

# TIME BELONG TUMBUNA



legends and traditions of  
papua new guinea

paintings and text by  
glenys köhnke

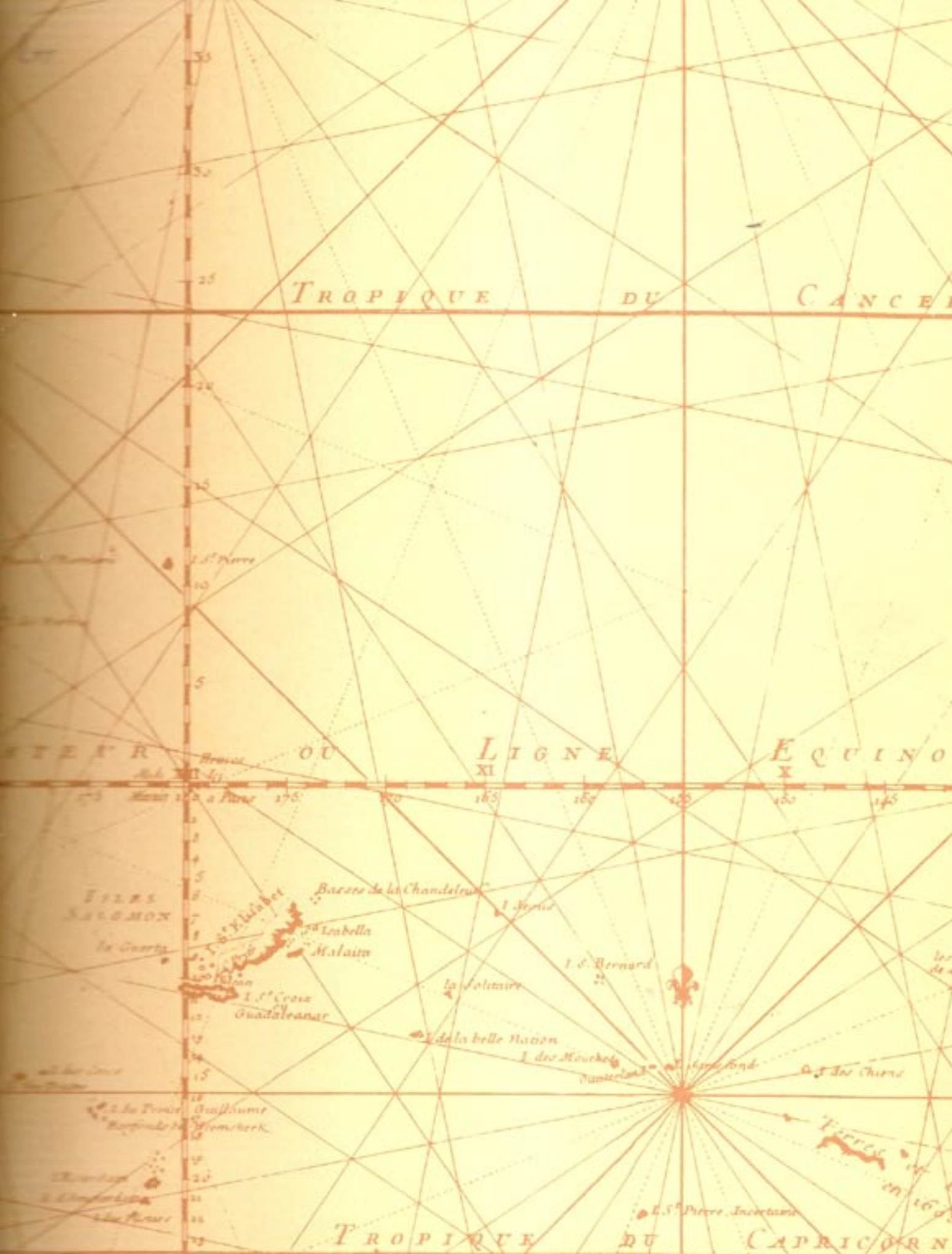
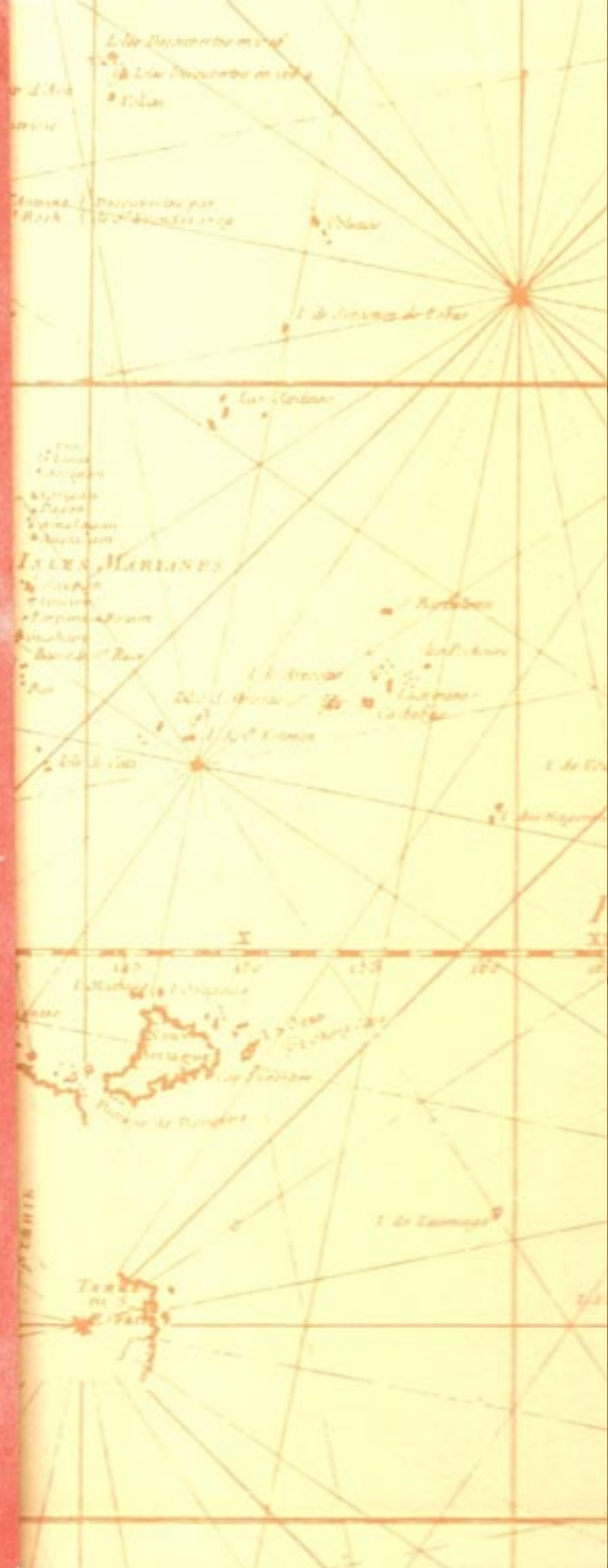
The real mythological heroes are those on the lips of Everyman, whether or not they are venerated in print.

In Papua New Guinea, where oral tradition is the cornerstone of culture, myths represent a continuing art form.

In this book of legends collected from all parts of Papua New Guinea, Glenys Köhnke has produced a work of considerable cultural significance. **Time Belong Tumbuna** is illustrated by means of her own paintings, drawings and sculptures inspired by the legendary heroes and heroines of the Tumbuna.

Through her many roles of collector, transiator, raconteur, interpreter and designer, Glenys Köhnke enables us to share her vision of the cultural complexities of Papua New Guinea.

**Time Belong Tumbuna** is a book which muffles the reverberations of cultural collision in Papua New Guinea by its clear message of respect for traditional social structures.



# **TIME BELONG TUMBUNA . . .**

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**robert brown and associates  
with the jacaranda press**

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since the beginning of time.*

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## acknowledgments

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I would like to acknowledge the help of the late Don Barrett, whose enthusiasm, encouragement and wide understanding of the people of Papua New Guinea was invaluable; Elmar Tonismae, who advised and helped me; John Page, whose task of photographing these paintings and sculptures was a difficult one; Dr David Holdsworth who read the finished manuscript and Sandra Wheatley who patiently deciphered and typed it.

My thanks go also to The Jacaranda Press and Robert Brown & Associates for publishing my book.

## introduction

When the sun goes to rest over the western rim of the world, night falls and brings with it the tropical rain. To those inside the thatched roofed huts, gathered around the glow of the evening fires, it is story time. They sit cradled by the darkness watching with eager eyes the monotonous moving of the storyteller's lips. They listen to the old stories which cloak their lives like the hardened smoke cloaks the rafters above their heads.

I too have been another in the line of listeners to whom these stories have been told. I wish to pass them on, this time not in the traditional way, but written, with visual interpretations, as they have inspired me.

These legends have their origin in the *tumbuna* time. *Tumbuna* is a Melanesian Pidgin word adopted from the Tolai language of the Gazelle Peninsula. The *tumbuna* time is the ancestral past beyond the memory or comprehension of the surviving individual: a vague time in the misty long ago. A *tumbuna* is an ancestor, any person from a great-grandfather to the mythical founder of a group.

The people of Papua New Guinea are divided into approximately ten thousand ethnic groups speaking over seven hundred languages. Despite this great diversity there are many unifying factors. One of these is the legend in the Papua New Guinea society which diminishes language barriers and reduces isolation.

Because of the importance of the oral tradition throughout the island, legends in Papua New Guinea are numerous and varied. They represent a way of understanding life and a way of venerating it. Magic plays such an integral part in everyday existence that it features prominently in most legends. Despite the diversity of cultures, legends are often surprisingly similar.

There are legends which explain the creation of Man and the world of nature, legends of crafts such as shark-calling, fishing, potting and carving, and legends which reflect the mysterious nature of birth, death and the supernatural.

One of the functions of the legend in the oral traditions of Papua New Guinea is educative. The methods of the craftsman, for example, are carefully preserved by the specificity of stories involving crafts.

Social structures have long been governed by these legends. In this way a leader could guide his people and ensure that tribal laws were obeyed. A chieftain could claim the power to interpret the wishes of a spirit in order to direct his tribe's action. This is most evident in tribal wars.

Laws were strict and the breaking of them punishable by death. The fate of those who disobeyed these laws could include being turned into a rock or mountain. Features of the landscape thus served to commemorate the fate of evildoers and to discourage disobedience. The oral tradition provided warning as well as instruction.

The storyteller in Papua New Guinea is a person of esteem and authority in the village, usually an elderly person who has proven himself as a warrior. His method of telling the story must follow a specified pattern but he will colour it with his own interpretation. This makes the oral tradition a living art form.

As with many non-literate groups, the people of Papua New Guinea have a well-developed sense of theatre. They are expressive musicians, skilled artists and craftsmen. Many of their stories incorporate song, which enhances the atmosphere. I am only sorry that these songs cannot be included here. In the legend of the 'Song of Mangon' (p.36 ) the young man who is possessed by the spirit of the snake, Mangon, wanders incoherently along the reef, singing plaintively. At this stage, listeners of the tale take up the song and so express their own participation in the oral tradition. The re-enactment of the legend reflects the unity of storyteller and listener in a living culture, common to all.

Belief in the spirits is so essential to life that it also affects the growing of crops, hunting, and the catching of fish. The spirits are the ancestors and are continually called upon to assist their progeny on earth. Legends reflect the power of such spirits.

There is an explanatory legend for most natural phenomena. Earthquakes, tidal waves, and tropical storms are usually seen as the expression of a dominant spirit's power.

Laws governing birth, marriage, death and the fate of the spirit after death are clearly defined. Despite the imminent punishment of the evildoer, the individual lives in a secure world, protected as he is by the laws of community and by the complex of beliefs that define behaviour.

Throughout Papua New Guinea, murder is dealt with in the tradition of the Old Testament—'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'—more commonly known as the 'pay-back system'. Many legends tell of tribal warfare or death by sorcery and the resultant 'pay-back'. This tradition is still strong today, and is a source of concern to many people in positions of authority.

Sorcery is a formidable force in any primitive society. In this country, sorcery is used for both good and evil ends. Profitable sorcery in the form of medical cures is quite common. Sickness is always 'caused' by the presence in the body of some evil spirit, or the work of a magic man in the pay of an enemy. Recovery is only possible if the victim is able to buy the services of a more powerful magic man. If not, he resigns himself to death.

Such phenomena are now being studied under the title of psychological medicine, but they are not completely understood by Western doctors. The existence of abortive and fertility drugs is, for example, often disputed, but I personally have no doubt of their existence.

The Tolai people of New Britain have a well-defined social structure and have itemized the creation story. According to Tolai myth Mother Earth had two sons, To Kabinana and To Karvuvu. They created all the necessary and unnecessary things in the Tolai environment. Of the two brothers, To Kabinana was the older and the more clever. His brother To Karvuvu was the foolish one, to which we owe many of the absurdities or irregularities of creation.

In Lemakot, New Ireland, the first coconut tree is said to have sprung from the severed buried head of a sacrificed hero. Tales similar to this one are spread throughout Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides, each claiming its own hero's head as the root of the first coconut tree.

In New Ireland, every individual of the shark-calling society calls upon his own ancestor to guide his hand and to pour magic into his shark-catching equipment. He composes beautiful songs to lure the spirits of his ancestors to his aid.

In the Sepik area of New Guinea the ancestral spirits are indispensable in the involved processes of yam cultivation. A yam garden is accessible only through one gateway. The gardener, however must enter his garden over the top of this gateway, for fear that by opening it, he will allow

the ancestral spirits to escape. These earthbound, or terrestrial spirits belong to the first generation (i.e. the most recently deceased) and are pictured on the façades of the famous *haus tambarans* the ancestral spirit houses. (See illustration page 45.)

Second generation spirits are said to move on a freer plane. They belong to the realm of the flying fox. They occupy the second row on the façade of the *haus tambaran*. These spirits are attributed with greater freedom because they are longer deceased and have now migrated. The gardener is able to invoke them to inhabit the tubers of his yams and make them grow large and strong. During the period of growth when the vines are crisscrossing along the ground the young girls play the game of cat's cradle with the vine, forming patterns between their fingers. This ensures their healthy development. When the vines begin to twist up the supporting posts, the boys make tops from half coconuts, with sticks inserted through the centre and send them spinning across the village square, to ensure the successful climbing of the yam vines up the supports. One is reminded of Pieter Breughel's painting of *One Hundred Children's Games*, many of which had superstitious significance.

A child's code of ethics is dictated to him from an early age through the many stories of his ancestors. These often have a powerful moral and so foster conforming behaviour in the most wayward child.

A child also gains his knowledge of the animal and plant kingdom from the explanatory nature of the legends he hears so regularly. If a child should wonder why the large cassowary bird cannot fly, the answer is ready on the lips of the storyteller. For many readers these exotic and imaginative stories closely parallel those of Rudyard Kipling.

Animal legends include tales of snakes, flying foxes, birds, dogs and pigs. Even in this world there are the heroes. (See *Origin of Fire* p. 78.)

The various traditions practised today are all seen as originating in the ancestral past. Such traditions are set forth in the legends. The single girl's courtship ceremony common to many of the clans of the Western and Eastern Highlands districts is one such tradition. This ceremony enables men from one group to meet girls from other groups or clans. Although this ceremony is similar throughout the whole area, each has its own explanation of how the first courtship took place.

Legends of battle from the Highland areas are often based on actual tribal wars. The three main causes of such Highland battles are pigs, women and land (in that order). As Councillor Wamuk, of the Kundiawa area, has it: '*Ass bilong olgeta pait, i kamap long pig, meri, na graun bilong mipela.*'

Through the many explicit legends it is possible to imagine how trade and travel took place long ago. It has been claimed that many people living in the New Guinea Highlands did not know what lay over the next ridge. It is true that fierce tribal enemies blocked access to certain areas. Yet the similarity in theme of many legends from the far-flung areas suggests that there was some mobility to enable exchange of oral traditions.

Either these stories were in fact transported from place to place despite enemies and geographical barriers or the same explanations were given for natural phenomena in different cultures. As in our society, a good explanation finds its way around.

One such popular tale in New Ireland bears marked resemblance to that told in the Owen Stanley Ranges on the mainland. Losu village, New Ireland, tells of a giant pig called Lungalunga who frightened people from the village to the offshore islands. A woman and her young son were

left behind. When the boy had grown into a strong hunter he slew the pig monster, enabling his people to return to their village. This story corresponds remarkably with that of Tauni Kapi Kapi of the Owen Stanleys (page 80 ).

