

No. 6

Special 10th Anniversary Issue

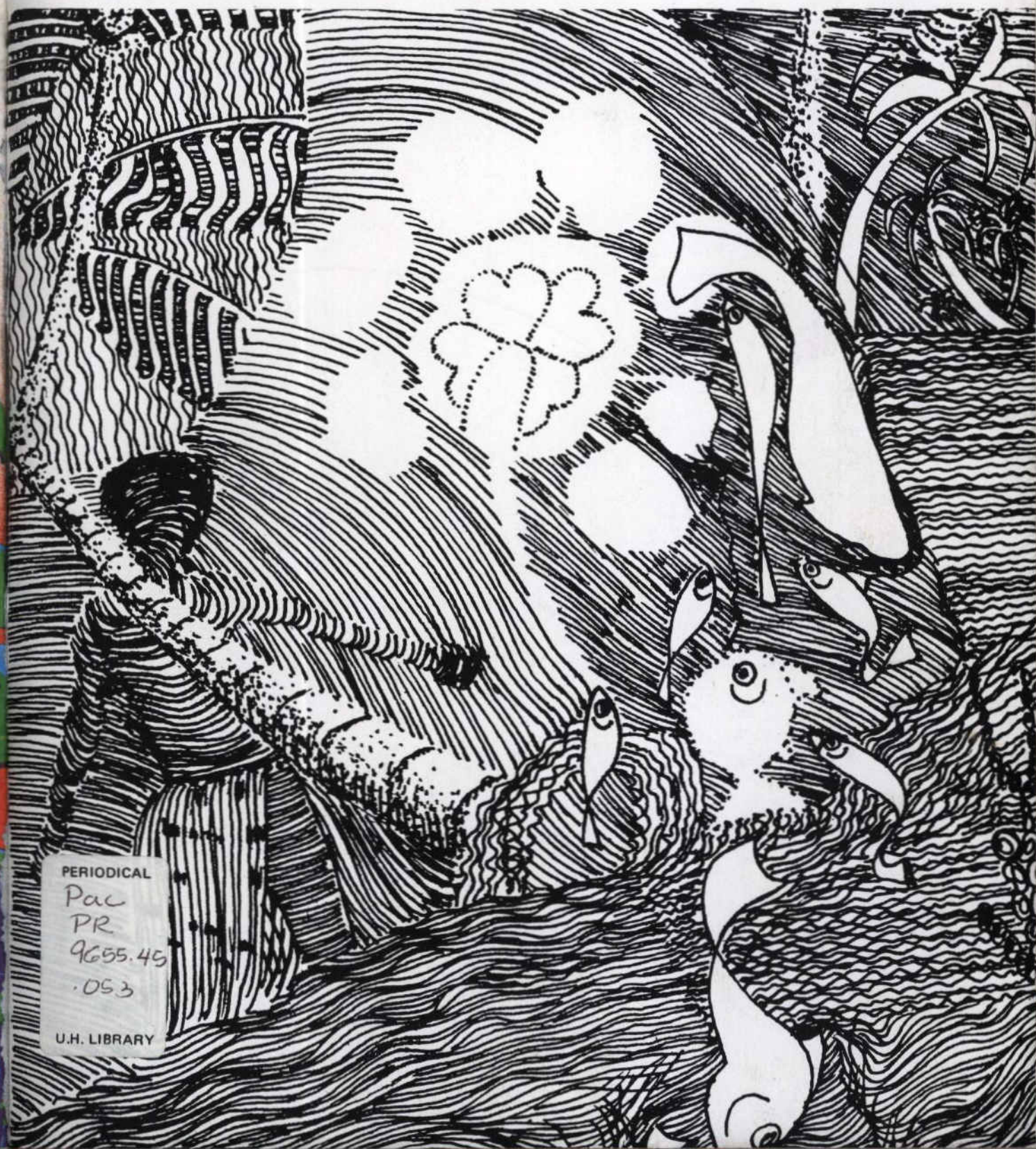
Mid 1985

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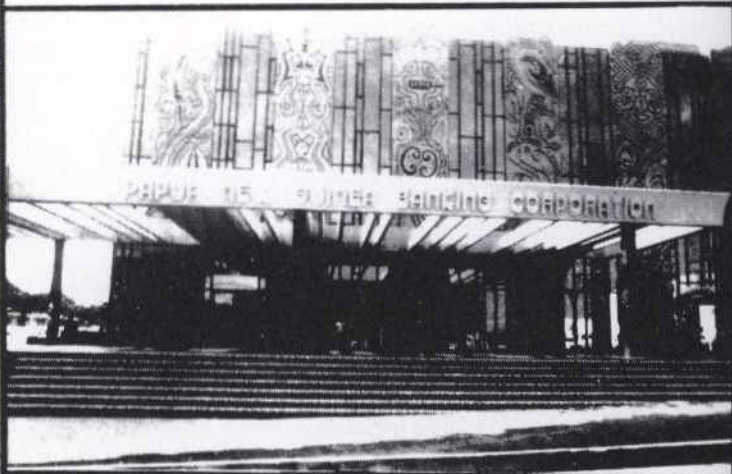
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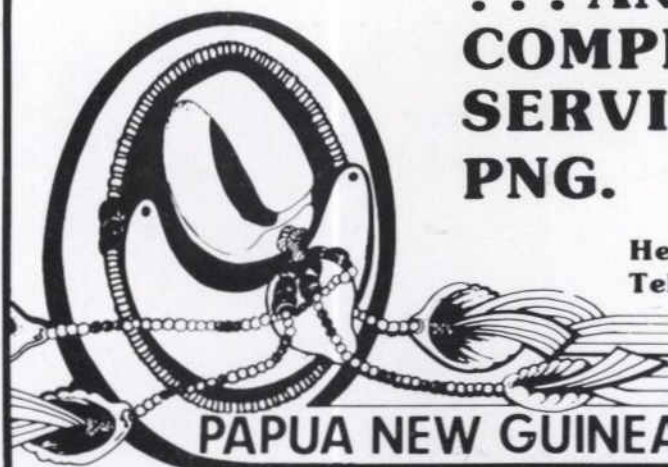
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ONDObONDO

No. 6 A magazine of new writing from Papua New Guinea Mid - 1985

Ondobondo is published twice yearly at the University of Papua New Guinea, Box 320, University PO, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea. Telephone 24 5383. Financial support is received from National Cultural Council, the University of Papua New Guinea and various art-loving patrons and business houses in Papua New Guinea. This issue commemorates Papua New Guinea's 10th Independence Anniversary.



ISBN 0254 0673.

Contributions and books for review should be sent to Ondobondo, Language and Literature Department, Box 320, University PO, NCD, Papua New Guinea. Manuscripts will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope (or international reply coupons), but no responsibility will be accepted for them.

Advertisements should be sent to the same address. Rates are available from the Chairman, Editorial Board, Ondobondo.

Copies cost K2.00 or \$3.00 each. Ten or more can be bought at cost of K1.50 or \$2.25 each. Cheques should be made payable to Ondobondo.

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Published twice yearly by Ondobondo Buk Haus, The University of Papua New Guinea, P.O. Box 320, University, Papua New Guinea and printed by Hebamo Press, P.O. Box 6033, Boroko, Papua New Guinea,

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MANGOVE

by Andreas Hara Wabiria

On the pig-shit-ridden bush track, lay Mangove, sprawled in the stinking mud, tears running down his cheeks. He was kicking about in the pig-shit-ridden path like a dying pig which had just been clubbed on the head. And he didn't know why he was crying, just that he knew for whom he was crying.

In the nearby bush there stood a bower bird with its neck erect and one of its legs folded, disturbed from building its love-nest. A couple of cassowary chicks were scurrying away to the safety of the nearby bushes. Up in the trees the birds and possums stopped doing whatever they were doing and looked down, as if surprised to see the young boy, whom they'd seen on the same path for the last nine days. The boy always seemed to be serious and determined to do something. But now, as if he had no hope left, the boy was just crying. Further up the creek a couple of cassowaries and a group of pigs that had been drinking, scurried into the bushes, frightened by the noise from Mangove's cries. He was crying in the middle of a thick jungle where there was no one to hear him. As you might well be aware, children cry when somebody, like a mother or a big sister or any adult is around so that they can be consoled and comforted. But this was not the case.

Six-year-old Mangove, who was enrolled for preparatory classes at Koroba Primary 'T' School, had quit going to school after six months. He had other things on his mind. He was going to be a man, he thought, an independent man on his own.

