

# **NEW GUINEA WHAT I DID AND WHAT I SAW**

Barry Craig, 2018

[barry.anthro@gmail.com](mailto:barry.anthro@gmail.com)

Photos copyright B. Craig unless otherwise attributed



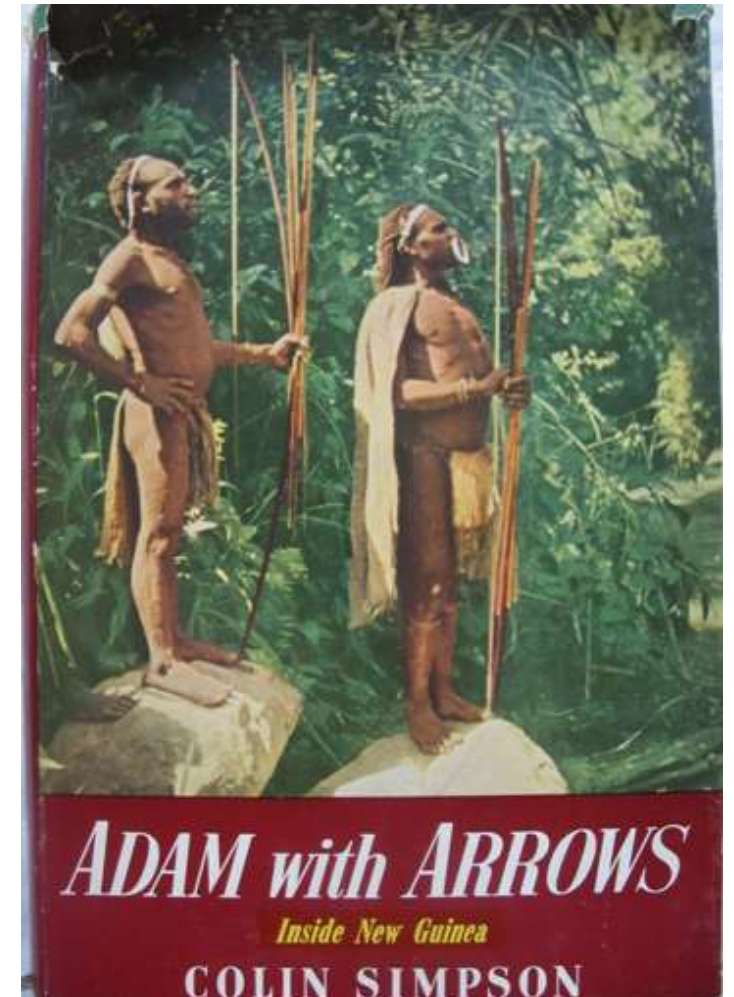
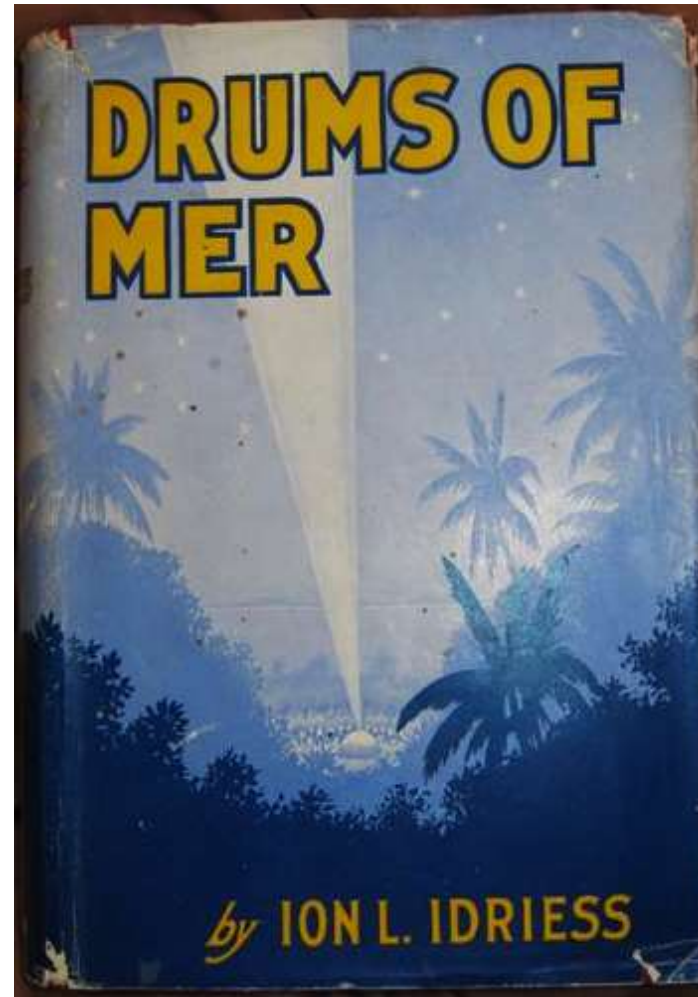
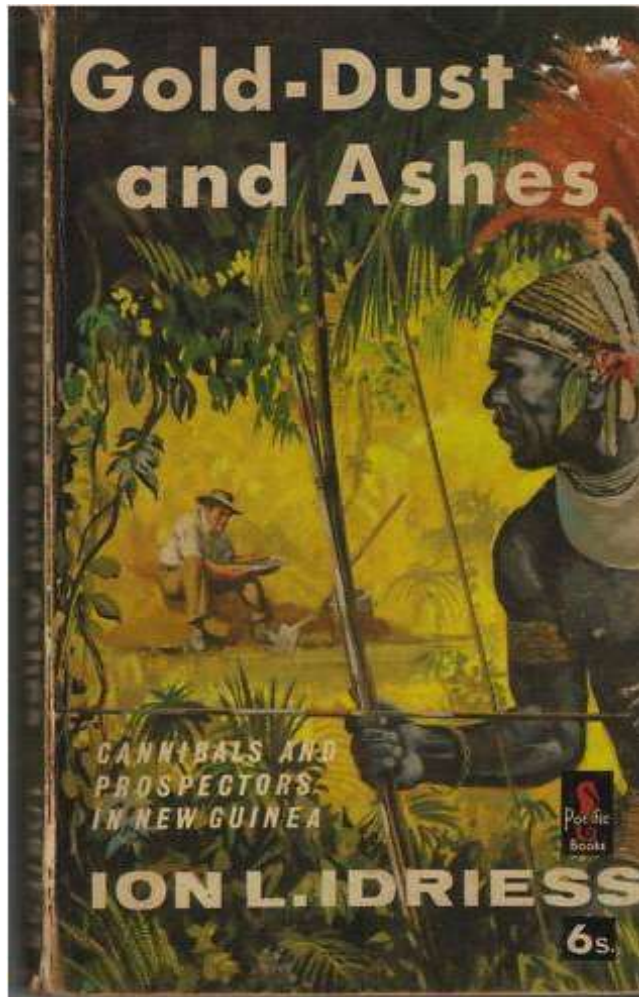
I guess I was  
destined to be a  
walker from an  
early age  
– I may have got  
that from my  
father.

Boot camp, c.1941

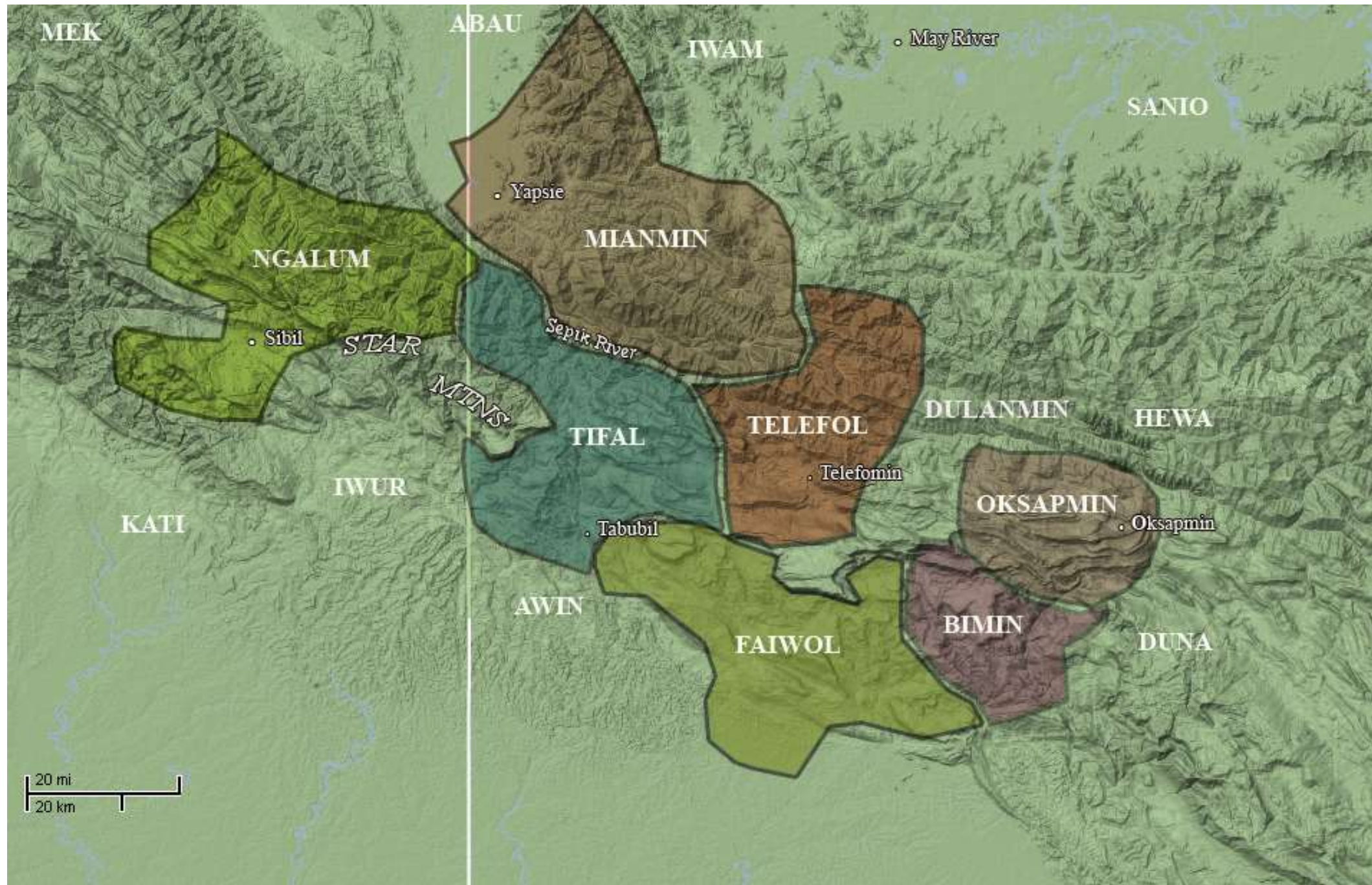
Martin Place, Sydney,  
c.1941



Because my father fought at Sattelberg in the hills west of Finschhafen in 1943, I became fascinated by New Guinea and read avidly. After studying anthropology at the University of Sydney I went to PNG as an Education Officer in 1962. I asked to be posted to Telefomin.

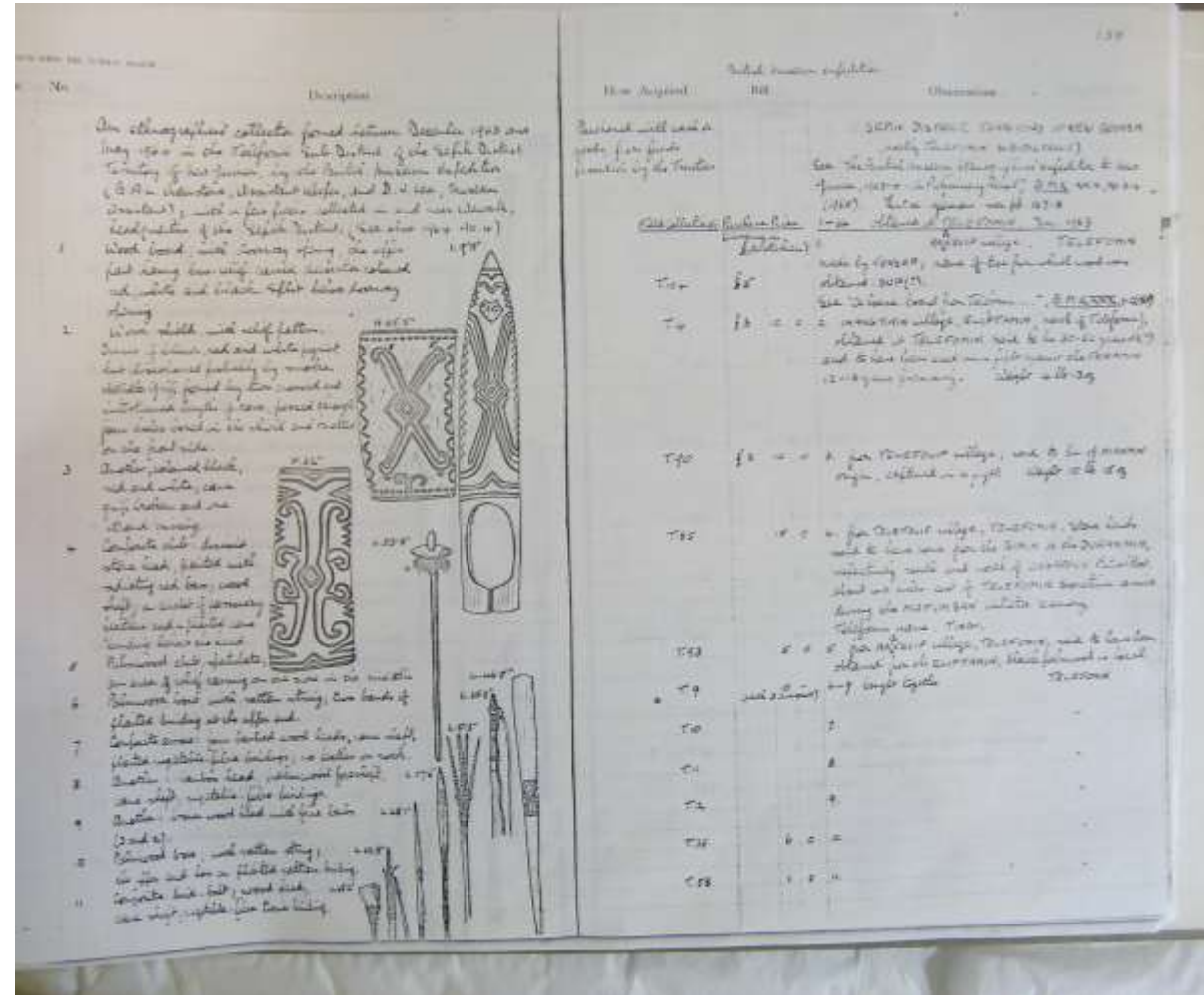






# Languages of Central New Guinea







I was fortunate to witness the last of the male initiation ceremonies – *dakasalban* candidates with sponsor at left, *otban* at right.





In 1964, I collected about 320 items of material culture for the Australian Museum, supported with photographs, and began a survey of all house boards and shields in the wider region, extended in 1967. This resulted in a Masters Thesis in 1969 and a booklet in 1988.