It would seem that these legends reflect significant migratory patterns, and that many people left their villages at some time and returned at a later date.

This culture of oral tradition has served as a code of laws, a history, and as instruction for a way of life for the people of Papua New Guinea. It is regrettable that those who came to bring 'enlightenment' to these people, often did not understand or respect the existing social structure which had served for thousands of years. As a result of the breakdown of their own traditional way of life and the superimposing of the new, the people of Papua New Guinea now face the unenviable process of cultural re-adjustment.

The early Christian missionaries were undoubtedly devoted, sincere people with an urge to alleviate suffering and provide an easier way of life for the indigenes. This has in part been achieved, but unfortunately many of the original cultural patterns have been lost in the process.

The Malanggans (New Ireland carvings) are a unique form of sculpture, closely governed by tribal custom and associated with many ceremonial occasions. These carvings have the strangely evocative power, combining as they do Aztec-type design with oceanic simplicity of form. Each carver held the rights to the style he carved. If he sold his carving, the carver forfeited the right to carve that particular design. This custom created the need for a quick imagination and a high degree of skill in the artist. Thus when early Christian missionaries swept 'paganism' out the door by burning Malanggan carvings, they destroyed not only the carving but the right to that style. Nowadays one does not find many of these works in New Ireland.

Those who bring the new should have the utmost respect and understanding for what has gone before. The art forms of Papua New Guinea, as seen in carvings, painted bark, self-decoration, music and dance, together with the many oral traditions, constitute a valuable aesthetic achievement. Such achievement is one of the most vital assets of a nation.

It is only by maintaining pride in this heritage and perpetuating it, that young Papua New Guineans will grow up with an intimate understanding of their environment, and so make their own country and the world a better place in which to live.



... from the islands

## Watuatuke and the Trobriand Women



The swordfish, Watuatuke, lived in the trunk of a magic mango tree which grew on the beach at Sawatupa, on Dobu Island.

One day, a man living nearby decided to cut the tree down. With the first blow of the axe against the trunk, Watuatuke jumped into the water, and passing over the waves calmed them. As he swam in an easterly direction, he created the many small islands of the D'Entrecasteaux Group.

When the man realized that the mango tree was magic, he decided to rid Dobu Island of the ugly women. He put them on the beach where the tree would fall, whilst the beautiful women were put on the tree's inland side. He then completed cutting down the tree. The magic tree swooped, gathered up the ugly women, and flung them back on to the island. It then picked up the beautiful women and crashing seawards, threw them a hundred miles away to the Trobriand Islands.

The beautiful women still live on the Trobriands, the swordfish Watuatuke, still swims in these waters, and the magic mango tree lies preserved under the wide seas.



## Weniogwegwe, the Great Dog

Long ago on Dobu Island there lived a terrible ogre, called Tokedokeket who ravaged the country far and wide. The people were afraid of him and fled when they heard him approaching.

One day Tokedokeket stormed into a village. All the people fled but one old woman who carried on gardening. Tokedokeket came every day and demanded her food from her. The hungry woman grew fainter every day. One night the spirit of the woman's mother came to her, and told her where to find Weniogwegwe, the Great Dog. Next day the woman found the dog and hid him under her skirt until Tokedokeket came. The ogre was so frightened when he saw Weniogwegwe that he fled non-stop to his hiding place in the hills far away. He locked himself in and would only venture to peep out of a hole high up in the wall of his hut.

Weniogwegwe took the stem of a cat's tail and tied it to a stick outside the door. Tokedokeket, who could only see the tail, believed Weniogwegwe to be waiting for him and was too afraid to venture out. He starved to death in his house.

The people returned to their village and Weniogwegwe still roams in the bush on dark nights. He is as big as a house, his eyes are like glowing coals and he is likely to devour any man whom he meets. Every year when the Trobriand Kula canoes approach the Dobuan district of Bivaioa, the owner of each canoe utters a charm to abate the fury of the Dobuan man and the Great Dog, Weniogwegwe.



## Where the Spirits Meet

When storms blew in from the sea and earthquakes shook the ground, it was a sign of the power of the spirits. The large, beautiful bay off Lemakot village is a *masalai* or spirit place, and is used for meetings between the Spirit of the Sky, the Spirit of the Sea and the Spirit of the Land. A magic man of Lemakot village spoke with the voice of the three great spirits who forbade men to go near the bay.

A young man called Moni had paid the magic man to work some magic for him, which Moni said was unsuccessful. Moni did not then believe in the magic man's powers and decided to go fishing in his canoe on the forbidden bay. After a little time a large fish circled his boat and he hurled spear after spear at it until he had only one left. Then Moni saw that the fish tail belonged to the head and shoulders of a beautiful woman.

The magic man, who was very annoyed at being disobeyed, called the three great spirits to punish the man. The winds blew and the waves roared and the Spirit of the Sea was angry. The eye of the storm glared down on the man as the Spirit of the Land melted the fish woman into mud. Moni raced back to shore and never again did he doubt the power of the magic man, or the force of the spirits.



## The Hornbill and the Cassowary

Whenever the people of New Britain's Gazelle Peninsula see a cassowary, they know why he cannot fly.

Before time began, the hornbill and the cassowary could both fly. One day they were both sitting on the branch of a tree eating its fruit. By dusk, both had eaten and settled down to sleep on the branch. The cassowary was sitting on the outside end of the branch and the hornbill near the trunk of the tree. The hornbill told the cassowary to move back towards the end of the branch. When he did so, the hornbill moved quickly after him and pushed the cassowary to the ground.

The hornbill screeched down in his triumph that the cassowary would remain on the ground forevermore and would have to eat the fruit which the hornbill, in his generosity, allowed to drop. So the cassowary walked and scavenged and the hornbill continued to fly.

Even today the hornbill's screech of triumph can be heard when he is flying above the jungle.



## The Parrot (To Karvuvu's Folly)



In New Britain, To Kabinana and To Karvuvu, the legendary sons of Mother Earth, created all things which we see about us today. The more intelligent To Kabinana instructed his brother who carried out his orders.

One day, To Kabinana carved two birds from wood and breathed life into them. They were the New Britain *ginigil* bird and the green parrot. To Karvuvu was entrusted to find a home for the parrot in the tree from which it had been carved. But To Karvuvu was not very clever and put the bird to rest in a banana tree. When the parrot awoke, it was hungry and started eating the bananas surrounding it. When he saw this, To Kabinana was very annoyed with his brother because he realized that from that time forth, parrots would always eat bananas, a food he had created for man. He took the *ginigil* bird himself and put it in the fork of a tree where it was happy and never stole the food which was created for humans.

Today, the parrot knows that he is able to eat tasty ripe bananas because of the folly of the first man. That is why parrots are screeching, cheeky birds, and can mimic the voice of a human being.

## Pearl Belong Snake

In Rabaul Harbour, not far removed from the place where the legendary Diararat and his wife made Matapit<sup>1</sup> by piling stones on top of the reef, there lives a giant marine snake. This snake is in possession of a huge white shining pearl, which he shows on occasion to a person of his choice.

On moonlight nights the snake uncoils his large body, takes the pearl in his mouth, and swims up to the surface. Canoe fishermen know that any unusual disturbance of the quiet harbour waters is caused by the snake shifting his huge bulk underwater. If he should misplace his pearl, he searches with such determination and fury, that he causes the waves to dance in anxiety in the harbour. When the snake decides to favour a man, he will take the pearl ashore and hide it well. He then communicates with his chosen benefactor who will go and examine the pearl. The pearl will stay in the man's possession and win him many admirers until the snake comes quietly ashore and takes it back to his watery abode.

<sup>1</sup>Active volcanic island in Rabaul harbour



Pearl Belong Snake  
in the collection of the Davara Motel, Port Moresby

## The Egg Prophet

In the Gaulim area of New Britain, a Baining called Melki is the leader of a current cargo cult.<sup>2</sup> His father was a paramount *luluai* and it is thought that Melki is using cargo cult to increase his influence with the people. Melki teaches that a bomb will drop on New Britain killing everybody except the Bainings. Then a giant egg will be delivered full of cargo which will be shared amongst the survivors.

It is their belief that the goods which will arrive will be sufficient to allow them to live comfortably for the rest of their lives. They will have no need to work again. To keep the interest of his followers from waning, Melki takes them on pilgrimages to Mt Sinivit. This is the dwelling place of the Bainings' female deity, Namugi. Here Melki speaks with the goddess and can also arrange for thunderstorms and earthquakes to show the people his power as a leader.

Old cargo cult supporters may lose interest in the unfulfilled promises of the leader, but there are always new young enthusiasts to keep the belief alive. Melki has been leader of this cult for some years and appears to be maintaining his influence over his Baining followers.

<sup>2</sup>Inhabitants of New Britain are known as Bainings



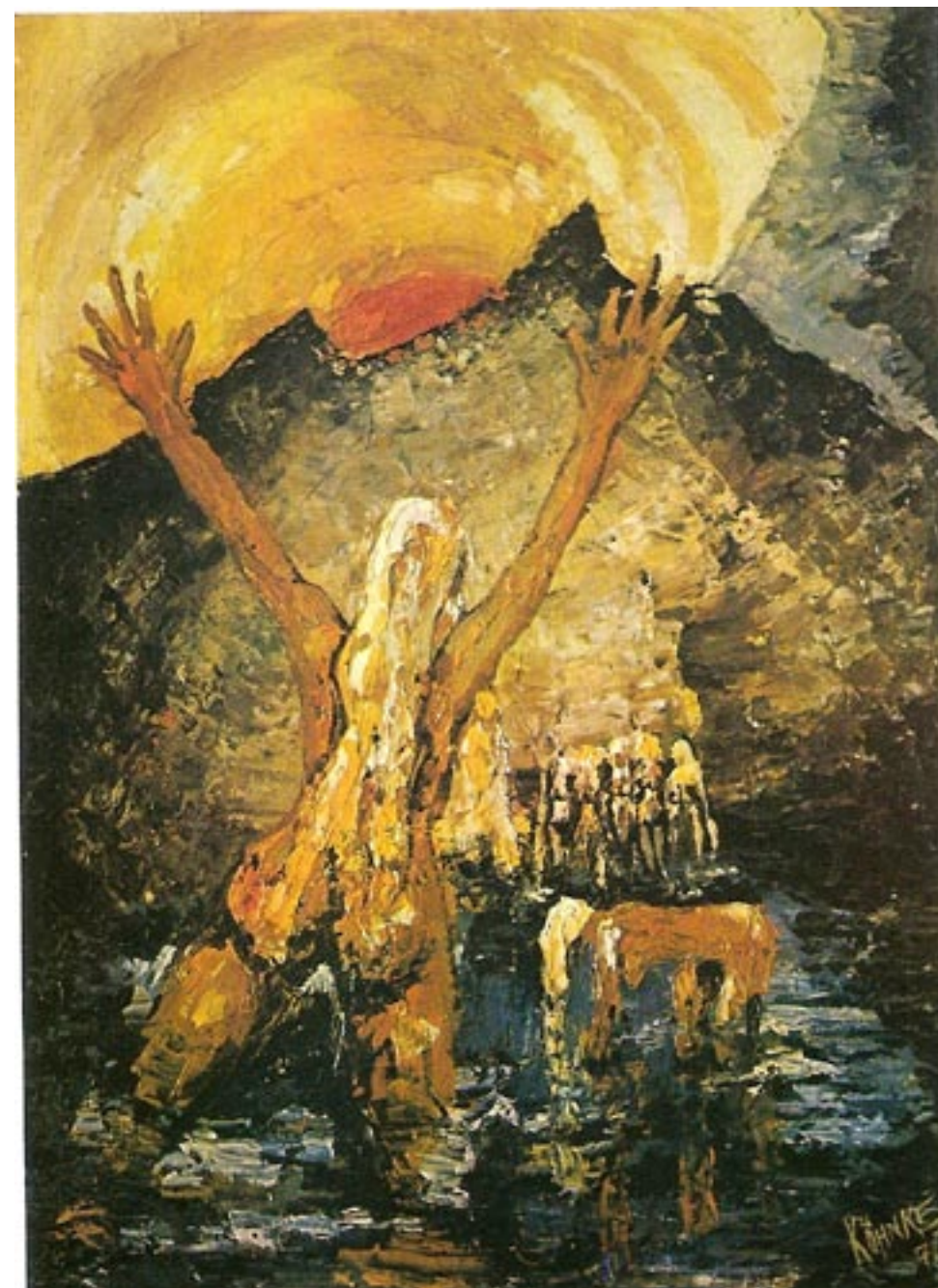
## The Women of Putarara

The crystal clear river which flows into the sea near Lemakot has its origin in the mountainous centre of New Ireland. Its source is a spring which flows into a beautiful small lake and overflows into the sea.

At the head of this spring live strange animals – like sharks which have only heads, and fish which are only tails. At the mouth of the spring is a large coral rock of the kind which belongs in the sea. Nobody knows how it came to be there. It has long arms and fingers which will pull people down under the water forevermore. The people call this place Putarara.

In the hills above Putarara live the most beautiful of all spirit women. These women come to the spring at dusk when the sun is sinking below the mountains in the west. They have long hair, the colour of the rays of the sun and their skin is like honey. They bathe in the waters of Putarara, and nothing harms them because they are the spirit owners of this place. These women cannot be touched by human hand and should not be seen by men.

If any man were to venture near Putarara the spirit women would cast a spell on him. The women of Lemakot sometimes visit Putarara and are never hurt as this is a woman's place.



## Tougouie's Wrath

A young adventurer, Ringantinsen, once stole the shark-catching rope of the magic cannibal Tougouie. He prepared to go shark-catching with his elder brother, Natelimon. When they had caught a small, sweet reef fish, they pulled their canoe far out to sea until Lemakot was a mere speck on the coastline. There they started to call the sharks. They sang the magic songs which evoked the help of their ancestors, and shook the coconut rattles along the surface of the water. After a short time their canoe was filled with a very successful catch and the two started out for home.

Their strong magic had lured the angry Tougouie from under the sea and he appeared beside the canoe demanding part of their catch. Natelimon cut a large slice of shark meat and threw it to Tougouie who dived down under the waves to devour his meal. Ringantinsen and Natelimon paddled with all speed for Lemakot. Tougouie followed them underwater and demanded more and more fish until the whole catch was gone. His continual diving under the waves and surfacing created a storm and made the flight back to shore difficult, even for the experienced sailors.

Tougouie, a cannibal, demanded one of the brothers to eat. Between themselves, the brothers decided that Ringantinsen, the younger, would be sacrificed. Natelimon killed his brother and cut off his leg to appease the terrible Tougouie. The tiny canoe travelled as quickly as possible through the now heavy seas. The cannibal's demands caused the sky to turn dark and it began to rain. Natelimon hoisted the sail and the strong winds ferried his canoe safely through the reef into Fangalawer Bay. All that remained of his brother was the head. Natelimon took the head and buried it on the shores of the bay by Lemakot.





## The Birth of the Coconut Tree

Many full moons came and went before any grass grew in the place where Natelimon had buried the head of Ringantinsen. This grass was cleared away and a small shrub grew. Natelimon cleared all growth away for years until finally one day he saw that a strange plant had appeared in the place where Ringantinsen's head lay. It was the first coconut tree.

This tree Natelimon left and it grew rapidly up and up, tall and straight. But it did not stop growing. It grew up past the sun and the moon until the top could not be seen any more.

Natelimon resolved to climb to the top of the tree in the hope that he would find his brother. He prepared for his strange journey for many months. A long, long rope was made from the strongest vines coiled for carrying. Natelimon's dog was fed the best food to make him strong for the adventure. Natelimon cut many strong spears from the hard wood of the *limbom* tree.

When the travellers were prepared, they started their climb. The man carried some supplies in a *bilum* on his back with the dog on top. They climbed all day until sundown. They tied themselves to the tree with one end of the rope and lowered the other end down for the village people to tie on fresh supplies. Natelimon pulled the rope back up and the two ate and drank.

