range which guarded Lorolargun village from the rear, life stirred within the small huts. Fires sent curls of bluish smoke filtering up through thatched roofs to play with the broad spears of sunlight. By the time the sun had hoisted himself over the mountain, the day's activity was in full swing. Women busily swept dust from the wooden floors of the family houses with brooms made from bundles of coconut stems. After they had cleaned their houses they hung sleeping mats in the sun on cane clothes-lines stretched between coconut palms. Then they gathered handfuls of multi-coloured leaves which had fallen and littered the ground during the night. They swept them into neat piles which were later scattered again by the wind. Chickens began their endless picking amongst the grey pebbles for seeds and morsels of food. Children set out to find one another and begin another day of play. The hard round nuts from the *lawatbulut* tree were again used for complicated games of marbles where the rules changed with each player. Nobody ever lost this game for when he had lost all the marbles the young child had only to go to the beach and collect another handful of

discarded lawatbulut nuts and he could again join the game. When the game had ended the children would run to the beach and plunge into the warm salty sea where games of chasing the waves involved them for hours.

The old man was always up with the sun. He lit a small cooking fire outside his hut and boiled the water for his sugar tea or roasted a reef fish which he had caught the night before. The Old One sat sipping his steaming brew of very weak tea and he spoke of men and sharks. 'No young man is considered a true man until he has caught his first shark. Then the time of youth, the time of not knowing is over and he is a man. Whether or not he continues to catch shark is up to him. Some men like Siringen, the man who knows about gardening, catch their first shark, become men and don't go shark calling again. Siringen is a good gardener, no one grows bananas like he does. He is a good husband and a father of eight children. Others catch their first shark and continue to catch sharks all their lives like this old tarangau. No one has caught as many sharks as this Old One. No one is as old as I am or knows the magic of shark calling like I do . . . But the women,' he added with a slight smile ' . . . that woman who is dead who was the wife of this old tarangau — she was a good woman, but she could not understand why her husband slept often in his shark hut and why he went out time and time again to the deep sea in search of shark. Women cannot understand the belly of a man who must go shark calling. They have never been out. Shark calling is tambu to women. Some women become cross with their husbands who shark call all the time and who neglect to help in the gardens. They tease their men and say their men are "old sea birds" whose eyes continually search the sea for shark. But they are happy to *mumu the shark in the earth oven and happy to eat its sweet white meat. Ah, yes, then the shark caller's wife is silent.' He chuckled to himself and his shoulders shook. He remembered how his own wife scolded him for always going out to sea. When he had finished his cup of sugar tea he took his taur down the few yards to the shore and filled it with sea water. He turned it so the water was contained in the hollow and did not escape through the hole in the end of the shell. Then he returned to above the high water mark where his canoe rested on two logs on the beach. He started to rub the canoe with a mixture of soft white coral and sea water in the shell. He was so absorbed in his task that it was some time before he began to speak again. When he did, he spoke with pride. 'How many sharks has this canoe seen? Plenty, plenty,' he answered his own question. 'How many times has it taken the Old One out and brought him home again? Ah yes, many times, many times,' he said rubbing his hand along the lamtu which supported the outrigger. Lesim, the canoe is the well guarded possession of every shark caller. Its design was handed to those tumbuna long ago by Moroa himself.

'From the moment the tall kapiak tree is cut down in the bush behind Lorolargun until the canoe is completed, men follow the instructions of Moroa. The kapiak tree is cut down and is roughly shaped and hollowed until it is light enough for a couple of men to carry it to the beach. Most of the finishing work is done outside the enclosure of the man who is making the canoe. Some do not know how to fasten the canoe with aman, the strong rope of the bush and if they do not know they

* *mumu: earth oven cooking*



must ask me. My ancestors skilled me in this art and only I know how the rope must be twisted and the knots securely fastened.' His voice was authoritative. He was not boasting when he spoke of his abilities. What he said was true, everyone in the village knew and recognised this authority. He knew it himself and was proud of what he had learnt through inheritance from his uncle.

'If the canoe is not properly constructed then it will not withstand the battles with the shark. Man could die if his canoe breaks up in the deep sea. We people of Lorolargun live all our lives by the sea but we cannot swim long distances. A man wrecked at sea must find a broken piece of the body of the canoe or a piece of saman and float ashore with it.' He picked up another handful of soft coral and dipped it into the sea water in the shell. With a slow motion, back and forth, he rubbed the canoe. Tiny lime fragments of the coral stuck to the wooden surface. 'When lesim is painted with the coral and left to dry in the sun its skin turns a dazzling white. Yes. It looks smart and it won't drink in the sea water so quickly.' he said. 'The tumbuna hollowed their canoes with stone adzes attached to wooden handles. The work was slow and the stone adzes had to be continually sharpened. Ah, that was hard work cutting a canoe with the adze but now we use tomahawks and bush knives and the work goes much faster. There are always plenty of helpers to cut lesim. Sometimes ten men might be working on the hollowing out of it. Others will wander off to the big bush carrying large sharp knives and come back hours later with forked branches. These must be strong and straight for the saman supports. There are four of these lamtu to every canoe. The bark is stripped off and the lamtu are stuck upright into the beach to dry out in the sun. When many men are cutting canoes, the lamtu stand like birds along the beach stretching from one end of the village to the other. The saman – the piece of the outrigger which skims the surface of the water – is the only part of the canoe which is not rubbed down with the coral paint. The saman is burnt until the whole outer layer of it is pure charcoal. This keeps the saman light and watertight for some time. A canoe may change its saman a couple of times during its long life.'

The Old One had finished rubbing the canoe down. He turned and sat on the beach and pulled his old pipe from the basket and complained that he had no tobacco. With the empty pipe sticking out of his mouth he continued to speak of canoes. 'Young men do not know how lesim must be cut and fastened so they come and learn from me. The old man Logwos, the son of the carver of paddles, used to carve beautiful canoes, but time has fastened his eyes and now he sits on the beach like the angry tarangau he says he is and tells the young boys that they will never make canoes like he made. Yes, old Logwos is right. Those canoes he made were like the canoes of the ancestors. The young men today fill their heads with thoughts of women or of working money far away on the plantations and do not cut lesim with pride.'

'When the canoe has been hollowed out, its insides and outsides are sanded down with oval-shaped coral. Holes are bored through the hull in four equally spaced places along both sides of the canoe. The lamtu are laid on top at these points and lashed on to the top of the canoe with aman. Aman is a strong and flexible rope. It grows along the branches of other trees and has finger-shaped leaves. These are removed before the ropemaker splits the vine into three strands and takes out the inner



SHARK MEMORY
(Logwos the son of the carver of paddles)

core. Aman is split and smoke dried for many moons in the shark caller's hut.'

'It must be bound and fastened as the tumbuna have taught,' he said. 'The rope must be passed four times over the top of lamtu and through the hole bored in the wall of lesim, then four times back the other way. Then it must be fastened off with three knots, like so.' He had found a piece of aman in his basket and had wound it around his fingers and was tying it off with three slipknots.

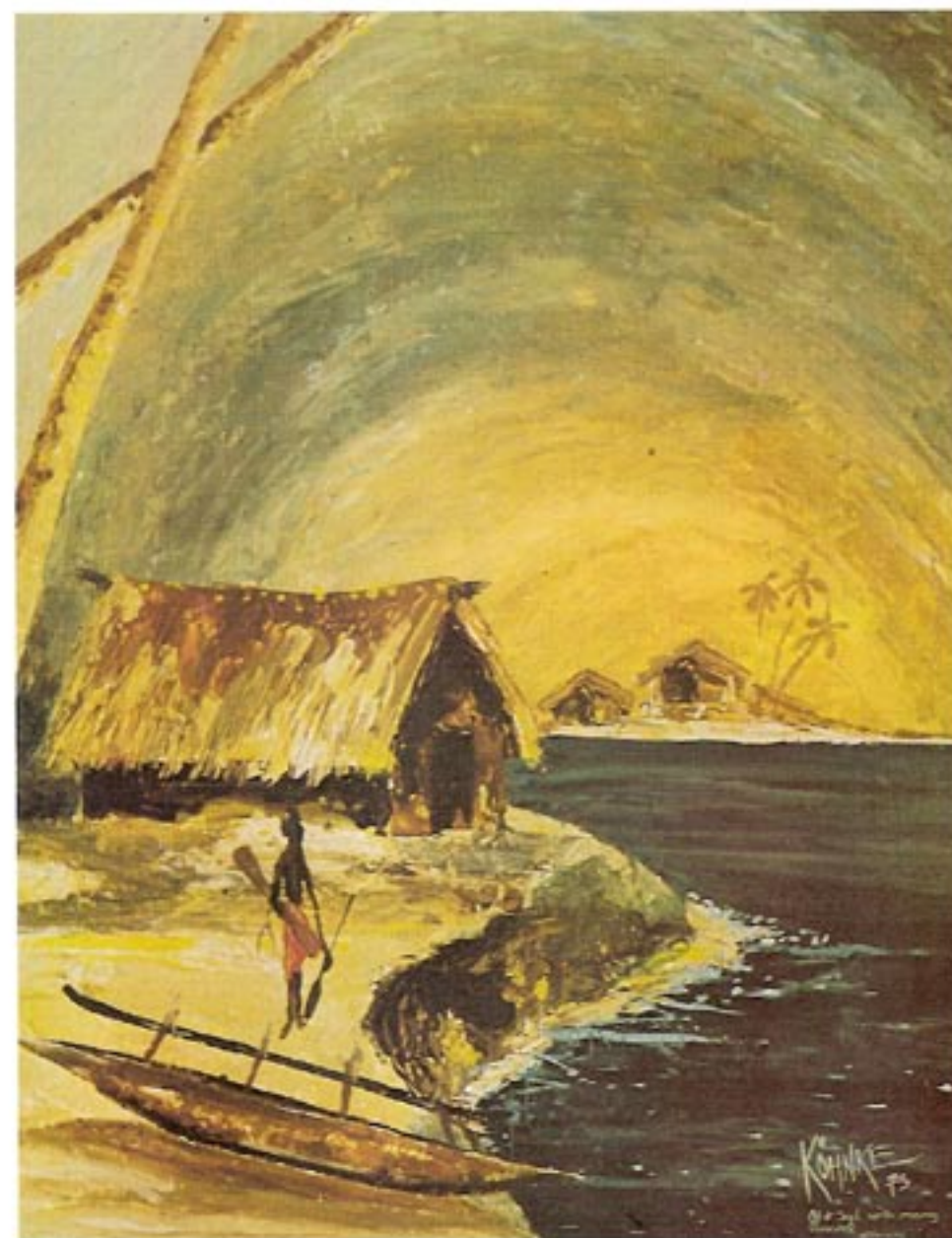
'When aman has to be joined, it must be joined like this.' He made a reef knot. Then he made a granny knot. 'That is a crooked knot, a tarangau married to a tarangau. It is not strong and it will break,' he said. 'It must never be used.' He tied a double slipknot with two pieces of rope and told the story of the young boy who long ago had invented the knot.

'His parents had died and he was looked after by his *waspapa . . .' All the time he spoke his fingers moved making knots with the rope. 'The canoe must be properly fastened,' he stressed. 'The saman is attached to the lamtu with supporting sticks which must be lashed on to the saman and bound properly to the lamtu. The lashings must be firm and strong. A canoe which cries and groans when waves hit its sides is not properly fastened. It cries to tell its owner that it is not a safe canoe. When a new canoe is completed and all the shavings of wood from its belly have been burnt in small fires on the beach, it is time for rejoicing. On the day of completion all those who have helped will sit together on the beach and eat a feast of hot **kaukau and taro after which the men will chew betel nut and smoke and discuss the work and the successful completion of another shark calling canoe.' He called out to the passing figure of the rainmaker for some tobacco. As he filled his pipe and lit it, he spoke of canoe magic. 'Women must never be carried on shark callers' canoes. The shark would know immediately that a woman has been on board and would turn and swim away from such a canoe. The shark can smell the blood of a woman.' He added in a low voice: 'If the canoe is to be successfully used in shark calling after a woman has sat in it or touched it, strong magic must be made. The shark caller will always wonder when a shark shies away from his canoe whether the smell of woman lingers yet. This is a strong tambu that women must observe. There are family canoes which women may use but never the canoe of a shark caller. Ah, tambu tru!' He spat tobacco juice with emphasis on to the beach beside him and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

'Magic must be made for new canoes. That canoe is full of magic,' he said, pointing to his own one-man craft. 'A newly made canoe must be taken out by an experienced shark caller and one who knows the canoe magic. When this Old One takes the new canoe out on its first voyage he will paddle only on the right hand side, steering as he does with the twist of the paddle. The right side of the belly of the shark tells him to come and investigate the bait fish so a new canoe is always initiated by paddling to catch the first shark in it on the right hand side. By paddling only on the right hand side of the canoe, the right hand side of the belly of the shark will always tell him that this is a good canoe. Lembe the shark will always approach a canoe that has been initiated in this

* waspapa: foster father

** kaukau: sweet potato



way. The Old One must catch a shark in the new canoe. The blood will be spilt over the newly carved wood and will be soaked up. The canoe can be taken out a second and successive times by its rightful owner because it is then full of magic and power to attract sharks.'

The Old One knocked the residue of tobacco out of his pipe and returned it to his basket. He picked up his taur and emptied the chalky mixture of coral and sea water onto the pebbles. He shook the last moisture from the shell and put his lips to the coin-sized hole in the narrow end and blew a loud blast that echoed from the hills and the sea.

'The taur is found in the sea. It was put there long ago by Trausel the turtle after a long battle with Pilai the lizard,' he said. He picked up his basket, wrapped the taur in the woven cover he also used as a hat when he went out calling; with a glance at his canoe, now a brilliant white, he returned to his own enclosure.

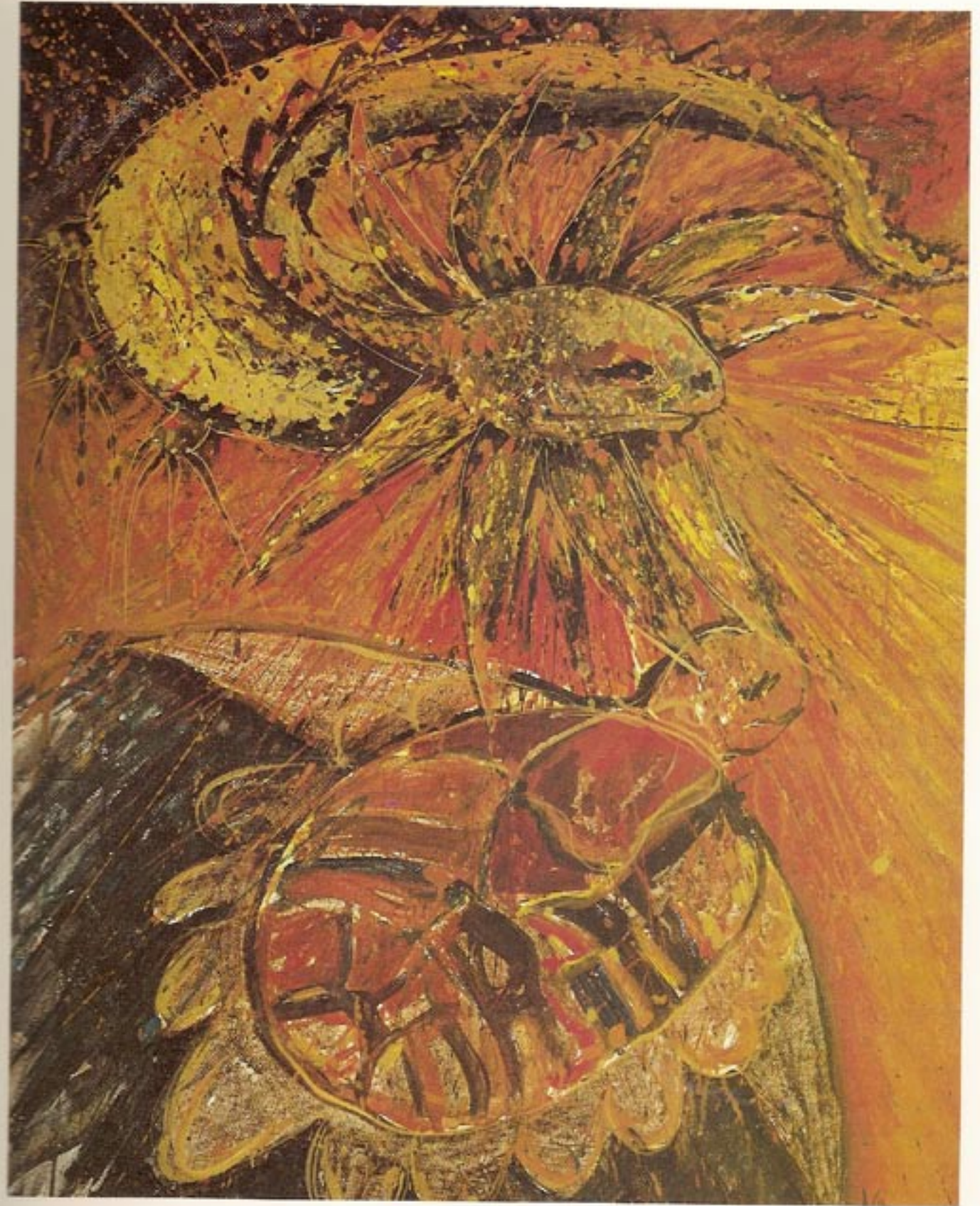


As the sun bathed the village with a flood of iridescent light in a silent farewell and sank into the sea to sleep, the Old One returned to his hut in the enclosure. Here he ate his evening meal prepared by his niece. His wife had long been dead and they had not had children. It was the old man's favourite time of day. The sun, after his farewell, sank quickly away and the night came in with giant strides, bringing her cool, calm breezes. A man could hardly believe the heat of the day when he sat outside at night under the stars and the cool sea breeze blew the old day away.