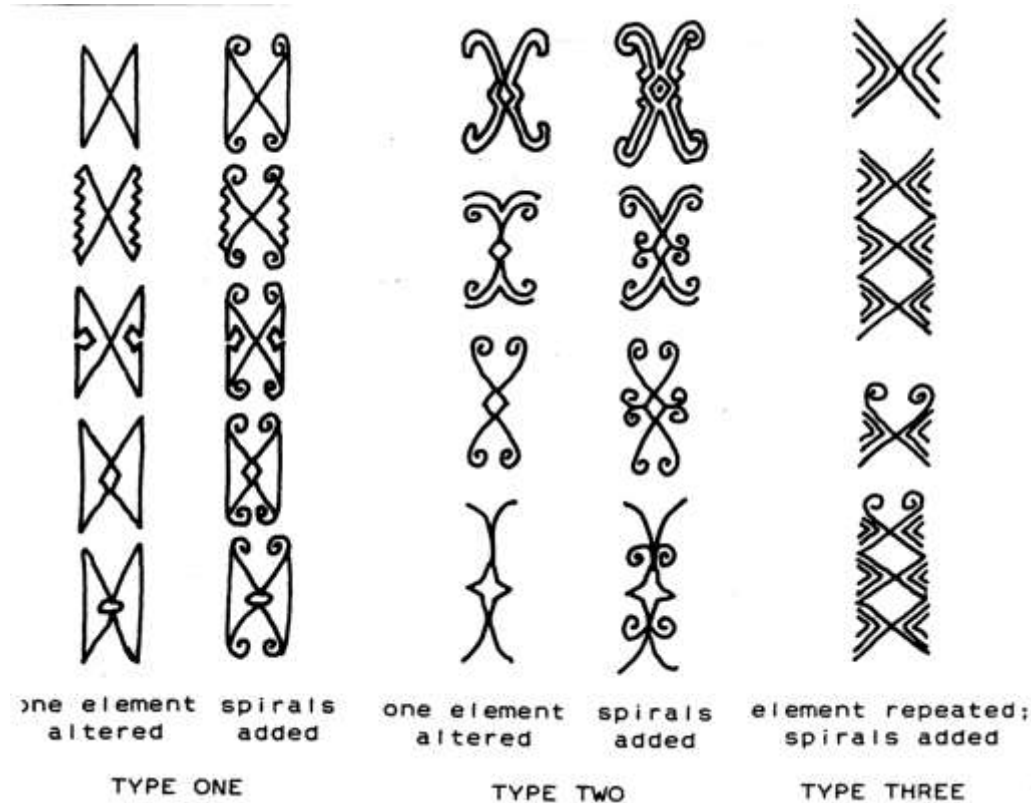
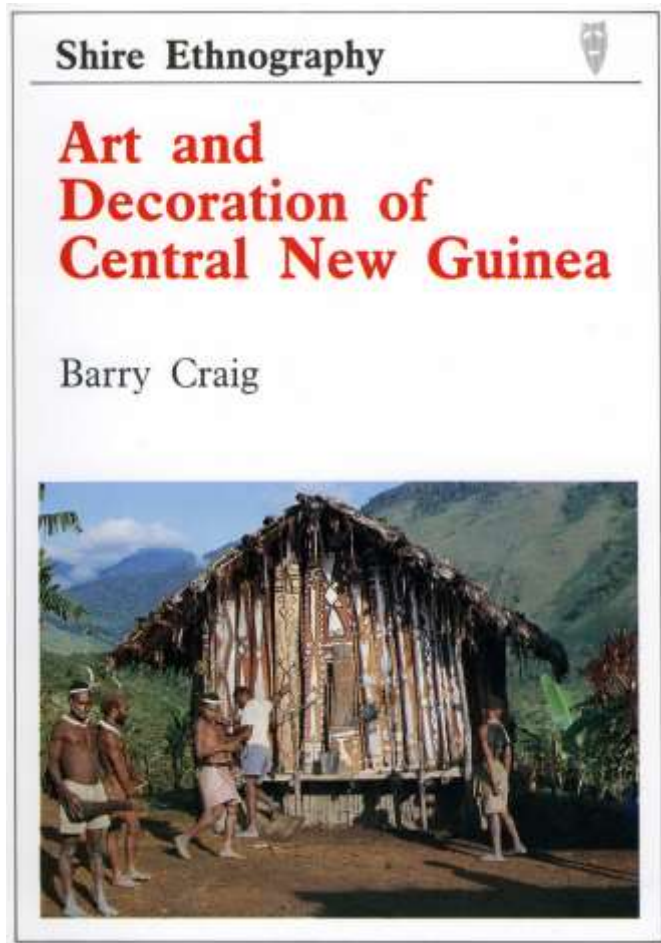
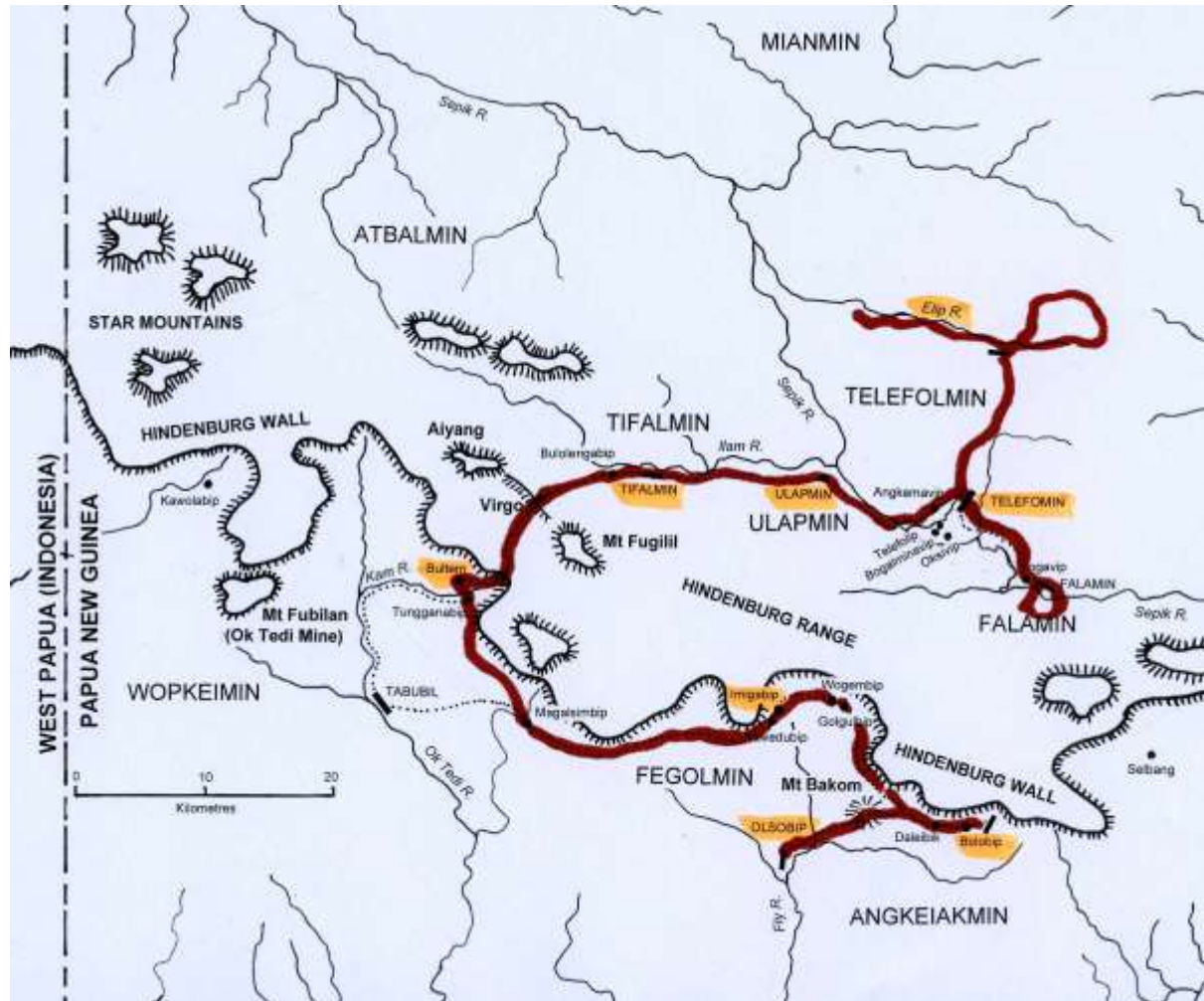


Table 1. Design types on houseboards by period of manufacture.

Design type	pre-1900	1900-13	1914-26	1927-36	1937-43	1944-53	1954-61	1962-7	Total
I	—	6	4	7	8	31	12	9	77
II	6	6	—	—	—	7	8	30	57
III	1	15	5	2	—	2	2	—	27
Total	7	27	9	9	8	40	22	39	161

At Bolovip, the board photographed by Champion in 1926 (left) was still there in **1967** (top right) but had been discarded by 1981.

**Map of 1967 survey**

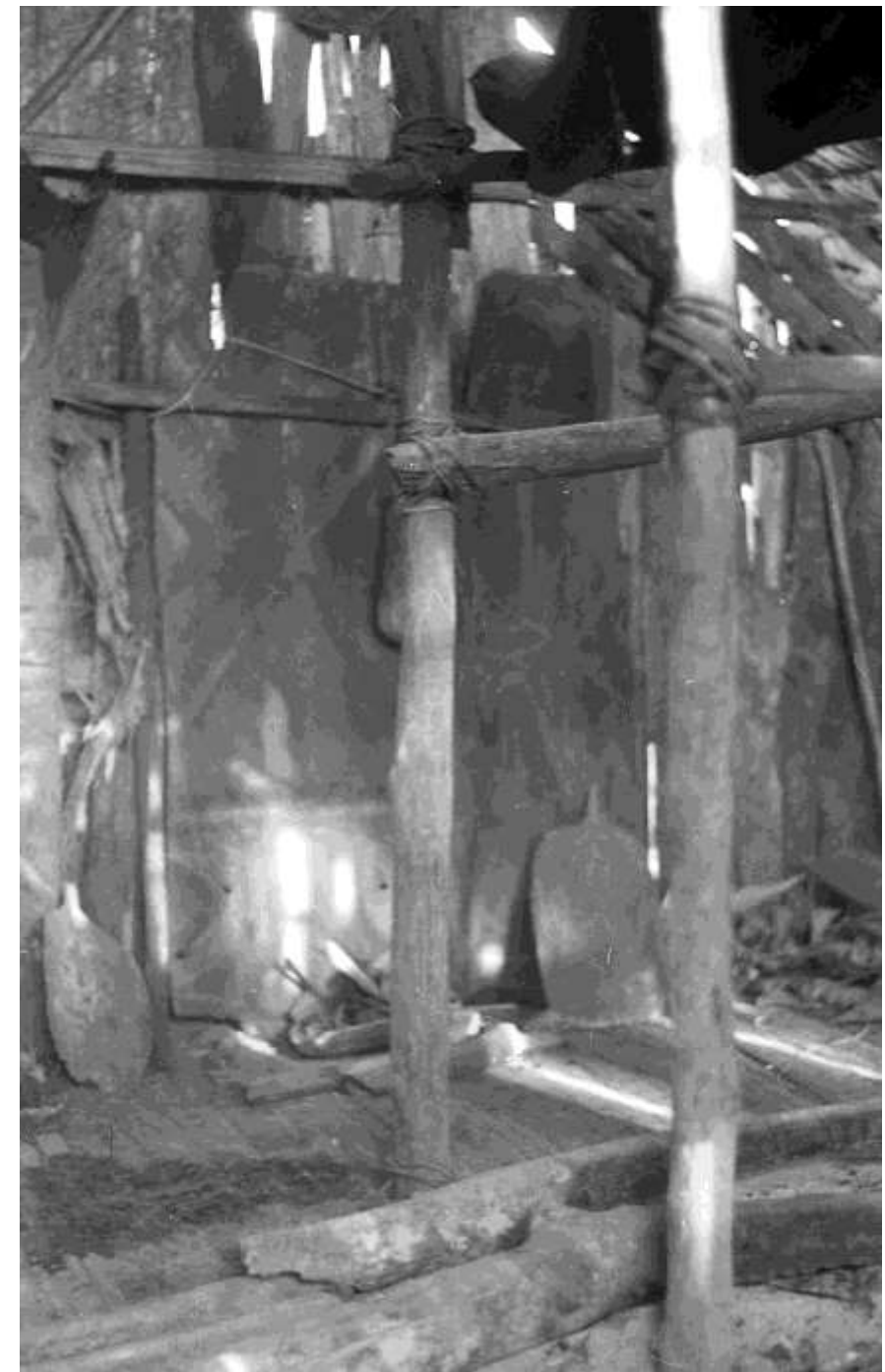


Interior photo showing shields, pig jawbones, a sacred feather-bag and ancestral skulls and long-bones.



Shields on the southern side of the main range were found to be sacred objects, kept in the men's houses in association with pig jawbones and ancestral relics (skulls, thigh bones, etc).

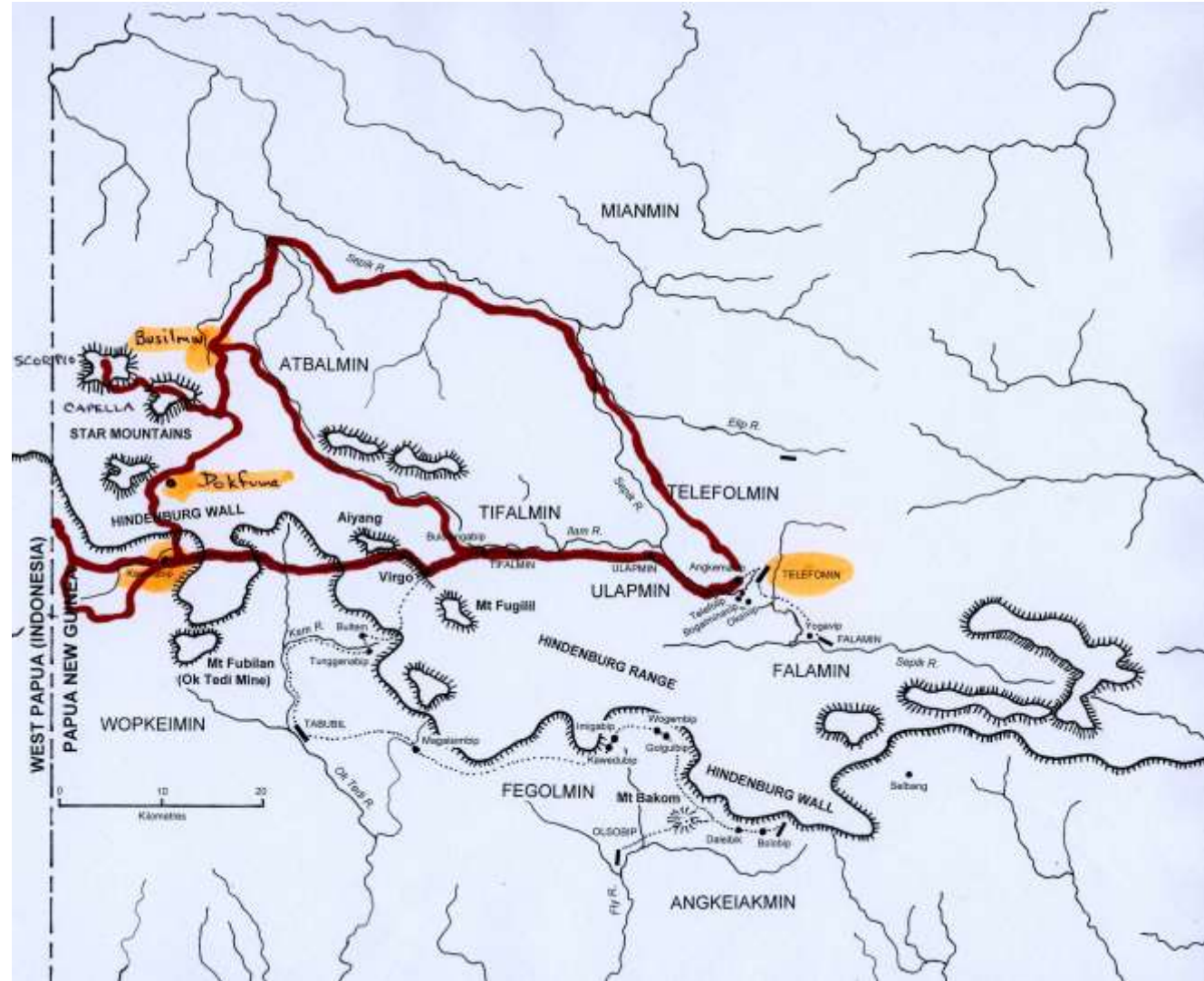
The survey I did of house boards and shields in **1967** made it possible to identify a shield in the possession of the retired UPNG Professor of Geology. It was in the men's cult house at Bolivip, the village made famous by Ivan Champion.