And so they climbed for three days, until they reached the clouds. Natelimon took a stone from the *bilum* and broke open the clouds for the two to climb through. There, above the clouds, hidden from Earth was the splendid top of the coconut tree, bearing all kinds of nuts. There was the dry, ripe nut ready for husking, the refreshing *kulau* (green coconut), and young sprouting nuts growing on Ringantinsen's tree. Natelimon picked all the nuts off the tree and threw them down through the hole in the cloud to New Ireland. Everywhere that they landed they took root, except Lemusmus where the rocky ground broke the nuts apart and they did not grow.



## Natelimon's Revenge

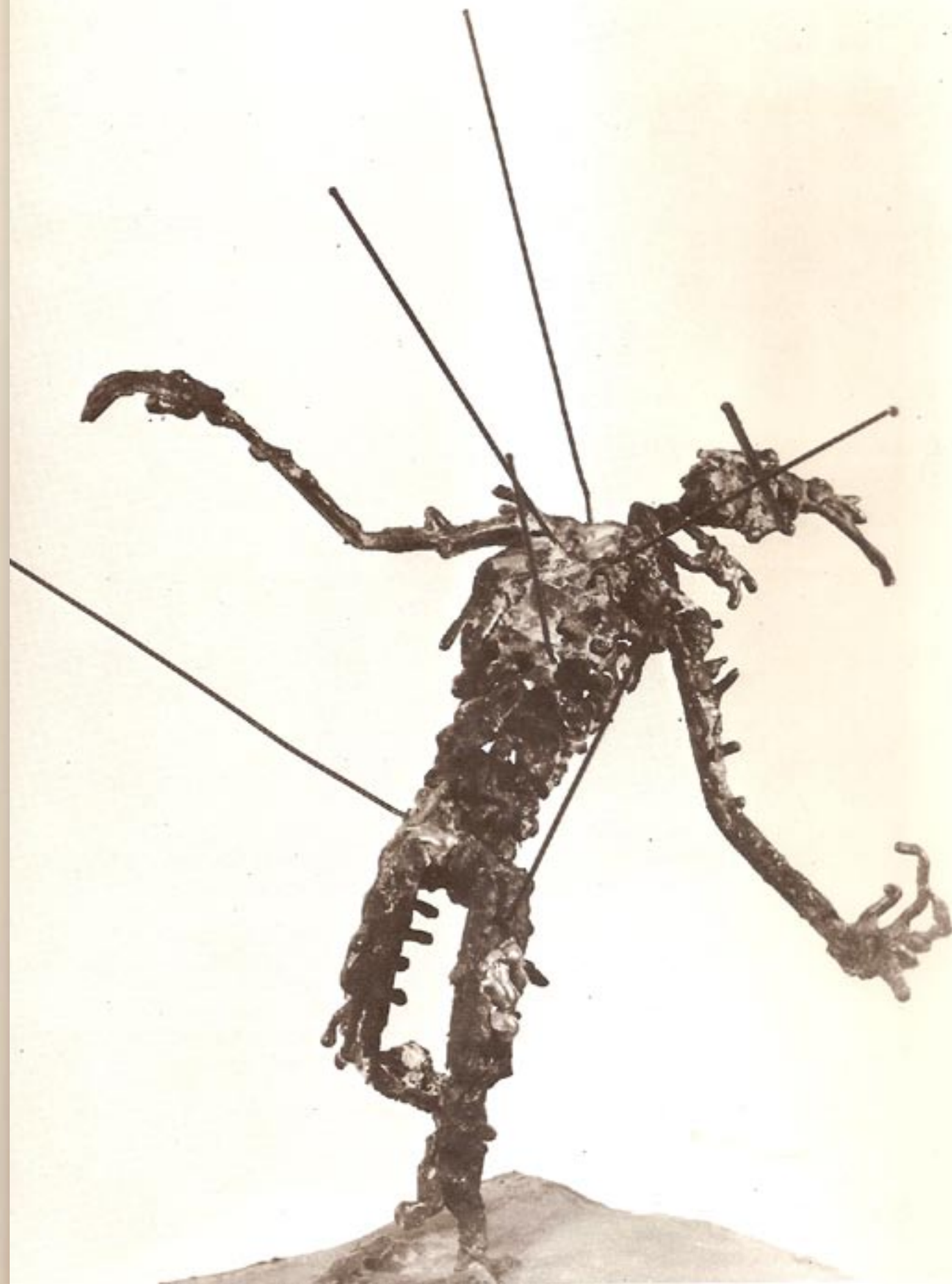
After Natelimon had thrown all the coconuts down to New Ireland, he and his dog went in search of Tougouie. They walked for days until they came to a house in a clearing. Natelimon asked a young boy playing in front, whose house it was. The boy, Toulangai, was the nephew of the evil Tougouie. Natelimon told Toulangai to go and tell Tougouie that someone had come to visit him. The cannibal was working in his *taro* garden far up in the hills.

Natelimon and his dog went inside the cannibal's house. Hanging on the wall were many sets of pigs' tusks. The two prepared a large fire outside the house and burnt all the tusks making them brittle. They then replaced them on the wall.

When Tougouie came home he offered the visitors bush bananas to eat, which they refused. He was a little angry at this refusal but thought perhaps the man and dog did not like bananas, so he offered sweet potato and *taro*, which they did not eat. Natelimon told him that they had only come to visit him and did not wish to eat. This made Tougouie very angry as he had made evil magic on the food to give to his victims. He offered them the shark which he had stolen from Natelimon and Ringantinsen. He was again refused. Tougouie flew into a rage, stormed into the house and returned, one by one, with all the parts of Natelimon's brother's body. Still the man and dog refused to eat.

Tougouie raced back into the house and fitted the pigs' tusks into his mouth. When he tried to bite Natelimon, the tusks crumbled. All the tusks crumbled in the same manner. Tougouie was beside himself with rage and charged at Natelimon. The dog grabbed from behind and dragged the cannibal back. Natelimon hurled his first, straight, long *limbom* spear which stuck in Tougouie's chest. Tougouie charged again, but the dog pulled him back and Natelimon's spear again found its mark. When the cannibal's body was full of spears, Natelimon took the *jasue* (*taro* digging stick) and with one mighty blow to the back of the legs, brought Tougouie crashing dead to the ground.

Natelimon and his dog returned to New Ireland by climbing back down the coconut tree. Never again were shark-catchers troubled by the evil Tougouie.



## Sarakuvene

Long ago the ground where the village of Lemakot stands today was empty. Nothing grew there until the spirit woman, Sarakuvene, came and took the form of a palm tree. The village formed around her, the head man's house being closest to her.

Sarakuvene is the female protectress and instigator of good, and is able to take many forms. Should a man's wife be unfaithful, Sarakuvene takes the outward form of the man and tempts the wayward wife. She then learns which two have broken village ethics. The protectress touches the two culprits who become covered with a rash which is the visible sign of their guilt. They must then pay the offended husband who, in turn, offers betel nut to Sarakuvene.

When she is about the work of the opposite sex, Sarakuvene is known as Kokonau, and thus can also catch unfaithful husbands. If one wishes to be absent from an occasion, Sarakuvene can be persuaded to take the form of the missing person. Sometimes she does this without their knowledge and this confuses the village people as Sarakuvene speaks with the voice of the person she is impersonating.

One can only discover if it is Sarakuvene or not by touch. Although one can see her, she cannot be touched. The touching finger or hand feels only space. Sarakuvene stands in Lemakot today, still the all-wise female protectress.



## The Malip Brothers

Once when a man called Fungadak was working in the garden, he cut his finger. He wrapped the blood in *taro* leaf and hid this in the garden. Every day he went to work in his garden and watched two eggs forming in the *taro* leaf.

Fungadak and his wife, Karak, had no children, so when two boys burst out of the shells, the man was very happy. He kept the secret from his wife and fed the children every day until they grew quite big. He built a house for them surrounded by a high fence. One day, he went shark-fishing but was unsuccessful and could not even catch any fish.

Meanwhile, the two boys, Natelimon and Ringantinsen were playing and throwing spears when the elder accidentally threw a spear outside the enclosure. When Karak, who was gardening nearby, saw the boy, she grabbed him and would not let him go. When Fungadak returned he was very angry that his secret had been discovered and that it had caused his fishing to be unsuccessful. He took the boys to the beach where he washed them in the sea. Natelimon dried quickly but the hair on Ringantinsen's head did not dry, so Fungadak knew what to do.<sup>3</sup>

He told Natelimon to spear fish while he took Ringantinsen further up the beach and speared him. He then put the body in his canoe and paddled far down the coast. He beached his canoe in a secluded bay and cut up his son, removing the liver. When Fungadak returned he gave the liver to Natelimon to eat saying that it was a pig's liver and would make him strong. Natelimon recognized it immediately as the liver of his twin, Ringantinsen.

Natelimon took his canoe and paddled in the direction of the bay, singing, in search of his brother. When he found Ringantinsen he put him back together, laid him in the canoe and took him home. As he beached the canoe, he saw their father running towards them. Natelimon lifted Ringantinsen out of the canoe then they turned themselves into little *malip* birds and flew out of reach, high into the coconut trees. Although Fungadak begged his sons to return, they would not.

Even today one can still see the *malip* brothers who are inseparable. They never come closer to the village than the line of the treetops.

<sup>3</sup>The following selection method was used to choose the stronger of twins as it was believed that one would inevitably steal the strength from the other, should both of them be allowed to live.



## The Eye of the Sun

Livatua, a giant pig, had four children, the eldest of whom was a beautiful woman with light skin and hair like flames. The other three were pig children.

One day the woman came down from their mountain home and walked along the beach. A young man, returning from fishing on the reef saw her between him and the setting sun, and he was dazzled by the reflection from her glowing body and flaming hair. The following morning as the sun lifted itself out of the sea in the land where good spirits dwell, the man asked the woman to marry him. She consented and they went together to live in the man's village. When she was asked who she was and where she came from, she always answered that she was the eye of the sun.

So the couple built their own house and garden and a strong fence to protect it from the pigs, as was the custom. One morning when the man awoke he found the fence broken down and everything in the garden eaten. When he found the giant pig sleeping under his house he took his spear and killed it. He did not know that it was his wife's mother. When he told his wife she cried and told him the truth. Then they were frightened that the three pig children of Livatua would seek revenge, so they moved away to another place.

The couple had many children who travelled to Lavongai (New Hanover), to Paruai village and to the west and south of New Ireland. Today the people in these places say that they are the descendants of the giant pig Livatua.



## Bugurom, the Lost Spirit

Long ago on Manus Island, it was the custom that the man who offered the highest bride price for a girl, won her hand.

In this time there lived a young man called Bugurom who loved Manohon, a beautiful girl ready for marriage. The two wanted to marry but Bugurom was poor and had no relatives to help him pay the high bride price.

Manohon's father was offered a handsome price from an old man of the village. The dismayed girl pleaded with her father not to accept the price and to allow her to marry Bugurom, whom she loved. She persuaded her father. This angered the other old man. He was so annoyed he went to the magic man and paid him well to make strong evil magic against Bugurom, who had broken the laws of the people and hurt his pride.

So in the time between the setting of the moon and the rising of the sun, when men's spirits wander among the stars, the magic man captured the spirit of Bugurom and locked it away. When the sun rose next morning, his spirit could not enter his body so Bugurom died. The good spirits took Manohon to where the river entered the sea. There she had the twin sons of Bugurom, Lon and Dru who grew up strong and handsome like their father, and founded the village of Londru.

Today the children love to hear the story of their ancestors Lon and Dru and of their father who still wanders among the stars in search of his spirit.



## The Sleeping Island

The island which lies off Karu village, New Ireland, was not always there. Long ago, it lay off the coast one hundred miles further south. It was a very special island in that it was really a man. This island-man was ill-treated by all the people who lived nearby. They used to throw all their rubbish on top of him.

One day he got up out of the sea and went ashore at Muliama. The river which flowed into the sea was wide and its waters were cool. The island asked the river if he could rest in its estuary. But the river was too occupied with its flowing and did not wish to be disturbed. He moved on up the coast to Nambuto. The river there rejected him too. At Belik and further up the coast at every other river, he was rejected in case his huge bulk should block the mouth of the river.

Lost and dejected, the island-man journeyed further northward until he came to the twin rivers entering the sea at Karu. When he requested permission to rest in their estuary he was warmly welcomed. There he lay down and went to sleep.

The strong continual flow of the two rivers has gradually washed him out to sea. Nowadays he rests one hundred yards off shore in an uninterrupted sleep. The people of Karu affectionately call him Mu-Mu.



## The Sea Woman and the Dolphin

Long ago, before Man measured time, there lived a young man who loved a chieftain's daughter. The man had no shells or pigs to buy the woman for his wife, and no parents or uncles to help him. So the chief promised his daughter to the man if he could catch alive the magic dolphin which swam along the coast of New Ireland.

The confident man sailed his canoe to the favourite waters of the dolphin where the creature swam around his canoe. He jumped on to the dolphin's back. In the next moment he was carried with mighty force skywards by a huge wave, and alongside him was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was the Spirit of the Waves. Forgetting his village and the chief's daughter, he jumped into the sea before he realized she was only a spirit woman. The dolphin capsized the canoe, thus destroying his only means of returning to his village.

The rough waters off the New Ireland coast are caused when the condemned spirit of the man tries to struggle away from the spirit woman and the waves and return to his home.





## Song of Mangon

Once there was a young man who left home because his mother had died and his father did not look after him. He went to live with his *watch papa*. This is the New Ireland name for an uncle who cares for a child should the parents be unable to do so.

One day the young man decided to go into the bush and hunt the large wild pig which had been raiding the gardens. He asked his *watch papa* for a dog and then he called eleven more. With the twelve, he set off to hunt the pig. He went deep into the jungle and his dogs rounded up the pig which ran for safety into the huge cave called Amatif. The man went into the cave where he killed the pig. When he returned to the entrance, it had closed over. A sinister snake, Mangon, crawled up behind the man and slid into his belly. Then the entrance to Amatif opened.

The man wandered outside and walked home in a dream, singing the song of Mangon. He wandered past his *watch papa's* place, out along the reef, all the time singing the song of the snake who had possessed his spirit. He came to his father's place. His father, who heard the plaintive singing had called his son by blowing on the *Toru* (conch shell). Then he blew another call and all the birds flocked to the spot where the father stood. He lured his son across the reef and up the beach by laying down the festive Ariziere mats.

The first birds to try to remove the snake Mangon from the boy's body were the large clumsy cassowaries. They were unsuccessful, but as a reward for trying, they were given a large portion of the slaughtered pig. All the birds of the air tried unsuccessfully in turn, and flew away again with their portions of the pig.

The last to try were the little *kunai* grass swallows, who succeeded in pulling out the snake. All that remained for them were the knuckle bones of the pig. These they took and, flying back into the *kunai*, all cried their happy song 'ko bo bo kak—ko bo bo kak—ha ha ha ha ha'. Then the villagers cut Mangon into many pieces and scattered him over land and sea.



## The First Taro

Long ago in New Ireland there was no taro. The people ate sweet potato, bananas and fish. One day the women went into the bush to look for food and left the children to play in the village. The women who had walked far into the hills did not return before sundown. The children were very hungry and were thinking of food when they saw large, leafy plants come singing and dancing into the village clearing. The moonlight played along the dark, silvery green leaves and the children were frightened and hid in the houses. However, the dance of the taro was so graceful that the children ventured out to watch again.

The taro asked where their mothers were. When the children explained, the taro told them to grab their fat tubers, cut them off and cook them. They cut, cooked and ate the delicious food until their little bellies were full. When the mothers returned, they were very puzzled at their children who said they weren't hungry. The story of the dancing taro remained a secret.

The next day the women pretended to go out again but they hid nearby until nightfall when the dancing taro returned. When the mothers saw the taro they understood immediately why the children were not hungry. They watched the tubers being cut off and cooked in the earth ovens and then quickly rescued the taro tops and planted them in the garden. They built a fence around the garden so that the taro could never run away again.

Today it is the children's work to cut the tuber from the stalk and to tie all the stalks together until replanting so that the taro will not escape. Lemakot people always make sure that the taro garden is fenced in.



## Kaksava

Many countries have stories which parents tell their children when they won't eat their food. In New Ireland, the children know that Kaksava will come and eat their food if they don't.

Kaksava is a man with only one leg who can run very fast. He lives in the large trees which grow along the coastline. These trees stretch their long branches out over the sea like the long outstretched arms of a man. The trunks of these trees are strong and the roots are like legs. Kaksava only leaves his tree abode at night when all is still and the village people are sleeping. He runs along taking huge strides on his one leg with a left foot. He steals the leftover food and extinguishes the small fires in the house. If he is caught in the act of stealing, Kaksava can outrun anyone. He will quickly retreat to his beach tree where he dissolves into it and becomes part of the tree.