The old man's hut sat upon a grey pebble floor, a small one-room place with only one opening, the door. An enclosure made of large stones and chunks of coral stood as high as a man's thighs and surrounded the hut and small pineapple garden. This enclosure was only accessible through a gateway made from the fork of a tree. The old man's enclosure called Langle, was one of eleven such enclosures. Levintasla, the enclosure of the son of the carver of paddles, lay within calling distance of the house of Langle. These enclosures were the seat of government for the families which belonged to them. The immediate family of the shark caller who occupied the enclosure was the head family of the group. As the line of inheritance went from uncle to nephew, the enclosure of Langle was always governed by the clan Tarangau. A shark caller's own son would be in the line of

inheritance of his mother's brother. The eleven enclosures had never changed their governing clans. What was Tarangau in the beginning of time was still Tarangau and what was Maningulai was still Maningulai. The old man's hut lay right on the beachfront. Behind his dwelling enclosure lay several burial enclosures where the bones of many generations of ancestors lay. Inside, the Old One sat beside a small fire in the middle of the pebbled floor. He was burning coconut husk and occasionally added bundles of dried frond, bombom, often used on dark nights as torches. Taking a burning frond from the fire and using it as a taper, he lit his pipe and began to speak. 'Long ago, Trausel the turtle and Pilai the lizard were friends. One day they were walking along the beach together. It was in the time when our beaches were all white sand. Pilai spotted a beautiful shell on the beach ahead and ran to grab it. Trausel had seen it at the same time; never had he seen such a beautiful, round shell. In those days of the tumbuna, taur the conch shell was not as it is today but it was a round shell. They had both seen taur the conch shell at the same time. Pilai grabbed the shell in one hand and Trausel grabbed the other side. The battle for the taur started. They pulled to and fro so earnestly that Pilai's fingers indented and extended the edge of the opening and Trausel with his violent tugging to win the shell for the sea had elongated his end. Pilai pulled towards the bush and Trausel pulled towards the sea. Trausel had almost lost his grip on the long thin end he held, when as a last effort he yelled to Pilai to look quickly behind him as his house was going up in flames. Pilai turned immediately to look and was caught off guard by the clever Trausel who snatched the taur and ran to the sea with it. Pilai's house was not on fire and he was so furious with Trausel for tricking him, and winning the beautiful shell for the sea, that the two have remained enemies since that time. Trausel has never come back to the land to live. The only time we are reminded that he once lived on land with Pilai, his friend, is once a year when Trausel comes up onto the beach and lays the eggs from which a new generation of trausels will hatch. So that is why the taur is in the sea and why men call the successful catching of shark on the shell. Had Pilai won the taur it would have been used to signal the killing of wild pig instead.' He stopped speaking to relight his pipe. He threw another bombom bundle on the fire. The finger shadows of the flames danced on the woven bamboo walls of the little hut. The warm light penetrated into the corners and showed the secrets that the ceiling held. Behind the exposed timber rafters many pairs of shark fins were tucked, coated with the smoke from previous fires and almost indistinguishable from the smoke-caked ceiling. The Old One's glance followed the shadows of the flames and came to rest on the shark fins. 'They are the wings of the sharks this old Tarangau has caught since the beginning of the last lavat,' he said, not concealing his pride at having caught so many sharks in the season of high winds. A simple bed made from four bamboo posts and split bamboo covering lay against the far wall. The two legs on the far end were shorter than the other two, giving the bed a natural slope. The Old One needed no pillow when he lay down to rest on his simple but comfortable bed.

In the corner of the hut were bundles of dried coconut fronds for the fire and a selection of firewood and dried coconut shells. Next to these, leaning against the wall, stood his paddle carved from



THE BATTLE FOR THE CONCH SHELL

the hard dark wood of the *kwila tree. The long handle was worn as smooth as gun metal by the years of handling. The main body of the paddle was encrusted with dried salt. The paddle was not decorated with carvings as was the custom in earlier times. The old man picked up the paddle and explained its important function. 'Los must be carved from the hard kwila in the fashion of the ancestors. The different parts of los are also named.' His hand rested on the comfortable knob on the top of the handle. This is leganbanane, the bud of the baby coconut. The place where the hand of the man rests while the other hand pulls the wood back through the water. Lebinos, the leg of the paddle is worn by the man's hand slipping along it.' His fingers followed along the handle down to the V-shape where the paddle expanded. 'Ah, this is lebelik, the small baby sharks from the belly of the captured mother. Legiptas, the broadest part of the paddle shaping down to the bulk on the end, means that which takes away sea water from the side of the canoe and pulls it through the water. The bulk at the end is Lembiros, that part which cries through the water and calls to the sharks. Lembiros must never touch the reef. If it should do so it would lose its beautiful singing voice and no shark would come near. Los, the paddle always stands on the baby coconut end when on land to protect lembiros, that which cries.' He paused to spit beside the fire and rising slowly he took the practical basket from where it hung from the centre post of the hut. He opened it and broke off a piece of warm baked **tapiok from inside. He placed it in his mouth and chewed thoughtfully savouring the starchy morsel for some time.

'There are shark roads in the ocean in the season of lamat when men go to call the sharks. The roads are broad, calm tracks of water in which man may see his face looking back up at him. It is only on these special roads that the sound of larung will carry great distances. When man approaches the shark roads of the ocean, he slows his rapid pace and draws nearer with caution. He must take the paddle and drive it with force into the water and pull it back with strength until he hears the lembiros crying, "batoot, batoot, batoot, batoot!" Ah yes, the cry of lembiros is a sweet sound which the sharks hear from afar. They must come to see the maker of ekarakos, the song of the paddle.' He went to the door of his hut and bending his head he stepped over the coconut log which formed the base of the wall of the hut. He disappeared behind the front wall and was gone for some time. When his stooped figure again appeared in the doorway he was carrying larung in one hand and kasaman in the other. He sat down on the corner of his narrow bed.

'Larung was first made by Moroa who showed man how to clean the half coconut shells of all their fibres so they would sing clearly in the water. He showed those first tumbuna how to pierce the shells and thread eight of them onto each of two hoops of cane joined and bound at the top with thin cane to form a handle. The four coconut shells nearest the handle look upwards. They are like the eyes of the shark and they see the shark approaching the canoe from underwater before the man does. The next half shells turn their backs on these, the next are front to front. The shells make the loudest noise this way. When a man is choosing the coconut shells to make larung, he

* kwila: ironwood tree

** tapiok: bread made from the maniak root



must be careful not to gather shells which have been cut by woman. A shark would never come to the call of a rattle which had been touched by the hand of a woman. When larung is shaken just under the surface of the water and knocked slightly against the side of the canoe it sends out many tiny waves which travel like the rays of the sun, out along the smooth surface of the shark roads. The song which larung makes travels far along the roads to where the shark is swimming. He will come to investigate the call of larung. No one knows what the shark thinks larung is. Ah, he may think it is the rush of tiny fish jumping out of the path of a larger fish. He may think it is the diving of the tarangau into the water to feast on a school of fish. Whatever the shark thinks, he is curious, and comes to larung every time he hears its urgent call. He shook the rattle in the air and the half coconut shells danced in a frenzied calling of "shark come, shark come".

'There is magic too,' he said. 'Without the magic, larung could call all day and the shark would not come to it.' He did not speak of the magic of larung but picked up kasaman. The bright moonlight did not offer enough cover to his secret words so he kept them locked awhile inside his old wrinkled skin.

'Kasaman is made up of many parts. The wooden float is cut from the light wood of the kapiak tree. A hole is burnt through the centre, through which the cane rope goes. The cane rope many times stronger than aman is found much deeper in the bush than aman. One end is tied in a slipknot and the other end of the plaited rope forms a handle. A piece of heavy strong limbom is used so the cane handle will not pull through the hole when the shark fights for his life. He held the propeller-like float and rubbed his hand along its surface. When it stood on one end, the propeller came up to the Old One's chest, but it was quite easy for him to handle it because it was so light. It was carved out of a single piece of wood, slightly rounder and thicker in the middle, flattened out and expanding into two blades which had a slight bow towards the top. The ends of the blades were decorated with line carvings. Some of the kasaman in Lorolargun were also decorated with two carved sharks both lying along the top of the blade facing the hole through which the cane rope passed. The kasaman of the Old One was not decorated but it was traditional in the house of Kantaloge for shark callers to decorate kasaman with shark carvings. He pointed to the thicker, central part of the float. 'This is called ledidigolagasaman, "the sitting on the shark's back", for this part of kasaman always sits on top of the shark's back.'

He touched the tips of the blades. 'This is called lagamanlakasaman, the mouth of the propeller. This slipknot which fastens against the shark's skin is called leginprutu or "something that must not move". The wooden piece of stopper which stops the cane rope from pulling through the hole and freeing shark is called longarongen, "the wood that holds the shark". The cane handle leskikanambonan, "he that must come up first". When the shark dives under water to try to free himself of kasaman it is leskikanambonan's job to make sure that kasaman comes up again and he will be the first one to see above water. He and longarongen talk to one another when a shark is snared in the noose. The man snares the shark and then casts kasaman and the shark away and he sits in his canoe and watches while the shark fights with kasaman, the float. Then longarongen and the handle



must work together to keep the shark up in the noose, for if the stopper breaks the shark will rip the cane rope out of kasaman and swim off with the noose still attached to him. Ah yes *pukim Lebeatle, the shark that fights, once got away with this old Tarangau's noose.' He shook his head from side to side and remembered the amount of work involved in making the new rope for a noose. But his eyes sparkled afresh as he described the conversation between longarongen and the handle. 'The handle says to the piece of wooden stopper: "Hey you, hold that shark, it won't be too good if he gets away from us." The stopper answers: "I'm holding him, he can't get away, but you'd better help me. Take us up so that you can see our place, the sky, the clouds, the canoe and the sun." The other replies: "Yes, that's alright as long as you hold the shark and as soon as he can't fight any more kasaman, the float will carry us up and I will see above water before anyone else. Then the handle will ask again: "Hey brother, you holding that shark?" and the piece of wood will answer: "Oh yes, I'm holding him!" and then the handle says: "Good, I think I feel the shark getting weak. I think he's nearly finished." Then they slowly surface and the handle sees again the world above water and informs longarongen that all is well. Then this old Tarangau pulls over to the shark, spears his eyes if he is a Lebeatle and clubs him to death.'

But he did not go on, this 'old man who knows the way of the shark'. He sat in his hut and his eyes swam with moisture and his thoughts were far out to sea, bobbing about with the young strong man who was watching the fight of his first shark.

* *pukim: fuck it*



The Old One often sat on the verandah of the family house of his Tarangau niece. As he sat, the young children, the latest generation of the sea bird, climbed all over the Old One, wrapping their warm brown arms around his strong neck. He had to lift his head so the groping fingers could not reach the pipe in his mouth. First one, then two would crawl into his lap. He showed them no favouritism. They were all his family and had equal right to a spot on his boney knees. When they were called for their evening meal of steamed fish and kaukau they left reluctantly and the Old One straightened his laplap and relit his pipe.

'When did the old Tarangau catch his first shark? Ah, that was long, long ago in the time before. In the time before the laplap and rice.' He smiled, for he enjoyed a good dish of boiled rice. It was much easier on the tired teeth than other foods. 'Only old "meri Lek Bruk" remembers the time when this old man was a strong young fisherman and caught his first shark, for she is the second oldest person in the village of Lorolargun. But the old woman does not speak with a strong neck and nobody listens to her bird talk. It was in the time when a strange ship with sails like sea shells came close to Lorolargun and slept in the harbour inside the reef.'

A number of people had drifted to the verandah and sat down. They never tired of the old man's stories of long ago. He was the oldest member of the village and a great authority on its history. 'It was a large ship with a high back and many round holes along its sides. Two *Kongkong were

* *Kongkong: a disparaging term meaning a Chinese*

on board and had come to trade beads and cloth for shell and fish, but you know in this time before — the time of my uncles — things were not as they are now. The old uncles did not want to pay for the strange cargo on board the big ship with wings, so one morning they walked along to the harbour by way of the sandy beach. This Tarangau was sitting thinking about sharks and how he would catch them as soon as he had finished his schooling in the fashion of the sea, when the uncles came by. They said they were going to cut sago up in the bush but instead of turning off onto the track leading to the bush, they followed the beach around. They met other old warriors like themselves and they came to the bay where the large ship lay sleeping. One Kongkong was sitting on the shore and they crept up behind him and struck him with their axes. They really killed him, that Chinaman on the beach, and then they threw him in the sea. But he was not dead yet, he must have been thinking of his home and where he lay for he began to cry: "Singapore, Singapore!"

The old man's voice had become high pitched and laughter twinkled in his eyes and played with his betel stained lips. 'You know,' he said to those listening, 'it was in the long ago, the tudak when men used to kill one another.' Seeing that his audience was enjoying his story and mime of the drowning Chinaman he went on. 'Then the old fighters boarded a canoe and pulled out to the ship and crept up to the side of her and climbed on board. They killed the other Kongkong who was leaning over looking into the water. The old men picked up the Chinaman and threw him in. He thought about his home too and cried: "Singapore, Singapore!"' The Old One's voice almost broke as he cried the last words. He shook his head from side to side in an imitation of lack of understanding for the way of those men of before. 'Then they took all the cargo off and burnt the ship and came home to Lorolargun. Everybody had laplap and shining beads and soon the poor Chinamen and their strange ship disappeared into fireside stories and were almost forgotten.'

'It was not long after this that the uncle of this old Tarangau said one day to his young eager nephew that he was too tired to go shark calling and the time had come for the young Tarangau to become a man. He gave me the bait fish and larung and kasaman and bid farewell to his pupil before the sun threw his spears over the mountain side. This young man pulled far out to sea and remembered all that his uncle had taught him about sitting straight and still in the canoe. He remembered to look for the shark roads and when he pulled close to the clear tracks of water he approached with caution pulling his paddle back through the water until it cried, "batoot, batoot, batoot, batoot!" As this pupil shook the shells in the water and held the bait fish tied to the end of the pole in the other, his belly was heavy with fear. He called with larung for some time but no sharks came. Had the uncle made the secret magic which the young tarangau did not yet understand? Then he saw a couple of tarangau birds diving into the sea further out on another shark road, so he pulled with speed to the place. Here he knew, as his uncle had told him, the small fish would be swimming and it was the best place to shake larung. The sun had climbed into the sky before a large Latno came up from the deep, green bottom and circled the canoe. This boy's breath was short and his belly was heavy as he stopped rattling. His uncle's words rang in his ears: "He must not shake the shells or



move when the shark approaches." Ah yes, he sat as still as a rock this young sea bird with the heavy belly, and that Latno was no *manki, he was as big as the canoe. That young man, who is now old, followed all the instructions and when Latno the giant shark came close to look at the bait fish, that Tarangau pulled the fish quickly out of the water. Latno became curious; he was puzzled by the smelly bait fish and came in slowly for another look. The tarangau circled overhead and looked down to make sure that their young man was ready to make a catch. Slowly the young hand picked up the propeller from behind him and opened the noose with his knee, straightened the end of the slip knot and held it fast between his two fingers. Ah yes, he was ready now for the shark. Skksksksksksk! he whistled through his teeth and Latno couldn't help but come quietly to the canoe side. As the shark approached the lure, that young shark caller slipped the bait fish through the noose and offered it to Latno. Slowly, keeping the fish always in front of that pointed nose, the lure was drawn back and Latno, thinking only of the morsel of food, swam right into the snare, just as Moroa said he would. Ha, quickly the wooden float was dropped onto the large back just in front of the fins. The handle was jerked with all the strength of this young shark caller and the knot slipped down and settled around the giant belly. Ah, then Latno faced away from the canoe and this Tarangau let him go. Yes everybody, you should have seen him fight. Down he went, down. Up he came, up and he fought and he fought. Then he tried to drag kasaman off along the surface of the water, but that wooden float was always there on his back. The more he fought the tighter the slipknot became. If only the piece of stopper would not break and he would not run off with the cane around his body, he would get so tired of swimming with kasaman gripping his rough skin that he would eventually be tired out. Yes, this young man thought about Moroa and how he made the skin of the shark rough so he would be snared in the woven cane noose. At last Latno floated to the surface and lay looking at the clouds with tiny angry eyes.'

'The proud Tarangau man pulled over to the place and then turned quickly into a crying boy when he found that he had no club in the canoe to kill his shark. He cried, who is going to kill my shark for me? Who will kill my shark? And who heard him? Nobody. There was no one to hear his calls. Tarangau, the sea bird had turned for shore, his belly full of fish and the shark caller and the shark were left alone on the sea. Who will kill my shark, he sobbed. But no one heard. So he took the piece of wood on which he sat and he threw it with all his strength against the large head. It slipped from his hands. He took the front seat and picking up the float by the middle, protecting his legs and arms with the two blades of it, he struck another blow. Ah, he lost that plank too. Then there was only one seat left and he killed Latno with it. He hauled him aboard. It was a long journey home, uncomfortable, sitting on the narrow lamtu.' He laughed and rubbed his thighs. 'Then came the moment that every young shark caller loves, the headland of Lima came into sight. He put his taur to his lips and blew four loud, long blasts: the call of the successful catch for the house of Langle, clan of Tarangau. The old mother was the first on the beach. "Oh my **pikinini, he is a real sea bird!

* *manki: nickname given to small boys*

** *pikinini: baby, child, little one*

He has caught his shark" and she cried, that old woman who was the mother of the young man.' His own eyes filled with tears. 'Yes, this old man is a real Tarangau. Nobody helped him to kill his shark. Yes, nobody. Like a true tarangau, he killed his own fish. And after that, the beach was lined with men and women, young boys and girls. The boys had toy spears and they rushed to the canoe and pulled the shark catcher into the water with the dead shark and pushed both their heads under the water. They threw their spears at this shark caller and tumbled him and turned him time and time in the water. Then they let him walk up onto the beach. This was a new person, not the young boy who didn't know how to catch shark, but a man. Another Tarangau shark caller! So that was when the 'Old One who knows the way of the shark' made his first catch, in the time when the people of Lorolargun did not know of the white man and his strange magic.' He sipped a weak brew of tea, syrupy with sugar, out of an enamel mug that his niece had brought him and then he continued his story. 'Yes, that was before the time of sugar tea.' he said, taking another shallow sip of the steaming liquid. He looked up to gauge the interest of his audience, before he went on. All eyes were turned to him and even the young children sat quietly on the mats and listened without a word. 'Everybody had forgotten the two Chinamen and the cargo and the burnt ship, but outside of Lorolargun were men, strong men who had not forgotten. The people of Lorolargun had heard stories from the north and from the Gazelle of a strange new race of men whose skins were white and who had spears that spoke with loud voices and that killed men. Those white men with their muskets were known but had never been seen in Lorolargun, until one day a large ship with three masts came over the horizon. Smoke poured out of its back and the sails flapped around the masts. It looked like an evil masalai and the people of Lorolargun knew immediately that it was a craft belonging to the people who were called "the men of Germany". The ship with three masts steamed over the horizon and came closer to the village. The people were afraid, remembering the Chinamen and their ship. Everybody ran away to the big bush behind Lorolargun, except for three old women who could not walk. They were put together in an old hut and left while the rest of the village was deserted. *Trimas came and sat in the sea off Lorolargun. Small boats were lowered over the side and many men came ashore. These men were from some strange village, brown-skinned like the people of Lorolargun, but dressed in long red laplap, fastened at the waist with a belt. They wore tiny red hats on their heads and carried the fire spears known as muskets. They ran through the empty village, one tall white man yelling to them as they went. They found the three old women and killed them and then they set fire to every hut in the village and sailed away again. They really made Lorolargun understand their strength. Our houses were burnt and the gardens destroyed. It was not until the houses had been rebuilt and the gardens replanted that the people of Lorolargun saw their first white man at close range. He was the tall white man of Germany with red hair and red whiskers. He came to the west coast with an interpreter to make peace with us.'