He was doing just that, and he had done well for the last nine days. He had gone to the garden by himself, had fetched water and firewood for his grandpa. In fact, he had fetched what he and his grandfather needed without the help of another. He already had cleared a place in the bush and dug six holes for the required number of posts for a pig-pen that he was going to build. Three days after his mother had left for Lavani — the place where he was to go one day, and where grandpa was going in the near future — Mangove, with his grandpa's consent, had been given permission by the elders

of the tribe to slaughter all but three of the 36 pigs mother had left behind. He did that to show his deep sorrow for his mother. He thought his mother had sweated her guts out to raise those pigs and she was not having any share of her own product. So it was wise to kill all the pigs for her cause. And also, it would be easier to look after only three pigs instead of the original number his mother had left.

Mangove had been living up to his own ambitions — to be an independent man, for the last nine days, but weariness, hardwork, stress, and sadness had taken their effect on him. He had no time to play with other children, no time to go swimming in the river, and no time for practically anything or any body. In his sleep, he dreamed of his mother, just as beautiful as he had seen her eight months ago when he was taken away to the 'haus man'. He was not forbidden to face her but he was forbidden to touch her or to come too close because it was a traditional law that a man couldn't touch or go close to a woman who is pregnant, whether it be your mother or sister or wife.

One afternoon, as Mangove came back from feeding the pigs, he had strange feelings that he had not experienced before. Had they killed his mother? Why did they keep her whole body covered when they lowered her into the ground? Was he going to come across anybody like mother anywhere in the future? Why did he have no brother or sister like other children? Who could he turn to when grandpa also went after his mother? As Mangove thought these things, he felt very sad. His cheeks began to shiver, his throat began to get itchy, his inner self, the very Mangove that he had been trying to disguise for the last nine days, had shown up. Tears popped out of his brown wide eyes.

He was in the very jungle that he used to be frightened of, in the jungle where he used to walk in front of anybody that was with him in fear of the evil spirits who might come up from the back to snatch him. When he thought of this, the hairs on Mangove's back stood up, his heart beat faster and faster. He missed the protection of his mother and he fainted in the middle of the pathway.

The sun was sitting on the tops of Mt. Hari Waya, looking back at the

journey it had travelled and making plans for the journey the next day. It was ready to have a rest for the night at the moment Mangove regained his consciousness and got up. His fears of the evil spirits had subsided. Now he was thinking about the old man whom he imagined was sitting by the fire drying his bony legs. Grandpa's legs were so dry and bony that if a stranger went into his house, he might push the old man's legs into the fire thinking they were firewood. When he thought of this, Mangove felt very sorry for himself, for he knew he was going to be an old man one day, and he set off quickly to find his grandfather.

As he approached the open grassland, he looked up to the sky and it was flaming red, like the blood he had seen oozing out of the 33 pigs slaughtered six days ago for his mother's funeral. The sun had already gone over the tops of Mt. Hari Waya and the nocturnal insects had come out of their hiding places. He could bear a cricket chirping in the thick kunai grass, not far away. On a tree near his mother's grave, he heard a humming bird singing. It was unusual for a bird to be up that late and Mangove's superstitious background prompted him to believe that it was his mother trying to greet him.

The moment that idea struck his mind, he felt a strong yearning for her, and called out loudly for his mother to come and get him. He told her all the things that he was doing, all the burdens that he was bearing since her departure. Once again his real self, the real six year old Mangove in him showed up. He told his mother that Malingi, Tindai, Hiwi and all the children were calling him a motherless orphan, saying he had no brothers and sisters. He told her that he had killed all but three of her pigs and he was coming back from feeding them. He told her that last night grandpa and himself had eaten some mushrooms and sweet potatoes and taro. He told her — as if expecting a word of praise from her, that he had gone to fetch water and firewood for grandpa. He told her everything that you would expect a child to tell his mother in the afternoon when she comes back from the garden. But Mangove got no answer. he started sobbing, aware now that he was on his own, a man.

He had been very silly telling his mother all those unnecessary things.

Thinking of himself as a grown-up, Mangove thought about what was expected of him, which brought more sadness than comfort. He was thinking of how he was to make his own garden. He didn't have the strength nor the tricks and techniques to make a good one. When he thought of raising pigs, he did not have a sister or an aunt to look after them for him because pigs were a woman's job. Again he called out to his mother to come back and get him. He thought of the days when he used to ride his mother's back, the days when he did not have to worry about the pigs or what he was going to eat in the evening because his mother did everything. All he had to do was to play with other children or look after the pigs from the branch of big trees where he used to build platforms in between the branches and doze off to sleep when he was tired. He thought of the Tagari river which he and his mother had left eight months ago and fled to her clan, when his father was killed in a war between the Anua and Kokoma clans, bordered by the great Tagari river.