Sometimes on moonlight nights when the shadows play tricks with men's eyes, people say that they have seen Kaksava stretching out his long arms to the moon. But nobody ever finds the imprint of his left foot in the sands of New Ireland.



## Kumotak, the Shark-Catcher

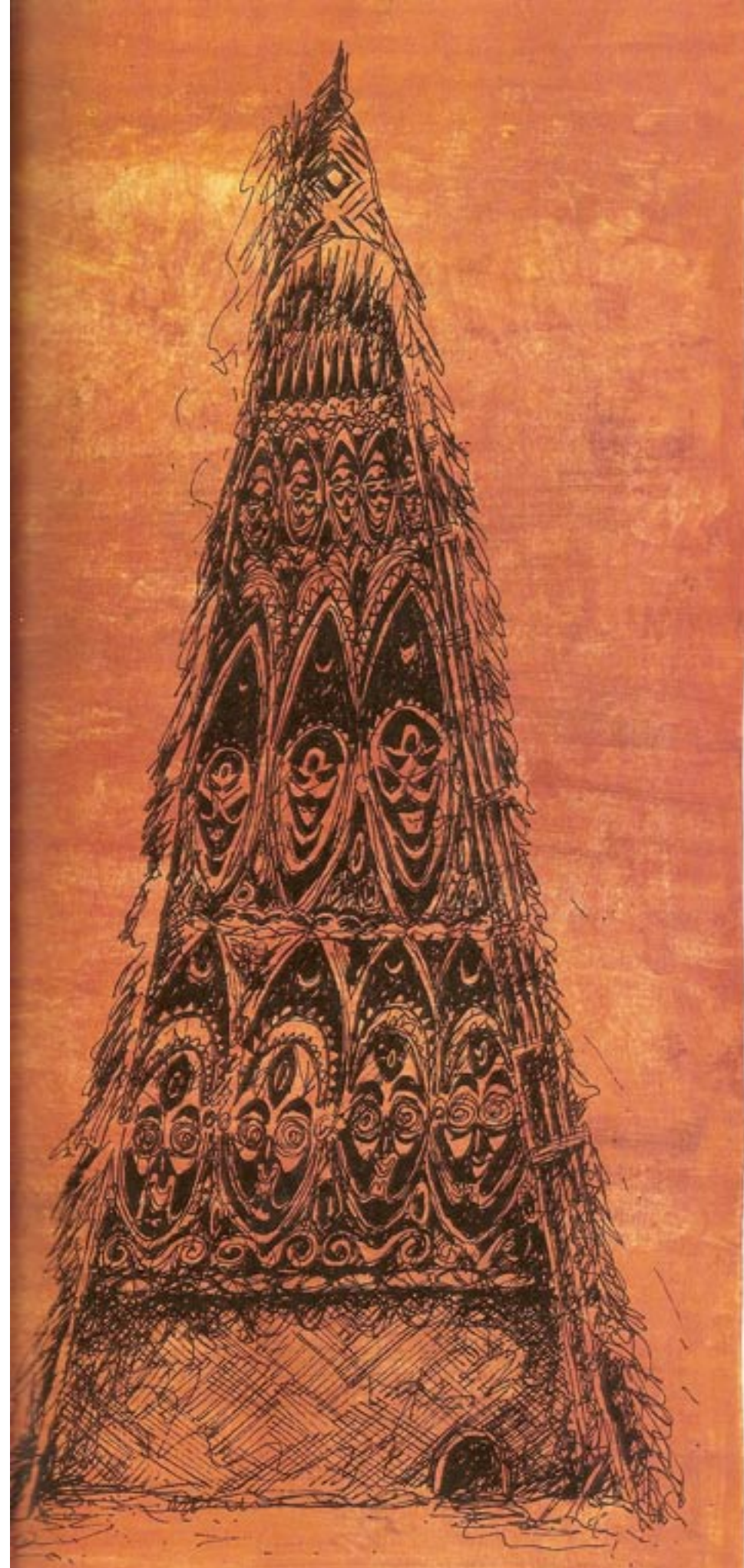
Kumotak was the most successful shark-catcher in the village. He was young and fit and his magic was strong.

Every day as he returned from the catch, he would play his bamboo flute and sing his special song. The melody travelled over the waves to the house of Karak. When she heard his signal, Karak would lay out the Ariziere mats from the interior of her house on to the path through the bush up which Kumotak would come. He always sat in the place of honour in her house and ate the foods which she prepared for him. He played on his flute and sang for her. When he departed at first light, she would roll up the mats until she again heard the familiar song of his homecoming.

At this time, there lived a man called Kutambor, who had the head and body of a man and the legs of a pig. Kutambor was very jealous of the favours Karak extended to Kumotak. He was always fed in the pig pen where he wrestled with his half-brothers. Kumotak's brother Nemier, was a lazy and jealous fellow. He persuaded Kutambor to deceive Karak. Nemier taught the pig man patiently how to play the flute and how to sing the song of Kumotak. When he had mastered it, Kutambor decorated himself in Kumotak's ornaments. When Karak heard the familiar notes, she prepared food and laid the mats. Karak fell pregnant to Kutambor, the pig man. Day after day she would walk along the beach crying out against Kutambor and begging Kumotak to return.

Far out to sea, the shark-catcher sat alone in his canoe. His magic had failed and he had not caught a single shark for weeks. The shark god loomed in his mind and told him of Karak's unfaithfulness. Kumotak pulled for shore and noiselessly made his way to the woman's house. He could hear her plaintive song and it touched his heart. Kumotak set fire to the plaited walls of the house, then he crawled on to the roof and together with Karak and the house, he was consumed by the fire.





... from the north coast

## The First Man of Woris

Long ago, the island of Woris in the Sepik was inhabited only by women married to flying foxes. The first man to reach Woris was a fisherman called Tura.

Late one afternoon after a hard day's fishing, Tura curled up inside a hollow log on the beach and fell asleep. He awoke many hours later with the far away twinkling fires of the ancestors above him in the night sky, and the smell of the salty deep sea about him. He had been carried by the tide out to sea. In the distance he could see the vague shape of an island. To this he swam. It was the island of Woris.

The first woman he encountered was amazed at the sight of a man, and preferred him immediately to her flying fox husband. Tura married the woman who hid him from the other women of the island.

One day a young girl saw Tura and told the other women who demanded to know the secret. When they saw the man they all wanted to marry him. To get rid of the flying fox husbands, they built boxes of cane and lined them with straw. Inside they placed fruit and flowers and coaxed the flying foxes to go in. When the women had trapped them, they floated the boxes away over the sea. Only one flying fox, who heard the screams of his friends, watched from afar. He was so angry that he promised to take revenge on Tura, and then flew off over the ocean.

Many years passed and all except Tura forgot the threat. He had many sons and daughters and many beautiful wives. One day as Tura rested from the hot midday sun in a cave, he heard the loud flap of wings. Almost before he had realized it, the vengeful flying fox was upon him.

Tura was killed by the flying fox and his friends who then left Woris Island forever. The great-great-grandchildren of Tura have never seen a flying fox but they have all heard the story of their ancestor, the first man of Woris.



## Split Wood Spirit



Long ago there lived two old men who were blind. They were taken to the magic man to be healed. The magic man put them in the hollow of a tree until they died because he needed their bones to make sorcery.

The nearby villagers heard of the old men's plight and encircled the hollow tree. Whilst the magic man was inside the tree preparing magic, the people rolled a boulder over the entrance. The magic man screamed in vain to be let out. His screams invoked the lightning to strike the tree and split it in half, killing him.

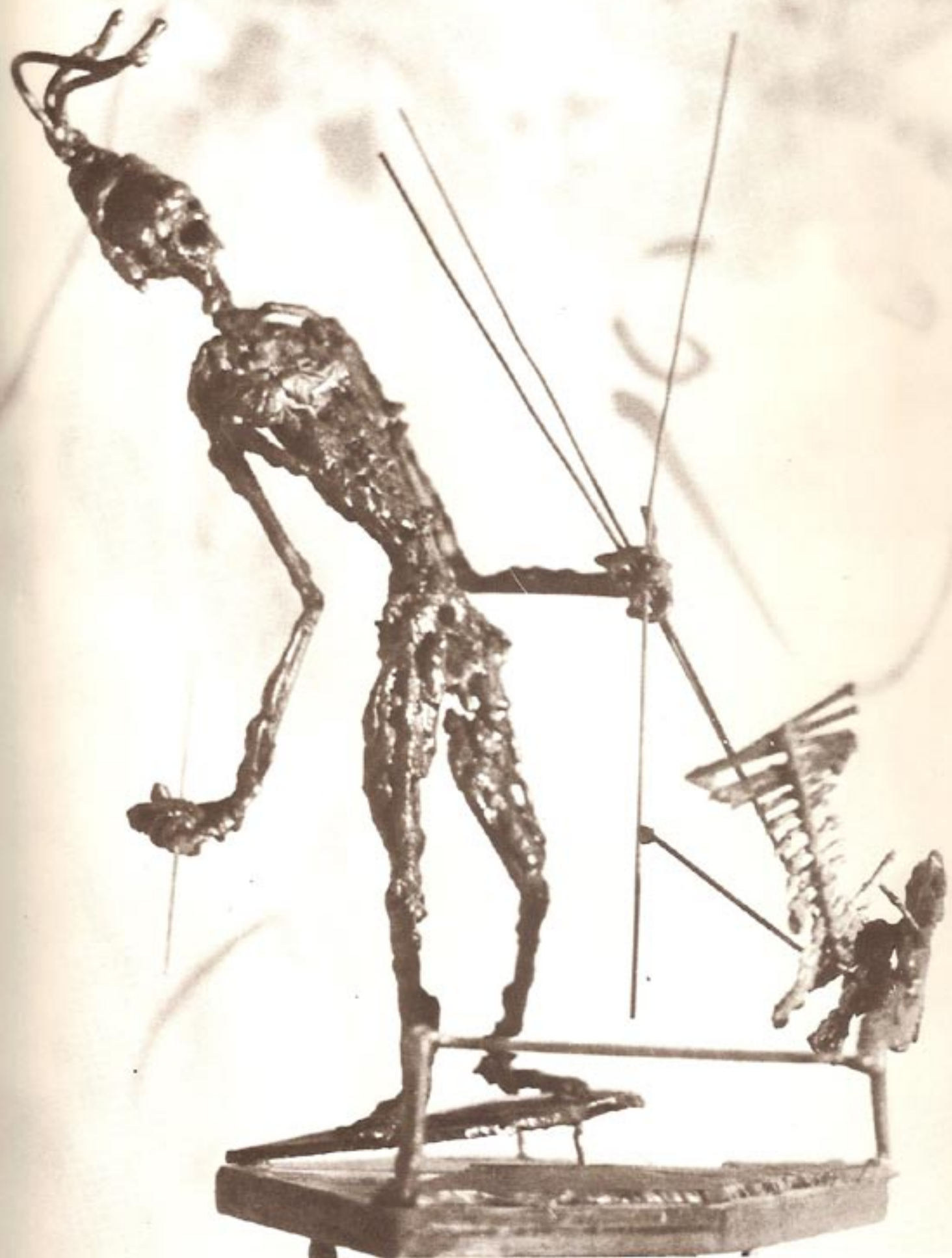
Now the wind whistles through the blind men's bones and when the rain falls and thunder rolls across the sky, the villagers see the evil spirit of the magic man fighting the good spirit. The good spirit which always wins, imprisons the evil spirit in the tree again. That is why, until this day, the tree is a *masalai* or spirit place where no man ventures alone.

## The Spear Thrower

The dwellers of the Rai coast thought that the occasional sailing clippers which passed along the north coast of New Guinea were giant spirit canoes of their ancestors, which were taking newly acquired cargo from the ancestral home back to their old villages. Where the town of Madang stands today, the people of the lagoons saw these winged canoes passing by, far out to sea, but never calling in to bring them their share of the coveted cargo.

One old man, the maker of magic spears, saw the ancestral craft and made magic to bring it to the offshore reef. However, the ship was so large that it could not sail over the reef to land its goods. The old spear thrower selected one of his straightest and strongest spears and hurled it into one of the offshore islands. The spear, landing upright in the land, shook and caused the earth to tremble. The sky turned dark, a distant rumbling came from below the sea and covered by a thick black cloud, the island slowly sank and the sea quickly covered it. Thus, the beautiful deep Madang Harbour was created and the ancestral ship sailed in to shore. The spirit ancestors on board were white, and they could not be understood because they spoke with spirit tongues, but they gave many wonderful gifts and made promises to return with more goods.

So the years passed and no ancestral barque returned, but the white men came back in other vessels, settled and built towns and roads. Even today, the children still hear of the ship of long ago which will one day return, bringing all the coveted goods of Western civilization.





## The Cranes

Once the wife of a chieftain went to the river to collect water. She placed her baby in a *bilum* and hung it on a nearby tree. As she stooped to collect water in the pot, the pot slipped out of her hands and floated slowly out of reach. Leaving the baby in the tree, the woman rushed back to the village for help.

As soon as she had departed, a wicked magician who ate children, crept towards the child. But just in time, two cranes who saw what was about to happen, swooped down and took the baby in the *bilum* high up to their comfortable crane nest. They looked after the baby, with the help of a very old, wise crane, until it was too big for the nest. They they decided to return the baby to its parents.

The whole village had believed the baby to be dead and was in mourning. The two shy young cranes went to the clearing outside the village at sunset where they performed a graceful dance which brought the villagers running to watch. Meanwhile the old crane returned the baby to its parents. The chief ordered all the girls of the village to learn the movements of the cranes, imitate them and teach the men.

The dance of the cranes is still traditionally danced in Uauwefu village to celebrate happy times.



## Ceramic Right

Yabob main island, which lies opposite Tatakokaret, only a few miles from Madang, is the home of the famous Yabob potters. The Pleiades galaxy is the home of the beautiful Honpain who once visited Yabob and taught the people to pot.

One stormy night long ago, Bunag the fisherman lay in his canoe, gazing at the stars. Whilst looking at the Pleiades galaxy, the home of beautiful women, he bewailed the fact that he could not marry one of them. Kidi Kendi, the small grey bird who heard Bunag's wish, flew off into the heavens to ask Honpain's father if he would release her. The consent was given and Honpain was decorated in shell necklaces and dogs' teeth. She set out in the canoe with Kidi Kendi at the prow.

Honpain's father had planted a croton beside his house which would begin to wither if his daughter was in trouble. Bunag who had fallen asleep in his canoe was awakened by the soft rustling of Honpain's grass skirt. He was so overcome by her beauty that he took her home and hid her in the upper part of his house. Some time later, Bunag's younger brother accidentally threw a ball into the attic. When he climbed up to retrieve it he saw Honpain. The frightened youngster ran to his father and clinging to his legs, told what he had seen. The father prepared a huge marriage feast and Bunag married Honpain and settled in Yabob. She taught the people how to make pots and fire them.

Honpain and Bunag had a small son, Lalo. When Lalo was four his grandmother was looking after him while his mother went to market. Lalo gave the old woman some *sisí* (grasshoppers) to roast on the fire. These she accidentally burnt. The little boy cried and screamed until the grandmother lost her temper saying that Lalo was not one of them but just a boy from the stars, whom she would not look after. Poor Lalo ran away and hid. When Honpain returned he told her what the old woman had said. The woman from the stars was so upset she decided to return to her ancestral home.

She prepared a huge fire in the kiln, stacked all her pots in it and piled green grass on top. With Lalo on her back she walked towards the smoking fire. She climbed right into it and disappeared, despite the efforts of villagers to hold her back.

Honpain's father in the Pleiades saw by the croton plant that his daughter was in trouble so he lowered a long rope right into the fire. Honpain and Lalo climbed up the rope pursued by Bunag. When the woman and child were home safely the old father cut the rope and Bunag fell back into the kiln, smashing all the pots except the *yabodi* (water pot).

The *yabodi* is still made in Yabob today and is known as Honpain's pot. It is decorated with similar markings to the tattoos which Honpain bore on her arms. The shards unearthed on Yabob are said to be the remnants of Honpain's broken pots.