**In 1965** I participated in the three-month Australian Star Mountains Expedition. We walked from Telefomin to the southern side of the Star Mountains, climbed the highest peaks (c. 4000 metres), and returned in separate parties by two routes to Telefomin. Ethnographic and linguistic data was recorded and botanical and herpetological collections were made.

**David Cook, Paul Symons, Tom Hayllar  
John Huon, Barry Craig, Mike Shepherd**

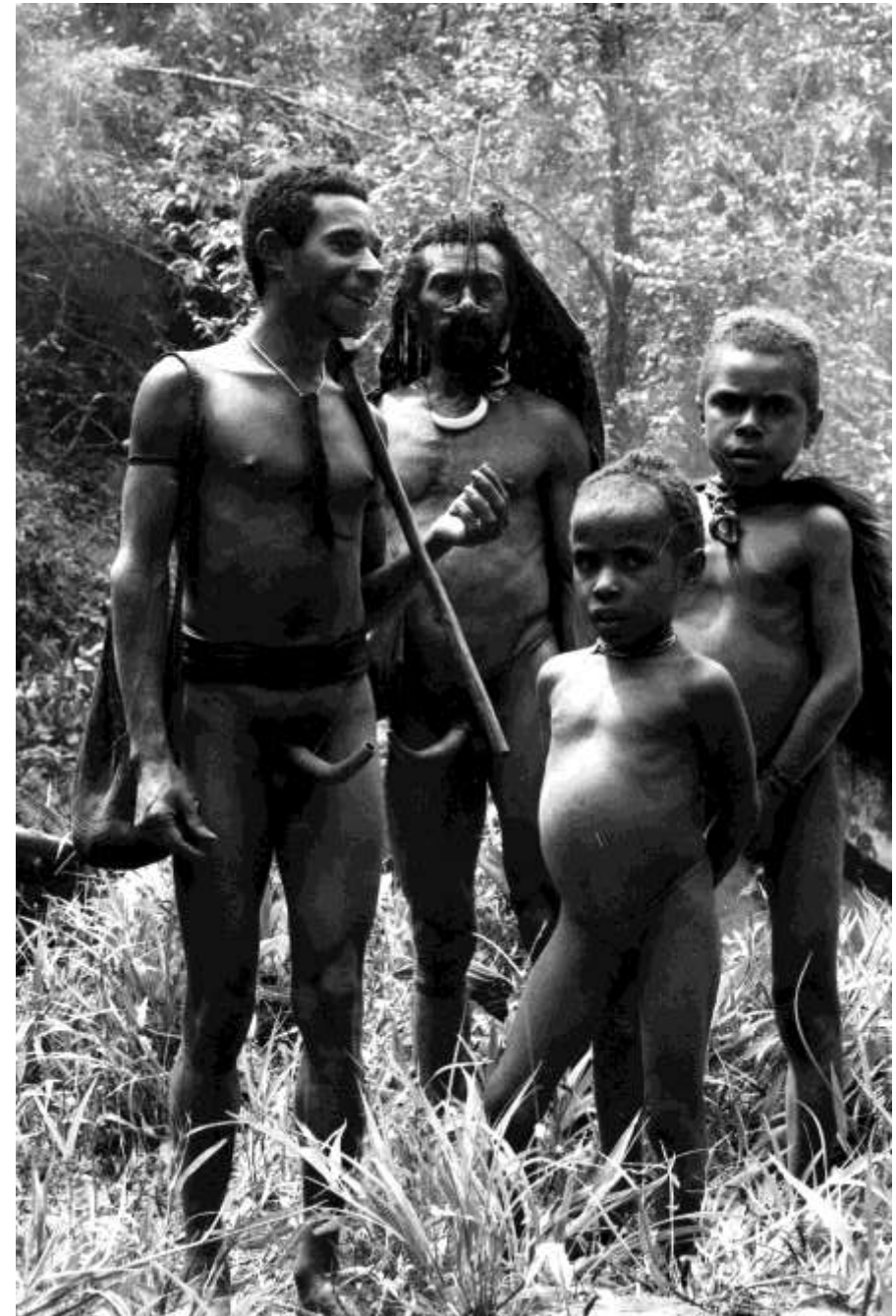






Awonim, our Tifalmin  
guide on the left, meets  
an Atebip friend  
(also in photo at right)  
unexpectedly

WOPKEIMIN men and  
boys at Atebip on the  
headwaters of the Ok  
Tedi.



We had a view of the snow (right of centre in far distance), now gone, on Juliana (Puncak Mandala) 100 km to the west, and of the north coast Bewani Mountains (right of centre on horizon) 200 km to the north.





People of the Star Mountains – WOPKEIMIN at left; ATBALMIN at right.





Left: WOPKEIMIN shield at Silinabip; right: interior of ATBALMIN men's house, Busilmin.

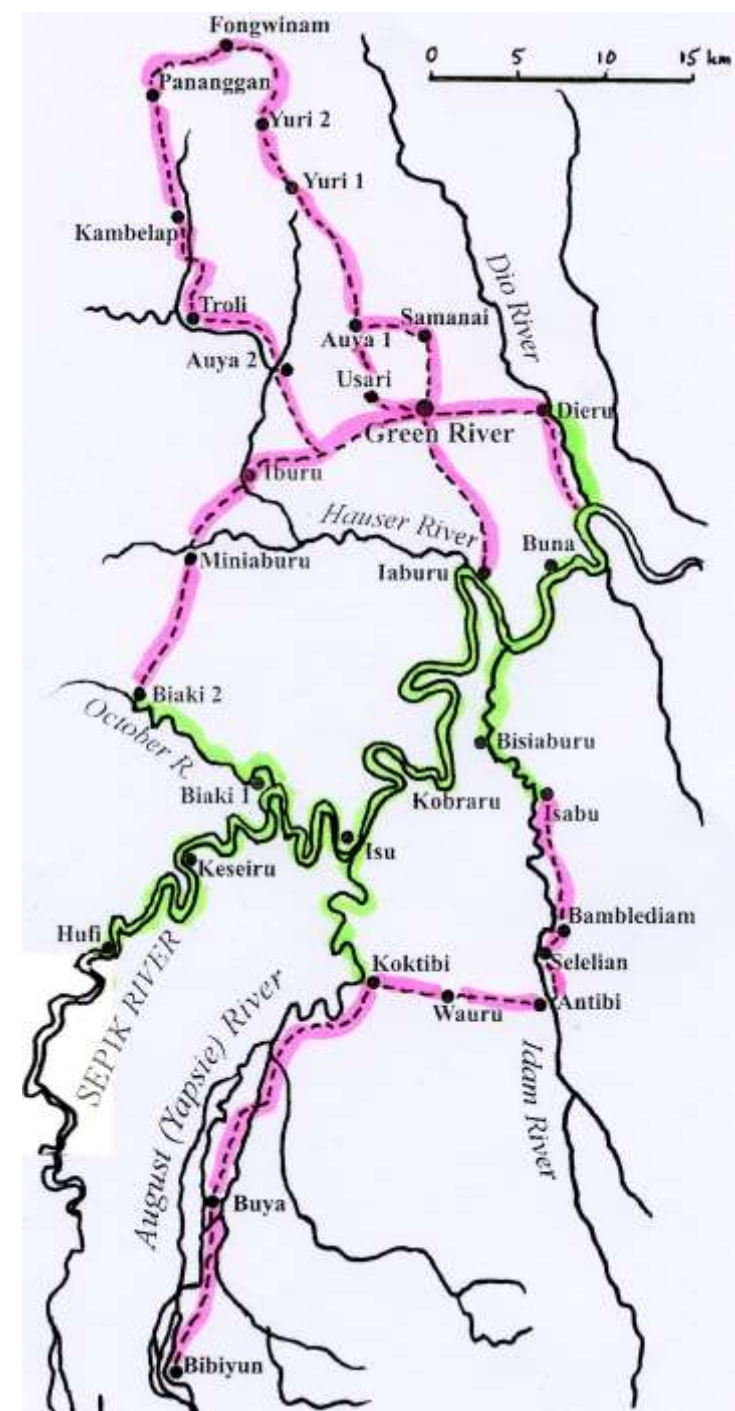




**In 1968:** 7-week survey and collecting expedition to the upper Sepik region with George Morren & David Balmer. Acquired 790 objects for museums in Berlin, Leiden, Sydney and Port Moresby. By motor canoe and on foot (ABAU territory) and south Border Mountains (ANGGOR and YURI territory).

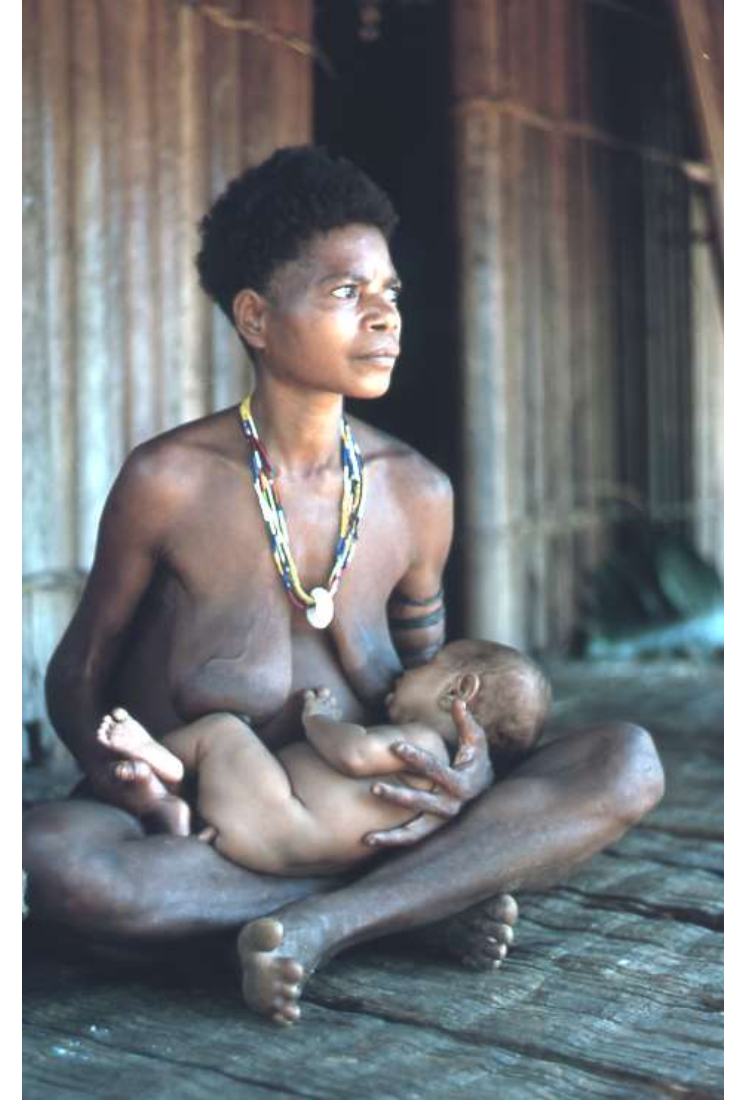


**George and David – on the Sepik and crossing the upper Green River below Kambelap**





Man of Iburu, Green River ABAU; mother and children of Bisiaburu, Idam Valley ABAU; mother and baby of Auya, YURI.





There were different devices used for smoking tobacco.

ABAU



YURI



ANGGOR





Left: An old Idam Valley ABAU shield used in warfare against Yasaru on the Yapsie (August) River – it has embedded arrow points; centre: buttress roots used to make shields; right: ABAU over-size shields made for sale, Wauru.





Between 1914 and the 1960s, everyday ABAU phallocrypts changed from the plain straight or curly, to the pyro-engraved egg-shape, a Border Mountains fashion. A long undecorated gourd phallocrypt was worn for special healing ceremonies.

**Thurnwald 1914**



**Idam Valley ABAU 1968**





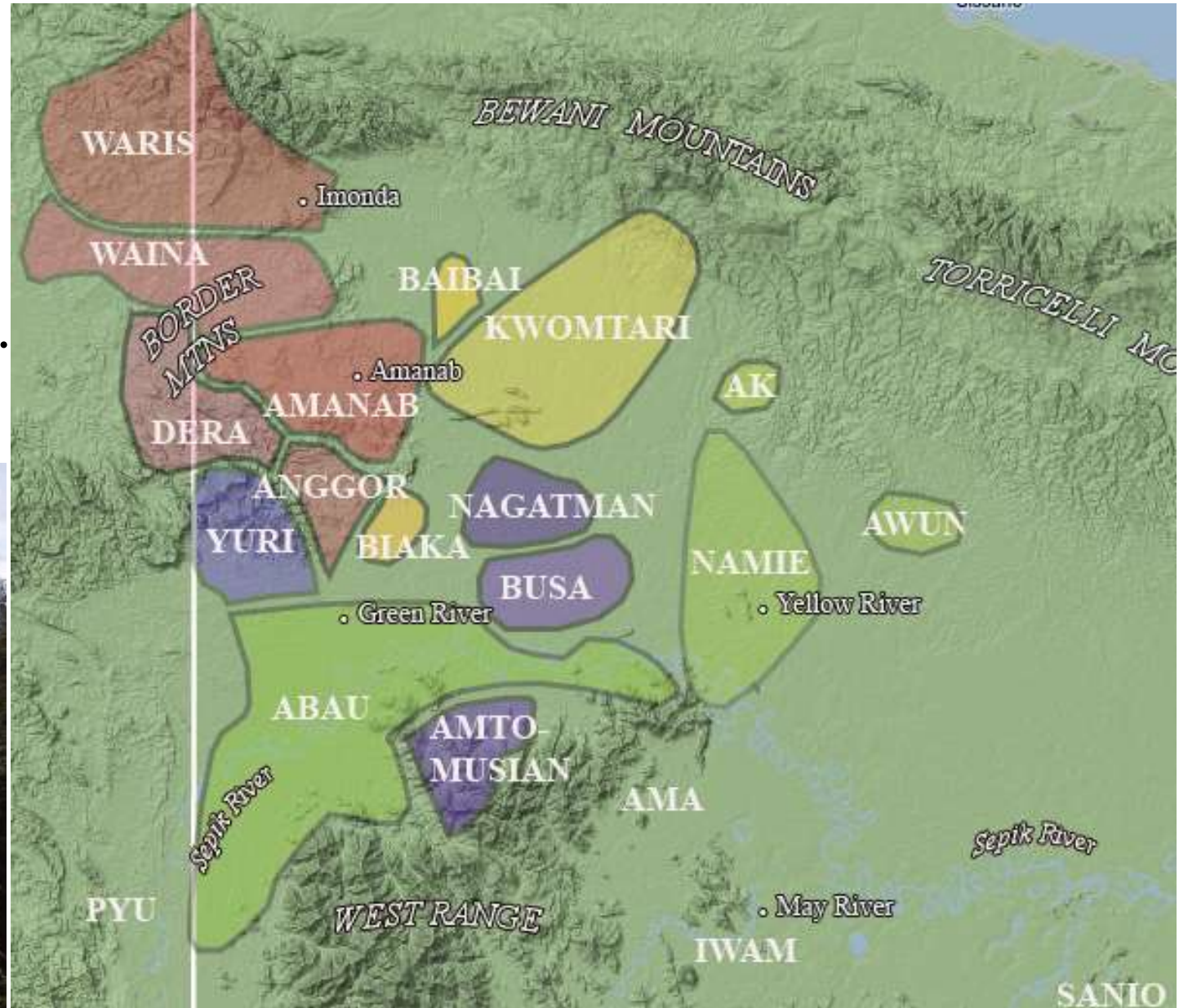
ABAU men could still make stone axe-adze blades at Bibiyun on the Yapsie River.