He remembered well the time he was swimming in the river and saw young men carry his father on a platform, an arrow right through his heart. He remembered seeing his mother and some other women crying and weeping as he approached the house. There he joined in and cried with the rest, not because he was sorry that his father had died, but because his mother was crying so he felt he had to cry too. In the night when the war was at its peak, his mother had put him in her bilum and with all their pigs, they had left father's place.

They followed the Tagari river upstream and when they were opposite the Yuyu clan, they crossed the river on a raft while the pigs swam. Once on the other side, they ran for their lives, to Kolopa and to the safety of his mother's people.

Mangove wept for his mother to come and save him from the other war that he was involved in, the war between the world and himself, between the real Mangove in him and the other Mangove that he was trying

to fake, the war between his own expectations and his capabilities to fulfill those expectations.

As Mangove was standing with tears rolling down his cheeks, he heard distant noises of children calling for their mothers who were coming back from feeding the pigs or from the gardens. In the trees and in the forests, he could see birds singing their evening songs. Up in the nearby Pai tree on a lower branch, he saw a young Eka igini popping its head out of the nest and calling out wildly. Maybe like the other children, it might be calling for its beloved mother, its protector and provider who might have ended up in a hunter's bag. The young bird's cries became dimmer and dimmer and finally became a whisper. It may have been hungry and too weak to continue calling its mother who hadn't arrived yet. After a while Mangove heard a loud thud behind him. He whirled around to see that the young bird had fallen from the nest — weak, exhausted, dead.

Seeing this, he thought of how kind it was for its mother to take him with her, instead of giving her young one a hard time and letting him suffer up in the tree tops. Stamping his feet loudly on the grave and crying loudly, he asked his mother to have pity on him and take him away from this sinister world. He pleaded with her to take him to the place where she was living, so that she could take him with her the way this young Eka igini was taken away by its considerate mother. Mangove didn't get an answer.

He was hoarse and exhausted as he fell down on top of the grave and went to sleep in comfort, knowing that his mother was sleeping just next to him — not in the ground.

As he slept, he thought about his mother and the more he recalled his early days, the more he yearned for his mother and the more he felt sorry for her. His mama was the kind of woman who would rush to her son's aid at the slightest indication of trouble. He remembered well the night when they came to Kolopa three years ago — his first time to come to his mother's place. She had three bilums in all over her back. The first one was filled with yams and taro, the second on top of it was filled with a sweet type of banana and new grass-skirts,

and the one on top was filled with cooked and uncooked kaukau. In all she carried twice her own weight on her back. At that time Mangove was only three years of age. After walking for a short distance, he told his mother that his feet were hurting, so despite the heavy load that she carried, she took her son and let him sit on top of the bilums with his legs down on either side of her neck. But after they had gone another couple of miles, he felt very frightened. Sitting on top of his mother's load, he thought all the evil spirits were looking at him in the night, ready to sweep down on him from the air like big eagles and snatch him away from his mother. So he lied to his mother that he was cold. His mother didn't want him to be cold in the night, so she took him in her arms and carried him for the last 12 miles, all the way to Kolopa. And that showed how much his mother cared and loved her one and only son. When he thought of all these things, he felt very sad.

As for his father, he had never known him, partly due to traditional custom that barred men from paying much attention to women and to boys who were not old enough to enter the 'haus man'.

The only time Mangove had looked at his father and seen his face closely was the day they brought his dead body back from the battle ground. Mangove knew it was his father only when he heard shouts from the other side of the Tagari river that Mangove's father had been killed and only when his mother confirmed it with tears.

The sun had gone down beyond the Muller ranges when he heard somebody calling his name. "Mangove!...Mangove!"

It was his Uncle Tarali, who used to live in a house by himself further across the plain, about 30 minutes walk. Tarali rarely visited, so Mangove deduced that his old grandpa had called his son over to help search for Mangove who had not come back from feeding the pigs. He felt very sorry for having kept the old man worried for so long a time. He didn't want him to know that he had been crying for his mother so he ran out to the main path and answered "ya'ah!"