The Old One straightened his back and continued proudly. 'It was to my uncle, the finest shark caller on this coast, that the tall white man came. He told of a new **gavman who had come to the

* *trimas: the name the shark callers gave to the ship*

** *gavman: government*



north of our land, who would never again burn the houses of Lorolargun. He gave my uncle a long stick of dark polished wood, on the top of which was a head of the king of Germany. He made the old uncle *luluai and the stick said that there would be no more trouble between the people of Lorolargun and the big man of Germany with the red hair. He went away and never came back again and the stick with the king's head was lost but there was no more raiding ships which came to burn the houses.' The old man stretched his legs generously, returned his pipe to his basket and with a few words to those assembled he sauntered back to his own enclosure. His walking stick was across his back, held firm by his arms flung over it, and crooked into his elbows. That was his favourite way of walking when he had to cover any distance. Perhaps it eased the pain in the tired old back.

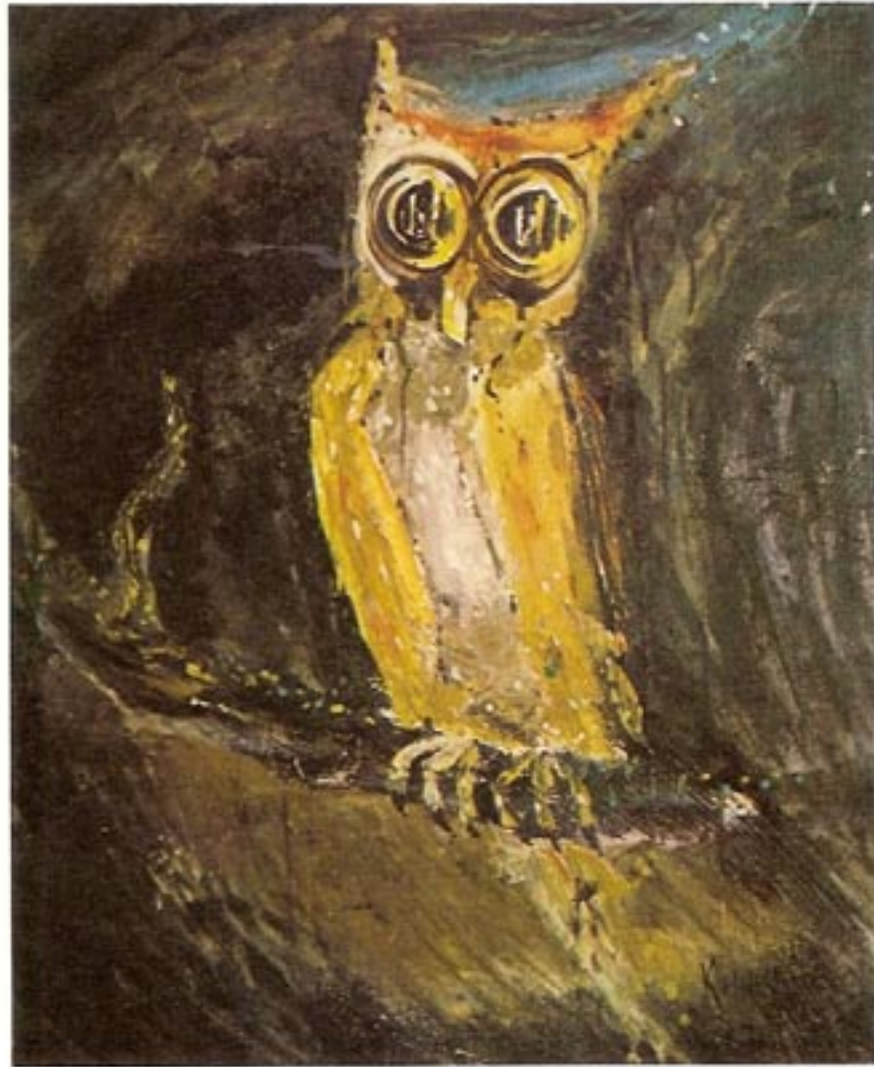
The night was dark as the full moon had fallen into the sea and far off the lenka bird cried. Lenka heralded the successful catching of a shark and any shark caller about to depart on a journey who heard the cry of this bird was filled with an extra amount of confidence as he pulled his canoe into the water. The night was full of the voices of the bush and in the background was the gentle lap lap of the waves and the low groan as pebbles pulled back over one another only to be carried again to the beach by the next wave. This was the time when many creatures made their appearance. It was the time when ledudu the owl fed and when he cried his warnings. Only ledudu, the bird of the black night has a special knowledge of coming disaster. Ledudu always knew if a man was about to be wrecked at sea or attacked by a shark. He also knew of the impending approach of strangers which often would mean raiding and battles in the days gone by. He tried to tell men of his knowledge but they lay sleeping in their cosy huts and would not hear the lonely ledudu call.

Bats and flying fox from the caves and limestone cliffs flapped their leathery wings and raided the pawpaw trees. The old man had told of Magamak, the masalai who belonged to the Maningulai clan and lived in one of the larger caves. Should a man wish to catch bat to make a delicious soup, he would have to call Magamak to wake up his friends the bats. Then all the bats who had been hanging in the cave would drop from the roof and beat their wings so loudly that no other sound could be heard, not even the reply of Magamak, the masalai master.

The Old One had returned to his enclosure and was sitting on a mat outside the hut enjoying the cool evening breeze. He crooned softly to himself, the songs of the sea and of the men who caught sharks. He continued singing as though he was rehearsing the old melodies. It was some time before he spoke. 'Lesiliman means song sung by the shark callers as they pulled back to shore with a successful catch . . .' He paused then went on. 'Long ago there was a young boy whose mother and father had both died. The boy's name was Belibubut which means spirit child. He belonged to the Meribak family of the house of Kantaloge. When somebody from this family caught a shark and brought it ashore they divided it amongst the family. The head of the shark was cut and cooked by **mumuim, on the beach outside the shark enclosure of the family. Belibubut was always sent out to

* luluai: government-appointed chief

** mumuim: to pressure cook by steaming with heated stones in a pit



collect firewood just before the mumu was ready. They would tell him to go out on his errand and that by the time he came back the shark would be ready to eat. So Belibubut would go and collect wood and when he came back the men would have eaten all the shark and would tell the poor boy that they had waited in the hut for the shark to be cooked; while they had left the oven unattended the pigs and dogs had come and raided and eaten all the shark.

Belibubut believed them and he had no shark. The men continued to trick him for many years. When the boy grew older he became suspicious of the older men. One time when they had caught shark and were preparing it on the beach, they sent Belibubut the spirit child to collect firewood. This time the boy did not go far away. He hid in the trees behind the hut and watched the men taking the shark out of the mumu oven, divide it and eat it. So Belibubut gathered the firewood. He brought it and dumped it on the beach beside the group and told them that he knew now that they had tricked him all these years. Belibubut got up and left then. He went to a place called Kolube where he lived from that time on with another family.'

Some other Tarangau men had wandered along the beach and entered the enclosure of the 'Old One who knows the way of the shark' and listened to the story of the song of Belibubut which they already knew so well. Betel nut was passed around and the Old One did not continue until he had a piece of the nut and pepper with lime in his mouth. 'When Belibubut had grown to the age when it was time for him to catch shark, his old waspapa taught him how to catch and the boy went and made larung, the rattle sing along the shark roads until a shark came to him. Belibubut snared the shark with the noose attached to kasaman as the old man had taught him. When he had killed the shark and brought it up to his canoe he thought back on his sad young years in Lorolargun village and of how the older men had tricked him time and time again over the head of the shark. Now for the first time he had caught a shark of his own. He would paddle back to shore to be greeted by people of his adopted village. He would mumu the head of the shark outside his own house. He was filled with very sad thoughts of the time when he was tricked and he sang the song which is now known as Lesiliman Belibubut.' The Old One cleared his throat and began to sing the sad song of Belibubut. He sang the leading part of the song, while all those sitting around him sang the end of each line with him. Some of those sitting on the ground outside the hut of the Old One were the descendants of the family of Meribak. To them this was a very special song whose sad melody and words brought tears to their eyes.

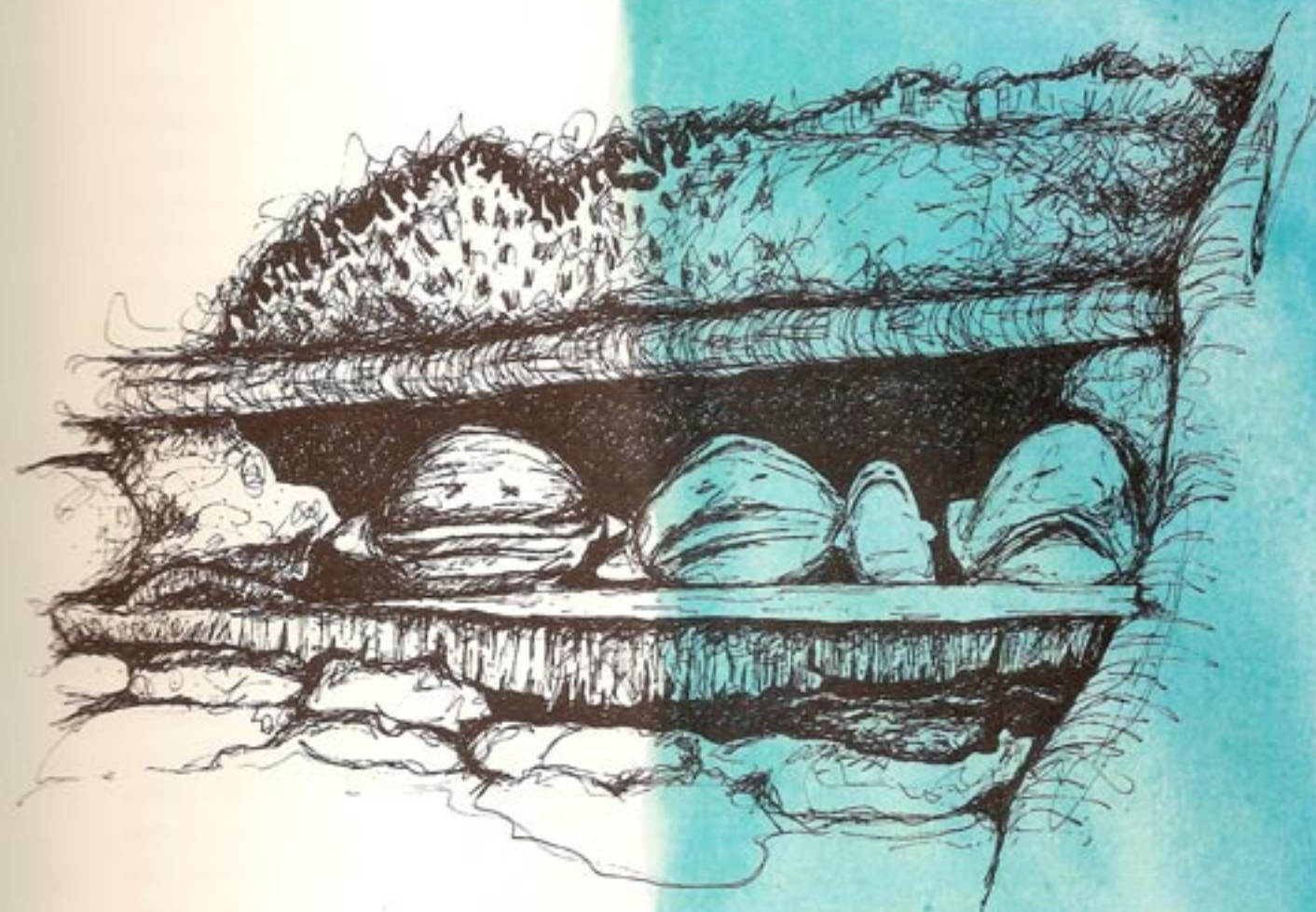
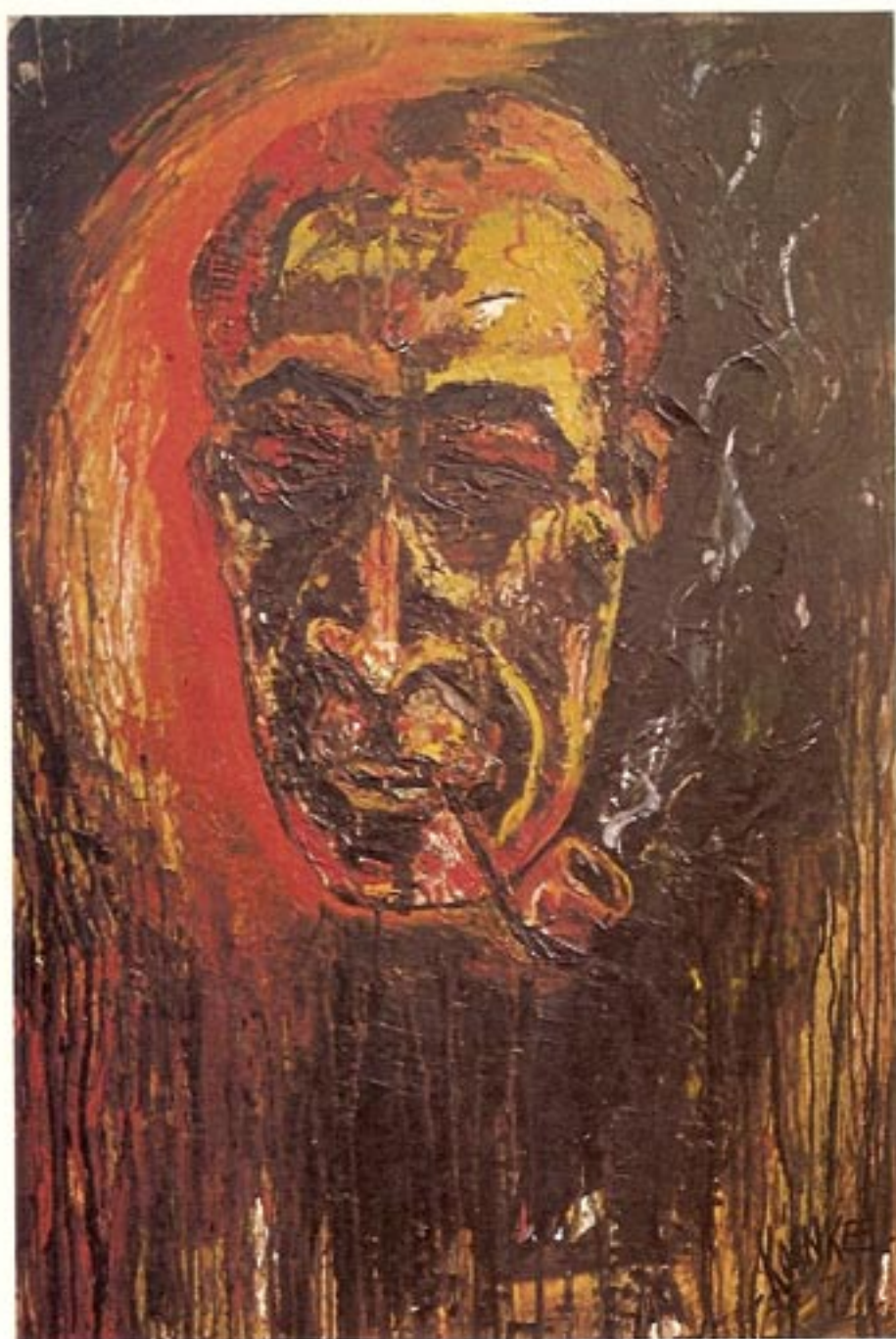
It reminded them of their ancestor Belibubut who had never returned to Lorolargun, and they were sorry about those old men of the tumbuna time who had tricked the young boy.

The Old One went on with his story and others hummed the song to themselves repeating the sorrowful refrain over and over. 'The voice of Belibubut singing his song to the sea and the birds travelled across the waters and reached the ears of those in Lorolargun. When they heard his taur they knew that Belibubut had caught a shark. The men of Lorolargun, in the family of Meribak, decided to send a member to invite Belibubut to return. They sent Kut to Kolube and he found the young man and invited him to return to his home. They were all old and the Meribak family had



BELIBUBUT'S WAVE OF MEMORY

nobody to catch sharks for them. Belibubut said that it was true that he could return but he would not because they had all tricked him when he was a boy. So Kut went back and Belibubut stayed at Kolube where there is still a branch of the Meribak family today.' The old man went into his hut to sleep and the others dissolved into the black night, their hearts heavy with the reminder of the spirit child Belibubut.



The wind had moved well into the pattern of the season of *lamat*. Men went out after shark every time the sea invited them with its calm clear horizons. The Old One was kept busy with requests for magic almost daily. This he made for his Tarangau brethren without hesitation and for those of the other clan, Maningulai, he made the same magic for a token fee of a few betel nut or a fresh fish, a stick of tobacco, or *one mark.

The maker of rain and calmer of the sea, an old man of the house of Umin, clan of Tarangau was busy working his magic spells on the weather. He made sure that the winds died down and that gentle rain fell the night before the canoes went out, so the shark roads would be plentiful for those who went to catch. The only indication that a man had gone out shark calling was the absence of his canoe from its familiar resting place on two bamboo logs on the beach outside his hut enclosure. Nobody spoke of his intention to go out and after he had gone nobody in the village asked where

* *one mark: ten cents*

he was, but those observant ones knew and the maker of magic knew who had gone out.

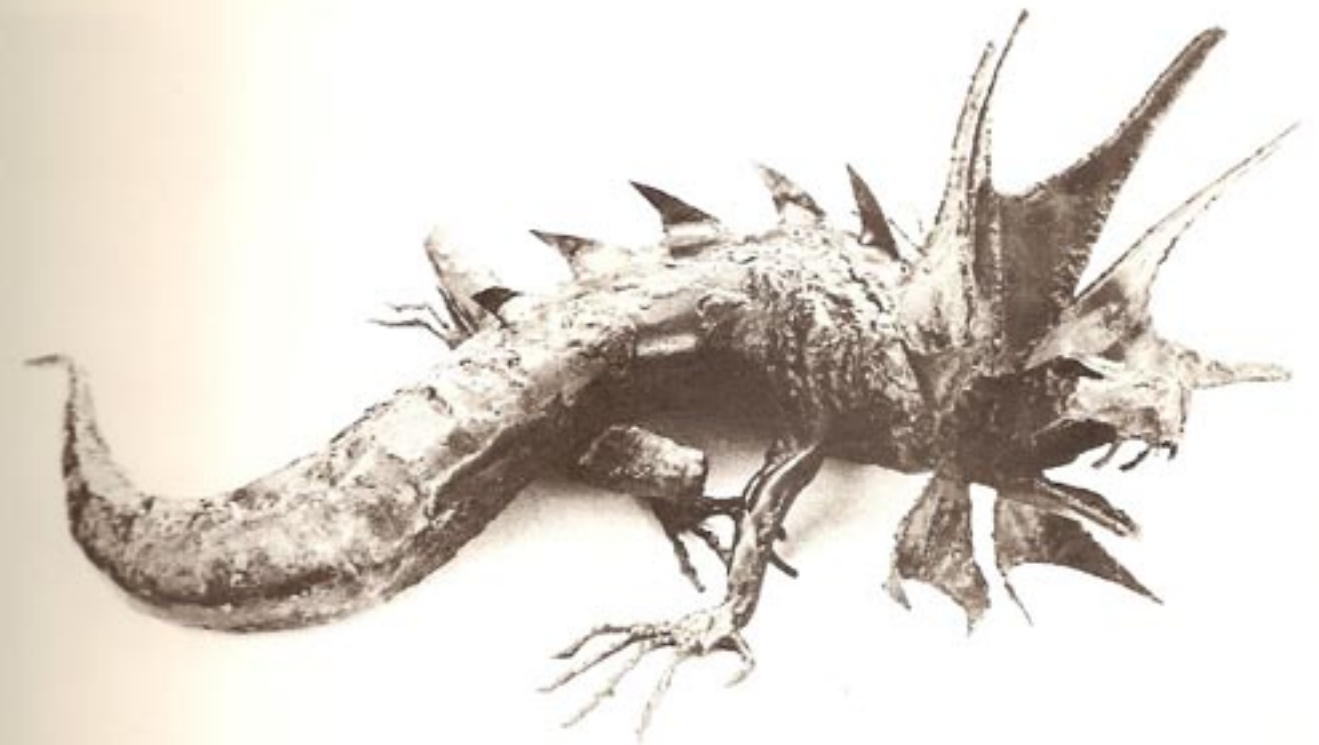
An air of quiet excitement and expectancy now hung in the air. The Old One became more willing to speak of the deepest, most well-guarded secrets of shark magic. He sat on his strip of beach outside the house of Langle, under the bountiful shade of his lawatbulut tree. He was lazily gathering leaves with his hands and throwing them into a small fire. The smoke curled up between the giant twisted branches. A lizard started a slowly measured climb up the trunk of this magic tree. The Old One said: 'Pilai the lizard is very important in making the shark come to the canoe of the man who is calling.'