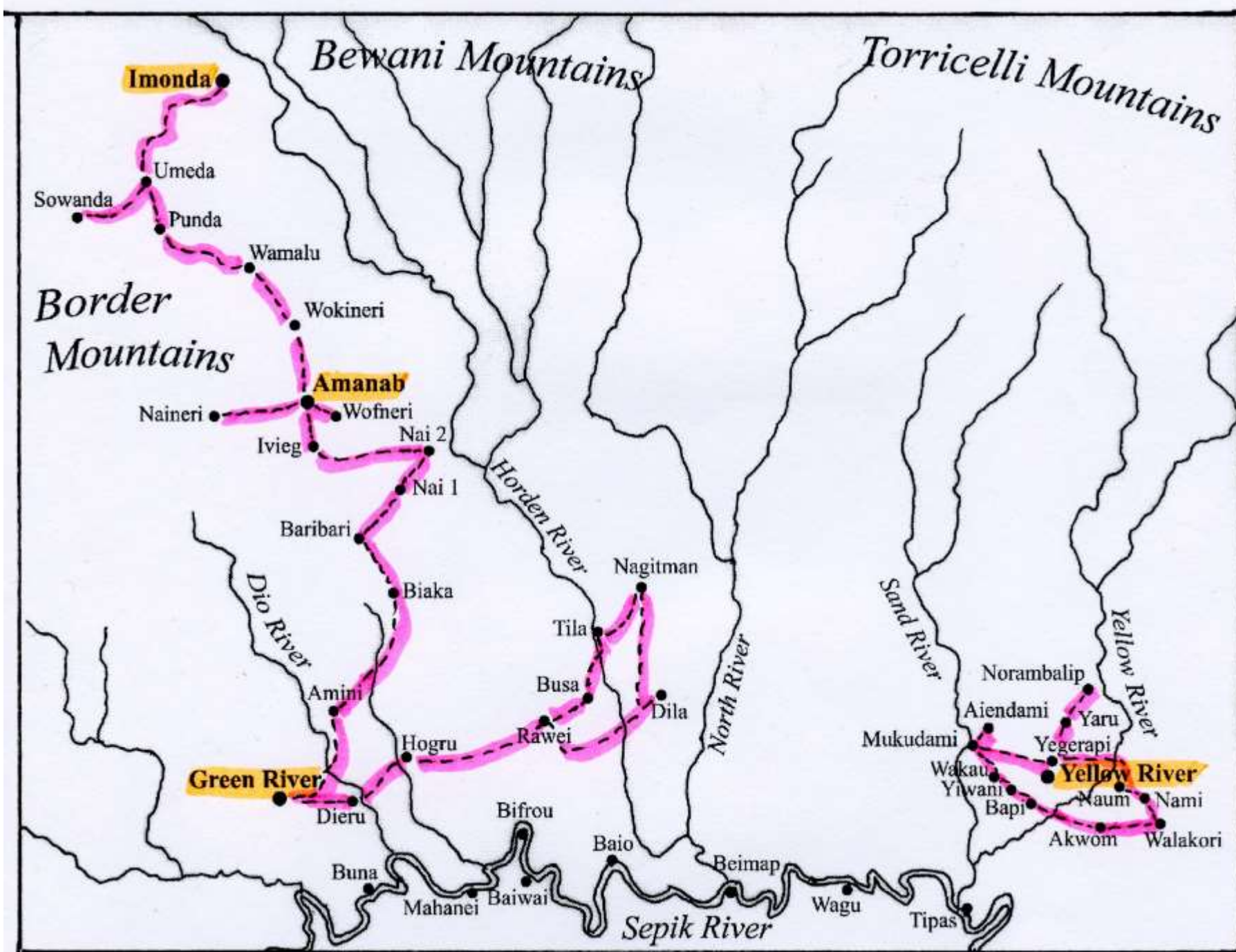


**In 1969:** 11-week survey and collecting expedition to the upper Sepik region – Border Mtns, Yellow and May rivers, and downstream to Ambunti; 1,970 items distributed to Berlin, Leiden, Sydney and Port Moresby.

**Border Mountains, view NNE**







First part of the 1969 trip was east of Green River, then Imonda to Amanab, Yellow River, then Amanab to Green River.



The WAINA and AMANAB had orchestras of large to small trumpets and the longest hand drums in New Guinea.



Gourds were made as phallocrypts and as containers for lime used for chewing areca (betel) nuts. In the north Border Mtns, the gourds are etched; in the south and on the Sepik and Yellow rivers, they are pyro-engraved, with some overlap between neighbouring peoples.

**Waina, Yuri , Abau (top to bottom)**



**Lime containers**



**Phallocrypts**

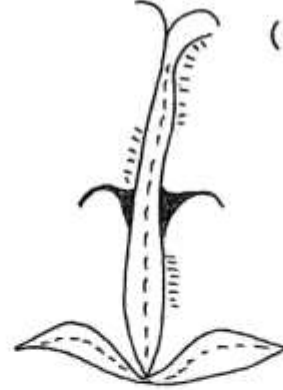
**Amanab (top); Namie (below)**  
**(top & centre); lime container (bottom)**

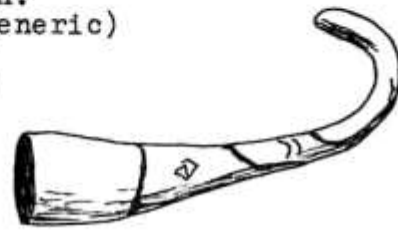


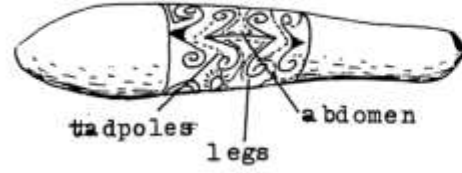


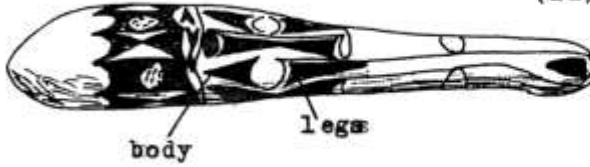
- (i)  Phallocrypt (siau) made by SONI of Bambleddiam, IDAM valley. Design: face and nose markings of possum (wamiok) PNGNMAG 79.1.368
- (ii)  Phallocrypt (siau) made by LALEIMO of AMTO but living with affines at Selelian, IDAM valley. Design: crab (lakau) PNGNMAG 79.1.370

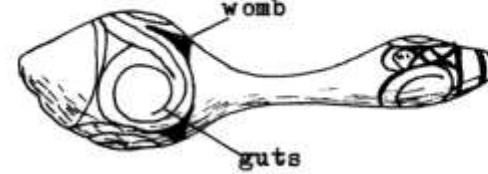
- (iii)  Phallocrypt (siau) made by SEBLIYAU of Selelian, IDAM valley. Design: crayfish (man) PNGNMAG 79.1.238
- (iv)  Phallocrypt (siau) made by NAIWEI of Bambleddiam, IDAM valley. Design: flying fox (wolim) B.Craig COLLECTION

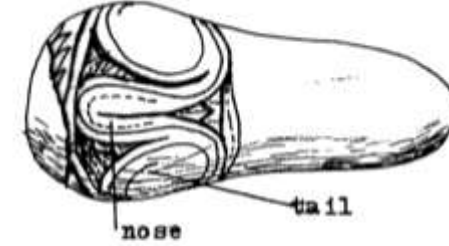
- (v)  Phallocrypt (siau) made by MALIEI of Bifrou, SEPIK River. Design: tail of possum (wamiok) PNGNMAG: 79.1.220

- (vi)  Phallocrypt (siau) made by MALIEI of Bifrou SEPIK River. Design: beitsiou - frog (generic) PNGNMAG: 79.1.221

- (i)  Lime container (aidep) made by SALAK of Selelian IDAM Valley. Design: beitsiou (frog - generic) PNGNMAG 79.1.238

- (ii)  Lime container (aidep) made by WAKIN of Bambleddiam, IDAM valley. Design: kumobou (probably Giant Water Bug - Lethocerus species) PNGNMAG 79.1.408

- (iii)  Lime container (aidep) made by POSIN of Selelian, IDAM valley. Design: guts and womb of pig. PNGNMAG 79.1.236

- (iv)  Lime container (aidep) made by SONI of Bambleddiam IDAM valley. Design: wamiok (possum species) PNGNMAG 79.1.240

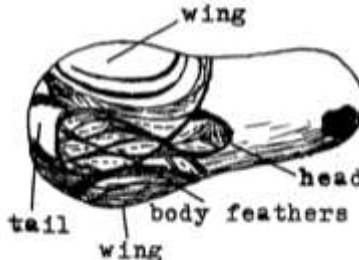
- (v)  Lime container (aidep) made by KWOMSALET of Bambleddiam, IDAM valley. Design: welion (Burdekin Duck - Tadorna radjah) PNGNMAG 79.1.230

FIGURE 9: Designs on Gourd Lime Containers



WAINA, AMANAB and ANGGOR in the Border Mtns lived in family houses; ABAU lived in community houses on the Sepik, Idam and Yapsie (August) rivers.

**Abau**



**Waina**

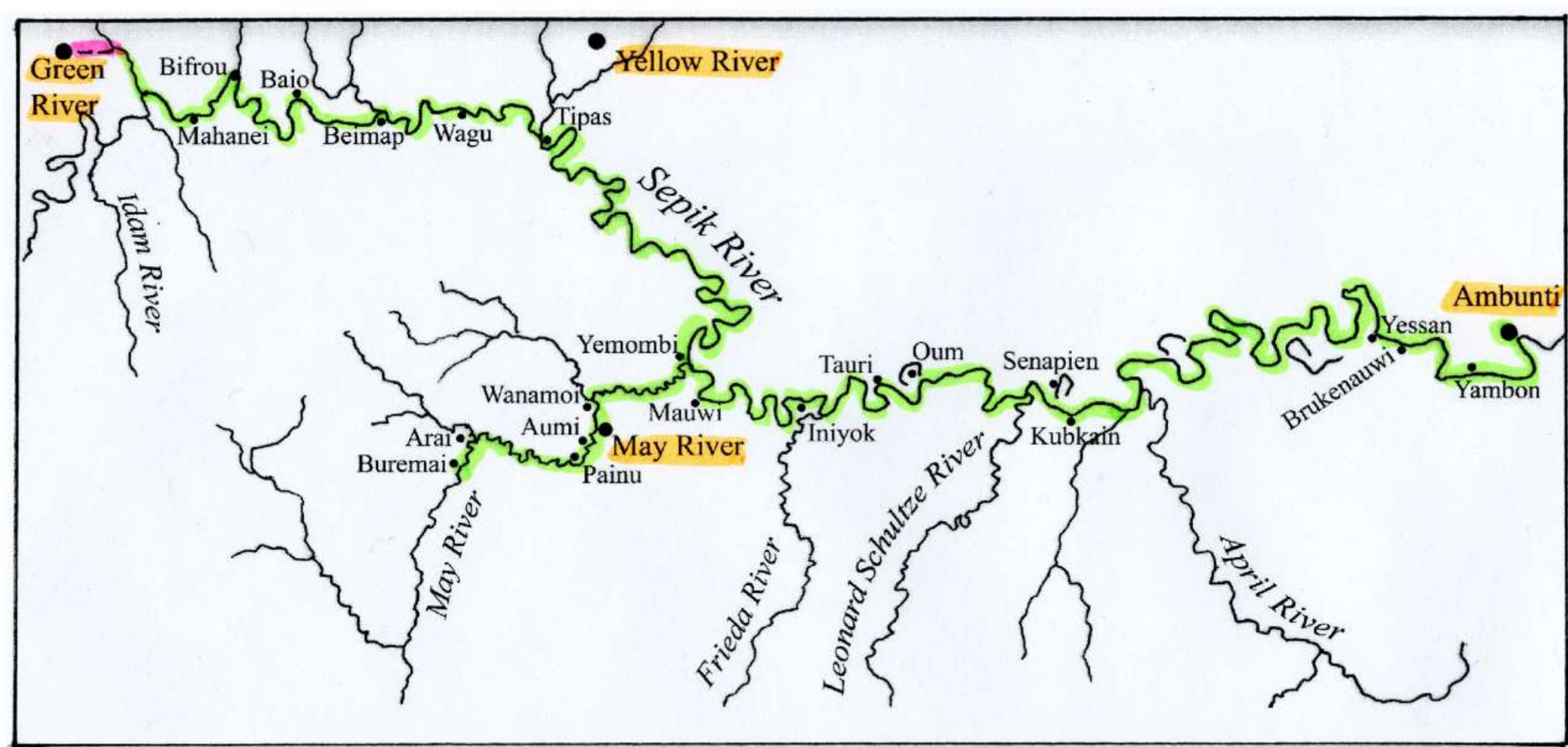
**Amanab**



**Anggor**







Second part of the 1969 trip was by motor canoe to the May River and Ambunti





The NAMIE of Yellow River had A-frame family and men's houses; the IWAM (May and Sepik rivers) had big communal houses, and separate conical-roofed men's houses with interior paintings (gone by 1969).

**Schuster 1969 'Die Maler vom May River'.**

**Bühler 1959**





Woven rattan cuirasses in the Border Mtns (and central New Guinea).  
Shields along the Sepik, North, Yellow, and May rivers.