## The Night of the Bat

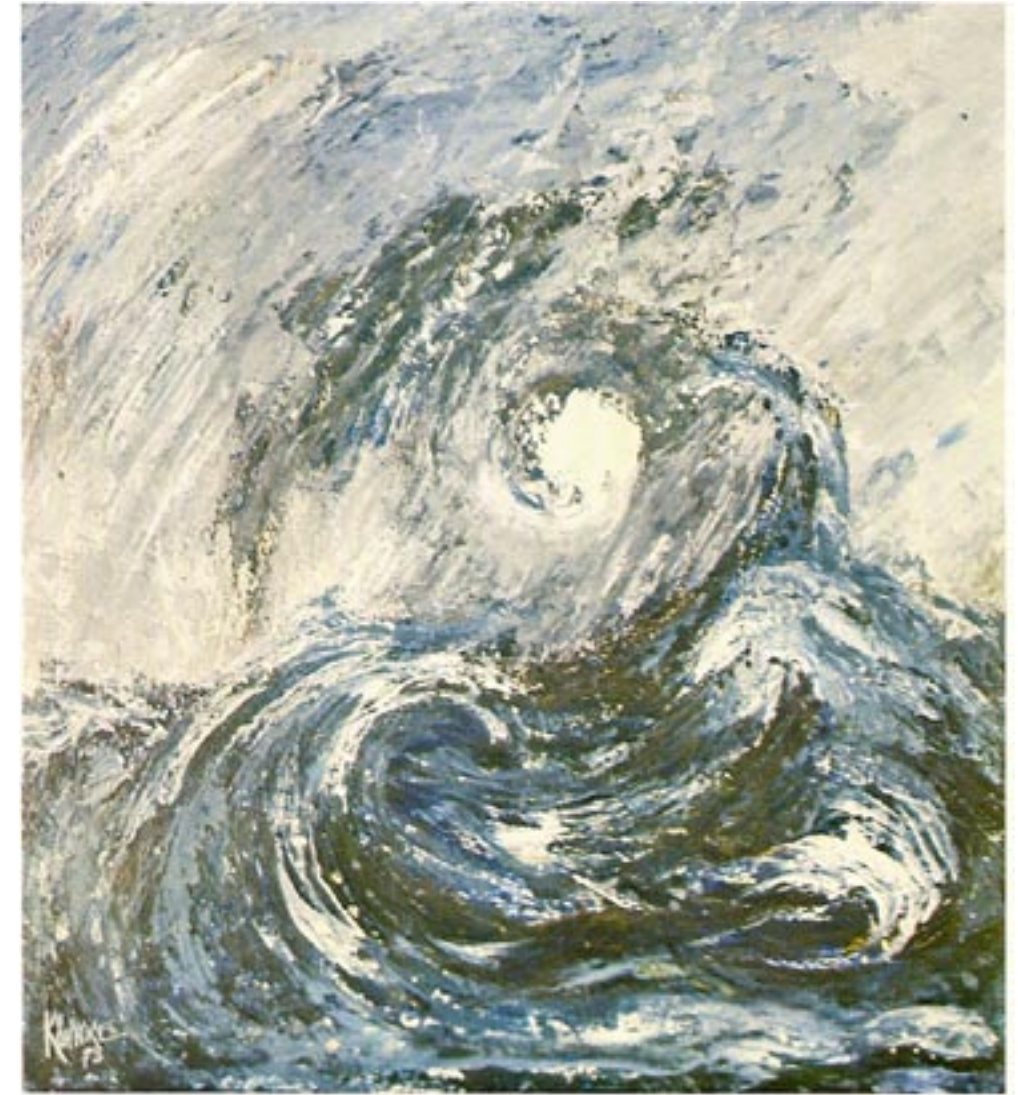
In Papua New Guinea legends nocturnal creatures are often associated with the forces of evil as this legend from the Sepik indicates.

There had been good times and the gardens were producing food. The people forgot their fear of the giant bat, the evil spirit monster of the sea and land, and even ceased making magic to appease him. Only the chief did not forget and advised his people to remember the power of the spirits.

One day when the women were tending their gardens and the men were hunting, the spirit monster returned. He shook the earth and the trees bent double. The women fled from the gardens back to the village. That evening when the men returned, the women told of their terrible experience. The men laughed and insulted them. Suddenly the ground began to shake again. The people were terrified, fled to their canoes and paddled to the open sea.

The giant bat came out from behind the moon and whipped up the seas until the waves reached up to the sky. All the canoes were overturned except that of the chieftain and his wife who had told the people to obey him and respect the giant bat.

The seas calmed and the bat disappeared again behind the moon and the chief and his wife paddled home to their ruined village. They had many children and grandchildren in the following years and all heard the story of the night of the bat, and obeyed the chief and respected the evil spirit monster.

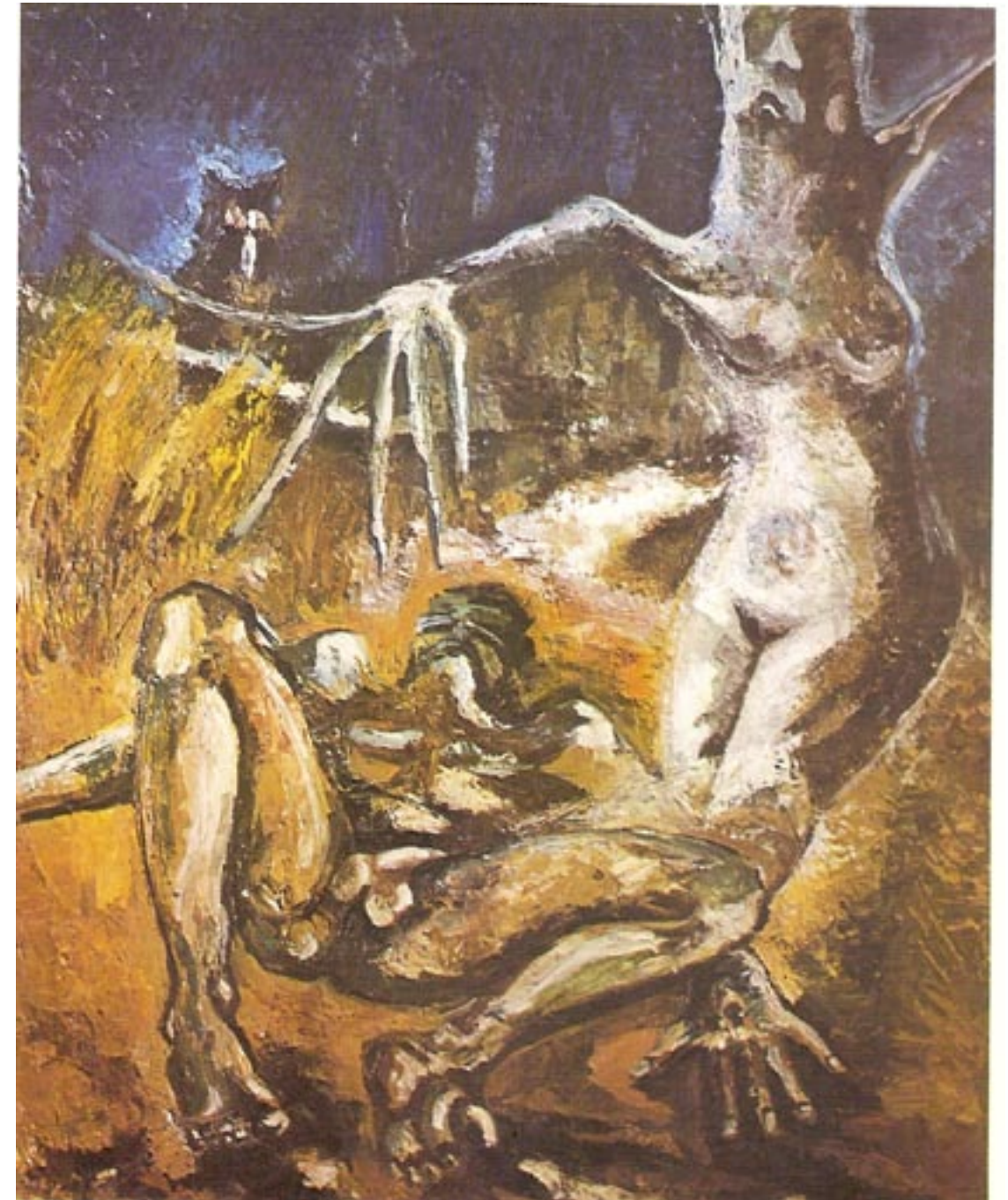


## Meri Masalai

Throughout Papua New Guinea, there is a widely held belief that the dense jungles are inhabited by many spirit creatures. One of these is the beautiful spirit woman, Meri Masalai.

It is told to a man from an early age that if he should venture alone into the jungle at night, he is sure to be seen by her, for being a spirit woman she is everywhere. Meri Masalai remains invisible, in the form of a tree, until the man approaches. Then she changes into a seductive woman and beckons to him. Because she is a spirit woman, she possesses magic and the man cannot resist her powerful charms. She makes love to her victim who dies immediately the spirit body leaves him. The owl, the bird of the night, keeps watch for her and screeches warning of intruders.

Meri Masalai's beautiful spirit body turns quickly back into a tree, but those who find the body of the man are sure that Meri Masalai is nearby.



## Waiting

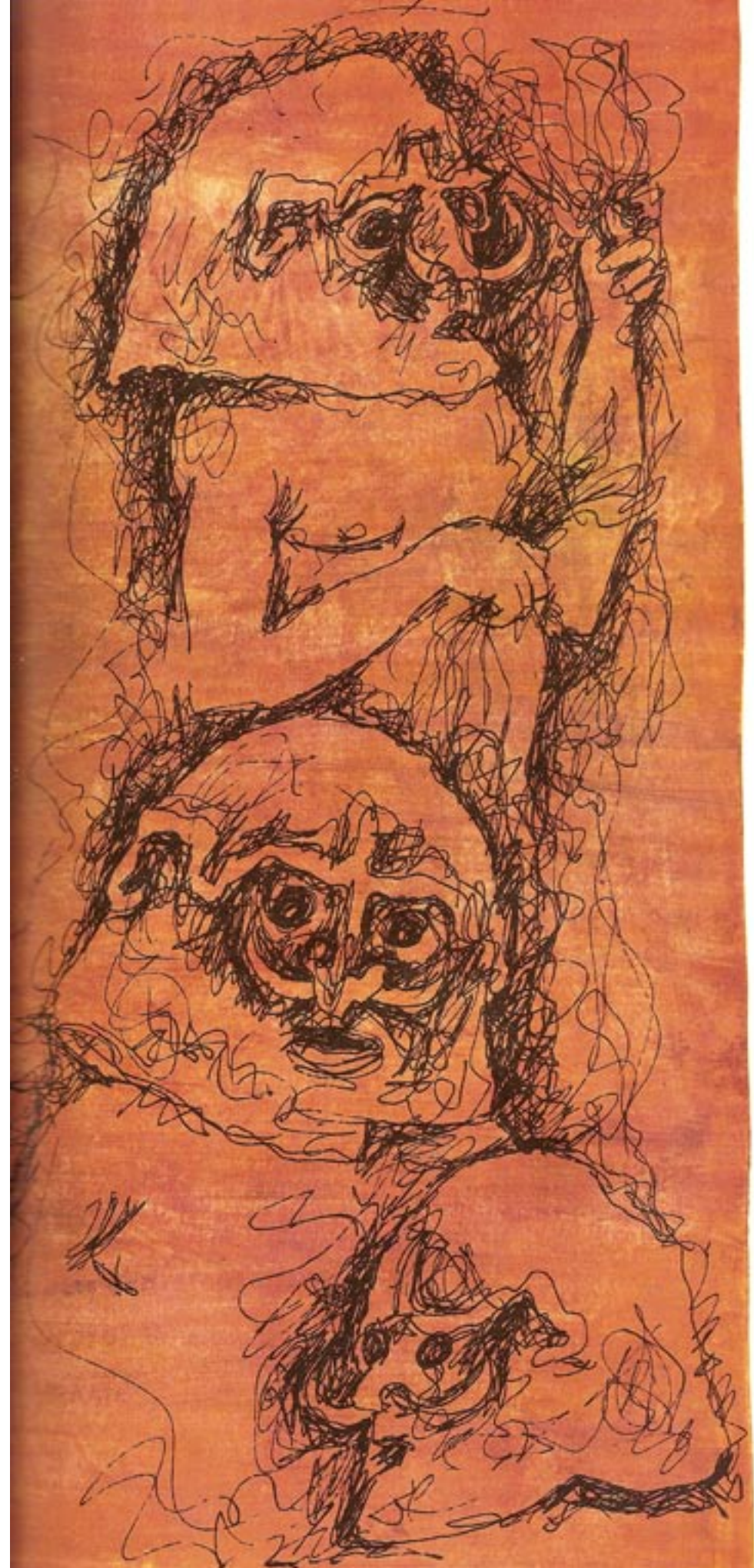
Some of the earliest settlers on the Rai coast were Christian missionaries. These Europeans brought with them what appeared to the primitive inhabitants, a superior material culture. The people tried to explain such phenomena as the hurricane lamp and the shotgun. One of the many explanations was derived from Yabob legend and adapted to explain the reason why the newcomer was in possession of such goods.

There were once two brothers called Kilibob and Manup who were born on Kar Kar Island. The two brothers quarrelled and decided to leave home. Manup made an outrigger canoe and sailed westward in the direction of the Sepik River where he settled and became the ancestor of the Sepik people. Kilibob, on the other hand, made a large seagoing vessel with a steel hull and sailed eastward along the Rai coast. He had dark and light-skinned people on board, all of whom he had created. He stopped at various places along the coast to let passengers disembark. The dark-skinned ones always chose to get off and when offered a choice of weapons they preferred the light bow and arrow to the heavy gun and the stable outrigger canoe to the clumsy dingy.

Kilibob continued on until he came to another land where he put all the white-skinned people ashore. The early European settlers on the Rai coast were thought to be those same white descendants of Kilibob returning with their cargo. The Christian mission taught that all men were brothers. The people thought that Kilibob had taught these whites the secret of obtaining endless supplies of these marvellous material possessions which started to arrive on ships at the Madang wharf. They thought, therefore, that they had only to obey the Christian mission's teaching wherein lay the secret of the cargo, and then they too could sit down and await the ships laden with cargo from their ancestor Kilibob, addressed to them.



Waiting  
in the collection of Dr B. Burton-Bradley



... from the highlands

## By Negotiation

In the Highlands of New Guinea, a man still buys a woman to be his wife in much the same way as his ancestors did. Polygamous marriage is allowed by many groups and is approved of by the women. A woman's lot is a hard one. She must look after the pigs and gardens as well as raise a family. If her husband has more than one wife, all can share these duties. His first wife is usually the one with authority, but the youngest is generally preferred sexually by the man.

A man must make a payment to the father of the girl he wishes to marry. How much is involved in this transaction depends on the relationship between the two groups and their social position. A man who is capable of making a high payment increases his social prestige and power. Thus, young men can usually afford only one wife.

Wealth is measured mainly in pigs and shells. A good price for a girl is about ten gold lip pearl shells and ten pigs. A girl does not have to be attractive to marry, but it is important that she be healthy and able to work hard. Generally the father of a boy goes and seeks a wife for his son. On his first visit he will take a pig or shell as a gift to open the negotiations.

On the marriage day, the girl's father kills a pig. The girl is smeared with pig grease and decorated with her dowry. These decorations will become the property of the husband. The girl is escorted to the man's village by her father's friends. A pig, slaughtered at her home, is tied to a pole and carried by two men. It is cooked and eaten to solemnize the marriage. The girl's father makes a gift of pigs to his son-in-law and makes him the head of this new household.



## Ampkanana

This legend explains the origin of the courtship ceremony which is common throughout the Highlands of New Guinea in various forms, known in Pidgin as *Tanim Hed* and *Karim Lek*. The word *Ampkanana* comes from Moge, a language of the Western Highlands: *amp*: women; *kanana*: singing.

Long ago there lived a young man called Deboninigins who owned a magic dog. He had plenty of pigs and his own garden, but no wife.

One day as he was returning from hunting, he saw a group of young girls washing in the river. One of the girls was very beautiful. The man told his dog, Opöi, that he wished he could have the woman for his wife. It was against tribal custom to approach a strange woman from another clan. So Opöi ran off alone and Deboninigins returned home.