The lizard took a couple of quick steps higher up the tree, his long tapered toes gripping the knotted bark. 'This old Tarangau knows the words to speak to Pilai to make him go up the lawatbulut until he reaches the top branches. As the lizard climbs the tree so will the shark, cruising along the floor of the ocean, climb through the water to the surface, where the shark caller's canoe drifts along the shark road; but only this Old One knows the words to send Pilai to the top branches and the shark to the canoe.'

The lizard cautiously ascended the trunk along a spiral route passing from view and reappeared again higher up. The Old One nodded his silent approval and turned his attention to the sea. Somewhere out there, deep in the ocean's blue, a shark would be feeling the compulsion to rise to the surface. The old man knew this was so. He knew the power of his magic and did not have to witness it. 'Who knows the magic words that send Pilai the lizard climbing to the top of the lawatbulut tree? Only this old Tarangau from the house of Langle. Nawanem! the old uncle called Bogin knew all the magic and gave it to his nephew, the magic words that send Pilai up the tree make the shark go up from the bottom of the sea to the canoe of the shark caller. When a man wants to catch a shark he must come to me so the magic can be made for him. Nobody else knows this magic. Sometimes they try to catch a shark without asking me to send Pilai up the lawatbulut tree. Do the sharks come to their canoes? Ah, if I have not spoken to the spirit of the shark through Pilai, he will ignore the canoes. Ah yes, there is much magic,' he added. 'If there was no magic, man would not catch shark. There are stone sharks too. They were made long ago by the ancestors who cut them from the white stone of the bush, the stone that drinks in water and then is easy to cut. The stone sharks are spirit sharks. Without them a man cannot make magic to the spirits of the sharks which swim in the sea.'

The Old One had four stone sharks. They lay in a shrine made from great slabs of flat coral outside the enclosure of the house of Langle. They rested on a human femur facing out to sea.

'The spirit sharks of this old Tarangau are the most powerful in the whole of Lorolargun. Those of the bearded one of the house of Kantaloge are not so powerful because he does not know the magic. It is a strong custom that no man must touch the stone sharks of another. It is very dangerous to go close to the sharks of another man and to touch one means death,' he said without shifting his eyes from the sea. 'A man touching the spirit sharks would be attacked by a man-eating shark the very next time he went into the water. Yes, even if he only went swimming near the beach a devil



shark would know the man had broken the custom and attack him and eat him. Children are told when they are very young and brothers and sisters guard one another from touching the stone sharks. If they were touched they would lose their magic. Many of the headmen of the other shark houses, do not know how to remake the magic. Only this Old One from the house of Langle knows. The old uncle Bogin who had the stick with the head of the king of Germany knew all these things and taught his young nephew well. The ancestor Seselin taught Bogin, who taught the 'Old One who knows the way of the shark'. Only when everyone has gone to sleep in Lorolargun and the Old One is alone in his shark caller's hut of Langle will he dare to call the names of the ancestors.

He starts with Bogin, he who has died most recently and calls back as far as he was taught to the name of the ancestor who lived fifteen generations ago. When the Old One has gone to the home of the spirit ancestors in the sky, his name will be the first called in the long list of names of shark callers. These names are called to ask the shark callers of before to send their spirits to help the shark caller who wants to go out the following day. The names of the Tarangau women are also called, the mothers of the ancestral shark callers: they who helped prepare the shark caller's food when their time for bearing children was passed. The shark would not smell the blood as it no longer flowed from their bodies with every new moon. All these names he would call softly in the darkness and they hearing him from their ancestral home would send their spirits to help their Tarangau nephew to catch sharks the following day.'

The Old One began to call softly the names of his ancestors, each name was called from deeper and deeper into the tumbuna time. When he came to the last name he stopped. To return to the present he had to travel the space of perhaps 400 years. 'Nobody could catch a shark if this Old One did not call those tumbuna shark callers to help the man. The ancestor's spirits help the man and send the shark to his canoe. Bogin was a great shark caller. His spirit helps the man in the canoe to catch as well as Bogin did before he died.' He remained silent for some minutes.

'Ah yes there is much magic to learn. This Old One spent many years learning the magic from Bogin. Only a little time before he died, did Bogin tell the names of the tumbuna spirits. This Old One has not told the names to his nephew who is not yet ready, although his own nephew is a fully grown man. It is a secret and must not be spoken of or the ancestors become angered and will not help men catch sharks.' The sun had sunk into the calm sea and darkness covered the old day. Children lit bundles of bombom torches and walked out along the reef in search of crab, octopus and any tasty sea creature they could find. Men drifted along in the darkness without torches. The spirits of the darkness were well known and men and spirits lived in a well defined balance in Lorolargun.

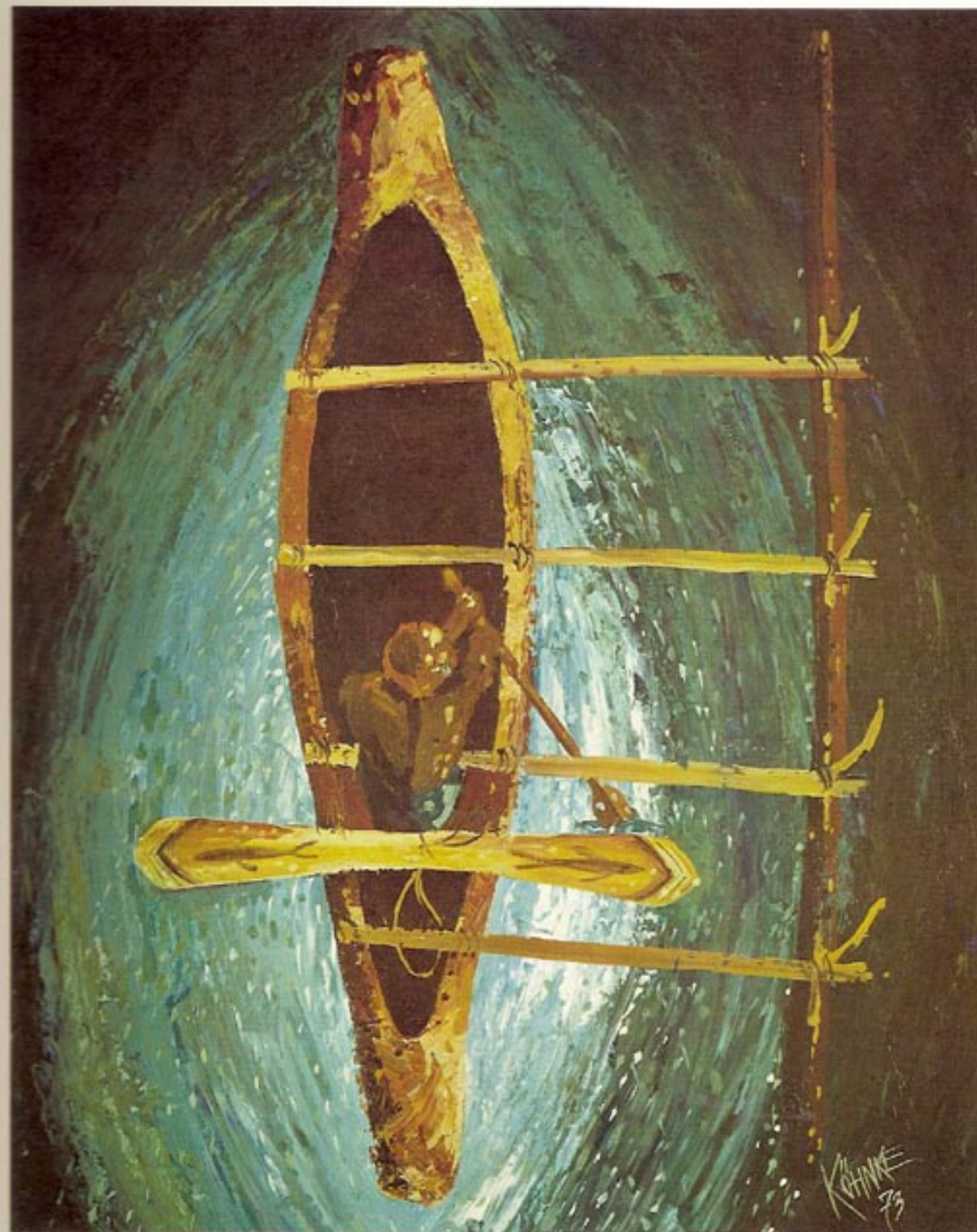
The maker of rain magic was heard approaching before he was seen. His tread on the pebble beach carried across the short space between his house of Umin and the house of Langle. The maker of rain magic was a Tarangau shark caller but his uncle had specialised in the magic of calming the seas and sending the rain. He was the authority on weather, just as the Old One was the shark magic man. He approached with a few quiet words of greeting and squatted on his haunches beside his Tarangau friend. He told the Old One that the magic had been made to quieten the sea. Light



rain would fall before dawn and the sea would be flat and the shark roads would be found crossing the ocean surface in many places. The rainmaker took a half smoked cigarette from behind his ear. He lit it with an old petrol lighter. The small flame outlined his strong face. He was not as old as the Old One but they had kept one another's company for many years. The cigarette was home made from trade store twist tobacco, rolled in a square of newspaper. Its smoke had a pleasant, heavy smell.

The Old One took a short length of plaited twist tobacco from his basket beside him. The Old One untwisted the dark leaf and broke it into small pieces. These he rolled into a piece of newspaper. He rarely smoked the plantation ration tobacco, he preferred his old pipe and the brus which had always grown in Lorolargun. The Old One drew deeply on his smoke and slowly nodded his head. 'Good,' he said to the rainmaker, 'tomorrow the Old One will catch a shark to show that his magic is still strong, his eyes are clear and his hand is firm.' The Old One's nephew joined the two men in the darkness on the beach. The nephew praised the rainmaker for the calm seas and gentle breeze. When the Old One told him that the canoes had been cleaned and whitened with the coral paint, the nephew knew that the Old One would pull next morning in his prepared canoe. The Old One was always busy and kept his own canoe in good shape and often repaired and cleaned his nephew's canoe. His nephew had a wife and children and often had to help his wife clear new ground for a garden. He could not spend as much time in the shade of the lawatbulut as some of the older men, like the rainmaker and the son of the carver of paddles.

'The shark *Lebigugu with the long head is the only shark which the nephew has not yet caught,' said the Old One. 'Perhaps he is not sure how to slip the cane noose over that strange head.' The Old One smiled in the darkness. 'He must learn to put the noose over one side of the head first and say "ting" and over the other side of the head quickly, with "ting-tidis". Ah, "ting, ting-tidis" is the only way to catch Lebigugu, the shark with the long head. Everyone in Lorolargun knew the words that the shark caller used to catch the hammerhead. Lebigugu, the hammerhead, was the only shark that man spoke to as he caught it, as the Lebigugu was the only shark with such a head.' The Old One had been reminded of a story his father had told him, the story which everyone in Lorolargun knew well. 'Once there lived a masalai shark called Lembembanam. The two old men who belonged to the families of Koisambo and Baris made Lembembanam. The men lived at a place called Larunun, to the north of Lorolargun. This place was tambu to everybody except the members of these two families. Lembembanam was a huge shark made out of a bamboo frame, lashed together with cane and the whole structure was covered with a material called kedis. Kedis was a material made secretly at Larunun. It was a heavy waterproof woven material of many colours. This was stretched over the framework and formed the skin of the shark. Nobody else knew how to make this kedis, but the two old men of the families of Koisambo and Baris. The two men made a machine to power the shark, made it run about to all places. When it was ready they carried it down to the beach and launched it into the sea. They sang and danced on the beach and filled Lembem-



* Lebigugu: the hammerhead shark

banam the shark with power to run. When they saw that it worked well they put it back into its hiding place, a large house that was guarded by a very old woman. This old woman kept watch night and day to make sure nobody came near to Lembembanam's hiding place.'

'One day the men decided it was time for Lembembanam to kill men, so they launched him into the sea again and let him go. They sang larangan-lembebanam which means "song to make Lembembanam go". Lembembanam went far out to sea where all the unsuspecting men were calling sharks. This shark would come up to the canoes and grab the men and swallow them whole. Down in his stomach was food, firewood and stones on which to cook. When Lembembanam had swallowed many men he returned to his two owners who put him back into his house with the men still alive in his belly. Here he stayed being watched over by the old woman until the two men had decided it was time for him to go. They sang the song to make him go and he terrorised the seas again. Nobody else knew about the structure of this shark, except the two men who owned him. All the villagers on the west coast were frightened of some unknown spirit shark. For years Lembembanam made his rounds of all the villages of the west coast, the east coast, to the north and south of New Ireland. The men that he swallowed and brought back to Larunun were finally put to work in the gardens of the two evil men until it was time for the shark to put to sea again, then they all went back inside his belly.'

'One day when the old watch woman wanted to go and wash, she asked her grandchild to watch while she was away. The old woman went to the stream to wash and she took off her old skin and it floated down the stream and caught in a piece of log in the water and stayed there. The woman thought she had lost her old skin as she didn't see that it was caught on the tree. She was changed into a young woman, with young woman's breasts. She went and sat in the sun so it could boil her new skin and make it strong. She sat until her skin was strong and then she returned to the enclosure where Lembembanam was kept. Her young grandchild saw her approaching and did not know who the young woman was. The child was frightened and began to cry and the old woman who looked young could not stop the grandchild from crying. The woman knew the child couldn't recognise her so she went back along the stream until she found her old skin caught up in the branches of the mangas, a tree of the beach. She put the old skin back on and sat in the sun until it was strong, then she went back to her grandchild who recognised her and stopped crying. Then it was time for Lembembanam to go out again. The old men from the families of Koisambo and Baris made their song to give power to Lembembanam. He went out again and swallowed many men and then he returned to Larunun. Then all the people from the places which had lost men thought about the strange shark.'

'One day a man from the family who owned the shark was ready to go shark calling. Even this man, who was a relative of the old men, did not know what Lembembanam was. He pulled out to sea to look for bait fish to lure the shark. A magic fish came up to the man while he was in his canoe and made the man ashamed that so many men were being killed when they went out shark calling. Then the fish swam away and the man pulled to shore and went to his enclosure. He saw a kalangai



pigeon and he took a stone and threw it at the bird. It was sitting on the branch of a tree and eating its fruit. The wind took the stone way past the bird and carried it to the secret enclosure of Lembembanam. The stone struck the kedis of the masalai shark with a loud slap. The young man was curious to know what the stone had hit. He went closer.'

'The old woman who had put the skin back on was on watch and had heard the stone hit the skin of Lembembanam. She cried out but the young man did not answer her. He crept into the enclosure and saw the masalai shark and he knew that it was the thing that had been eating all the shark callers. Lembembanam was huge. The man knew that the old men hid the shark from everybody so they could send it out to swallow shark callers into its large belly. The young man took a stick of charcoal from the fire and crept closer to the shark. He marked it under the fins with charcoal then he went back to his own shark caller's hut, to sleep.'

'Next morning before the sun was up, the young man pulled out in his canoe with his shark calling equipment. He also had a huge stick and a stone in the bottom of his canoe. The old men in the enclosure of Lembembanam heard the man singing his shark calling song and they knew that it was time to prepare Lembembanam. The young man out to sea shook larung, the rattle and in a short time he saw Lembembanam approaching. The man could see the marks he had made on the belly of the shark. As the shark came in close to eat him the young man drove the stick through the kedis and the masalai shark filled with water. All the men in his belly were killed with the stone and Lembembanam sank to the bottom, dead. The young man killed all the men except one old uncle of his. They pulled for shore and told everybody that Lembembanam had been killed; that shark callers would fear no more masalai sharks when they went out calling.'

'Ah, that was long ago,' the Old One said. 'Nobody living in Lorolargun today ever saw the shark Lembembanam, but some of the magic skin called kedis was found not long ago and given to a *kiap who took it away with him.'

The rainmaker and his nephew had joined in with the singing of the song of Lembembanam for they knew the song well. The rainmaker got up and went to his enclosure of Umin to sleep, for tomorrow he would go shark calling. The Old One and his nephew went to the shark enclosure of Langle to speak for a while longer. The nephew would sleep that night in his own enclosure of Logusolamat as no shark caller ever slept in his 'married' house before he went shark calling. They prepared their own meal of kaukau and taro outside, then went into the tiny hut and closed the door.

* *kiap*: government patrol officer



It was dark inside the small hut until the Old One made a fire in the simple hearth in the middle of the floor. The old man and his nephew sat smoking and talking for some time. The 'Old One who knows the way of the shark' heard the cry of lenka the bird who heralds the successful catching of shark and he nodded to his nephew. They both knew they would be successful on the morrow. The nephew finally left the Old One and walked along the beach to his own enclosure. He looked up to the night sky which was crowded with stars. He knew they were the spirits of his ancestors. Those stars which shone most brightly were the spirits of ancestors not long dead. The stars whose faint light blinked on and off were the spirits of ancestors long since dead; those of the tumbuna time of Moroa. Nobody could call the names of those ancestors but the nephew knew that the Old One could call many of the names of their direct ancestors. He wondered if they fished and caught sharks in the night sky and decided that they must, for a man who has caught sharks all his life in Lorolargun would surely continue in that other land overhead.