AMANAB



ABAU



NAMIE



IWAM

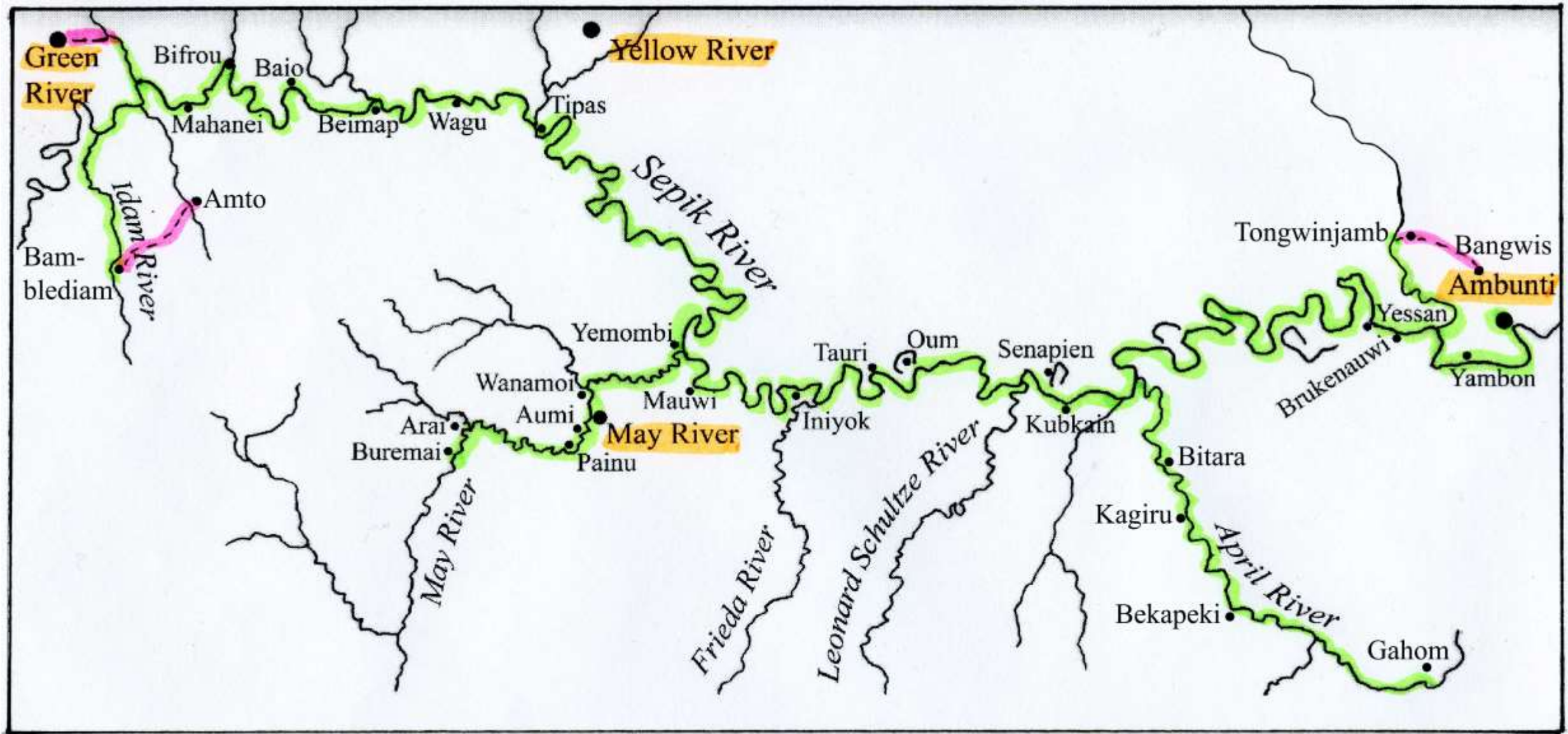


**In 1972-73:** 6 weeks in the Telefomin area, 10 months based at Bamblediam, Idam Valley, south of Green River, collecting for the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board. 650 objects collected for the Board but all transferred to the PNG National Museum. Research extended to the AMTO of Simaiya Valley.

**Simaiya Valley, view south**







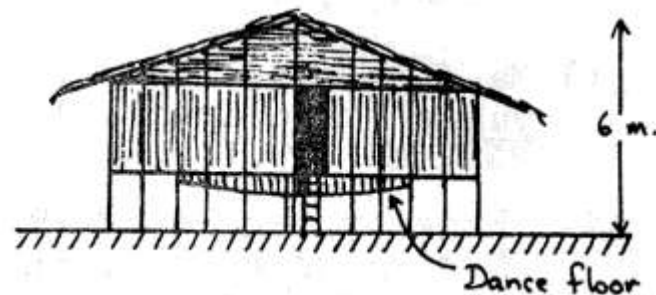
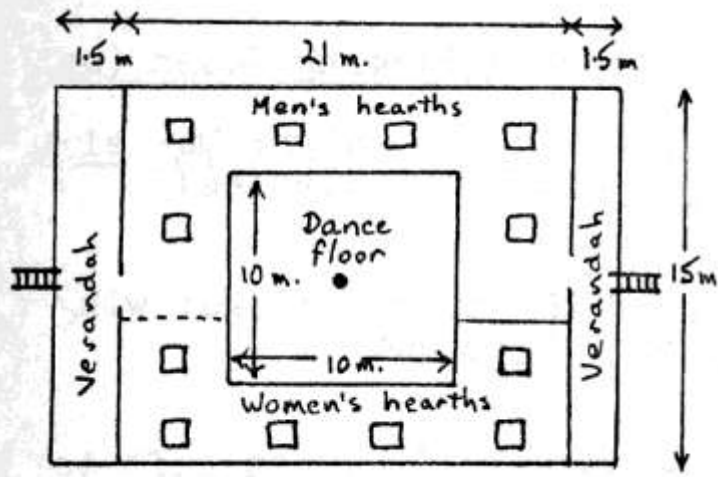
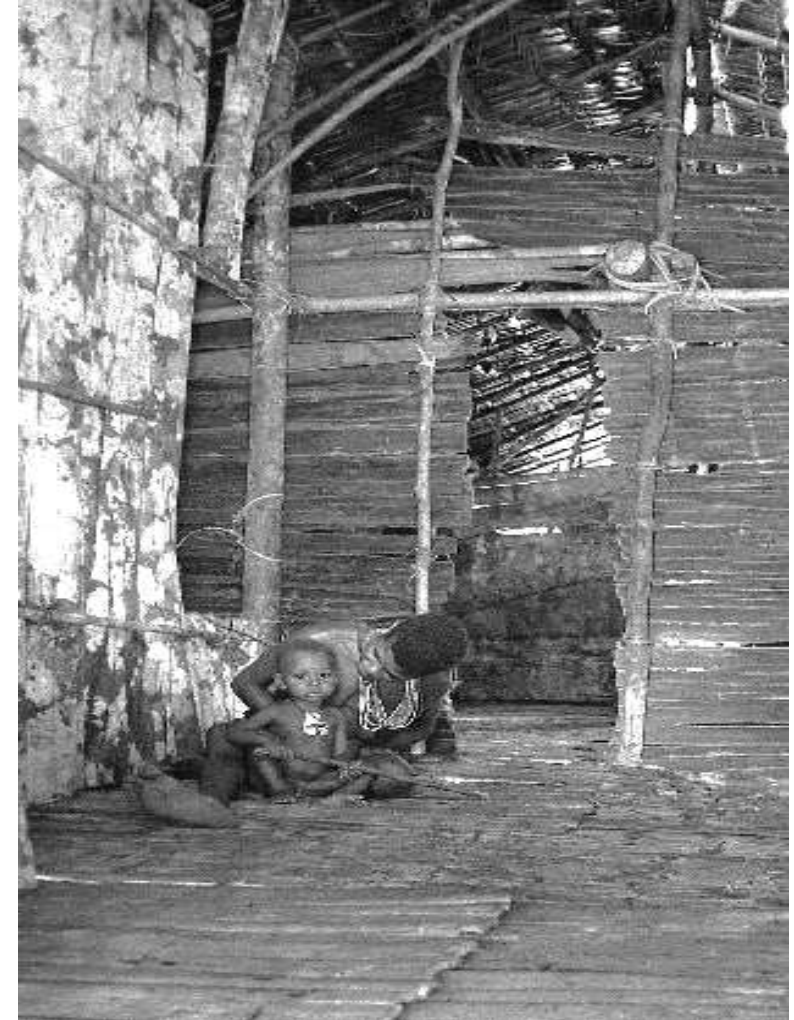
From Bamblediam on the Idam by motor canoe to the May and April rivers, and Kwoma villages near Ambunti.



**AMTO communal house in the West Range and interior.**

Sprung-floor dance houses also were built in the Range, by the Mianmin of the upper May River... and in Borneo!

Below left:  
**Amto dance house.**





Recorded AMTO and ABAU legends and songs,  
and 344 designs painted on paper.

See [www.uscngp.com/papers/](http://www.uscngp.com/papers/)

*Symmetry in Arrow Designs, Songs and Legends of Central New Guinea and the Upper Sepik.*

AMTO

**Crocodile** (*lobu*)



**Eagle?** (*api*)



**Insect** (*matapiya*)



ABAU

**Untitled**



**Ficus tree roots**



**Eel** (*melou*)





Two Australian Research Council grants for 2004-2010 facilitated the Upper Sepik-Central New Guinea Project. One outcome was a PhD thesis by Andrew Fyfe and another, the USCNGP website, where ‘Dataset’ enables access to 2480 artefacts on a Google Earth based search protocol, created by Sai Perchard. A prototype for museum collections?

[www.uscngp.com/dataset/](http://www.uscngp.com/dataset/)

See also ‘Papers’, ‘Photos’

The screenshot shows the USCNGP website interface. On the left, a map of New Guinea is displayed with various regions colored in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Green dots are scattered across the map, representing artefact locations. The map is titled 'Map' and 'Satellite'. On the right, a 'Results' panel is visible, showing a table of artefacts. The table has columns for 'Language Gr...', 'Village', 'Title', and 'Vernacular'. Below the table, there is a section for 'Shield' with details like 'Vernacular', 'Measurement', 'Language Group', 'Location', 'Collecting History', and 'Images'.

Language Gr...	Village	Title	Vernacular
Abau	Kobraru	Shield	unavailable
Abau	Hogru	Bamboo blade arrow	sik-nasi
Abau	Keiseiru	Rodent tooth engraver	unavailable
Abau	Bamblediam	Limestone nose-stick	wek
Abau	Wagu	Shield	unavailable
Abau	Bamblediam	Bone tipped arrow	moblou
Abau	Wagu	Palmwood head arrow	wagou
Abau	Buna	Pig tusk scraper	nas
Abau	Wagu	Stone adze blade	eyore
Abau	Bisiaburu	Bamboo blade arrow	siknasi
Abau	Wagu	Wood sago pounder	namali

2480 Results.

**Shield**

Vernacular: unavailable

Measurement: 131 x 48 cm

Language Group: Abau

Location: 141.62639, -3.96667

**Collecting History**

Collector: M. And G. Schuster

Date Collected: Unavailable

Museum/Collection: Museum Der Kulturen, Basel

Accession Number: Vb 22971

**Images**

[Image 1](#)



# RESEARCH RESULTS for Upper Sepik-Central New Guinea

- Andrew Fyfe, 2008. *Gender, mobility and population history: exploring material culture distributions in the Upper Sepik, and Central New Guinea*. PhD thesis, University of Adelaide. <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/53352>
- Barry Craig, 2008. 'Sorcery Divination among the Abau of the Idam Valley, Upper Sepik, Papua New Guinea', *Journal of Ritual Studies* 22,2: 37-51.
- Andrew Fyfe, 2009. 'Exploring Spatial Relationships between Material Culture and Language in the Upper Sepik and Central New Guinea', *Oceania* 79: 121-161.
- Andrew Fyfe and Jill Bolton, 2011. 'An Analysis of Arrow and String Bag Craft Variability in the Upper Sepik and Central New Guinea', *Oceania* 81: 259-279.
- Christopher Roberts, 2014. *Music of the Star Mountains*. Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Boroko, Papua New Guinea; *Apwitihihire Studies in Papua New Guinea Musics*, 11.
- Andrew Fyfe and Jill Bolton, 2015. 'Relationships between String Bag Craft Distributions, Language and Geographical Distance in the Upper Sepik and Border Mountains of Papua New Guinea', *Australian Geographer* 46:2: 235-253.
- Barry Craig, 2018. 'Material Culture of the Upper Sepik', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 146: 189-201.
- **see many relevant papers at** [www.uscngp.com/papers/](http://www.uscngp.com/papers/)

Some things purchased in **1972-73** are in the PNG National Museum's Masterpieces Exhibition  
(*Living Spirits with Fixed Abodes*, pp.85-86, 169-171).

**Telefolip, TELEFOLMIN**



**Magalsimbip,  
WOPKEIMIN**

**Komdavip,  
ELIPTAMAN**





Purchased in 1972 near Ambunti for CAAB but now in PNG National  
Masterpieces Exhibition  
(see *Living Spirits with Fixed Abodes*, 2010)

**Nukuma *minja*, p.111**



**Gutok with Kwoma *minja*, p.109**



**Gutok with Kwoma *nowkwi*, p.112**



**During 1980-83**, I was Curator of Anthropology at the PNG National Museum. I did two major survey/research trips to central New Guinea, three to the middle and lower Sepik, one to New Ireland/Tabar Islands and another to the Sulka of East New Britain.

The new Museum building opened at Waigani in 1977. Heavy rain, following roof failure after an earthquake, flooded the exhibition areas in October 1980 so I reconfigured the Masterpieces Exhibition which re-opened in September 1981 after re-roofing of the Museum (see *Living Spirits with Fixed Abodes*).







Kaban  
Range,  
south  
from near  
Bolivip,  
1981



**1981, 1983: central New Guinea.** Both trips reprised my 1967 and 1972 surveys of cultural heritage, this time to recommend gazettal as National Cultural Property.

**Men's cult house (*yolam*) Golgulbip, FAIWOLMIN, Fly River headwaters.**

**1967**



**1972**



**1983**





The principal cult house (*futmanam*) at Bultemabip, WOPKEIMIN, Ok Tedi headwaters. The cycle of deterioration and renewal.

1967



1981



1983





Supreme cult house (*tefolip/amdolol*) at Tefolip, TELEFOLMIN,  
periodically renovated as part of male initiation ceremonies.  
Gazetted as National Cultural Property 30 July 1982.

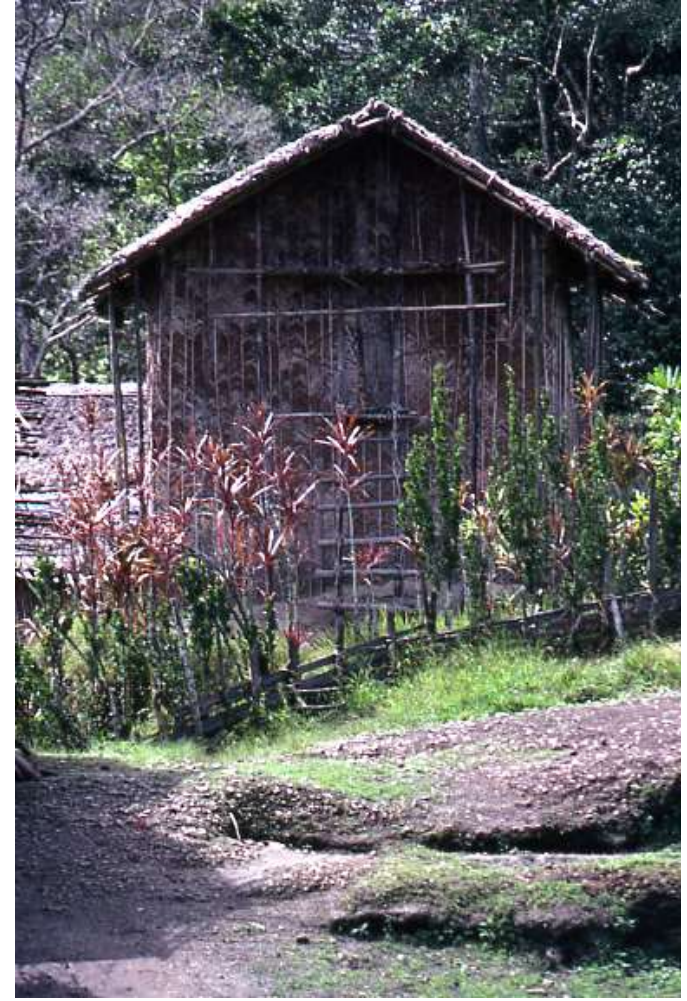
1964



1972



1983





The *telefolip* was burnt down by Christian fundamentalists ('Operation Joshua') in 2001. Relics scattered, subsidiary men's houses collapsed. PNG Museum took no action.