Hearing Mangove was close by, his uncle shouted very very angrily,

"Where have you been?" Knowing that the old grandfather could not see well in the little light that was given off from the setting sun, Tarali ran up and belted Mangove and said.

"A small motherless creature like you should not keep us big men worried and make us look for you all over the country side."

He pulled Mangove by the leg down the track. When they were near the house, he told Mangove to stand up and stop crying because he knew that if the old grandfather found out that he had beaten Mangove and pulled him down the muddy path like a pig, he would get his bows and arrows and try to shoot him. The old man really loved Mangove and made sure that nothing happened to him. Two days ago when Hiwi had called Mangove a motherless orphan, the old grandfather was very angry and would have shot Hiwi with an arrow if Tarali had not been there to stop it.

When they entered the house, Mangove wanted to cry and tell his grandfather that Tarali had beaten him, but since the old man was sick, he did not want to disturb his peace. Even if he had told, Tarali would just beat him up again one day when they were alone by themselves.

Mangove entered the house and sat on the other side of the fireplace where he used to sleep. He was very angry with Tarali and felt like lurching at his neck and pushing him into the burning fire. On the other side of the fireplace lay his grandfather. He was sleeping with his wig still on. Tarali was sitting at the back of the house, sucking at the end of his smoking pipe.

"Shue u eou!" came the sound when Tarali inhaled the smoke from the bamboo pipe. After a moment the old man got up.

"Where have you been?" the old man asked.

"I got lost in the jungle as I came back from feeding the pigs," replied Mangove. The old man sat down and fiddled with one of the burning sticks, considering the integrity of the tone.

"When the whiteman hadn't come yet to this place, it was very dangerous to walk around in the night by yourself, especially when there was a conflict with another clan," said the old man.

"Do we have any conflict with other groups?" asked the boy innocently.

"Whether we have a conflict or not, you've got to watch out, boy," interrupted Tarali from the corner, "Sometimes people kill for no reason or from sheer jealousy."

"I didn't ask for your opinion," replied Mangove, who was very angry with Tarali still.

"He's right. He's not asking for your comment," supported the old man.

"That's your problem," muttered Tarali and he went back to minding his bamboo smoking pipe.

"Your mother died a peaceful death, a natural death," said the old man. In the past, when the white-men had not yet arrived, most of the deaths were caused by violence. Like your father, most of the young men died on the battle field....poor souls! They did not have any peace in their final moment of life when death overcame them." Grandfather went on to recall his young days when he used to be on war parties. He described how they used to paint themselves black with charcoal and creep along on their bellies.

"Thanks to the whitemen," repeated the old man again and again as if it was the whitemen who had given him his life or helped his mother give birth to him.

"During the days of my youth...when we didn't know that the whitemen existed, or of the existence of any other Papuans for that matter, I witnessed many tribal fights. From those I've seen and taken part in, the most fiercely fought was the war between the Tunuka and Iroke clansmen. It went on for more than seven months, excluding the pay-back killing period. During the battle I was helping the Iroke clan, my great grandmother's clan."

Mangove, who had been dozing off was stirring awake to hear the interesting story. He put more wood into the fire which was dying as the old man continued the story.

The old man described a payback killing mission. Payback killings were most feared by the Huli people. It was the old people, women and children who suffered. No matter how helpless a person was, they were killed. "I've seen some bizzare, dreadful, and frightening ways of killing used by

enemy tribesmen to claim the lives of others," continued the old man. "Once I saw a boy just like you," he said pointing to the six year old Mangove, "stuck on the sharp-pointed fence tip, with his tongue sticking out, the fence post right up his arse and through his heart. I saw another sorrowful sight where both the mother and baby were killed, placing the baby in a breast-feeding position....eeeee and many other dreadful sights which I can't find the words to describe."

"On this particular payback killing trip to the enemy tribe, there were four of us in the squad, all young strong, wellbuilt, and unmarried. All of us are still alive except for Piru," said the old man as he thought of that tragic and hair-raising penal expedition through enemy territory which took the life of one of his best mates. "We were to strike the well-guarded enemy fort by nightfall." (A fort according to the Huli's is a steep, wide, man-made ditch-usually 12 feet high, six feet deep and 6 feet wide — ringing the houses the warriors use as their headquarters or command posts. One house in the fort holds twenty-five armed men and there are open doors on both ends.)

Old grandfather continued, "After a tasty meal which I thought may be my last — we heard an urgent war cry in the distance. It called that two more men, Torenge and Tangeria, of the Oroke clan had been killed by the enemy Tunuka clan.