The nephew reached his enclosure of Logusolamat and stepped over the forked tree trunk into the enclosure. He curled up on a mat on the pebble floor of his hut and was soon asleep, knowing that the Old One would make all the necessary magic. Had he not heard the cry of the lenka bird? The Old One sat alone in his hut softly singing the magic songs of lentum. Lentum, a small insect



SPIRIT FISHERMEN OF THE NIGHT SKY

of the bush, made a cry like that of a small cicada. Lentum cried every evening just before sundown and never after the sun had gone. The Old One sang the song of lentum which he knew would make the driftwood and vines float out to sea. He sang more magic to make sure that the rubbish he was sending out to sea would not break up and disperse. Then he sang a strange, low pitched song to send all the small and large fish to feed off the rubbish. He called to larangam, tarangau the sea bird, his own clan totem, to circle the rubbish and feed off the small fishes. He took a small fruit of a beach tree called ambibi from his basket. The fruit was oval shaped. It had a slit like the mouth of a shark and contained blood-red seeds. The two spots on its outer skin represented the eyes of the shark. To the fruit of the ambibi, with eyes like a shark, the Old One spoke many magic words. As the ambibi fruit in his hand could see, so let the shark's eyes see the canoe of the man who would catch him. He spoke the words over and over. Many things he said in the language of the shark callers. He spoke individually to the spirits of the sharks in the ocean and told each one which canoe he must approach. Then he called the fifteen names of his Tarangau ancestors and asked Bogin especially to help him as he had been a good shark caller and was the most recently deceased of the ancestors. It was not long before dawn, when the Old One threw another log on the fire and curled up for a short sleep.

That inbuilt mechanism which brings men from deep sleep to full awareness in a few seconds woke him. He stirred the coals of the burnt-out log, filled his pipe and lit it by placing a small glowing coal in the bamboo bowl of his pipe. The tobacco soon caught alight and he knocked out the coal. He was dressed in a faded turquoise laplap folded around his sparse body and tucked in at the waist. He wore rubber thongs on his small feet with pieces of tyre tubing cut into strips to form a strap around the back of the heel. He wore no shirt. The cover which he removed from his conch shell served as a protection for his head. The Old One was always to be seen shark calling in his woven frond hat. He took his taur shell horn from where it hung on the front wall of his hut and his larung from nearby. He took los, the paddle from inside his hut and carefully stepped over the forked tree trunk which was the entrance to his enclosure. He walked down to his canoe. It rested on two logs under a pandanus palm. Kasaman, the wooden propeller leaned against the tree. He lifted his canoe easily and carried it by the middle two lamtu, the outrigger supports to the water's edge.

The Old One always sat on the simple wooden plank seat in front of the third lamtu from the front. In this position he could have the best control over his light craft, with just the twist of the paddle he could alter the course a half turn. He put kasaman, the float behind where he would sit. Kasaman lay across the top of the canoe, its cane noose lying in the belly of the canoe. He put larung in front of him and the wooden club behind. He walked back up the beach to the pandanus palm and cut two or three of its lower leaves. They were broad, fat leaves with needle spikes running up on either side. These he trimmed off with his knife and cut the leaves and bent them around to form a simple but effective bail. From the forked tree trunk he took lenantulus, the lure pole. Lenantulus was a piece of strong straight cane, one end of which was sharpened to a sliver.

He had threaded the small, sweet bait fish on this sliver of cane, through the gills and out the anus of the fish. He doubled the sliver of cane back against the main stem of the pole and fastened the skewered fish with strong twine. This lure fish was usually caught early on the night before and left out in the enclosure all night. And Moroa had told man that he would be able to trick the shark with a day-old bait fish. He lay three long bamboo fishing spears along the lamtu. Then the Old One took kulau, the green coconut whose milk was cool and sweet and he put some cold kaukau into his basket. He always placed his basket at the very back of the canoe on a little platform he had made from three pieces of flat wood. The water which collected in the bottom of the canoe would wash under the platform but his basket remained safe and dry. Nobody else was as well organised as the Old One. Years of his life spent in his canoe had taught him many simple tricks. Further down the beach at the point where another large lawatbulut tree stood, the rainmaker was preparing his canoe and kasaman. He cast his eyes with satisfaction over the mirror-calm sea. He could tell by the gentle lapping of the tiny waves on the shore that his magic had been successful. The sea was calm and awaited the shark callers.

'The Old One who knows the way of the shark', had one last ritual of magic to perform. He had a piece of heavy vine found only high up in the big bush behind Lorolargun. This vine was covered with tiny, sharp thorns which could prick a man and make his skin turn red and swollen. He took the piece of vine to the place where his four stone shark gods lay in their coral enclosure. With whispered words of magic he rubbed the mouths of the sharks, back and forth with the vine; then rubbed up and down the tails of each shark in turn, quietly speaking the magic words. By rubbing the mouths of the stone sharks with the thorny vine he would put the teeth of the real sharks on edge, make them hungry for the bait fish which the man in the canoe would offer to them. By rubbing the tails of the stone sharks the magic would direct the tails of the real sharks and cause them to swim quickly to the canoe of the awaiting shark caller. Then he uprooted a small piece of uli or wild ginger and threw it into the sea. The wild ginger makes the saliva of man flow when it is chewed, so it would make the saliva of the shark flow in anticipation of the juicy bait fish. The Old One had completed his preparatory magic and taking his long, many-pronged spear, he speared the pebble beach from the house of the shark gods, down to his canoe. This fastened all the devil sharks to the floor of the ocean. They would not be able to approach his canoe or those of his fellows and do them harm, for he had fastened them to the ocean's floor. A large rock which he had put in his canoe a few days before, sat up front and looked as though it could serve as an anchor. He pushed his canoe into shallow water and stepped in. The canoe hardly settled further into the water with the light weight of the old man. He paddled silently, directly out from the beach and at an invisible spot, which he knew to be the traditional path of canoes of the house of Langle, he veered left. It was tradition that a man must pass the other shark callers' enclosures along the paths in the sea, designated by the tumbuna of long ago. No man would paddle along the path of another. That would be an insult to the other, a sign of disrespect. The invisible paths started from the headland of Lima and the closest one to shore ran to Logusolamat, as it was the



THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE WAY OF THE SHARK

closest to Lima. The next pathway a little further out, ran to Langle, the next still further out, to Levintasla, the next to Umin and so on. Those shark callers who lived in the house of Kantaloge at the other end of Lorolargun, furthest away from Lima, had to travel along the path furthest out to sea until they reached level with their own enclosure. There they could paddle directly into shore. In this way, no man ever crossed the path of another on his way out shark calling or on his way home, for every man came to shore at the strip of beach outside his shark calling enclosure. Once a man had passed the headland of Lima, he could paddle where he liked for the traditional paths only ran from Lima to the enclosures. There were no enclosures on the other side of Lima. The Old One rounded Lima and followed the coastline southward until he reached the bay where long ago the ancestors had killed the Chinese and sunk their ship. At the reef outside the bay, he stopped. Careful not to touch the reef with lembiros, the tip of the paddle, he speared the reef, with quick stabbing motions. Then he paddled out to deeper water and dropped the large stone that had sat in the front of the canoe. The stone made a big splash and many tiny ripples danced on the surface to show where it had been swallowed by the ocean. The stabbing of the reef and the throwing of the large stone would let the sharks which the Old One had called with his magic, know that he was there. He knew that they would have heard the splash of the rock and the vibrations of his spear on the reef and would follow the path of his canoe out to the deep sea.

Now the Old One changed his course to south-west and as he paddled he looked up to the giant tent of stars above him. They seemed almost close enough to be picked from the sky. These stars of the northern tropics are a fascinating mixture of southern and northern hemisphere lights but to the Old One they were merely visible proof that the ancestors were there and could be called upon to aid their children still living in Lorolargun. Way out to the east, the sun was rising out of the sea but his light had not reached over the mountains to the old man in his canoe. With every stroke of his paddle into the sea, myriads of tiny phosphorescent sparks flew out behind. It had always given him pleasure to be alone in his canoe with the sea and his magic. Sometimes when the canoe plunged headlong into a wave, a spray of sparks like thousands of tiny eyes fell around him. He was never puzzled, there were stars in the night sky and these were the night stars of the ocean. Perhaps they were the eyes of the ocean spirits quickly opening and closing again, having been awakened by the bump of the canoe or the brush against the paddle. It did not matter for they never harmed him. The ocean had beautiful stars during the daytime too. They were spots of brilliant blue, caused by the reflection of the sun on the water. These stars of the midday tried to trick men's eyes after many hours of drifting in that midday heat. The Old One could still see these stars even when he closed his eyes. These stars made it difficult for man to see the approaching shark. The Old One always pulled further out to sea than the others. The rainmaker and the nephew who were closer into shore could see the Old One, a speck on the horizon. So clear was the new day that the shark callers could see a faint line of blue that was the Gazelle Peninsula and the telltale bank of clouds above it.

The Old One pulled out to the large clear shark road. He slowed his paddling as he approached and



he pulled the paddle back through the water with big strong strokes. He heard lembiros, the tip of the paddle crying underwater and he saw the ripple it sent out along the ocean's surface. He looked down into the depths of water and knew that Lembe the shark lurked nearby. When he was on the smooth shark road he paddled a full circle, beating the paddle into the water and singing, 'tumlos belos, tumlos belos, tumlos belos!' which was the song of the shark callers of every enclosure who called 'fish jump, shark jump, fish jump, shark jump!' When he had completed his circle in the middle of the shark road, he made sure that the front of his canoe was facing into shore as he drifted along the road, for this was the season of lamat, when he must snare the shark on the right side of his canoe, from which the south-easterly, the lamat blew. All these things he did as automatically as breathing. He took lenantulus, the lure pole and fish and holding it in his left hand, put it in the water on the right hand side of the canoe. Taking larung, he shook it beside the canoe on the right. The half coconut shells danced on the hoop of cane. They knocked against the side of the canoe and they stirred the water beside the canoe into a foam of tiny bubbles and sent their ripples out along the shark road. The Old One shook for a short while on the right side, then repeated the performance on the outrigger side of the canoe. Then he shook the water from the glistening half coconut shells and placed larung back in the canoe near his feet. He drifted slowly along the shark road, the bait fish in the water, and scanned the surface for fins. His eyes searched the depths for the more mysterious silent approach of shark from the bottom of the ocean. The sun was over the mountain and although it was still early morning, the calm water reflected the sunlight and the glare and heat held promise of a long, hot day. The Old One held lenantulus and filled his pipe with one hand and lit it with a box of matches which he took from an old tobacco tin in his basket. Soon the bluish smoke floated lazily up and hung in the air over his head. There was hardly a breeze. This shark fishing was work for a patient man and the Old One was patient. His eyes continually scanned the sea above and below the surface. After drifting for the duration of time it took him to smoke a bowlful of tobacco, he took the paddle and faced the canoe prow towards land, as was demanded by custom during lamat and he shook the shells again on either side of the canoe. Then he placed them beside his feet again and waited and watched. Come on Lebeatle the white shark, or Lesinabe the blue shark, or Lebigugu, you shark with your long head, come on up to the bait fish. He could see that the nephew and the rainmaker were drifting along another shark road, not far from one another. He wondered if their sharks had approached them yet. Sometimes the shark appeared in his silent splendour, circled the canoe once or twice, then disappeared again. Then the shark caller would have to sing his own song to woo the shark back to his canoe. He would never use larung when the shark was nearby as the shark would realise the rattle was a trick to make him think there were many fish beside the canoe. No, the Old One knew that the rattle must be put back in the canoe and he must rely on his magic and the smell of the bait fish to bring the shark closer. Further out on another shark road, the Old One could see a few dried coconuts and vines tangled around an old piece of kapiak log. Overhead some tarangau were circling; occasionally diving head first down to the water only to fly straight back up with a



small fish clutched in their beaks. His magic was working. There was his rubbish his song of lantum the cricket had sent out to sea and there were his bird totems circling above it. He shook the water off the bait fish which had begun to smell a little and laid it across the lamtu supports beside his long bamboo spears. He took his paddle and set off towards the circling tarangau. He sang softly to himself the song larangam, meaning tarangau the sea bird. As he approached he heard and then saw Lilom the dolphin diving into the school of fish and surfacing again, blowing and puffing air in and out of his fat belly. The Old One knew that Lilom and Lembe often fed near one another without fighting, although he had seen Lilom fight a shark and once long ago he had seen sharks chasing Lilom. The Old One liked Lilom and his playful antics. Once he had been chased by a school of dolphins who had come to investigate the shaking of larung. They must have expected to find many juicy fish to eat for when they found nothing they became angry at the canoe and swam under it, scratching their backs on its hull and bumping the outrigger until the Old One thought he must surely capsize. Then they had left as quickly as they had come and shortly after he had caught a giant Latno, the shark who fights.

He approached the rubbish and placed lenantulus and the bait fish in the water and shook larung. The birds wheeled off into the distance and circled once or twice before they returned to feed off the small fish around the log. The Old One drifted along near the debris for some time, but the current along the shark road was carrying him too swiftly towards Lorolargur, so he placed the bait fish on the outrigger support and pulled off the shark road and down towards the south again. The rainmaker and the nephew were still drifting along closer into shore than he, but they occasionally stopped calling and pulled down towards the south against the current too. The Old One found a suitable place and shook the shells again. His eyes were screwed up against the glare of the sunlight from the calm water. The canoe had shipped some water which he bailed out with the folded pandanus leaf. The sun was almost overhead and his skin was hot and his throat dry, so he took kulau and cut the top off with his bush knife and drank deeply of the cool, refreshing, unripe coconut juice. His attention was diverted by a whoop, from the direction of his two friends. He saw that the rainmaker had snared a shark and it was fighting with kasaman. He was pleased his magic for the rainmaker had been successful. He did not bother to paddle over to assist the rainmaker. He was an experienced shark caller and could handle his catch single-handed.

The Old One paddled further away and further out to sea. He had spotted more circling birds. The sun stood directly overhead and although the Old One had felt its burning heat all his life he still moved slightly on his plank seat to scoop up salt water to splash over his face and shoulders. He was hot. The heat, the reflection of the water and the necessity to sit upright on the plank seat and not lean over too far to one side or the other was exhausting. Still the Old One never gave up until he had caught his shark or darkness had fallen.

It was well into the afternoon and he could no longer see the canoes of the rainmaker or of the nephew and he guessed that they had gone home. He shook larung again, near the debris he had found and he felt that his shark would soon come. It came. Circling up from the ocean's floor,



in lazy spirals, just as Pilai the lizard had climbed up the lawatbulut tree. He had seen and caught many, many sharks but each one made his belly leap with excitement before it pulled tight the ropes in his stomach. He knew he had ropes in his stomach, he could feel the tightness of them. He stopped rattling and he held the lure fish deep in the water. He waited, never taking his eyes from the shark as it cautiously approached his canoe. It was a Lebeatle, shark that sees the club when man goes to kill him. He knew he would have to be careful, this was a big Lebeatle. The shark came straight up for the bait fish without breaking the surface of the water. The Old One drew it quickly out so that the reflection of the red fish was all that remained in the water. He smiled to himself and remembered that clever sharks had often crept up from the floor of the ocean and stolen bait fish and pole in one quick bite before the poor shark caller realised that the shark was there. The surprised Lebeatle was close to the surface now, searching for the morsel of food which he had smelt the moment before. Lebeatle, the white tipped shark, circled the canoe in wide, quick circles. The Old One cautiously put the bait fish back in the water. He knew how to train these sharks to approach slowly so he could snare them. If the shark rushed in at the bait fish, the Old One would jerk it out just in time, so finally the shark would come in close to the canoe at a quiet suspicious pace. He wondered how this Lebeatle would react. The Old One was able to snare the shark no matter from which direction it approached. If it approached head on, the Old One would snare it, or if it came behind him, or even if it came at right angles to the canoe. Nobody else in Lorolargun but he, could snare sharks that came directly at the canoe. This required a great deal of skill on behalf of the shark caller. Having caught it he must hold the snared shark, and manoeuvre it as it thrashed wildly until its head pointed away from the canoe. If he let the shark go while it was facing the canoe, it would swim under the hull and tear the outrigger off in its fight against kasaman. The Lebeatle shark was cruising closer now and more slowly. The Old One could see that he would have to take it in the frontal approach. It was closing the distance between itself and the old man now. Calmly the old man took kasaman from behind him. He held kasaman by the central part. His thumb around the wooden stopper, his first and second fingers held the slipknot and his other two fingers held the float underneath, supporting it. Lebeatle was only a canoe's length away now and cruising slowly towards the bait fish. The Old One could see its angry eye and smelt the familiar smell of shark. Skskksksksksksk! he whistled between his teeth, and on came the shark. The Old One slipped the bait fish through the noose which was now submerged in the water, and offered it to the great slit which was the hungry mouth of the shark. The shark propelled itself quickly forward with a flick of the great tail and the Old One drew the bait fish back through the noose. The shark having smelt and seen the fish was oblivious of the noose and headed straight through the noose after the fish. Quickly the Old One threw lenantulus into the canoe and released his finger hold on the slipknot. Holding the cane handle of the noose rope, he dropped kasaman with a jerk onto the back of the unsuspecting shark. He had made this manoeuvre so quickly it was like magic. There was the shark, the noose around its girth, behind its gill slits and in front of its pectoral fins. A moment of time when all was still, then the Old One cast the propeller away, the

slipknot around the shark secured by the jerk he had given the handle.

Then the fight began. The Old One had done all he could at this point. The shark was free to fight kasaman. The wooden float was not attached to the canoe. The Old One held no line which connected him with his shark. His eyes and their gaze after the shark was the only bond between them. The shark went into a mad rising and turning and frenzied dragging of kasaman the float along the surface to try to free itself from the stranger on its back. The thick cane noose cut into his rough skin. The resistance of the water against the blades of the propeller only served to tighten the slipknot and the noose around the shark. Now and then the shark would leap and dive down into the water with its tail like a waving arm of a mad man and would be lost from the old man's view. The shark would dive deeper and deeper, the pressure and resistance increasing against the blades of kasaman. On and on it fought the terrible propeller which tried to drag him to the surface. The Old One in his canoe paddled after the kasaman and shark. When they submerged he had to trust in his magic of the cane handle and the wooden stopper who spoke to one another underwater. Only when he saw the cane handle appear above the water again way out into the distance, did he smile to himself. He knew that kasaman had won the battle. The limbom stopper had not broken and the handle had brought them up to the surface; the handle which could see him, the old man in the canoe, and the clouds and the sky and all the world above water. He knew what the two spoke to one another underwater. The blades of kasaman, whitened with coral paint, glistened in the late afternoon sun and the Old One could see this from a great distance. He paddled quietly over. The big Lebeatle lay snared in the noose, trickles of red blood running from under the tight cane rope which held it prisoner. The Old One looked at the shark. He had caught many but still he loved to see their brave fight. He respected the shark, he was not frightened of them and he loved to eat their sweet meat. Far nicer it was to him than the fatty undercooked flesh of pig. He looked into the small angry eye and knew that it saw him too. It was a Lebeatle that had dragged that man from his canoe and bitten his arm off. The old man took his long bamboo spear with the single steel prong from its resting place on the outrigger support. With an accurate single stroke he speared the left eye and then the right. The exhausted shark thrashed with its remaining energy. The Old One waited until it was quiet again. Then he brought his canoe in close, wary of the large tail. His canoe had been broken by the tail of a dying shark before. He cautiously leant over and picked up kasaman from the top of the shark's back. He pulled it closer to him, then twisting it he pulled it so one blade protected his upper body and arm and the lower blade protected his thigh and leg. The snared shark hung in the noose on the far side. His hand was protected as it held kasaman in the very centre, out of reach of that fearsome mouth. He reached behind him and grabbed the heavy wooden club. Holding kasaman in his left hand he brought down a smashing blow to the right side of the head of Lebeatle. The shark gave a lurch and the Old One pushed it away with kasaman. He was always protected by kasaman as the old teeth marks on his float showed. He gave two or three more glancing blows to the right hand side of the head. Then, turning the wooden float and the shark around, he struck it on the left

hand side of the head.