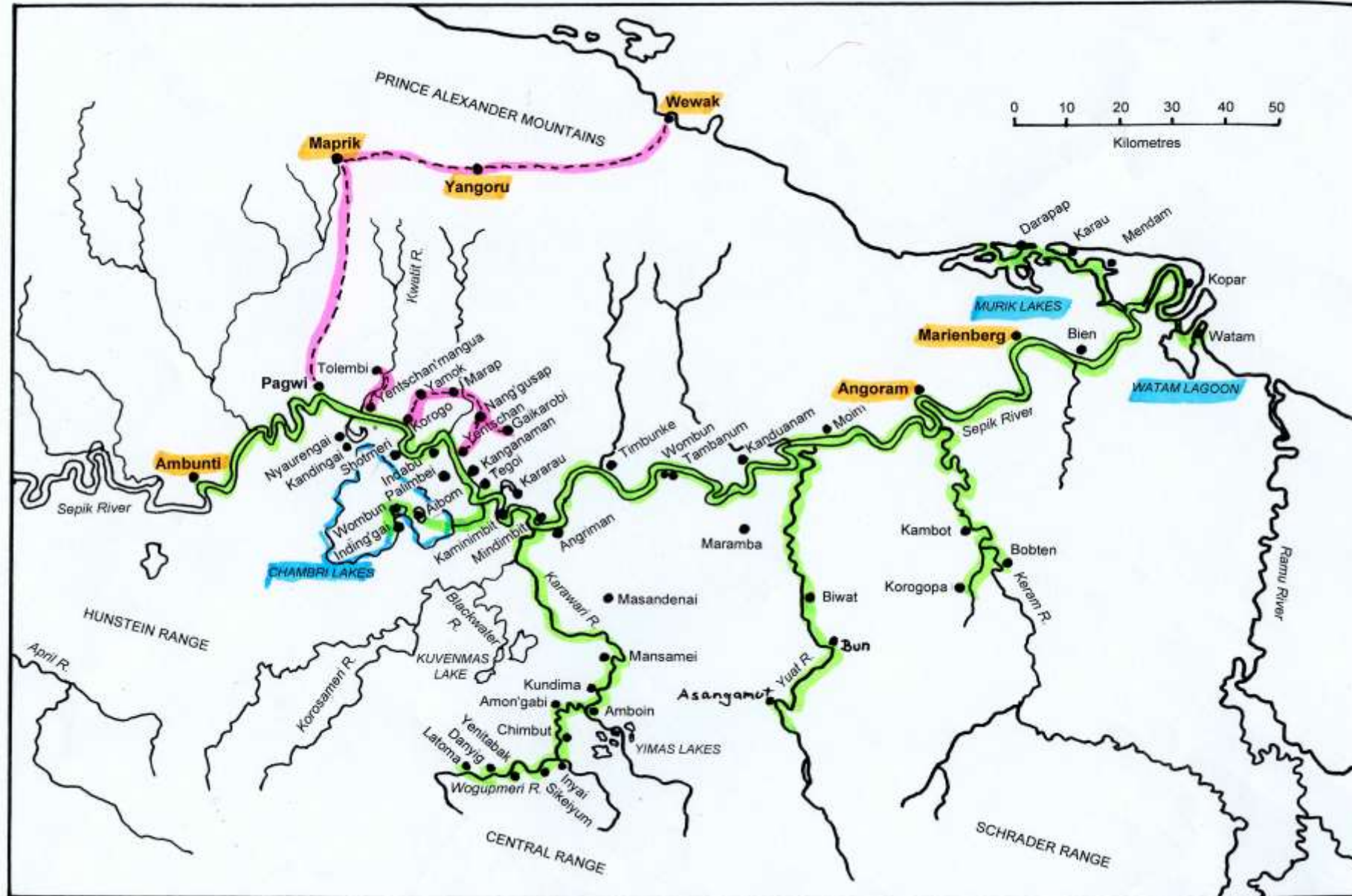
This is what was destroyed: 6000+ pig jawbones lining three internal walls, ancestral relics in net bags (centre) and possibly the shield.







**Sepik surveys 1981, 1982, 1983** covered villages from Ambunti to Kopar, the Murik and Watam Lakes, Chambri, the north-inland Sawos, the Karawari, Yuat, and Keram rivers.



Things were bought for PNG National Museum and NCP gazettals were recommended.



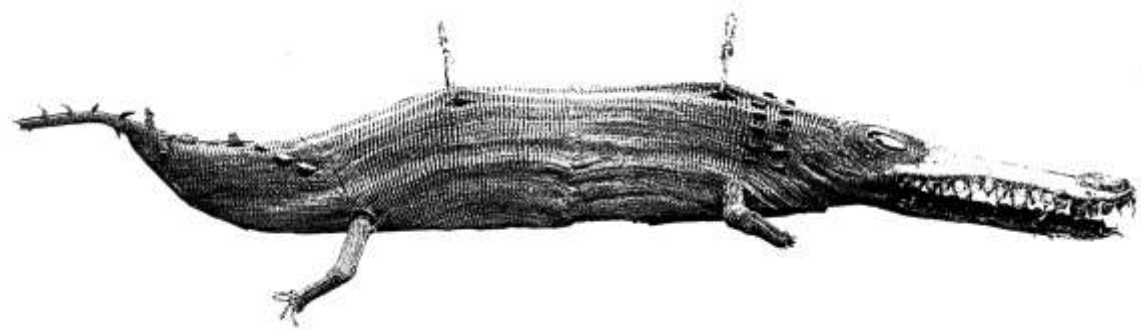


Kavak, the primal creator crocodile, woven rattan, 3.2 metres long; Wombun, 1981.

Wassmann summarises a version of the Iatmul creation myth (*The Song to the Flying Fox*, 1991:183-4; extended version pp.94-5):

‘At the beginning of the world there was only the primal sea; then there came into being . . . the primal crocodile Kabak [Kavak]. His spittle . . . turned itself into a little piece of earth which whirled up to the surface of the water . . . The dog Koruimbangi made the earth bigger by running about on it until a cleft appeared from which all living creatures, including the first human beings, came tumbling out. Then the crocodile split into two pieces, the lower jaw fell on the earth and the upper jaw became the sky, and there was light’ (see also *War Trophies or Curios*, 2015:44-47).

**Reche 1913 Plate LXXXI, Nr 1.’ 293 km village’ (Angerman). c. 3.6 m. long**







1981: Kanganaman village initiates painting their skin with red ochre to promote healing of scarifications ‘made by the teeth of the primal crocodile when he swallowed them’. The loss of blood releases the ‘bad mother’s blood’ and the lads are reborn as ‘crocodile-men’. During seclusion, following scarification, some secrets of the men’s cult are revealed and they learn to use the bullroarer, and practise flute and slit gong playing.

Crocodiles are often carved as the prows of slit gongs: Mian’gandu and Yoangamuk at Kandingai, 1981.





**Garamuts (slit gongs)** – a detailed survey is at [www.uscngp/papers/](http://www.uscngp/papers/) Four kinds:  
(i) ‘long prow’ west of Ambunti; (ii) ‘short-prow’ east of Ambunti; (iii) ‘big-maus’ north of Sepik; (iv) symmetrical in lower Sepik/Ramu and north coast.







Carvings illustrate variations on stories with common themes: the eagle perched on the woman's back and the woman on the crocodile's back giving birth to snake and eel.





There are several versions of the woman who mates with a male crocodile spirit and has twin bird/animal progeny



**Jamari, the southern finial (*gauwi*) of the men's cult house at Shotmeri, 1981.**

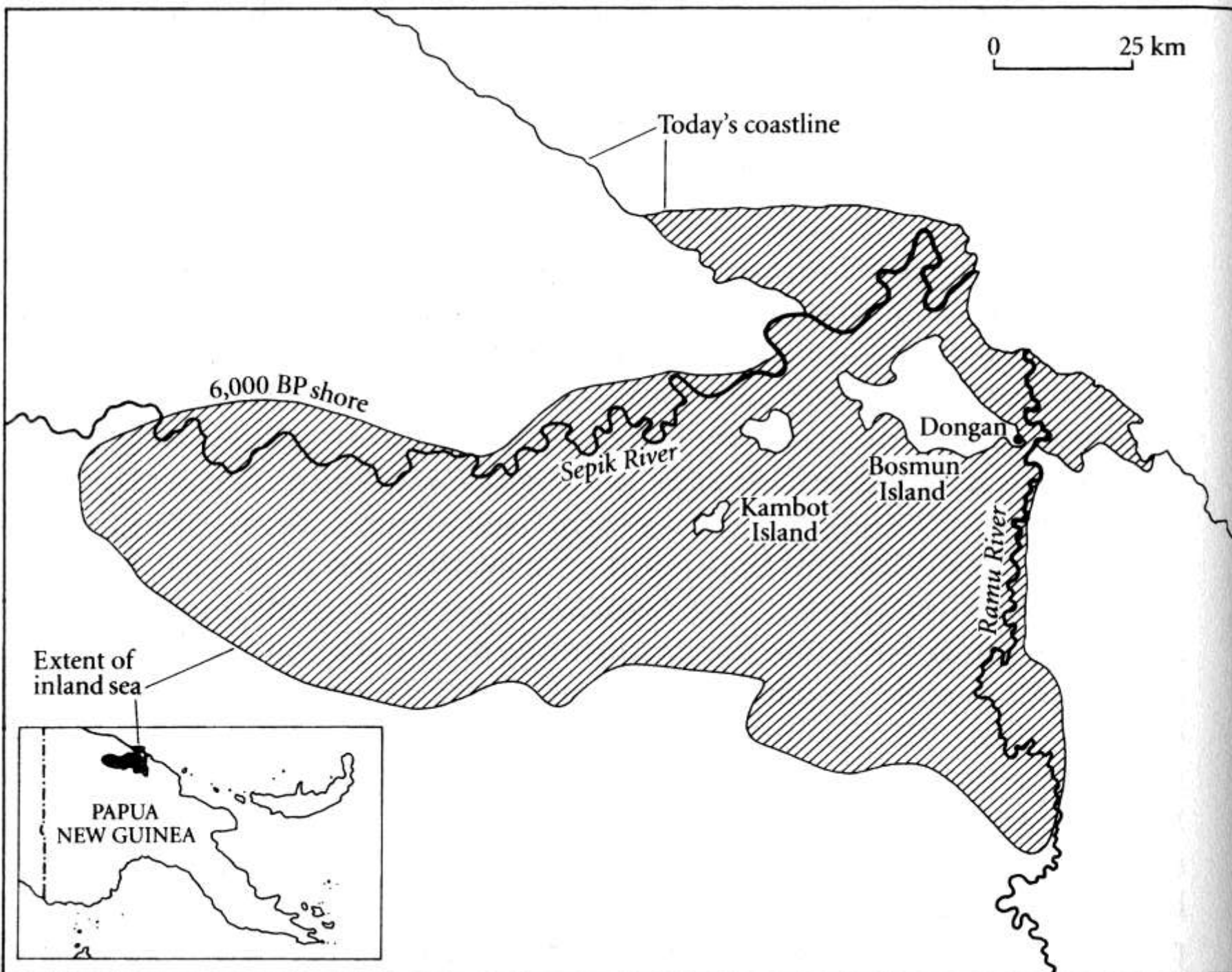
Wassmann (*Song to the Flying Fox*, 1991:192-4) records a version of a story referred to by this kind of finial. In brief, a woman, Kula, fishing at a large lagoon, was seduced and impregnated by Tandemi manifesting as a crocodile. She gave birth to two eggs. The eggs hatched as eagles, Mingre and Ndambali. The eagles built a nest in a tall tree and from there they terrorised the neighbourhood killing and eating anyone they could catch. They went and fetched their mother, Kula, took her up into the nest, and killed and ate her. Two brothers managed to trick and kill the eagles.



**Gun'namak – carved during German times by Tavla of Mairambu clan, Kararau, to replace a deteriorated original. Photographed, 1981.**

Gun'namak was impregnated by the crocodile Mabaten'gowi and gave birth to Kinjin, the snake, and Ang'guri, the eel. She and her family rafted down the Sepik from the primeval lagoon, Mebenbit (in Sawos territory), to Kumbarang'gowi (possibly Kambragambra, near Angoram). This is perhaps an ancient memory of the retreat of the large saltwater embayment that once stretched from Ambunti on the Sepik to Annaberg on the Ramu.





## Extent of Sepik-Ramu salt water embayment 6000 years ago.

Walter Behrmann during the 1912-13 Sepik Expedition, noted geological features southwest of Ambunti that identified 'the old coast line which existed before the Sepik and the Ramu had formed their deltas' (1914:272); also 'the Sepik and Ramu have made a wide delta not shown on the contour of New Guinea simply because it has filled in a bay' (p.264) – *Jnl Berlin Geographical Society* Nr 4 (translation).



Demonstration of flute playing at  
Yentschan, always played in pairs.  
Carved finials represent a totem bird,  
*san'gi*, a kind  
of parrot.



I recorded songs by Michael  
Mai'a using his hand drum,  
at Karau, Murik Lakes.



Left: Carving of a police constable, Korogo Community School.  
Right: Crucifixion on Catholic Church slit gong, Tolembe, SAWOS, 4.75 m long.





SAWOS men's cult houses are lower to the ground than those of the IATMUL as there is no risk of floods.



**Debating stool**



**Tolembi men's house  
'Man'gemit'**





# Upper Karawari River





Remarkable old Karawari figures: all female -  
left to right: for sickness; cassowary hunting;  
and hunting/warfare. Far right: *aripa* and  
*yipwon* carved for sale, Latoma, Wogupmeri R.

**Maran'ganma**



**Fogiambut**



**Gin'guma**







Sago petiole paintings by  
Simon Novep, Kambot,  
Keram River.

Legendary figures Mobul and  
Woyan; shape-shifting figures  
Dowena and Rowena.

Left to right:

Woyan, Mobul's brother;  
Dowena, crocodile form;  
Mobul;  
Rowena, cockatoo form;

(see Dennett 1975)



*Brag* masks of the Murik-Watam area – there are many names but same-name *brag* masks, such as ‘Sendam’, may occur in several villages. This name was also given to a men’s house at Karau and a carved figure at Watam.

**Karau**

**[carved: Watam]**



**Marbuk**  
**[carved locally]**

**Mendam**  
**[carved Watam]**



**Jangimut**

**[both carved: Aramot]**

**Aramot**

**Darapap**

**[carved: Watam]**







**Sendam**, carved c.1850, damaged by termites and rot; Watam, 1983. Its partner, Jore, is in the PNG National Museum (*Living Spirits...* p.127). Lipset (*Mangrove Man*, 1997, pp.192ff.) records that Sendam brought weapons and taught the Murik men how to conduct warfare. Among various activities of an erotic nature, Sendam killed two sea eagle spirits that were terrorising Kopar (an analogue of the middle Sepik myth?), demanding a reward of sexual access to their women.