While the beautiful girl, Ambamboib, and her friends were bathing, Opöi stole her *bilum* bag and her *pulpul* (skirt) from the river bank and ran away into the bush. The girls called after him and chased him. They asked him if he was a real dog or a man. Finally, all the girls had given up the chase and Ambamboib was alone in the bush in the gathering darkness. She called again to Opöi that she would follow him if he would return her *bilum* and *pulpul*. Opöi appeared with them and the girl followed him back to his master's house. When Deboninigins saw what Opöi had brought for him he was very happy.

The two slept in Deboninigins' house and the next day they travelled to Ambamboib's village with a pig for feasting. In the girl's village all were mourning as they thought she was dead. When the parents saw the young couple, they were not angry. The pig was killed and cooked, grease was smeared on everyone and a great feast was held to celebrate the marriage.

Because of Opöi's clever trick, from that day on, men can meet women of different clans. This is arranged by holding *Ampkanana*, where all the single girls come and 'turn their heads' and sing with the men who may eventually marry them.





## Karim Lek

The single girl's courtship ceremony known in the Western Highlands as *Ampkanana* or *Tanim Hed*, extends down into the Eastern Highlands district as far as the Kundiawa area and is known there as *Konanae* or *Karim Lek*. The custom is said to have originated in the following manner.

A long time ago there was no such thing as a girl's courtship ceremony and young men were forbidden to marry girls from other moiety groups. It was during this Tumbuna time that two creatures came down from Mt Wilhelm. Their names were Mondu and Pahr. When Mondu reached Mendima village, he turned into a man and Pahr turned into a pig. Pahr went down to the Wahgi River to wash and Mondu removed his decorations, headdress, bark belt and leaf coverings. He went down on all fours and searched for food on the ground. When Pahr saw his brother he told him not to undress and act like a pig. He told Mondu to dress, go into the village and find a young girl. He taught his young brother the beautiful songs which would enchant the young girls, and showed Mondu how to *Karim Lek*.

Mondu was the first ancestor to *Karim Lek*, and Pahr established the custom of buying young wives and paying the parents with the gift of a pig. Mondu bought his wife with his brother, Pahr, and so the custom has continued.

Today, the unmarried girls invite the men to their villages for a *Karim Lek* ceremony. If a couple are well-suited, the man will take the girl back to the village and will buy her as his wife if his parents have approved of her.



## Buruk, the Frog

Buruk, the frog, sat on his rock in the middle of the river. He slept during the day and hunted for food at night. Trosel, the snake, sitting up in the overhanging branches of the tree and continually dropping nuts on Buruk, woke him up. The frog became very angry and insulted the snake. He called him a lazy fellow who wasted his day annoying frogs while his mother worked very hard to make *bilum* bags.

Buruk dropped off to sleep. He had not been asleep long when Trosel dropped nuts on his back again. This time Buruk was so annoyed that he screamed at the snake and called him a coward, and afraid of Man. To hear the frog say this really insulted the young snake. Trosel climbed further out on his branch and was about to strike at Buruk when both heard the sound of hunters approaching. So engrossed had they been in their argument that they did not hear the men until it was almost too late. Trosel turned and disappeared quickly into the shelter of the bush. Buruk jumped into the swirling waters of the river and disappeared out of sight.

Until this day Buruk the frog and Trosel the snake are still enemies. But because of their fright, snakes stay in the bush during the day and frogs can swim under water.



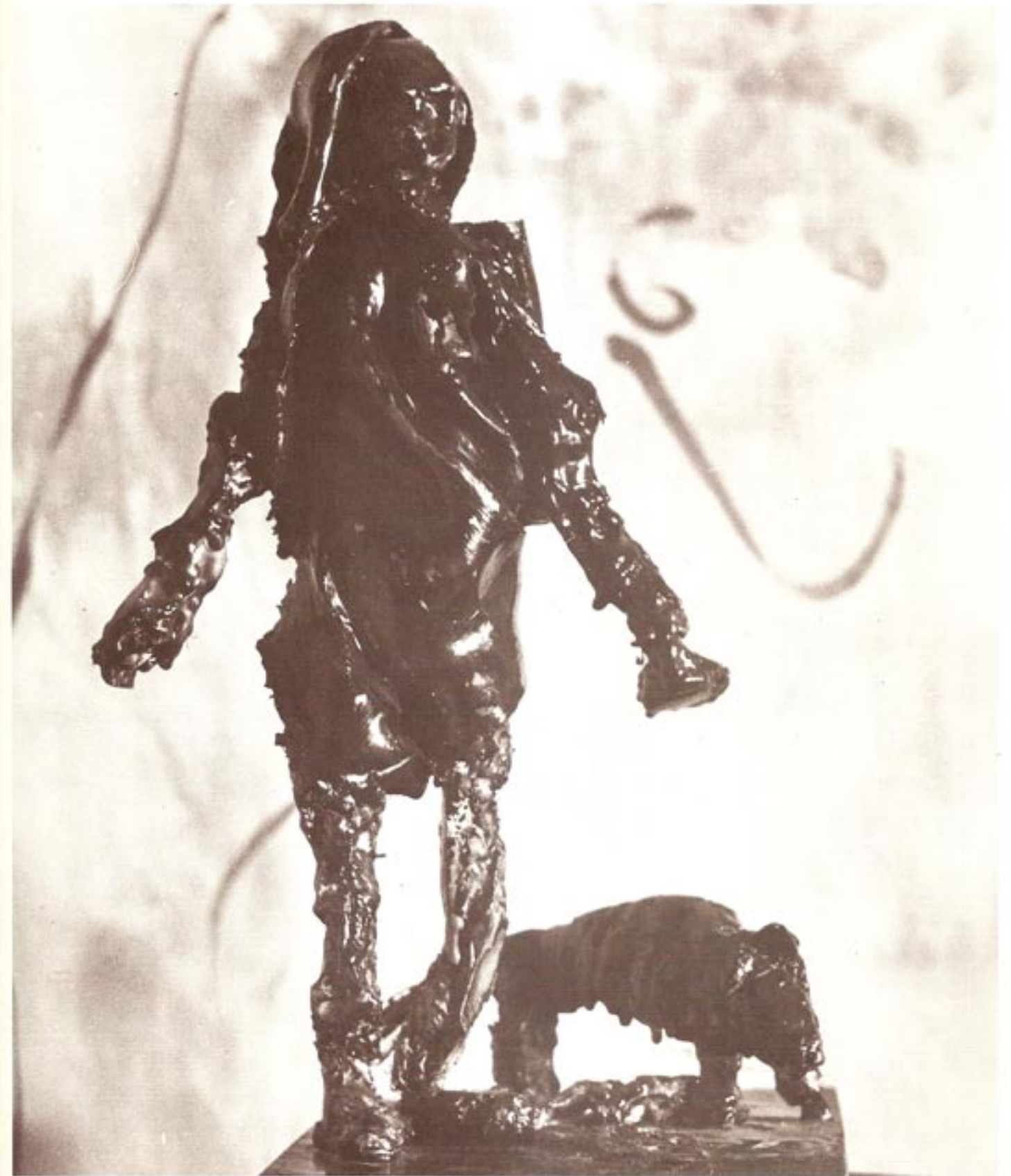
## Pariahs

Deboninigins had two wives who were called Black One and White One. The two women had sons. The son of Black One was beautiful while the son of White One was ugly.

One day Deboninigins went far away into the hills to make a *taro* garden. His two wives were to make food and carry it to the garden for him, as was the custom. White One was lazy and took only a small portion of food. Their husband had told them to take the path after the river. The correct path would have water lying to the side of it. White One, who wished to gain favour in her husband's eyes and be the only wife to bring food, covered the water on the correct path and wet the wrong track.

When Black One came along some time later she took the wet path and was soon lost. She came to the house of a witch who gave her shelter for the night. When the witch learnt what had happened, she told Black One to trust her completely and everything would be alright. The witch told her to catch frogs by the river, but only the small frogs. Then she received instructions on how to reach home again but was not allowed to take her son out of the *bilum* until they reached home. This she did, but when she opened her bag, her son was not there and in his place was the flower of a banana bunch. Then the ground shook, and out of the distance came a handsome man. It was her son miraculously grown. The witch had made the baby grow into a young man to protect his mother.

When White One returned and saw the other woman's son she was very jealous and asked what had happened. Black One told her to take the false path which led to the witch's cottage. The witch recognized White One immediately as being a selfish woman so did not instruct her to pick only the small frogs. She told White One, however, not to remove her son from the bag until she had reached home. White One did not follow these instructions but took her son out before she reached home. She found that he had not grown but was covered in blood. Immediately the people saw the baby, they knew that the second wife of Deboninigins was evil and lazy and had been selfish. So they chased her out of the village with an old, mangy, yellow dog and she was never allowed in again.



Pariahs  
in the collection of Mr K. Plund

## The Kapul's Trickery

At the beginning of time, there were two *kapuls* (small marsupials) who were always competing with each other in games and when in search of food. Their names were Kumuk and Olt.

One day, Olt, who wanted to beat Kumuk for all time, decided to trick his friend and said, 'I think I would like to lose my tail and leave the trees to live forever on the ground. Don't you think we should both remove our tails and stay on the ground, Kumuk? Why should we have these long things when they only get in the way?'

Kumuk was not sure about this, so Olt took his tail and hid it behind his back when Kumuk wasn't looking. When Kumuk couldn't see Olt's tail any more, he really believed that his friend had cut it off, and because of this, Olt would be able to defeat him in everything. So Kumuk cut his tail off too!

Olt had really tricked his friend in a very unfair manner. He then took his tail out from behind his back and ran up the tree, but poor Kumuk, who had cut his tail off, couldn't climb the trees any more. He dug a hole in the ground, and there he slept during the day, too ashamed to show himself. His coat became hard and he grew spines to protect himself. He lost his face from shame, and all that remained was his long nose. Olt stayed up in the trees, swinging victoriously from the branches by his long beautiful tail.



## Ambram'ninga

(Many Mt Hagen clans have lived in the Mt Ambra area at different times in the past, and all claim the ownership of this story.)

Long, long, ago, there lived a small *kunai* pigeon called M'Ninga, who was known as Ambram'ninga, as he exclusively owned the beautiful Mt Ambra.

One day, Ambram'ninga decided to build a large traditional men's house and he flew off into the bush where he busily collected bamboo, grass and rope, with which to build his house. He had been collecting all morning when his work was interrupted by a heavy downpour. He quickly took shelter by the trunk of a Karuka tree, where he fluffed up his feathers and hid his head underneath his wing to keep warm.

In the middle of the rainstorm, Reim, the cassowary, was still in search of food and he came shuffling along, eating everything in front of his nose. When he came upon the sleeping Ambram'ninga, he thought he was a shoot of bamboo, so he ate him. Ambram'ninga, who was swallowed whole and was unharmed, sat in Reim's belly until he was able to escape. The little *kunai* pigeon was so very cross at being badly treated by Reim that he swore, as he washed himself in the river, to take revenge on this clumsy, greedy cassowary.

Ambram'ninga collected all his building materials and returned to Mt Ambra where he worked non-stop on his men's house. When it was completed, he invited all the birds of the bushland and grassland to a big feast, where he had prepared pigs, cooked in the earth ovens with delicious fruit and vegetables. Everybody was invited to partake of the spread, except Reim, who stood discontentedly to one side. When all the birds had eaten, Ambram'ninga stood up and explained to his guests the reason why he had not invited Reim to eat.

All the birds of the grassland were so annoyed with Reim that they screeched their disapproval, each in his own dialect. Ambram'ninga took his fighting spear, threw it and hit the cassowary on the side of the neck. All the other birds took their spears and shot at Reim's legs. Reim ran so fast down the side of Mt Ambra that his huge claws scratched deep *barets* (grooves) down the slope.

The defeated cassowary retreated deep into the bushland where he still lives today. If he is ever caught, one can still see the red patch on his neck where Ambram'ninga's spear caused his blood to flow, and the scars on his legs where the other birds' spears hit him.



## Origin of Fire

In the Tumbuna time of long ago, life was not as it is now. Man had no fire to warm himself during the long cold Highland nights—not until the magic dog, Opōi, travelled far away and brought fire back to his master, Deboninigins.

Opōi had a brother called N'gdap, a large fine pig. The two set off one day into the higher mountains far away. Men believed that these mountains were inhabited by evil spirits who stole the sun and made the nights cold. Opōi and N'gdap journeyed for many days and nights until they came to where the sun rests on top of the highest peak. They crept up until they were close enough for each to bite off a piece from the edge of this great fire. They turned and fled back down the mountainside, holding the fire between their teeth. On and on they ran while the fire burnt into their flesh. The pain was so great that N'gdap could not bear it any longer. He swallowed it down and there it sat inside his belly. Opōi quickly cut a piece of bamboo and spat his fire into the hollow tube. He carried the fire, concealed in the bamboo, back to Deboninigins. Opōi showed his master how to coax the fire out of the bamboo again. He slit the tube, inserted a long fibre strand and rubbed it back and forth stirring the smoke which broke into fire.

From that time on, men could make fire come out of the bamboo, and men and dogs have been best friends since then. The pig became a lazy fellow, contented to sleep outside in the cold, because of the warmth inside his belly.



## Tauni Kapi Kapi

High up in the Owen Stanley Range in the area of the now famous Kokoda Trail, there once lived a terrible giant devil, Tauni Kapi Kapi. He was taller than the coconut palms of the coast. He could stand on his hind legs and survey the countryside for miles around. He was a curious, fearsome mixture of wild boar and some unimaginable horror that exists only in the mind. His name was always spoken in a whisper in case he should hear and become angered. Tauni Kapi Kapi ate people and tore whole villages apart when he was angry. If the devil giant was thirsty he would extend his long arms to the coast and scoop up handfuls of sea water to drink.

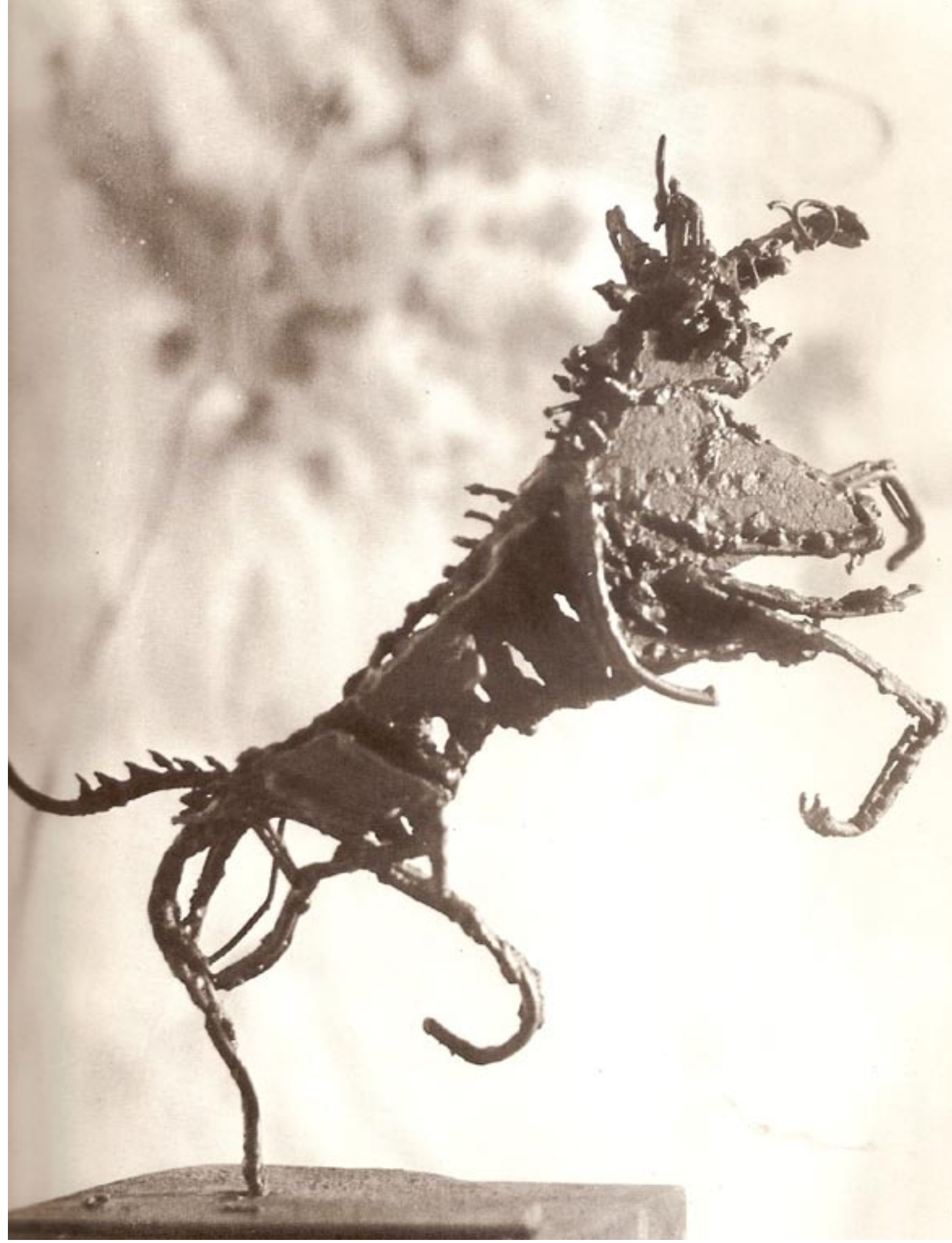
One day Tauni Kapi Kapi went further afield in search of human flesh. As he strode towards the coast, the people could feel the earth shake and the hills rumble. They jumped into their canoes and pushed quickly out to sea.