When the Old One was quite satisfied that the shark was dead, he pulled it into the canoe. This he did with the minimum of movement lest the frail, evenly-balanced canoe tip over. He put the cane handle over the prow of the canoe and pulled it back until it was firmly held. Then he took the great body by the tail where Moroa had held Lembe the first shark. He hauled the tail section on board then the rest of the shark. When he had the shark lying in the bottom of his canoe, he released the cane handle from the prow and laid the great head up on the front outrigger support, so the shark faced in the direction they were going for all to see and the long tail came right back under his feet. The Old One did not free the shark from kasaman, which lay on an angle against the outrigger supports. He turned his canoe about and with the help of the current flowing towards Lorolargun he pulled for home.

As he rounded Lima he took his taur shell from its place next to his basket behind him and blew four loud even blasts, which signalled a catch for the house of Langle. The 'Old One who knows the way of the shark' had made another successful catch.

He pulled his canoe ashore and stepped out into the shallow water. People had flocked to the beach to see what sort of shark the Old One had caught. The children whispered in awe at such a large Lebeatle but the shark callers themselves never showed surprise at the size of another's catch. To show surprise could be taken as an insult. The nephew came and helped the Old One free the dead shark from the cane noose and the rainmaker whose shark was already cut and cooking in his mumu on the beach, came to cut the shark for the Old One. A shark caller never cut his own shark, someone else always did him the honour.

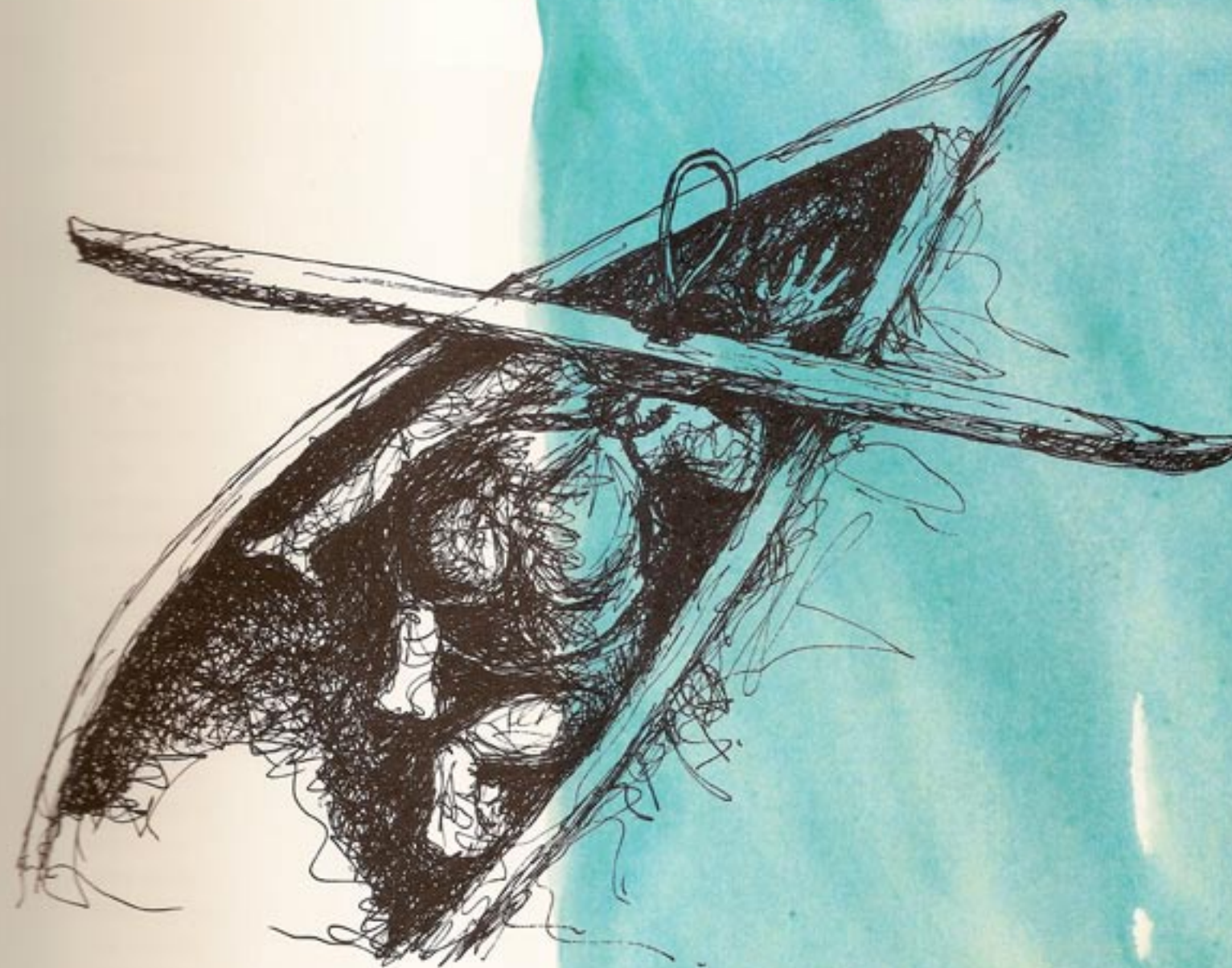
The Old One returned his canoe to its logs on the beach under the pandanus palm and sat his weary bones on the beach and watched the rainmaker cut his shark. The shark was washed in the sea and hauled up on the beach facing inshore. The dorsal fin was cut off and offered to the one who had caught it. The Old One refused it, giving it to the child of his Tarangau niece. The boy ran off with the great load of the dorsal fin and its heavy cut of flesh beneath. The Old One would taste it later, cooked to perfection by his niece. Then the shark was rolled over onto its back by grabbing the right pectoral fin and rolling it over from right to left as was the custom in the season of lamat. The rainmaker slit the shark from one end of its creamy coloured belly to the other.

Eager children waited to see if the shark had lebelik, babies. If it had any, many groping excited fingers pulled the sack containing the small sharks from the mother. Each child who managed to win a lebelik ran home to bid his mother to cook it for him. Next, the entire contents of the stomach was removed and washed in the sea by one of the rainmaker's volunteer helpers. The Old One sat on the beach and pulled the cold grey kaukau from his basket. He had not eaten all day, so now he ate the morsal, after which he chewed betel nut. The liver of the shark was removed, two long dark lobes, and offered to the Old One who signalled that it be given to the children. The liver of the shark was the seat of its decision and strength and power and it made a tasty meal. The man eating the liver of the shark would receive something of the shark's strength. The Old One

always gave it to the children. Each child received as much as his clenched fist could hold, bigger hands received larger portions than smaller hands. This was the measurement of how much liver each child should receive and there was no arguing that one should have more than he could hold. The women of the families governed by the house of Langle received the remaining viscera and the belly cuts, and the men the tail. The Old One took the head and he and his friends proceeded to mumuim outside his enclosure on the beach. The heat of the small grey pebbles were hot enough to cook the head of the shark.

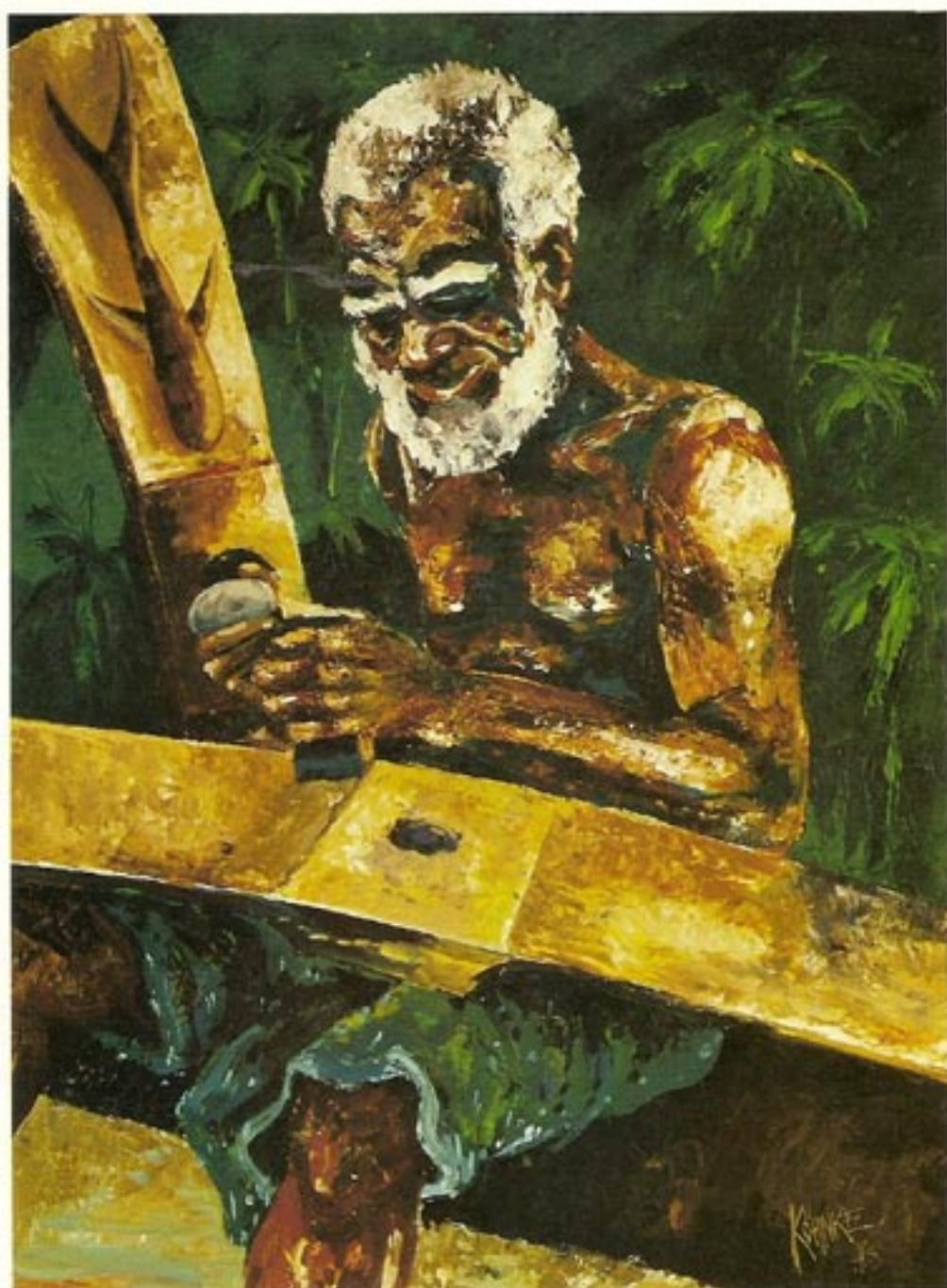
The nephew sat and told the Old One that a shark, a Latno had come up to him, circled and gone away again. He was worried as he had not broken any of the tambu. He had not slept with his wife nor eaten food from her hand before he had gone out. The Old One nodded his head and spoke: 'Perhaps the nephew had trodden mistakenly in the excrement of pig, dog or fowl and had not realised it. The shark knew this thing and went away. This Old One will make the magic to clean the skin of the nephew who will catch a shark tomorrow.'

When their meal was cooked they ate it together with cold taro which the niece had given them. A few men had come along the beach and sat down to hear the Old One tell of the fight of today's shark. They were immediately invited to share shark and taro and they all sat and listened to the Old One tell of his day, and the fight of the Lebeatle that was now being eaten.



They sat around on the beach after they had eaten the shark and taro. Most men chewed betel nut or smoked the homemade twist tobacco cigarettes. The Old One smoked his bamboo pipe. An old man who was the head of Meribak the governing family of the house of Kantaloge joined those sitting on the beach. It was not often that the Old One saw the bearded one from Kantaloge as their shark enclosures lay at either end of Lorolargun and the distance was usually considered too great except for special occasions. The bearded one, named affectionately Timitas, his father's name, had come to hear how the 'Old One who knows the way of the shark' had caught his recent catch.

They sat and talked in a friendly manner, as indeed they were friends, having lived their years since birth in the same village. But the Old One and he called Timitas, the bearded one, were also rivals. Timitas knew something of shark magic, but not as much as the Old One. He had a faithful following from his Maningulai clansmen.



THE CARVER ELIAP TIMITAS

Although the Old One claimed that the magic of the house of Kantaloge was no good, men from that house caught sharks without consulting him. Besides, the Old One belonged to the original family of the giant pig, Lungadak, or Lungalunga as it was called on the east coast of New Ireland. The Old One loved to tell the story and he taunted his bearded friend as an excuse to tell it again. 'Ah, you whose family came after the killing of Lungadak the giant pig, how goes your shark magic?' It was believed that the families who came after the killing of the pig were those who had brought the tradition of shark calling, but that was so long ago nobody knew for sure.

The bearded one from the house of Kantaloge who knew his Langle friend well, grunted good humoredly for he knew that he was about to hear the story of Lungadak and everyone loved to listen to the Old One's stories. 'The story of the giant pig is claimed by the people of Losu on the east coast but it is not their story. It belongs to the west coast of New Ireland and especially to this village because two men from here killed him.'

'It was long ago when there lived in the village of Sear, in the far south-west, three old men. The three owned a pig and fed him daily. The pig grew past the normal size of the other village pigs. Everyday the old men of Sear fed him and he became bigger and bigger, until one day he was big and angry and large enough to kill a man. The men went to feed him in the afternoon and the pig broke out of his *banis and ate the three old men. The pig belonged to them and they always fed it well, but the pig ate the three men first. When the pig was finished eating the men, it ate all the other people in Sear village.'

'The word soon spread up the west coast of New Ireland that the giant pig, Lungadak, was coming, eating everyone in every village that he passed so the people of Lorolargun prepared themselves and were ready with many newly-cut canoes. Then they waited to see if the pig would come closer. When Lungadak was not far from Lorolargun the people could hear his roars and they ran away. The pig was still some way from the village when the people of Lorolargun packed their possessions and headed for the Gazelle Peninsula.'

'There was one old woman who had no relatives whatsoever. She stood on the beach and watched all the canoes pulling out. She asked the first canoe to take her with them, but the people in the canoe said they had no room for her and told her to get into the second canoe. The next canoe told her to catch the next and so on until the last canoe. The last canoe did not want to take the old woman so she said it didn't matter, if the pig wanted to eat her, it could, she would just lie down on the beach and wait for it. So the last canoe left and the old woman lay down and thought about the pig which would come and eat her. A small laslie pigeon came up to the woman lying on the beach. The old woman thought that the pigeon may as well make love to her as she was going to die anyway. The laslie bird walked up and down the beach and finally it came up to the old woman and made love to her. Then the laslie bird walked up the beach and came back again and made love to the woman a second time. Then the bird went away and the woman became pregnant with twins. So she got up with the help of her walking stick and went off to find a safe place to have her

* *banis*: fence



LASLIE'S JOY



LUNGADAK THE GREAT PIG

babies. She went to a stone called lernerisin, which means "the stone where she hid from the rain". Below it was another big stone called luatanin meaning "stone of the pregnant belly". She went and sat on the stone of luatanin and saw it was not safe, so she searched for a safer place. She found another stone but soon saw that the pig could get up onto it and eat her, so she searched further. She went higher up into the mountain until she came to a large stone with a chasm on one side and a steep cliff on the other. She knew that she was safe here from the pig. This stone is called lagagalabo meaning "the stone that held the pig back".

'There on the stone of lagagalabo, she gave birth to two male children. Although their father was a laslie bird the two children were human boys and they were called Kasangaliep and Kasangalom. The two boys grew magically quickly for the pig had still not reached the deserted village below when the boys were fully grown men. The old woman no longer called them her sons but grandsons. When the two were strong, the old woman told them to go and cut the wood of the lembon tree. They cut the wood into strong sharp spears and made many spears.'

'Then the old woman made food for her grandsons. When she had prepared it, she served it under her leg to them. When she served it like that it was full of kaiboliyu magic which filled the two men with power and magic. This she did every day. She salted their food by urinating on it and she always passed it to them under her leg. In this way she filled the two men with strength. It filled their bellies with heat and power until one day they heard the pig approaching. The pig smelt them up on the stone and tried to reach them. The two boys were ready for the pig with their large bundles of hardwood spears. The pig was angry because he could not find a way to get onto the stone. The two men were eager to kill the pig and they cried out and danced around on the stone ready to spear the pig but the old woman told them to wait, it was not yet time.'



THE SPEARS OF KAIBOLIYU

'The old woman made her last magic to fill them with power for the fight. She stood up and yelled: 'larplarplarplarlarplarp!' and the men were filled with magic power and they ran down the rock, hurling spears at Lungadak the great pig. In the place where the spring of fresh water flows today, the two speared the pig who urinated, excreted and spilt his blood which can all still be seen lying on the ground. They chased him further and further and they could hear the old woman's magic cry 'larplarplarplarlarplarp!' and they chased the pig further up north, spearing him all the while as they ran, until they came to Maragalang. There they chased him over to the east coast and killed him at last at Losu village. All the people of Losu had run away to the Tabar Islands when they had heard the pig coming.'

'Kasangaliep and Kasangalom hung the skin of the pig on two sticks and gave all the flesh of the pig to the fishes and birds as there were no men to give the pig to. So the two brothers went back to the west coast via Maragalang, where they threw all their spears at the spirit stone jutting out of the sea.'

'Those spears of Kasangaliep and Kasangalom were so full of magic that they turned into sword fish as soon as they hit the centre of the spirit stone jutting out of the sea. The mouth and nose of the sword fish is the head of the magic spears of kaiboliyu. The men of Lorolargun know when they

see the sword fish that he carried the magic spears of the two brothers as his nose to this day.' Those listening who knew the story well nodded their heads in agreement and they all sat in silence and smoked. Finally the bearded one got up to go, as the sun had gone down into the sea and he had far to go to his house of Kantaloge. One or two younger men accompanied him to his end of the village as they would visit some of their young friends down there. After the bearded one had said he would go and those remaining had given their blessing of 'orait, yu go!', he took the more difficult way along the pebble beach with those accompanying him.

When they had all gone, leaving the Old One and his nephew alone, the two spoke of the reason why the nephew had not caught a shark. The Old One was very wise in his knowledge of shark magic and immediately knew how to fix the problem. He was sure the nephew had trodden on the excreta without realising for he told the Old One that he had not made play with woman, or touched anything belonging to his wife before he went out shark calling.