**Men's cult house (*kamasan*), Mendam, named 'Tarego', the sea eagle totem of Sendam; 1981.**







17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch East India Company bronze cannon dug up c.1930 from a beach at Lemieng, near Aitape, by Catholic priest Father Jacques Donkers. Now kept at Catholic Mission, Wewak.

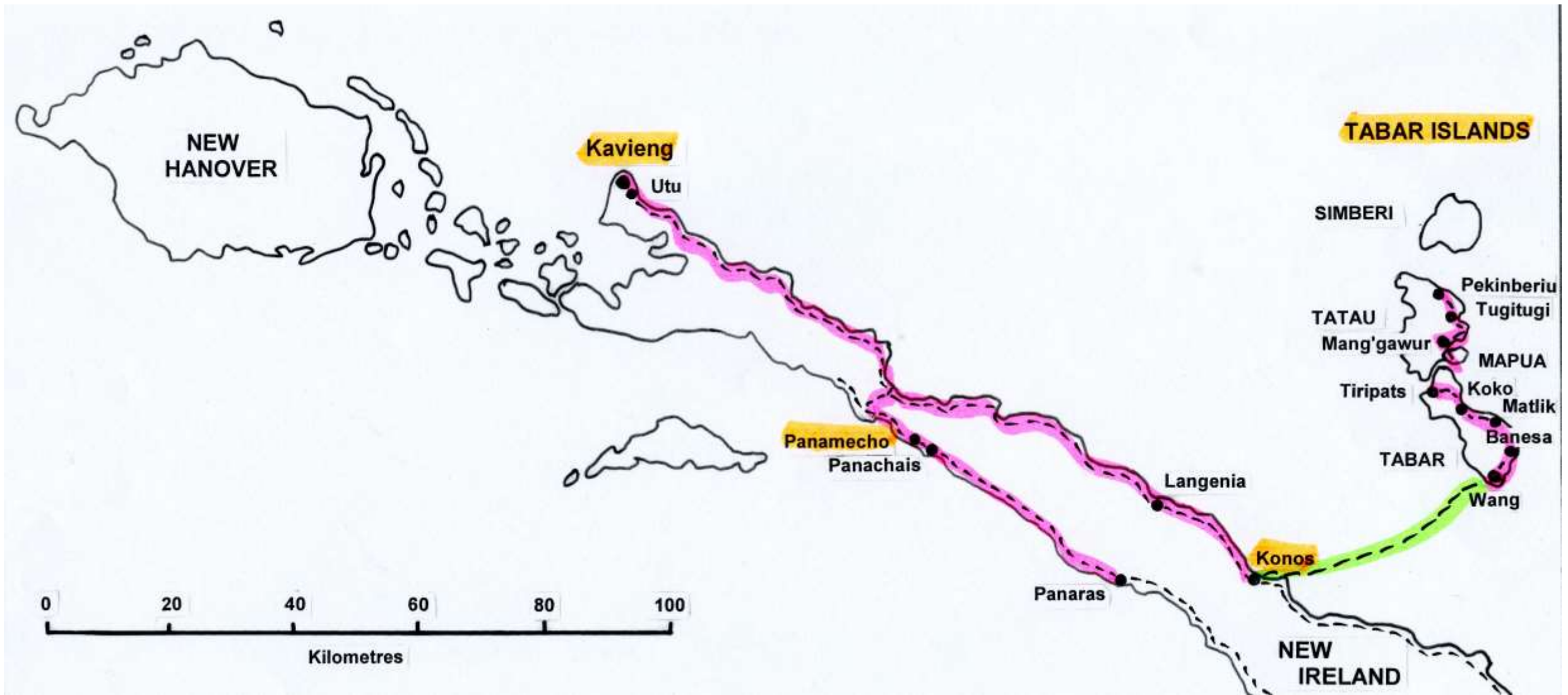
Probably the oldest European artefact found in PNG.



**1982: New Ireland/Tabar Islands**, to obtain information about the Panamecho *malangan* (*Living Spirits with Fixed Abodes*, pp. 240-250) and facilitate export of Mike Gunn's Tabar collection to the Northern Territory Museum.







1982- New Ireland by motor vehicle and Tabar Islands by boat and on foot.



*Tatanua* masked dance at Langania, New Ireland, parodied by an old woman.





On Tabar Island, there were two garamuts:  
'Timakat' at Sinikima and 'Pagarau' at Matlik.







In 1982, to Guma, along the east coast of the Gazelle Peninsula by 'copra boat' from Rabaul.





# Celebrations at Guma, Wide Bay SULKA, East New Britain.

Traditional masked dancers celebrate the ordination of Joe Quintiep into the Franciscan priesthood.



Some *kulukun* masks and *rei-apunun* dance wands were donated/purchased for the PNG National Museum after the event.





*Hemlaut* mask named 'Bethlehem' with nativity scene beneath the 'umbrella', purchased after the ceremony for the PNG National Museum.







EDGAR RAVENSWOOD WAITE  
Director, 1914-1928

**1992-3:** six weeks field trip to New Ireland/Tabar to follow the 1918 trail of South Australian Museum Director, Edgar Waite, and to the Sulka of East New Britain, to engage masked performers for the 1993 Pacific Arts International Symposium at the SA Museum in Adelaide.

Waite's 'NW Pacific Expedition': 24 May-4 September 1918. He obtained 1040 ethnological items, of which 484 were from other collectors and a significant proportion are from locations other than New Ireland/Tabar. 30% have been on display in the SA Museum's Pacific Gallery for c.70 years.

**Part of New Ireland exhibits**





Malangan display hut, Tatau village, with *wowora* at right; Pitsia and his *wowora*; Pitsia and his son Lingei painting a *wowora* for SA Museum.







**Left:** *malangatsak* carved by Tames Litir of Simberi, bought for SA Museum; **centre and right:** *sereme* and *walik* forms of *marumarua* by Edward Sale, Tatau village; the *walik* bought for SA Museum.





*hemlaut* and *susu* masks performed at Tagul, a Mengen village; the *hemlaut* portrayed the Noot legend of two brothers who came into conflict over a woman.







During initiation ceremony at Guma, a Sulka village, *keipa* masks whip representatives of the food receivers who distributed cooked and uncooked tubers and pork



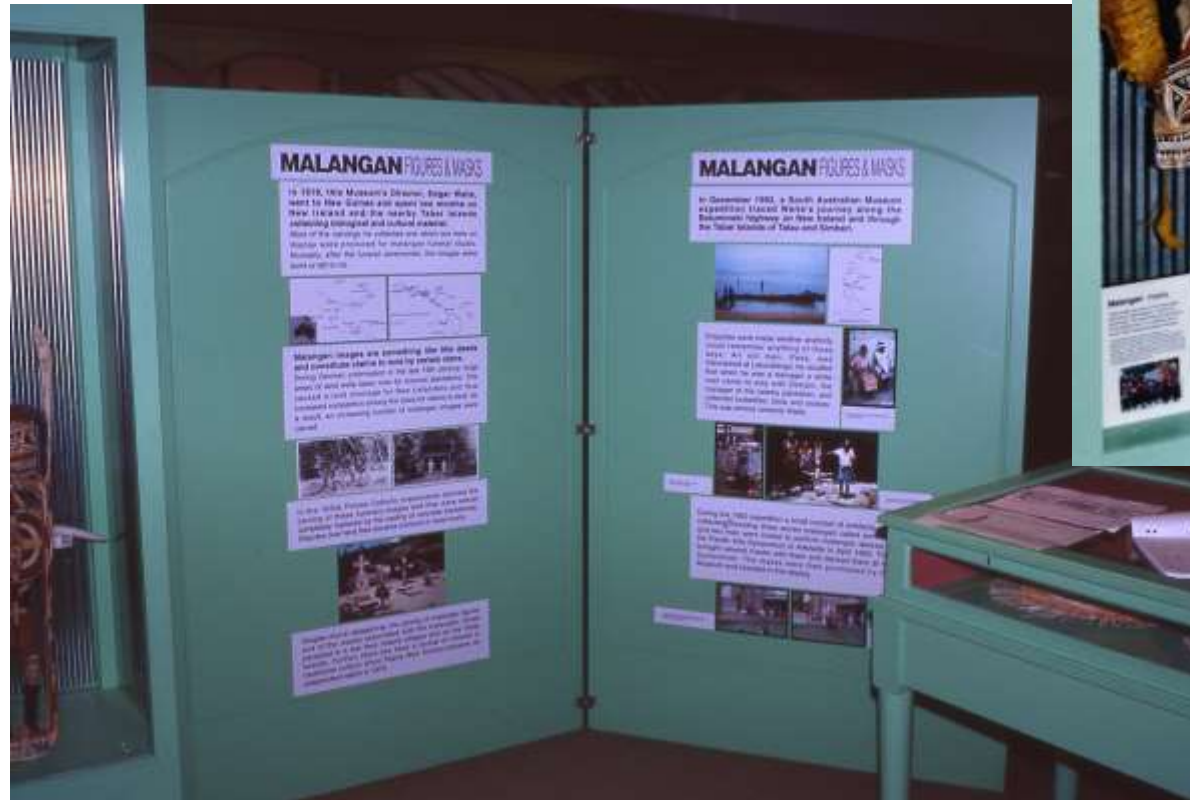


**Left:** *hemlaut* mask performed at circumcision of young lads at Guma, a Sulka village; bought for SA Museum. **Centre:** double-hatted *hemlaut* donated 1917, exhibited at right with 1993 *hemlaut* and *susu* masks.





# Performance of *vanis* mask and New Ireland exhibits at Pacific Arts International Symposium, South Australian Museum, 1993.

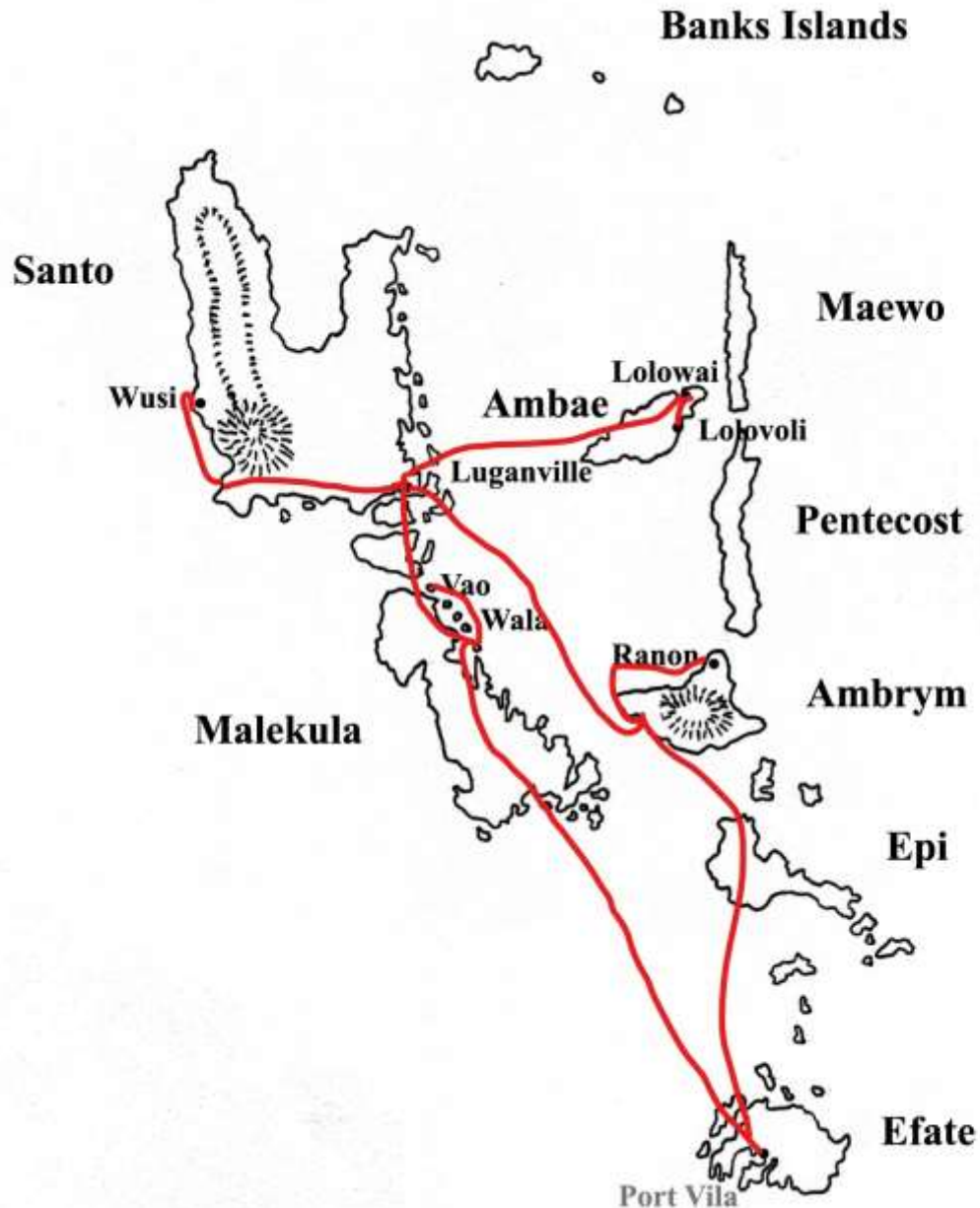




Performance of *hemlout* mask, and exhibit, at Pacific Arts International Symposium, South Australian Museum, 1993.







1997 fieldtrip to Vanuatu for an SA Museum exhibition during the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1998: not New Guinea but....

**Objectives:**

- a) to identify the carver of an Ambrym slit gong (*a tin-tin*) donated to the Museum in 1996, and arrange for two men to come to Adelaide in 1998 to repaint the slit gong;
- b) to deliver to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre a complete photographic record of Vanuatu collections in the SA Museum, with registration print-out;
- c) to visit central Vanuatu villages to obtain information about the Museum's collections and prepare a focus exhibition to accompany the repainting of the slit gong.



The Ambrym slit gong (*a tin-tin*), donated to the Museum in 1996, was carved by Tin Mweleum (Golele) of Fanla, near Ranon, in 1968. James Taimal of Fanla and Billy Bong of Ranon agreed to come to Adelaide in 1998 to repaint the slit gong.