One woman with a young son was left behind on the beach and sought shelter in some nearby caves. Here she lived until her son, Mabi, was a fully grown man and a fine hunter. Mabi devised a plan to kill Tauni Kapi Kapi. He chose a tall straight tree in which he built four sturdy platforms at different levels. On each platform he placed huge rocks, logs and bundles of spears.

Then he baited the mad giant with insults. Tauni Kapi Kapi came thundering out of the Owen Stanleys in a terrible temper. When he reached the base of the tree he opened his mouth and roared in rage. Mabi tipped the many rocks down his throat, followed by the burning logs. Mabi hurled spear after spear until the giant's body was full.

Then Mabi clambered to the second platform with Tauni Kapi Kapi in pursuit. The giant devil's roaring was heard for miles around. The more he roared, the more stones and logs Mabi threw into his belly.

Finally, up on the fourth platform, Mabi took a long stabbing spear and plunged it into the right eye of the giant. Tauni Kapi Kapi, his belly full of smouldering logs and red hot stones, fell crashing to the ground, dead. Mabi had killed the fearsome giant and his people returned to live in peace.



## The Women of Stone

Once there were two girls called Tagal and Magal, who didn't want to take part in *Ampkanana*, the girls' courtship ceremony, in which, traditionally, all single girls take part.

So the two decided to run away into the bush in search of wild rope with which to weave their *bilum* bags. They went far up the mountain side, following the course of the Kuna River. Tagal and Magal walked until they came to a place where a large stone sat in the middle of the Kuna. They had walked so far along the banks of the river that they were almost at the source. There they halted and prepared a meal of wild *kaukau* (sweet potato) and *kapul*. After their meal they washed in the cool waters of the river and sat upon the large stone to let the warm rays of the sun dry their skin. The sun set behind the mountain and Tagal and Magal decided it was time to go back to their village, but when they tried to jump down from the river stone, they could not move. The sun had dried them out and stiffened their burnt bodies.

The dark, cold night closed in around them. Tagal looked out over the valley in the opposite direction from the village and Magal looked longingly towards home. By the next morning, the two women had completely turned into stone.

The hot sun continues to bake them by day, and the cold night cements their stone bodies to the Kuna River stone, where they sit even today, looking with unseeing eyes, in their opposite directions.





## From Hefioza

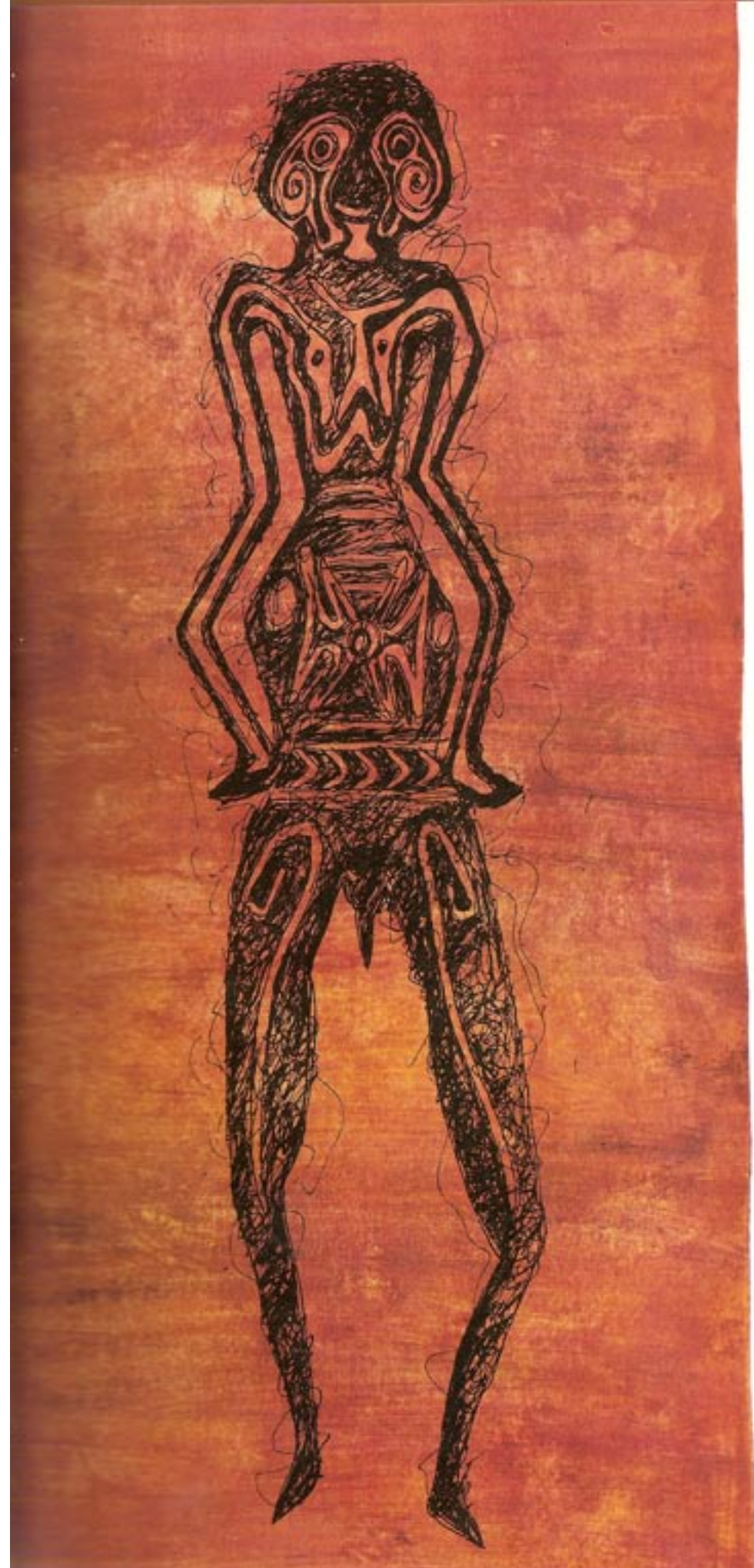
Many years ago a man named Hefioza lived alone on a mountain near Henganofi. Below the mountain flowed the Kafe River. Hefioza was unable to travel very far because of the length and size of his penis. When he did travel, he coiled it and carried it in a basket hung from his shoulder.

One morning at dawn he managed to struggle to the top of his mountain. From his vantage point he could see over the whole valley, and down below, to one side of the mountain, he beheld a woman working in her garden. He uncoiled his penis and allowed it to slide slowly down the mountain side. When it reached the garden, it crept along the border of the tilled soil towards the unsuspecting woman. When the woman felt the penis between her legs and saw the size of it, she seized a stone axe and chopped it into many pieces.

The first piece which she cut off and threw away turned into *taro*, and the rest into yams, bananas, tapioca and sugar cane respectively. These crops, which until this time were unknown to them, are now the staple food crop of the Kafe people.

She chopped up the whole length of the penis until it was trimmed to a normal length. Then she discovered that Hefioza was dead. She killed a pig and collected its blood. With this she prepared a magic potion and poured it down Hefioza's throat. Slowly he came back to life. They later married and produced many progeny who became the ancestors of the Kafe people.





... from the south coast

## Blow Lahara Wind

The Taurama Hill, eight miles east of Port Moresby and the Keaura Hill, one hundred and fifty miles west along the Papuan coast, were once two brothers who lived inland, surrounded by an abundance of food. Both were married to beautiful women who made the best cooking pots and wore the finest ornaments.

One day Taurama discovered that Keaura had been making love to his wife. He was so mad with jealousy that he ripped Keaura from the earth and hurled him, with all his might, at the setting sun. Keaura realized that he would never be able to return, so in great haste he collected nearly all the food and large trees within reach. He left only arm-shells and other adornments, pots and a few wild bananas. Keaura fled westwards at great speed. His load was heavy, so at Kabadi he threw away some yams, coconuts and sago. At Lolo and Maiva he dropped more. After a brief rest at Kevori, he left coconuts and sago before he resumed his journey. Further west he travelled. At Moto Motu and Moviave, he left his prized large canoe logs. When he reached a comfortable spot just west of Silo, he was so tired and angry that he fell down to rest. He threw the remainder of his load around him.

The foods and timbers took root and flourished. Keaura called in triumph to his brother Taurama, who had moved to his present vantage point on the coast so he could see where Keaura had gone. Taurama realized that by the time the Lahara wind blew they would have nothing to eat. So he agreed to trade with Keaura, his brother. They traded arm-shells and clay pots for coconuts, sago and canoe logs.

And so the Motu people have traded each year from that time forth. The north-westerly Lahara wind blows them on their adventure and the south-easterly Laurabada wind brings them safely home.



## Spirits of Taurama

Many many years ago the peace-loving Motu peoples of the Papuan coast were constantly in fear of the marauding of the warlike mountain Koiaris. At a young age, the children were told of the time when the Koiari had burnt and looted Pari village. The only survivor of this raid had been an old woman and her son Igo. The woman told her son that Taurama Hill near their old home would, in future, protect the Pari people from all harm.

Taurama is an impressive landmark, rising six hundred feet out of the landscape and falling sharply away on the seaward side, visible to home-coming sailors for miles. Indeed it seemed to give security to the people living in its shadow. As Igo had always expected, the peaceful life of the Motu people one day came to a sudden end. A Pari hunter, chasing *maganí* (small wallabies) on tribal land was speared in the leg by four Koiari men. However, he managed to return home to tell his story. Igo warned the people of a possible attack but they were tired from a hard day's fishing and went to sleep in their cosy huts. The restless one crept silently into the hills to spy on the raiding party and when his fears of a raid were confirmed, he turned and ran all the way home to warn the village. The warriors were close behind him so Igo could not give much warning. The Motu peoples did not possess such weapons as the Koiari and they were swiftly driven out of their homes.

Igo rallied as many people as he could and, shouting above the noise of battle, called his people to Taurama. They ran at full speed up the steep slopes with the Koiari warriors chasing them. Up to the top they went and over, crashing down on to the rocks and into the sea so far below. Those pursuers, who were close behind, had no chance to stop and joined the ill-fated ones below.

During the season of Laurabada, when the wind is from the south-east, the seas are turbulent and dangerous and the currents are strange and unpredictable. This is caused by the warring spirits of the Pari and the Koiari who are still at war beneath the sea. Sailors trading along the coast in their *lakatois* (sea canoes) utter magic charms to appease the spirits of the dead who lie in the shadow of Taurama.



## Aruako, the Moon Woman's Lover

Long long ago, before there was a moon in the night sky, there lived a great hunter called Aruako. He could not find a girl he liked well enough to marry. So he spent many hours lying on the sand dreaming of a beautiful girl.

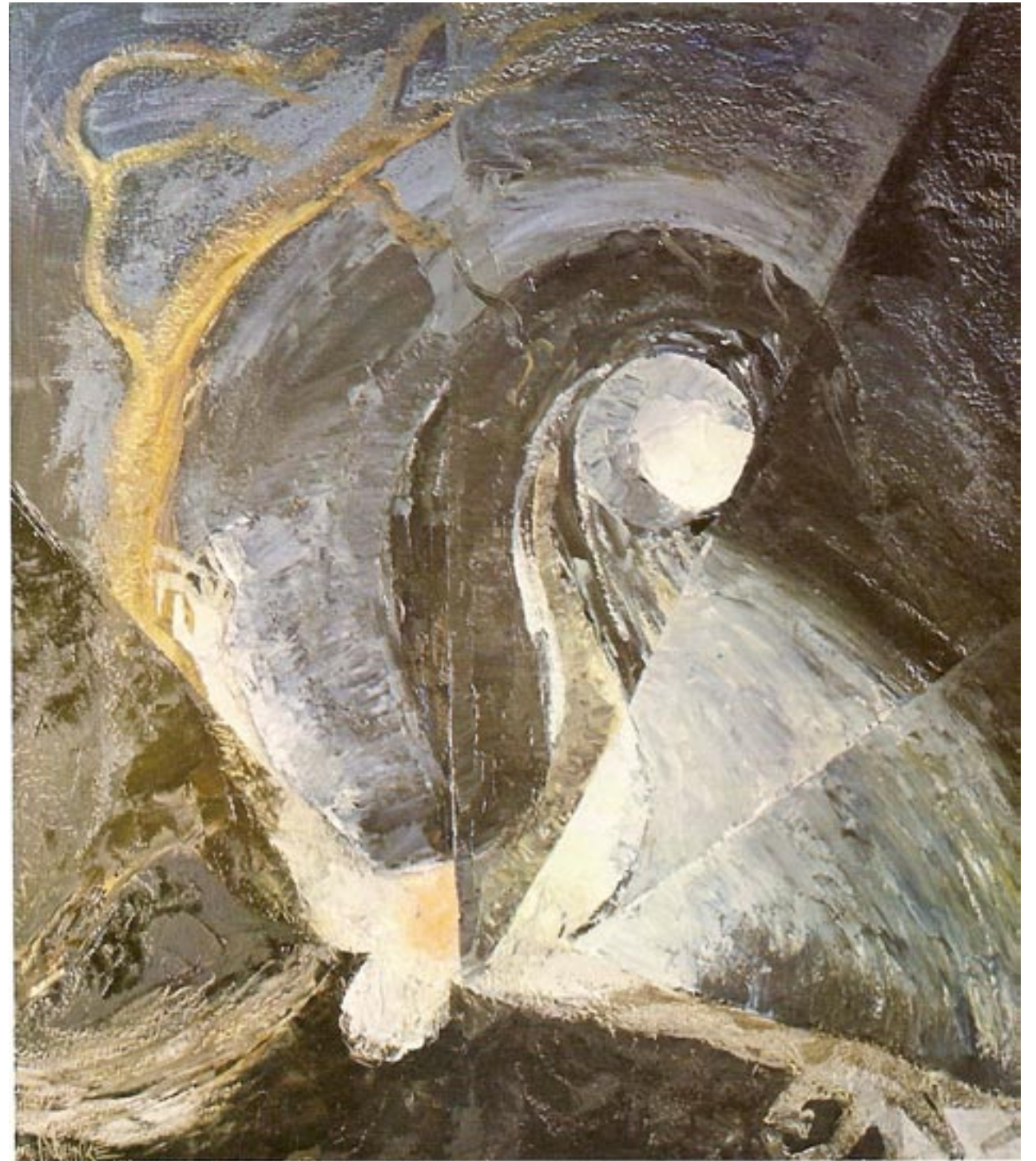
One day as he sat gazing, two girls came along the beach and shouted insults at him because he failed to notice their swaying bodies. They called him a lazy young boy.

Aruako jumped up and seizing their digging stick, raced to the garden. He dug for days and nights until his voice, deep down in the earth, could hardly be heard. Finally he uncovered a beautiful bright white disc. He raced to the surface with it. The gleaming circle grew larger and larger in his hands. He took it into the sea and washed it. The disc was so large and light that it started floating out of Aruako's hands. It was now so bright that nobody could look at it. Then from the glowing silvery distance came the accusing tone of a woman's voice. It was the voice of the moon woman whom Aruako had dug prematurely from the womb of Mother Earth.