'Ah yes nephew, Moran the snake has coiled himself around your belly and prevents you from catching a shark. This Old One will make the magic to uncoil Moran and clean the skin of you whom the shark would not approach.'

The nephew had left his canoe on the strip of beach outside the house of Langle with kasaman the float resting in its usual place on the canoe, its cane nose sleeping in the belly of the canoe. The Old One and the nephew walked off into the bush just behind the Old One's enclosure, and came back with some long thin leaves of a variety of pandanus. The nephew squatted at the water's edge. He folded the leaves so they would scoop up the sea water. The Old One squatted beside him, reciting the magic words: 'Snake loosen your hold, snake uncoil.' Then the nephew scooped up water in the leaf he held in his right hand and drank a small quantity. The Old One whispered his magic words. He pulled his kabang pouch from his basket and shook some powder into a half coconut shell which he also took from his basket. He added some salt water and mixed the contents into a smooth paste. He handed the half shell to the nephew who made two white spots on his cheeks under each eye while the Old One said: 'As the man makes the shark's eyes on his face, so will the eyes of the shark see the man and approach his canoe.' Then the nephew made a spot with his right index finger on his left shoulder and another with his left index finger on his right shoulder. He marked his belly in a long stroke down the centre and another down the centre of his back. All the while the Old One recited the magic words. Then the nephew placed his clenched fists under his armpits forming an imitation of the pectoral fins of a shark and he swung his body from side to side. The nephew took the leaf and scooped a little more sea water and swallowed a few more drops. He and the Old One got up and the Old One whispered the magic words to him to loosen Moran from his belly. Then the Old One walked back up the beach and entered his enclosure.

The nephew climbed into the belly of the canoe, whispering the words: 'Snake loosen your hold, snake uncoil.' He put his head and shoulders into the cane nose and crawled through it slowly, repeating the magic words over and over. He crawled out the other side, straightened himself,



SHARK MAGIC

stepped out of the canoe and walked away to his enclosure of Logusolamat without casting his eyes behind him or looking at the canoe, the kasaman, or the noose. He knew that if he looked back the magic would fail.

The Old One sat on his woven coconut frond mat in the enclosure, outside the doorway of his hut as was often his custom in the evenings. He was cleaning the dried encrusted salt off his taur shell and paddle. 'The same magic is made for he who has broken the tambu and slept with woman,' he said quietly. 'All men know that shark will not approach the canoe of he who has slept with woman but sometimes their bellies become hot for a woman and they forget Moroa's tambu. Then they must come to me so I can clean their skins. They must drink the salt water, mark themselves with kabang and crawl through the cane noose.'

'But he who has slept with a woman must go to his enclosure, make a fire in his hut and take off his laplap. He must throw the leaves that he used to scoop the sea water into the fire and crouch naked over the fire. The fire will not burn his nakedness but it will take away the "samting nogut" he did by breaking the custom. Then the man can go and sleep and next morning when he pulls out to sea in his canoe he will catch a shark.'

The Old One was not tired from his long day at sea but his back which often troubled him was aching. 'Ah, the Old One is really old now: his back cries out against pulling all day in the canoe and catching shark. Soon he will pull no more, catch no more sharks, then die.' He shook his head gently and continued to polish his conch shell. 'Taur can make magic between man and woman,' he said. 'The man comes and whispers the girl's name to me. Nobody else hears the whispered name and the man returns to his own enclosure to sleep. Next morning the young man will pull out to the deep sea to catch a shark. When he has gone, this Old One takes his taur and fills it with sea water. Then the name of the girl is whispered into the hole in the shell where man usually blows his taur signals. The name goes inside the shell and is not heard by anyone else. The girl whose name is called hears the loud blasts on the taur. It does not matter how far away from the beach she is, she will hear the blasts and she will recognise the signal as that of the man who asked for the magic, for everybody in Lorolargun knows the different blasts belonging to the shark enclosures of the village. Even if the girl is away up in the gardens in the big bush behind Lorolargun, she will drop her digging stick and run to the beach. She cannot stop herself because the power of the magic is strong. This Old One who makes all the shark magic knows when the man has caught his shark. He cannot see it but he feels it in his skin the moment the man has killed his shark. The girl will wait on the beach till the man returns with his shark. He must give the whole shark to her. If he did not do this, she would be so angry that she would beat him with sticks, throw stones at him and chase him until he dropped, for she is driven by the magic made in the taur shell. After the man has given the shark to her, she will lead him away to the bush where he must make love to her to break the power of the magic over her. Sometimes the two may later marry, but usually this magic is made when a man's belly is hot for a woman who has paid him no attention. If the man wants to make love to the woman another time, and she won't agree, he will have to ask me to make the magic

again for although the magic is strong, it only lasts until the man has made love to the girl.' The Old One put the conch shell into its cover and hung it up on the outside wall of his hut. He poured himself an enamel mug full of water from an old bottle with a homemade wooden stopper. His young nephews and nieces collected his bottle daily and filled it with the cool water of the stream which flowed into the sea near the enclosure of Kantalogue. The Old One went into his hut and slept.



The Old One joined the men sitting on his strip of beach under the shade of the lawatbulut tree. This was a favourite meeting spot, for the men knew the Old One would sit with them and they enjoyed hearing his stories. Some lay cradling their heads on their arms and dozed in the midday heat. Under the lawatbulut, the pebbles were cool and still moist from the early morning dew. Along the great expanse of beach where there were no shade trees, the sun made the pebbles so hot that men had to hurry over them or walk along the water's edge to reach their destination. The sunlight reflected from the still sea and where sky met sea there was hardly a horizon line to be seen. The green dripping leaves of the big bush which crouched behind Lorolargun steamed in the heat. Where the sun's rays did not penetrate there was a smell of rot and damp, where strange mushrooms and weeds lived. This was the home of toad and snake, a place where no one ventured. 'There are many spirits of the bush and sea, some are good and some are bad,' said the Old One. 'Soon it will be time to think of a good spirit of the bush, an ancestor spirit which looks after taro, called tambaran Lesombes. Lesombes has always lived in the big bush behind Lorolargun. If men do not make dances to him, he will not make the taro grow fat and juicy. The tambaran Lesombes, like all tambarans has long hair which has never been cut and long whiskers. He has only one eye in the middle of his forehead, and he wears long leaves hanging from a cord around his belly. Only men of the bush have ever seen Lesombes. He never shows himself to the men of the sea. He is a bush masalai and only tells of his songs and dances to the men whom he sees walking through the bush to the gardens every day. He trusts those men because they belong to the bush like himself. He does not step out in front of them and show himself, but at night when they sleep, he comes into their dreams and teaches them the songs and dances of Lesombes, the taro masalai. Soon it will be time for fathers to make singing decorations for their sons who will dance the spirit dances of Lesombes.

They will wear head-dresses made from long thin leaves soaked in coconut fat and perfumed with crushed flowers. They will wear grass skirts and paint their faces to look like Lesombes. The tambaran will be pleased when he sees the boys dancing his dances and others beating time on small bamboo *garamut drums and he will give Lorolargun a good taro harvest.'

'Ah, but there are bad masalai too.' He paused while he lit his pipe and drew the cool smoke into his lungs. 'Ah yes, a bad masalai called Legas killed a woman from this village last year.' Those listening nodded their heads in agreement for they remembered the circumstances well. 'The woman, she who is dead and lies in the burial enclosure of Kantaloge broke the tambu of the bush. Legas, the evil spirit of the bush lives in a cave high up in the bush near a place where the river comes out of the mountain. There is a little lake in this place, then the river overflows and runs down the mountain side and it goes into the sea down there.' He raised his hand and pointed his crooked index finger to the south-west beyond Lima. 'It is forbidden for woman to go to that place, the home of the bad masalai, Legas. Legas is tall and has four eyes, two in the front of his head and two in the back, so he can see in two directions at once. He saw the woman who broke the tambu approaching his spirit place. She followed the river up gathering wild banana leaves for a mumu and putting them in the **bilum on her back. When she reached the pool where the river came out of the mountain, she put her bilum and bush knife down and took off her laplap. It is forbidden for the people of Lorolargun to wash in a spirit place and it is a strong custom that no woman should ever be seen without her laplap. But the woman was naked and Legas saw all of her and she washed in his spirit water. He looked at her and his evil magic went into her body, but she did not know. She finished washing and put on her laplap and went back down the mountain with her banana leaves.'

'That night she was sick, her eyes rolled and her lips spoke strange words and she could not recognise her own husband or sisters. Legas, the evil masalai, came to her house and made love to her. Legas came every night and made love to the woman. She was sent away to the hospital in †Kavieng but Legas followed her there and every night the evil masalai would make love to the woman whose naked body he had seen in his spirit place. They sent her home to Lorolargun and she died.'

'Nobody can break the customs and not get punished,' he added. Some little boys who had been playing water games in the sea in front of Langle ran up the beach and dripped salt water all over the Old One as they leant to whisper in his ear. He nodded his head and they scampered off to his enclosure. When they came back they had handfuls of elongated nuts. The Old One stood the nuts on their ends on a flat stone and struck them a blow with another large stone which split them longitudinally. The children popped the oily, oval nuts into their mouths and kept the Old One busy cracking them until there were no more left. Then they sat down on the beach beside him.

A little boy had a black streak down one side of his face where he had wiped it with a dirty hand.

* *garamut drum: slit gong*

** *bilum: a string bag*

† *Kavieng is the capital of New Ireland*



BATHING IN A SPIRIT PLACE

'Ah, little one, you look like Watkeris. Who has painted your face?' he asked with a broad smile. He had the attention of the group of boys around him as he began to tell a story. 'There were once two birds, one was called Lebangabang, the hornbill and the other Watkeris, the cassowary. The two were good friends. One day the chief of all the birds of the air and the grassland, told his followers that there was to be a huge feast. All the birds of the air and the grassland were invited and the chief marked the day of the feast. At this time in the long ago, the birds did not have beautifully coloured feathers like they have today. The birds were told by the chief that each one had to arrive at the feast decorated in his own costume. The bushland and the grassland was covered in busy birds all making costumes for the big feast. Lebangabang the hornbill and Watkeris the cassowary decided to decorate each other. Watkeris started to colour his friend, the hornbill. He mixed whites and yellows and blacks. He took a knife and sharpened the hornbill's beak until it was beautifully long and pointed, then he painted on the colours. He put white along the beautiful beak. Watkeris was very clever and soon the hornbill looked as though he was going to a feast. Watkeris painted the tail feathers red and he coated the body feathers with soft charcoal, so they shone a deep black. Then the cassowary took a twig and chewed the end until he had a fine brush. He dipped it in the yellow paint and just touched the beak feathers with a little of the colour. He added a few more touches of yellow to the head and stepped back to admire his work. He was very proud for Lebangabang looked very fine. He told his friend that no other bird at the feast would look as good as the hornbill.'

'Lebangabang started to decorate the cassowary. He carved the beak to a sharp point and was just about to colour it when the two heard the far off cry of the garamut. When the hornbill heard the drum calling them all to the feast, he loaded the knife with dark blue and smeared it all over his friend. He stepped back and told the cassowary how beautiful he looked. Watkeris did not feel good. He asked the hornbill to take more care over his decoration. Lebangabang picked up the red paint and smeared it down the sides of his friend's neck, then he turned and hurried off to the feast. The two have been enemies since that day because all the birds at the feast kept their costumes on for the rest of time and only the cassowary had an unfinished one. So Watkeris and Lebangabang have never been friends again because the hornbill did not paint the cassowary with fine colours.' The children liked the story, they knew it well. Whenever they saw cassowary in the bush they felt sorry for him in his plain feathers and when they heard the noisy hornbill flying overhead, screeching as he went, they knew he was trying to draw man's attention to his beautiful feathers.

The children ran off to play and the men sitting on the beach fell into discussion about sharks. The shark was never far from the minds of those men of the sea. They would sit for hours and talk over their experiences. 'Ah yes, it is time for the new dry reef, the best time for men to catch sharks; when the sea water does not come in to cover the reef for the first time in one moon, it is a good time for sharks. The shark caller sees the reef at tulait when he pulls in his canoe out to the deep sea and he thinks to himself. "Ah, new dry reef, the sharks will be hungry today."'



THE HORNBILL LEBANGABANG'S VICTORY

The nephew had gone out early that morning after the Old One had made his cleaning magic the evening before. A few more men had joined those sitting on the beach. They had seen that the nephew's canoe and kasaman were missing and without spreading the word had come to sit on the beach and await the return of the nephew.

'Kesarisbe means "the sitting down on the beach of a large group of men to await the return of a well known and successful shark catcher". The name Kesarisbe was given to an ancestor of the house of Langle when he was born because his parents hoped that he would be a successful shark caller, and men would sit and wait for his return. It is custom to give names to newborn children which have a meaning. This Old One put the name on the head of his great-nephew, the name Boktise which means to round the headland; then he went and caught a shark and gave it to the parents of Boktise to fasten the boy's name strongly to him. 'Ah yes, it is custom. The old Logwos, whose father was the carver of paddles called his son Logwos, which means "son of the carver of paddles". Sometimes children are given new names, like the sea child whose mother and father died.'

'Once long ago there lived two brothers who were looked after by their uncle and his wife. Every day the aunt and uncle went to the gardens to work and the two boys would eat all the food in the house. The woman was very cross with the boys who ate so much and talked strongly to them. The elder brother decided to send his smaller brother away, as the elder was barely old enough to fend for himself. He found some kanai, a strong wood growing near the beach. He cleaned it out and burned it hollow and sealed up one end. He took his brother and put him in the log and sealed up the other end. The log looked like a kundu drum. The elder brother threw the log into the sea and the tide carried it far out to the ocean.'

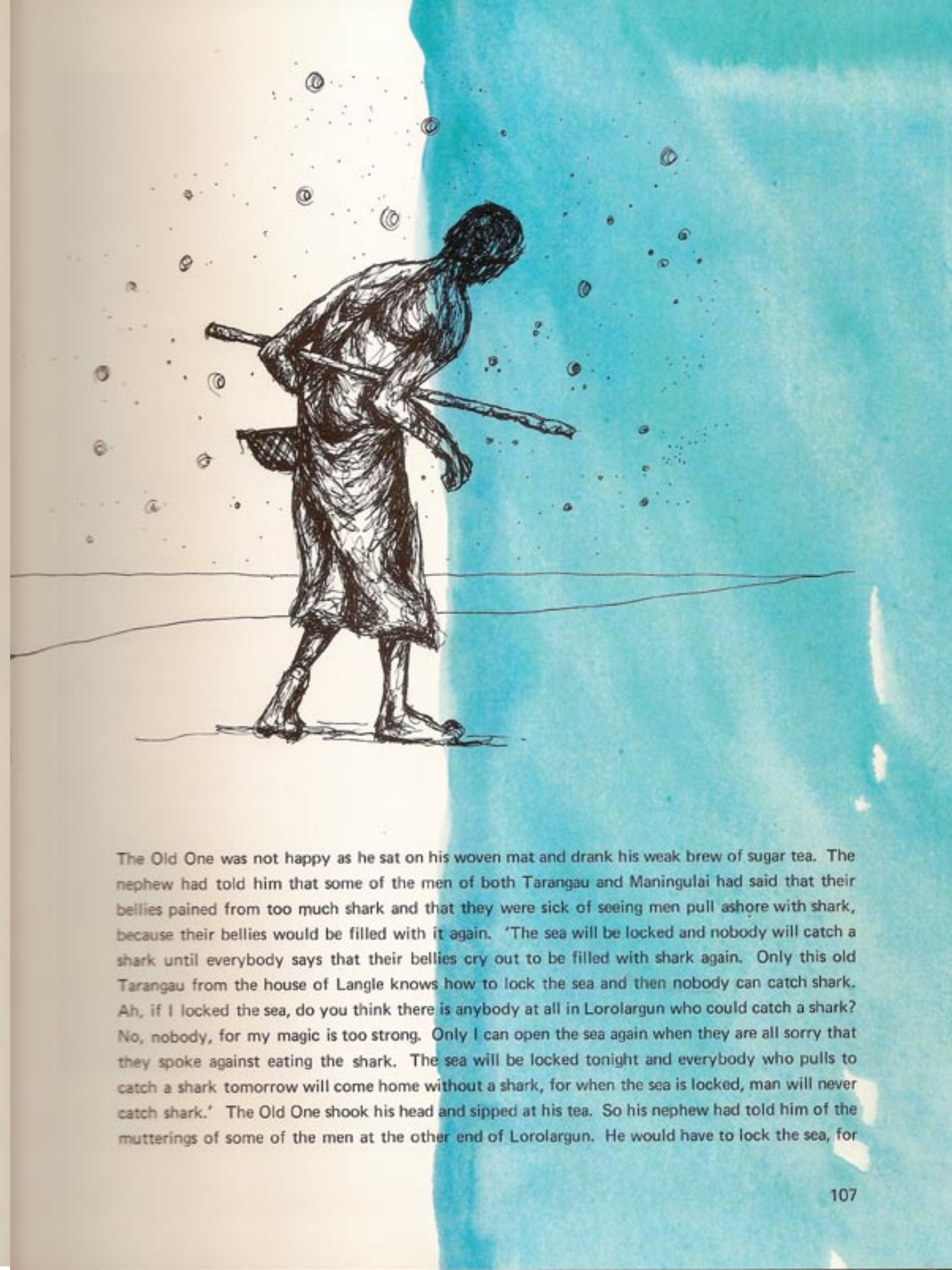
'One day an old man and his son pulled out to the deep sea to catch sharks. They pulled far out to some drifting logs on a shark road and there they shook the shell rattle. The small boy in the log heard the rattling of larung and he started to sing, "dingdingdingdingding". His voice carried along the shark roads and reached the ears of the young boy in the canoe and he asked his father what was singing. His father told him to be quiet and not ask questions about the deep sea. The boy in the log sang his song again and the boy in the canoe asked his father what the sound was. His father told him not to talk about it as it was something evil belonging to the sea. The two in the canoe drifted down the shark road and came close to the log with the boy sealed inside. The boy in the log sang his song again, "dingdingdingdingding". The two in the canoe were close to the log and were frightened by the song. Then they saw the log which had been sealed up and paddled over to it and hauled it up into the canoe. It was heavy so they guessed someone was inside. They lay it in the bottom of the canoe and as they drifted on down the shark road, they waited for it to sing again. The boy in the log sang his song again, then the two in the canoe knew that a child was inside. So they took him back to the village and opened the log inside their shark enclosure. They found the boy inside and asked him what had happened. The boy explained that his mother and father had died and that his aunt did not like to feed him. So the old shark caller and his son adopted the boy and looked after him well and called him "the sea child". The sea has good and



evil masalai too, that is why the old shark caller told his son not to speak of the singing log when he first heard it. There are places in the sea where men never go because they are known to be the homes of evil masalai.'