**Slit gongs (*a tin-tin*) and grade figures (*mage*) at the Fanla dance ground (*nasara*).**







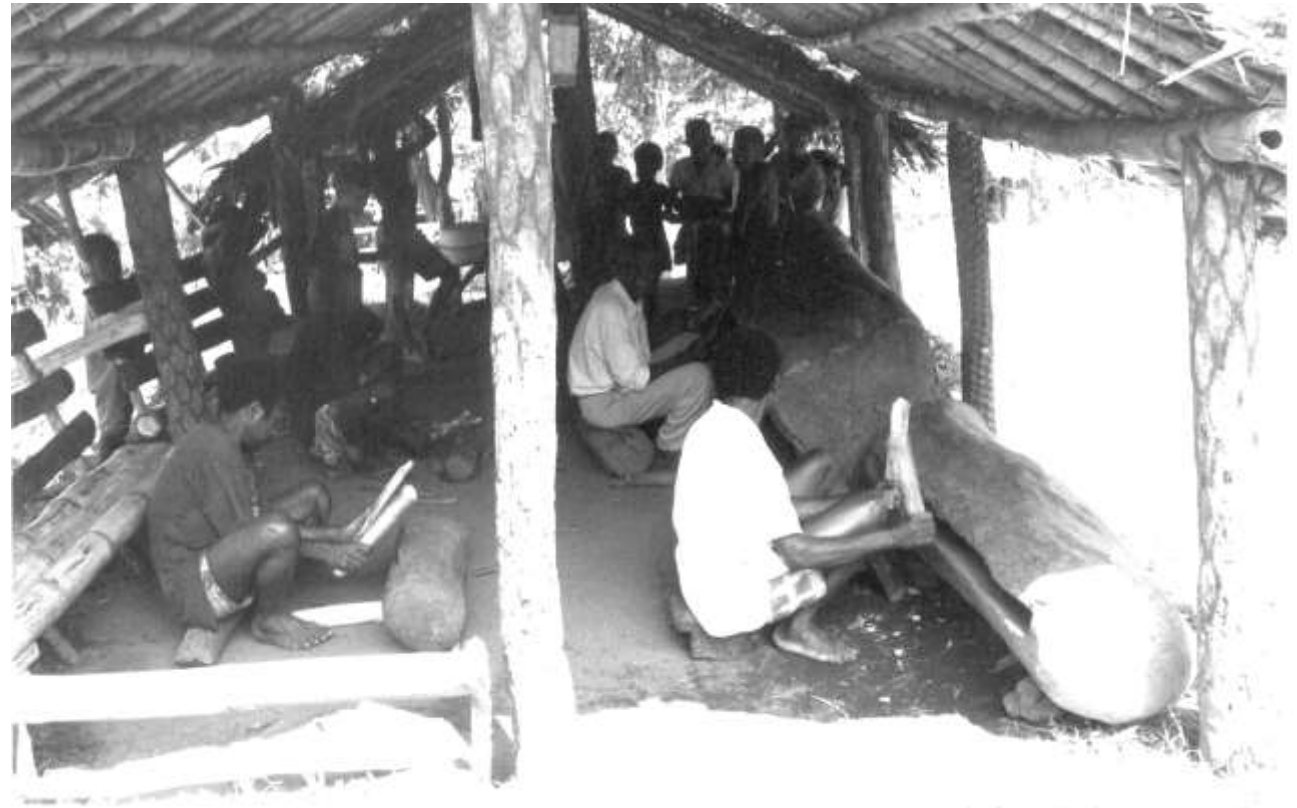
**Left:** Slit gong (*a tin-tin*) donated to the SA museum by Claire Murray in 1996; carved by Golele of Fanla, north Ambrym c.1968.  
**Right:** James Taimal repainting the gong at the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1998. He was accompanied by Billy Bong.





**Left:** Slit gongs on Vao Island, NE Malekula.

**Right:** Slit gong ensemble being played at Lolovoli, Ambae Island





The bird carved on canoe prows from Wala Island, NE Malekula (centre), has been recorded as a frigate bird. However, I was given its name as *soliip* and the bird on top of the mask (*bang-lulu*) donated by Rev. W. Gray, 1895 (A.7430, left) also is called *soliip*, a sea bird followed by navigators to find land, hence its image as a canoe prow. It is a Roseate Tern (right), not a frigate bird.





# Spirits of Vanuatu



Many traditional Vanuatuan skills have survived the impact of Europeans over the past few centuries because they continue to be relevant for daily life and for the occasional, but socially and ritually important, ceremonial events that mark changes in status, the establishment of new relationships, the passage from life to death, and unity with the ancestors.



Vanuatu, previously known as New Hebrides, achieved independence from the British, French, and Dutch in 1980. There are 100 islands, 60 of which are inhabited. The islands are located in the south-western Pacific, between the Solomon Islands to the north-west and New Guinea to the north-east.

The first Europeans to reach the islands of Vanuatu were Portuguese in the 16th century, followed by the Dutch, French, and British. The islands were then known as the New Hebrides. The name Vanuatu was given by the British in 1980.



## Spirits of Vanuatu

An exhibit of field-collected 1997 material to compare to late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ambrae mats and baskets, Malekula flutes and mouth bows collected by Rev. Gray, and Santo pots collected 1903 by Douglas Mawson.







**2002  
fieldwork,  
again in  
New  
Ireland,  
Tatau,  
Simberi, and  
in the  
Torricelli  
Mountains  
of West  
Sepik**

**Mainland  
New Ireland,  
from boat  
travelling  
north to Tatau  
Island**





On Tatau Island, I found that Joel Pitsia, the ritual expert I met in 1992, had died a few weeks ago.

**Left:** Pitsia in the 'death chair';  
**top right:** *geis* masked men at coffin; both photos by Noah Lurang.

**Bottom right:** Pitsia's grave.



At Tatau village on Tatau Island, the second and third *malangan* ceremonies were being performed for Pitsia. His son Lingei prepared a large *wowora* for display at the third ceremony, which I later bought for the South Australian Museum.

Left: Lingei at right, with helpers, painting the large *wowora*.

Right: Orator at completed *malangan* display and food presentation; the large *wowora* on display; the smaller *wowora* to the left was gifted to me for the SA Museum.



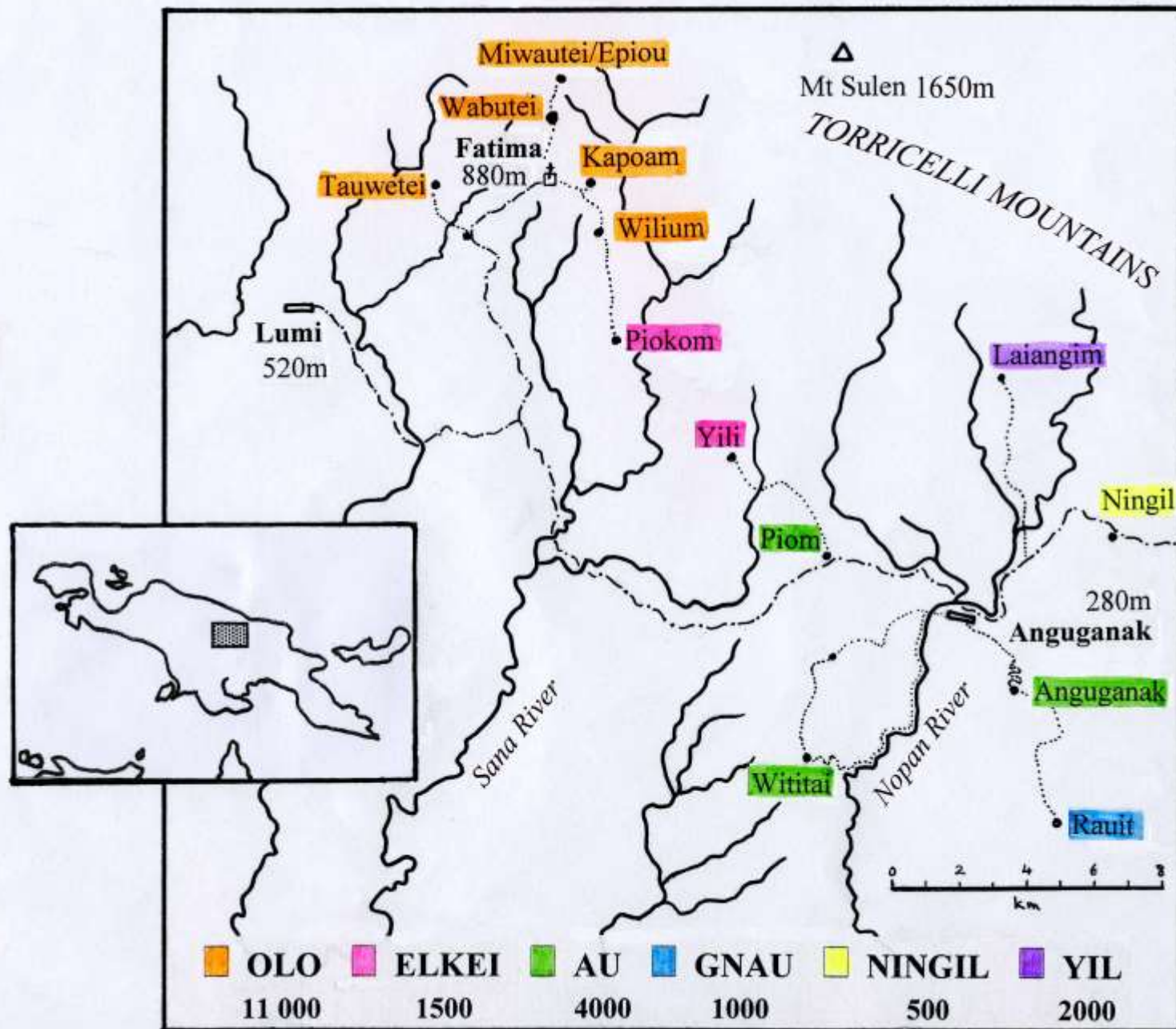




Matthew Sale of Tatau, son of famed carver, Edward Sale, with his carved figures, *simra* (left) and *malagatsak* (right), wife and children.







**2002 fieldwork** in the Torricelli Mtns of West Sepik. Villages visited represent six ethno-linguistic groups to the north and east of Lumi. The objective was to seek information about remarkable objects in the SA Museum collected by Patrol Officer Kenneth Thomas in 1932.



Enquiries were facilitated by using photographs of the museum objects and a 1926 cine film by E.A Briggs, shown on a laptop.

**Left:** Crowd gathered in church hall at Wilium to watch the 1926 film on the laptop (Photo: Cameron Bloom). **Centre:** Female figure collected by Patrol Officer Kenneth Thomas at Wititai in 1932. **Right:** Female figures photographed by E.A. Briggs at Beerkom (Piokom) in 1926. This kind of female figure was widespread among speakers of Torricelli languages. Similar figures in a different style have been collected from among the Boiken to the east.





Three strange carved softwood objects collected by Kenneth Thomas c.1930 from 'Central Wapi' were identified by reference to a 1926 photo by Briggs at Epiou, called *silbi* there. In the Briggs film, the man wearing the *silbi* took part in a circling dance by men and women in a clowning role; he was identified in 2002 as Kibinau, the grandfather of informant Stephan Sio. Informants linked the forms of these phallic objects to different kinds of spear points.





**Left:** Carving of ‘masalai’ figure (*ramawei*) representing a spirit of a section of Raut village; later purchased by Michael Hamson. **Centre:** two wood bowls (*pain-gelem*) at Epiou, used traditionally for anointing initiands, the smooth one for girls, the hooked one for boys. **Right:** slit gong (*bung’gi*) at Raut.







Similarities of carvings of the Gnau of the Torricellis and the Kwoma, Nukuma and Warasei near Ambunti:

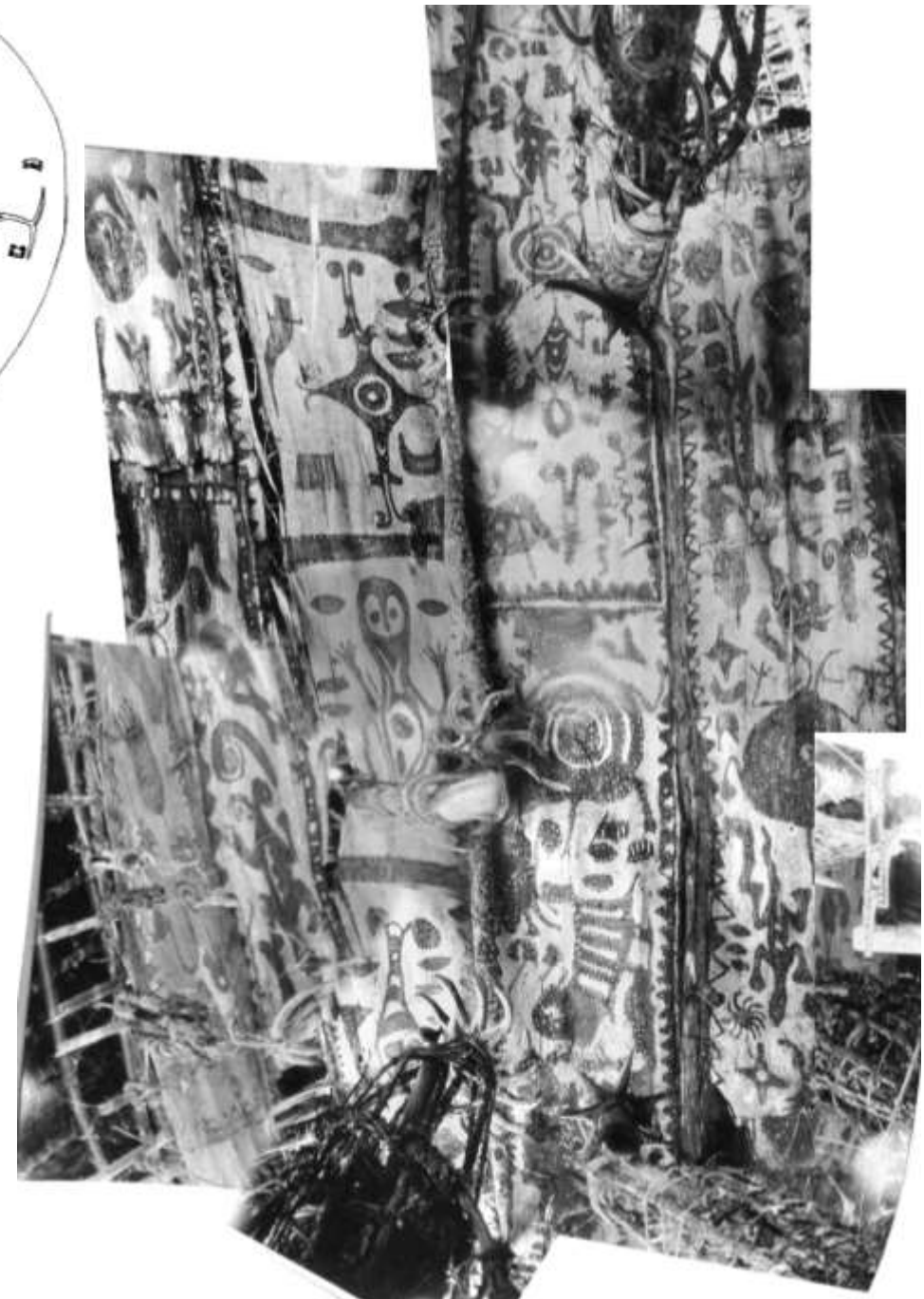
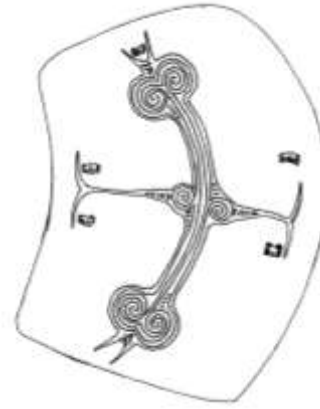
**Left:** Carved head on stake (*masipi*), a hunting and fight spirit, carved by this man's father, Bawalak of Raut c.1948. Purchased for South Australian Museum.



**Right:** a yam cult figure (*yena*) of Namblo River, Warasei (Mayo) speakers. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; 1978.412.1699.



Briggs photographed paintings on sago petioles lining the ceiling of a men's house at Beerkom (Piokom), 1926. The motif below is similar to the shield motif and represents the *tumbuan* head dress, *meni*. Right: composite of Briggs photos.







Paintings on walls and ceilings of Catholic Church at Kapoam, 2002.



My last hurrah....

.... in the Torricellis, 2002.

Photo: Cameron Bloom