Although Aruako knew she was a spirit woman, he wanted the beautiful moon woman for his wife. For months Aruako searched the land for his beloved. Finally he found her and was bewitched by her beauty. He asked her to marry him as he had originally discovered her. But she was the promised bride of Sinali, the sun.

So the two married for one day and then the hunter returned home. The jealous sun pointed his shadow spears at Aruako and he died. Sinali, the sun man and the moon woman, had two children, Kukwana, the morning star, and Didigar, the evening star.

When the moon woman tires of her husband the sun, he dances on the rim of the world and floods the sky with bright orange to impress her. Then he sinks to take his bath in the sea and leaves her to search in vain for Aruako. The early morning dew is all that remains of the tears she has shed over her earthly lover.



## Kalomatu's Tattoo

Long ago gardens were closed in by high fences and a man never entered into his neighbour's garden, except by invitation of the head of the household.

Kalomatu went to hunt birds with his bow and arrow. His elder brother was out fishing. Kalomatu's swift flying arrow fell into his brother's garden where the brother's wife was working. The woman hid the arrow because she liked its beautiful carvings. When Kalomatu finally caught sight of his arrow, he asked her to hand it over to him. The woman refused, saying that he could scale the fence and take it himself. Kalomatu did not wish to enter his brother's garden in his absence, but the woman insisted so he jumped the fence.

Then the woman asked him to tattoo the arrow design on her thighs. This he did then taking the leaves of a *celosia*, he wiped away the blood and threw the leaves into the sea. The current carried them to where the elder brother was fishing. He recognized them at once and returned home in his canoe. He called for his wife to help him and as she waded out to his canoe he paddled back into deeper water. The woman lifted her grass skirt to keep it dry and unwittingly showed the tattoos to her suspicious husband.

So angered was he by her deceit that he killed her immediately and then ordered the people to prepare carved posts for a great new men's house. They all felled trees and carved them. The beautifully carved post of Kalomatu corresponded exactly with the design on the woman's thighs. Everybody took spears and chased Kalomatu to kill him. He climbed high into a Simboan tree. The people below began to fell the tree. Kalomatu took his bow, shot an arrow into the sky and then many more arrows into that one and made a ladder. On this he climbed to safety into the sky. When he went he took all the best *taro* with him to punish the people.



Kalomatu's Tattoo  
private collection

## Hoivea, the Black Cockatoo

Marai was a great fisherman. Many fish were caught in his traps or writhed their last on the end of his sure spear. The fish people were very distressed by the large numbers of their folk who fell prey to Marai. They held a conference and decided to send Marai a woman for his wife. They decorated Eare with a barnacle skin and placed seeds of banana and taro crops on her body.

One day as the fisherman levelled his spear at an unsuspecting target, there was a great swell which almost capsized his canoe and unbalanced the fisherman. When he recovered he found to his surprise a very ugly looking woman had been deposited in his canoe. It was Eare, the gift from the sea people. Marai paddled home as quickly as he could, abandoned his canoe on the beach and ran home at full speed.

Eare was discovered by an old woman and cared for by her for many months. The sea woman made a garden and planted all the seeds she had brought with her from her home. One day, feeling hot, she shed her mantle to bathe in the cool waters of the river. Hoivea, the black cockatoo, saw her, was enraptured by her beauty and flew straight away to tell Marai. When the man saw the woman without her ugly skin, he immediately fell in love with her. Marai took Eare as his wife after hiding her barnacle skin forever.



## High Tide and Low Tide

Many years ago, when the world had just begun, a crab decided to travel to the setting place of the sun.

After many days' travel without rest, he fell asleep in the cool mud beneath some mangroves. The mangroves were annoyed by the intrusion of this stranger and awakened the crab. They demanded that he move on but he was too tired. The angry mangroves pierced the crab with their sharp branches. The crab called out in pain to a rat to come and save him. The rat hurried over and began to bite the fruit of the mangroves. The mangroves called the fire to sweep through and burn the crab and the rat. The rat called the sea to come up the mudflats and extinguish the fire. The sea rushed in to settle the trouble. It put out the fire, threw the rat inland and washed the crab away from the mangroves. The sea made them promise they would not fight in future.

Since that time, the sea has come in every day to make sure they are keeping the peace. First it rises high to speak to the mangroves, the next time it stays low to speak to the crab.

The mothers of Kerema village explain this story of high and low tide to their children when they complain that the high tide spoils their games along the mudflats.





## From this Clay

The man Sopuse worked very hard in his garden. He loved the soil which he dug every day. He formed a woman out of the clay and made love to her. Every morning when he came to the garden to work, he would at first lie with the woman whom he had created. From this union a boy called Sido was born.

Sopuse did not know he had fathered a child. The offspring grew rapidly and was soon walking and running. He became an excellent spear thrower. Sido always slept underground in his original birthplace, until the day when Sopuse discovered him. When he learnt that Sido was his son, he washed him in the fresh creek water and dried him in the sun. He fed Sido with bananas which were the only food people had at that time. Sido decided that people require additional food, so he brought *faro*, yam and sweet potatoes.

When he was older, Sido's father made him a drum and his mother made magic to attract women to him. Thus Sido married a girl from Iara village. This angered many men in Iara as Sagaru was a beautiful girl.

One day Sido and Sagaru had an argument over some fish which she had caught. Sagaru was so annoyed with Sido that she ran away from him to live with another man. Sido carved two birds out of wood and pasted feathers on to them. The birds then flew all over the country until they had found Sagaru. They then returned and led Sido to the hiding place. Meuri, Sagaru's new husband, picked up his stone club and struck Sido a fatal blow to his head.

The body of the dead Sido was placed in a canoe and paddled back to his village. But his spirit raced ahead before the canoe.



## The Twins

The spirit of the dead Sido begged the canoeists to throw the body overboard into the swiftly flowing river. This order was disobeyed so Sido decreed that all people would eventually die from that time on. People had previously died for only a short time, had gone to Saibai, the resting place of the spirits, and then returned to their own bodies.

So the spirit of Sido wandered the land looking for a permanent dwelling place. The spirit changed into many different forms at will. One day Sido's spirit had changed itself into an *uae* (shellfish) and lay in the shallow waters to rest. There were twin sisters living nearby who were permanently joined back to back. They found the shellfish amongst others of its kind and took them home to cook. The sisters, Koumo and Ahau swallowed the delicious shellfish, but Koumo ate the spirit of Sido and became pregnant.

After a short time she gave birth to a boy, also called Sido. One morning Sido, who grew to full manhood with supernatural speed, hid in a sago palm. When the sisters approached, he jumped out on to the track and split them apart with his axe. (The skin that he took from between the two women, he stretched over the mouth of a *kundu* [drum]. This *kundu* was magic and later helped Sido in many of his adventures.)

The woman facing the bush ran that way, and the other facing the village raced home. The women lived separate lives from that day on.



The Twins  
in the collection of Mr E. Tonismae

## Towards Adiri

The spirit of Sido, which had been born out of the twin woman Koumo, continued its wanderings after it had separated the two women. Sido was searching for a way to provide a spirit with a new body immediately it left its old one. He would dig a hole in the moist earth where he would lie and wait for a body without a spirit. Sido was continually disturbed by mischievous youngsters who were cheeky and angered the spirit being.

Sido, in his wanderings, came upon the twin sisters and requested a drink. They offered him water, using the top of his skull for a bowl. Sido was so insulted that he decided to abandon his search for new bodies and from then on all people would die and not return in another form to their own villages. Instead, Sido travelled westwards in search of Adiri where he would establish a dwelling place of spirits.

On his way he met the young children who had bothered him before. He asked them for passage in their canoe, to the other side of the river. One young boy on the edge of the river, pretending it was shallow, put his paddle just below the surface of the water and told Sido that he could wade across. The boys jumped into their canoes and paddled quickly away, laughing at their clever trick. Sido was outraged and transformed himself into a large fish. He chased the boys and tipped over their canoe. He then returned to his spirit self and continued on towards Adiri. He found Adiri way over on the western rim of the world where the sun sleeps and there he planted coconuts, betel nuts, *faro*, sago and bananas. Now everybody who dies joins Sido in Adiri forever.



## Pairio, the Catfish Woman



On Marukara Island in the Gulf of Papua, there once lived a wicked female who was known as a Hiwar-Abere.

One day she was pursued by a cloud of giant butterflies. She ran from them but finally the butterflies caught up with her and settled all over her body. She ran round and round the island trying to get rid of them. In desperation she jumped into the water and became a catfish. She grew huge spines on her back and the butterflies which were stuck to her skin changed her body to a beautiful mixture of iridescent colours as soft as the velvet of butterfly wings. Many of the other butterflies who had pursued, but not attached themselves to her, followed her scent into the water and were changed into spiny stonefish and brightly coloured catfish.

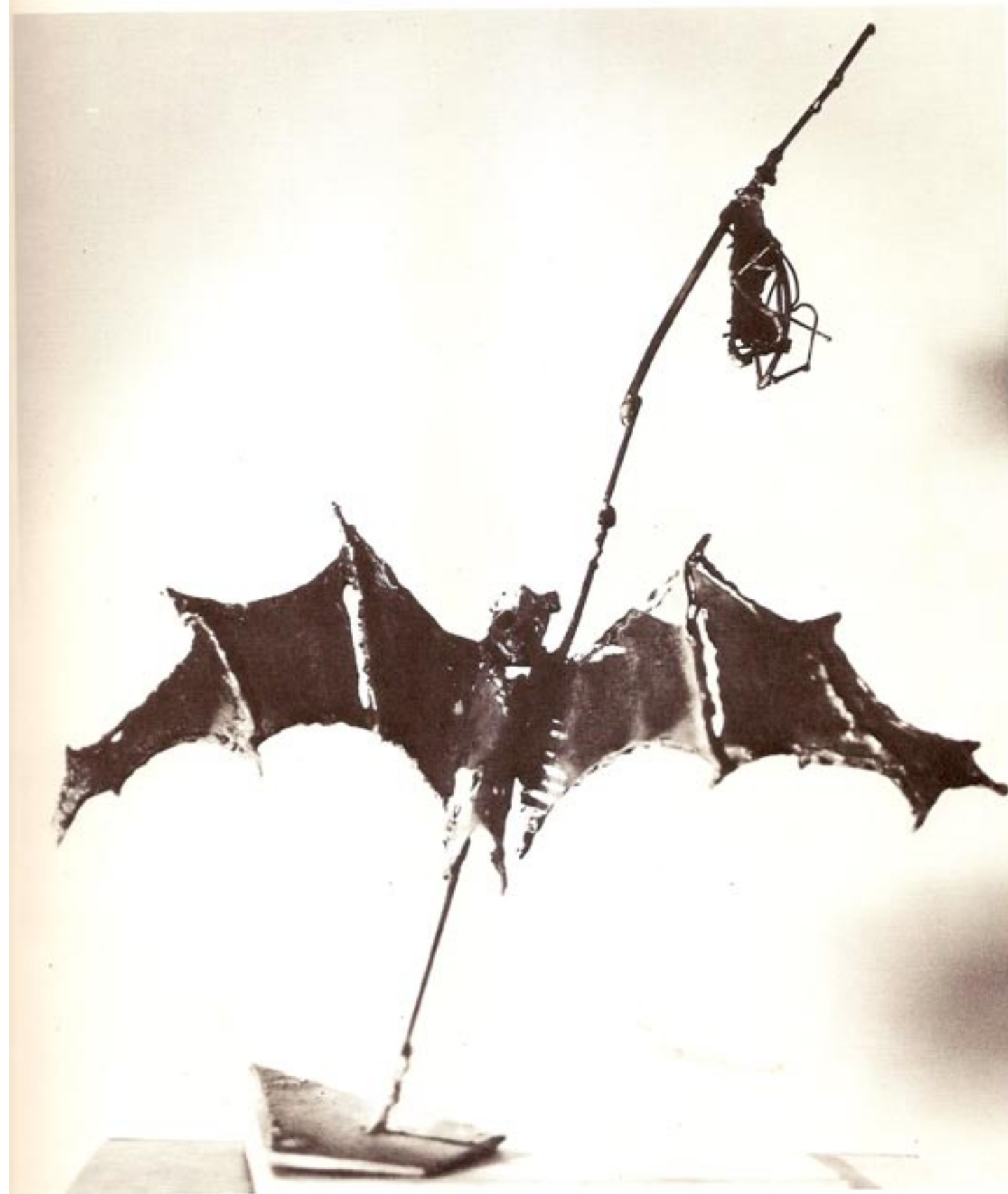
All these creatures live together on Kubani-kikava reef. Seafarers dare not go near this reef for fear that Pairio the catfish woman will become enraged and arch her back out of the water. It is certain that the long sharp spines could pierce and rip apart the fragile outrigger canoes. Sometimes, fishermen journeying home past the Kubani-kikava reef have seen these spines protruding out of the water. They must change course quickly in order to avoid shipwreck and death. Pairio often chases people who come too close to her reef home. Perhaps Pairio is amused to see the poor canoeists paddle for their lives when she chases them, pointing her dangerous spines in their direction.

## The Broken Paiva

Oamukapo, the old man of the Uaripi people who live in the Papuan Gulf area, taught his son Molala Harai the use of the *paiva*. The *paiva* is a long woven vine which Molala used as a tightrope to slide from his mountain home to the coastal villages below. Molala used to reach these villages by nightfall. He would stay and make love to the women of his choice. His father had instructed him to be home before dawn.

These orders he carried out until one night he found a woman who encouraged him to tarry and he lay asleep as the sun cast its golden fingers upon the huts of the coastal dwellers. Molala Harai leapt to his feet and ran to the place where he had abandoned the hanging *paiva*. Alas, his father, angered at his son's disobedience, had ordered the flying foxes to fly down the mountain and sever the line. As Molala approached, he saw that the cunning flying fox had bitten his home connection, the *paiva*. So he settled on the coast and married a woman from the village.

However, every night he could see the twinkling fires of his home village far away in the mountains and he longed to return and make peace with his old father. Molala Harai would change himself into the morning star and try to reach his home. But just as he would almost reach home, the sun would peep over the rim of the world and he would have to return to his coastal exile.



The Broken Paiva  
private collection

## Sesere, the First Harpooner of Dugong

Sesere lived alone, tended his garden and speared fish for his evening meal. His parents had died and both his sisters were married. He was a successful fisherman and his brothers-in-law would watch with covetous eyes and hearts full of jealousy at his beautiful catch.

Sesere's sisters made fun of their husbands' inferior fishing ability until one day, the two could stand no more abuse. They attacked the lone Sesere, beat him up with sticks and stole his catch. That night the sore, despondent Sesere dug up the skulls of his parents and slept with them. The spirits of his dead loved ones came to him in his sleep and instructed him to be brave. They told him to follow the course of the creek where he would find a ready made *wapo* (harpoon handle) which they had made for him. They told him where to find the rope for his harpoon and wood for fashioning a strong head.

In great detail they explained the construction of the platform from where he would harpoon the dugong at sundown. Next day Sesere put his parents back to rest and carried out their instructions. At sunset, he called upon the hand of his father to guide his spear and make the harpoon find its target. Sesere was successful and supped on dugong flesh and *kaukau*.

The following night Sesere speared three dugong and smoked them over his cooking fire next day. The two jealous brothers-in-law saw the smoke of the cooking fire and crept in for a closer look. When they saw the large pieces of meat, they were amazed. Quickly, they changed into the form of dogs and darting into Sesere's house, stole his cooking dinner. Sesere again consulted his parents and when the dogs returned the next day he killed them with a big stick.

So the thieves were punished, but the village warriors planned to avenge the death of their comrades. They formed a large group and attacked Sesere. The young man was again helped by his ancestors, and he slayed all the attacking enemy. There were then many women without husbands, so Sesere chose the finest to become his wives. He provided for them all as he was a great fisherman and the first harpooner of the dugong.



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Sesere, the First Harpooner of Dugong  
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At the age of twenty-four, Glenys Köhnke is herself a legend. To many villagers in Papua New Guinea she is **Meri Spik** (the Speaking Woman) and attributed with magical powers to explain her knowledge of languages and folklore.

She was born in Brisbane in 1948 and moved to Madang while still a child. After studying creative art at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, Germany in 1968, she returned to settle in Port Moresby.

Glenys Köhnke has held five exhibitions in Papua New Guinea and is represented in collections in Germany, Australia, South Africa and the United States.