'Over there,' he pointed towards the sea. 'Out from the enclosure of Kantaloge is a masalai place. If a man approaches that area in his canoe, he will see the water boiling, as if a giant fire was alight on the ocean floor. The water bubbles up and is never quiet. Down below lives an evil clamshell masalai, called Lenka who opens and closes his shell all day and night to make the water boil. It is his masalai place and any man who paddles too close to the bubbling water will be sucked down and swallowed by the clamshell. There are good masalai too, who walk the floor of the deep, deep sea. They look like men and have long hair and fingers and eyes that can see underwater. They help to send the sharks to the canoes of the shark callers. One night the rainmaker was out fishing for bait to catch a shark and he hooked a good masalai. The rainmaker thought he had hooked a shark on his trade store fishing line but when he pulled the fish up it was a man, a man of the deep sea. The rainmaker quickly unhooked the masalai and he slid down into the water again. There are many spirits of the sea. Man must not go close to the places of the evil masalai, but the good spirits wander all over the ocean floor. Sometimes when shark callers go a very long way out to sea and sit for hours shaking larung and no sharks come, the good masalai of the deep sea comes close to the shark caller's canoe. The man follows the good masalai until he can't see him anymore, then he shakes larung, the rattle and it is not long before a shark approaches.'

Some of the men who had been listening to the Old One's story climbed to their feet, stretched their cramped legs and departed. Others sat for a short while longer in order to chew betel nut with the Old One, until the nephew's return. Tarangau circled overhead. 'Ah, the nephew has caught his shark and will be returning soon,' said the Old One. He had a way of knowing the precise moment when one of his Tarangau shark callers had caught a shark. He waited patiently on the beach, chewing betel and smoking his pipe. Just before sundown the nephew rounded Lima and blew the call of a successful catch on his conch shell. He pulled ashore at Logusolamat and the old men got up and went to greet him. The Old One supped on baked shark and taro and discussed the day's catch with his nephew before returning to his hut in the enclosure of Langle.



The Old One was not happy as he sat on his woven mat and drank his weak brew of sugar tea. The nephew had told him that some of the men of both Tarangau and Maningulai had said that their bellies pained from too much shark and that they were sick of seeing men pull ashore with shark, because their bellies would be filled with it again. 'The sea will be locked and nobody will catch a shark until everybody says that their bellies cry out to be filled with shark again. Only this old Tarangau from the house of Langle knows how to lock the sea and then nobody can catch shark. Ah, if I locked the sea, do you think there is anybody at all in Lorolargun who could catch a shark? No, nobody, for my magic is too strong. Only I can open the sea again when they are all sorry that they spoke against eating the shark. The sea will be locked tonight and everybody who pulls to catch a shark tomorrow will come home without a shark, for when the sea is locked, man will never catch shark.' The Old One shook his head and sipped at his tea. So his nephew had told him of the mutterings of some of the men at the other end of Lorolargun. He would have to lock the sea, for

men should not fill their bellies with shark and complain that they were sick of eating it. The Old One would stop them all from catching sharks.

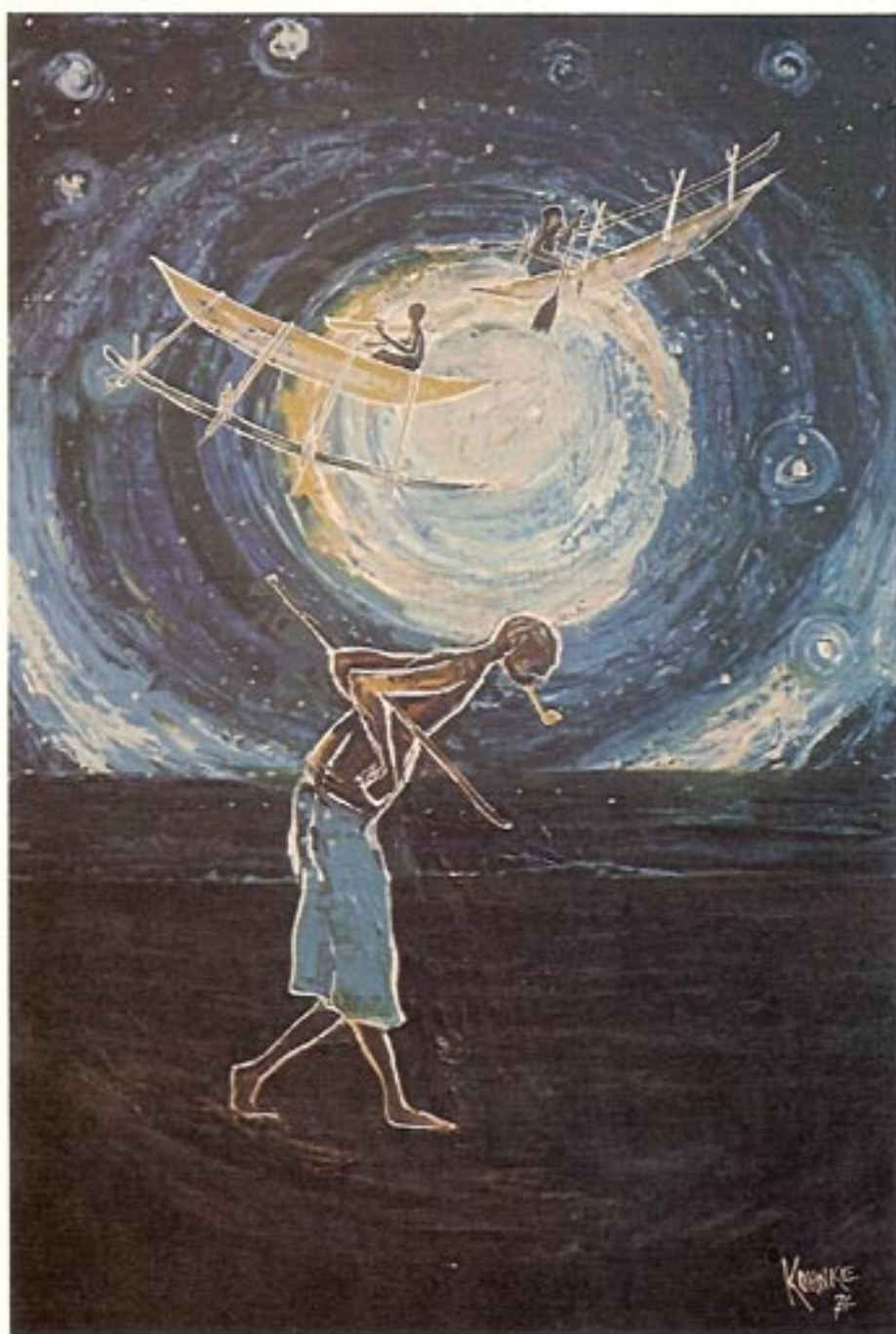
'I will go to the stream which flows into the sea down there,' he said, 'the one which flows from the spirit place of Legas, the evil masalai of the bush. I will face the sea and say the magic taught by Bogin and turn my back on the sea and it will be locked. It will be locked until I go to the stream again and open it by standing with my back to the sea facing the bush to speak the magic words, face the sea again and then it will be open once more. But that won't be until every belly in Lorolargun cries to be filled with shark!' He refilled his enamel mug with tea and added two full spoons of sugar. He stirred it and drank and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and coughed. He felt less angry now. His anger, if it flared up was soon gone with his ready decision, in this case, to lock the sea.

After loading his old pipe with tobacco, he spoke no more of the day's trouble. 'The uncle Bogin was a good man, as were all the line of ancestors of the house of Langle,' he said. 'No man from this line has ever made evil magic, for we only know the strong magic of the sea and sharks. Some men from other enclosures know and make evil magic. The men of Langle have always known the magic which is stronger than anybody's evil magic.' He lowered his voice and moved nearer inside the fire's circle of light. 'Once,' he said, 'an evil magic man tried to make poison against another man. This other man was very sick when he finally told the name of he whom he thought had poisoned him. So then, this Old One who has been schooled in how to make good magic, found out who the evil one was. Ah yes, it is a very good way, it never fails. When it is dark, the Old One goes to the shore and stands in the shallow water, only up to his ankles. He calls many names and finally he calls the name of he who is suspected of making evil magic. As soon as the name is called, many tiny fish come and nibble at the toes of this old tarangau to tell him that he has called the right name. The next morning a shark caller who is going out to catch will be told the name so only he hears. The man must go far out to sea and shake larung and call the shark with the name of the evil man. If the man catches a shark by calling the evil name, the shark is a devil shark and has proved that the fish who nibbled at the Old One's toes were right. If the man does not catch a shark the one who was thought to be evil is not. Ah, but does the Old One ever fail to be right? Ha, no. He has called the names of many evil magic men in the time gone by and has stopped their poison. Ah yes, but we all die. Some die slowly like the old man whose body shook like an earthquake shakes the palms. He broke a tambu. The one who shakes is a Maningulai married to a Tarangau whose line of ancestors are in a spirit place in the big bush behind Lorolargun, the place where the giant pig Lungadak urinated in fright when the two brothers were spearing him.'

'That spirit place was forbidden to the Maningulai husband of the Tarangau woman, but he went there one day to cut cane. As soon as he cut the cane growing up a giant kapiak, his hand began to shake. He hurried back to the village and has shaken ever since. He told his wife where he had been and what he had done, but nobody could stop his shaking. Everybody knows he shakes because he broke a tambu, but he lives yet and his wife cooks kaukau for him and looks after him . . . Ah yes,



THE DEATH OF THE SHARK CALLER



soon this old shark caller will die. Even now his back cries out and he has to walk with his stick across it. In the days before the coming of the men of Germany, every shark caller who died was kept in his own hut inside his enclosure. Ah, but that was long ago. Now the dead are planted in the matmat enclosure, behind or beside the shark caller's enclosure. But then, in that time before when a man died, two young men from the other bird totem looked after the body. They dug a trench inside the hut of the dead man and sat his body in it. His back was supported with a stick and his arms were held out and his legs, bent at the knees, were propped up. The two young men kept watch over the dead shark caller day and night. They burnt many logs the smoke of which was sweet and strong. The smoke from the special logs chased all the insects away while the men guarded the body. The body always broke open first at the bones below the neck.' He pointed to his own protruding collar bones. 'As soon as the body broke open it was time to wash it. The men carried sea water and cleaned the body with it day and night. The sea water and the water of the body ran down and soaked into the ground of the hut where the old shark caller had lived most of his life. When all of the body had disappeared into the earth except for the bones, a feast was held and the bones were buried in the burial enclosure, next to the hut enclosure. The relatives of he who had died would kill many pigs, and sharks would be caught for the feast. Women would go to their gardens and take taro from the soil. When the food was prepared all the men of Lorolargun would assemble in the hut enclosure of the man and burn the hut down. When everyone sat down on the ground, the dead man's relatives would tell how he whose bones lay close by had gone to the spirit world to join the ancestors. He could no longer be seen, but he could be called to help his nephew to catch shark. He was the brightest star in the night sky for he had just died. Then the food would be divided equally amongst all the big men governing the shark enclosures who would in turn divide the feast between the families who belonged to him.'

'Nobody is ever buried in the living enclosure. It is the place where men eat and sleep and nobody ever eats or sleeps in the burial enclosure. It is the place for the bones of the dead. Ah, there are many, many tambu and customs and there is much magic . . . There is magic in the night sky,' he said, 'where the spirit ancestors dwell.' He went out into the enclosure and pointed to a set of stars, hovering above the sea, way down on the horizon line. 'They are the spirit ancestors of long ago. There are two canoes, with three shark callers in each, and they are pulling in their canoe to catch shark. They have pulled across the night sky for many years and are nearing the shark roads. Soon they will catch their shark and turn and pull for home. Ah yes, there is much magic. There is much that even the nephew of this old tarangau does not know. This old tarangau knows all the magic of shark calling through the ancestors of the house of Langle and he knows of the spirit world.'

The Old One did not continue. He looked from the world of the stars, back to the world of men. Taking his walking stick and crooking his arms over it across his back he murmured: 'There is much magic.' And he walked off down the beach under the canopy of stars to seek out the company of the son of the carver of paddles.



THE SHARK CALLERS DREAM

You who have the laughter
of a child in your heart,
and in your voice
the cry of Tarangau,
how many sharks have you caught
since your face knew no beard?
Long ago in the time of tudak
your ancestors followed
the path of the sun.
How many sharks have you seen
off that wild west coast?
In your smoke filled hut
when the sun is asleep
and your pipe has been lit
you tell of the coming of white men
in ships with sails like shells
and belching smoke across the sea.
Now with a gentle chuckle
you witness their going.

Time has bent you back Old One
and stiffened your hands.
Now you walk slowly
but still you do not rest,
still you catch sharks
in the season of lamat.
Before dawn you pull
in your dugout canoe
out on the southern sea.
How many canoes have you cut
from the kapiak tree?
O, maker of the shark snare
the glare of the ocean
has not dimmed your eye.
How many sharks have you snared
with your kasaman?
You know the magic
that calls the shark —
you only remain.

You, of the house of Langle
out on the shark road,
your rattle is heard.
How many sharks have been called
by the sound of your larung?
Your lilting song is carried
across the mirrored sea.
The smell of caught shark
is brought by the wind.
How many times have you blown
your taur shell
past Lima point.
The shark has been lured
by the smell of your bait-fish.
In your enclosure
you have made magic
as your ancestors taught you.
You have called their names
many times, many times.

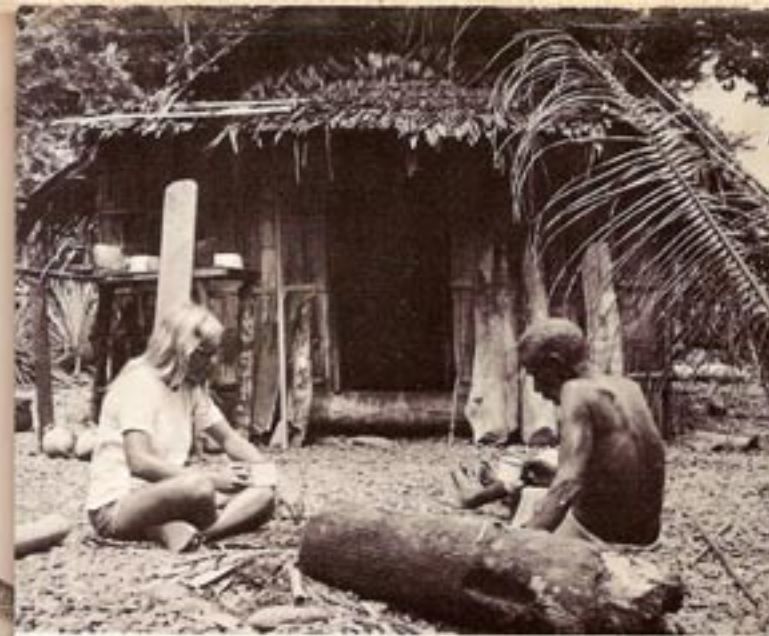
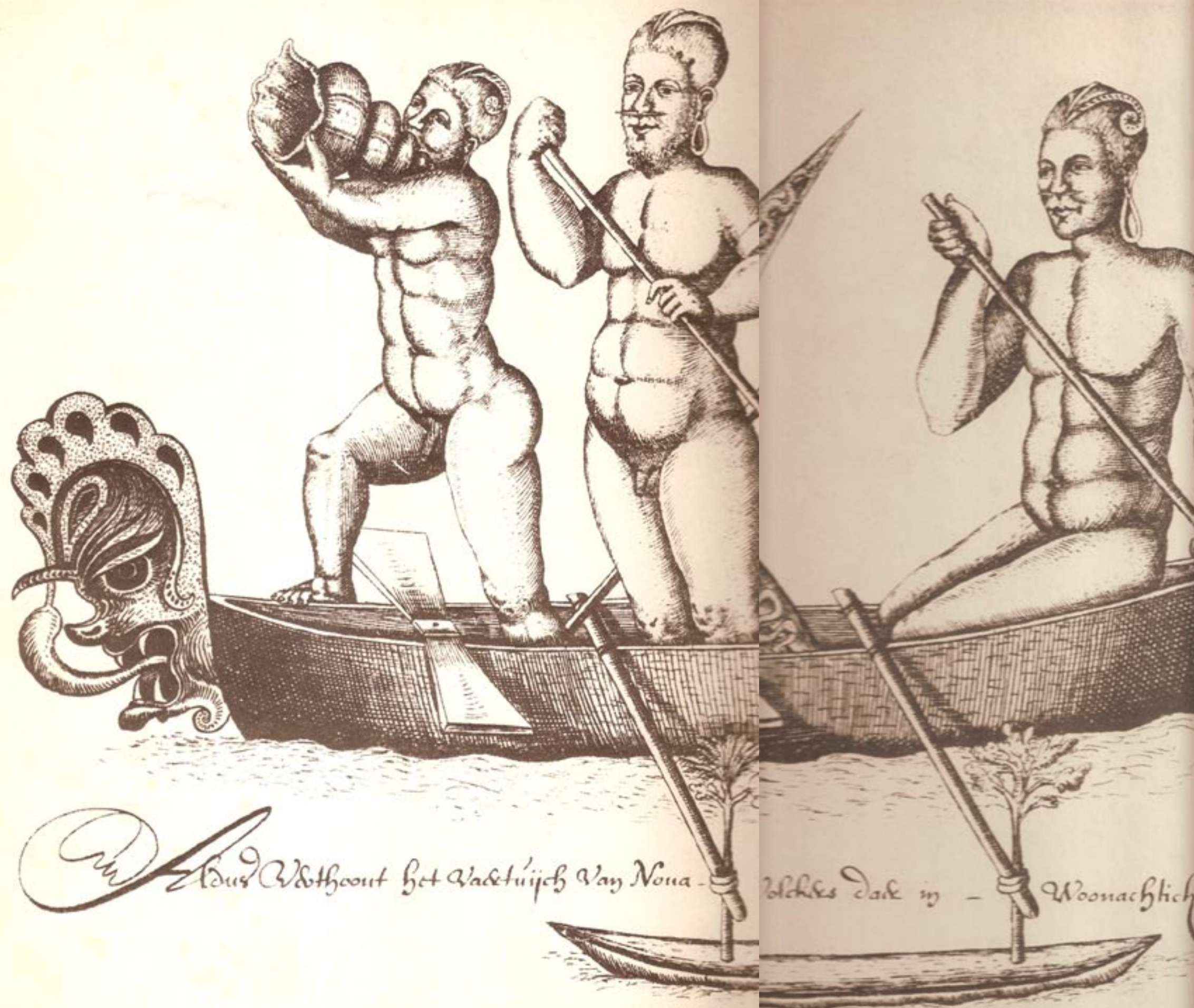
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The author and the 'one who knows the way of the shark', talking and drinking sugar-tea in the enclosure of Langle, 'Lorolargun' village, New Ireland.

Glenys Köhnke was born in Brisbane in 1948 and moved to Madang, New Guinea while still a child. After studying creative art at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, Germany in 1969, she returned to Port Moresby.

The author has travelled extensively in many parts of Papua New Guinea, living in villages, painting and collecting legends and traditions – some of these were compiled into her first book 'Time Belong Tumbuna' (1973).

Glenys Köhnke has held nine exhibitions of paintings and sculpture in Papua New Guinea and Australia and is represented in art collections in Europe, the United States, Africa and Australia. She was awarded a young writers fellowship grant for 1975 by the Literature Board of the Australian Council for the Arts.