"A feeling of revenge, anger and sorrow built up inside me for the death of the two men — my best friends. We started getting rid of things like our string bags, necklaces, arm-bands and wigs and anything that could be a hazard to silence and betrayal of presence in the enemy territory. Then, cautiously we took off, along an old abandoned bush track.

"The sun was about to hit the tops of Mt. Lepani. By this time we were in the middle of Mogorafugwa, the great swamp. This swamp is 3½ miles long and half a mile wide. The fort was a few miles away on the other side of the swamp. When we hit the swamp we became much more cautious. The enemy guards on the nearby ridge could spot us easily. If we were seen first we knew we had no chance to live.

"At the edge of the swamp we started to camouflage ourselves. We pulled out swamp reeds and leaves from nearby trees and started wrapping them around ourselves and our weapons. After tucking up our aprons to the hipstrings, we started toward the fort on our hands and knees. It took nearly three hours to cross the half mile stretch of swamp. By then the sun had gone down and we had to be extra careful. Slowly and silently we started crawling again, through a thick undergrowth of pitpit which was normally used by pigs. In the night, we had to be extra careful; stopping, listening and moving along, one after the other. Only our hands acted as guides.

"After crawling through the mud and stinking pig shit we arrived at the high-walled ditch. As planned, we put two of our men on guard on our side of the ditch, while the other two, Piru and myself, went into the ditch. At the bottom we pulled out the sharpened wood which we had strapped around our abdomen with the hipstring, and started planting it up the ditch to form a ladder.

"Everything around us seemed to be holding its breath. There was not even a buzz from annoying mosquitoes. Everything seemed to be waiting for something to happen. My nerves strained as we climbed up the steps, even though we were working from a well hidden angle. There was a big bush of pitpit on the other side which gave us a considerable amount of cover.

"When we finally reached the top and slipped over onto the other side, we flattened ourselves on the ground and lay motionless for a couple of minutes — nervous, panting and trying to pull ourselves together. At last we got up and moved a couple of yards forward under the shadow of the sugar-cane and banana stems.

"Just a few yards ahead we could hear talking and laughing in the house. We kept our eyes and ears peeled. Just a small mistake could lead to disaster. One of the doors was opening a couple of yards away from us. Piru and I stood very steady, with our deadliest arrow, the 'ta'arre, fitted to the bow string. A 'ta'arre has spikes at the sides of its sharp pointed tip. This makes it hard for the arrow

to be pulled out of the prey's body once it is inside.

"With the bow and the arrow having a tug-o-war with each other, we waited for some one to come out. I can remember feeling urine around my legs. Never in my life have I felt so frightened and so excited.

"It was two...three hours since we had left the swamp area. Now the moon was up shinning brightly. As we waited we heard a loud argument inside the nearest house. We could clearly hear what they were saying. They were arguing with a fellow who was trying to go outside to urinate. His comrades were telling him not to at this time of the night. One of the fellows arguing spoke up a bit louder and said "You never know if the enemy is outside." The man who was trying to go outside replied, "If there is someone, I'll give him a hard blow with this" and he walked out the door with his big pillow stick.

"We could see him very clearly in the moonlight. He was Porolia, the man who had instigated the tribal fight. As the best shot between us, Piru told me to take aim and finish off this man.

"Looking this way and that way, Porolia lifted his apron high and started to urinate. Before the first gush of urine touched the ground below, I let my arrow fly. My arrow met its target. It went duogg...Not a sound inside the house. There was too much noise and laughter and not one of them realised the danger that was lurking outside. We went closer to the house. Judging by the type of story they were telling, they were young unmarried men in their late twenties. They were talking of their experiences with girlfriends — a subject forbidden during time of war because thinking of women brings bad luck and talking about them will bring more serious trouble.

"At the doorway we divided. Piru took the left side of the doorway while I took the right side. We hid there listening, still as rocks. While we waited, the fire inside glowed a little brighter and we could see two men very clearly. With the movements of our heads as a signal, we let our arrows fly at the closest targets. We just heard the thudding sounds as the arrows kissed their hearts.

"After that Piru and I sprang from where we were hiding like two dogs chasing a cat. We leapt over the ditch as if we were wallabies, and within seconds we were on the other side. Those pursuing from the fort met the arrows of the other two waiting on the other side of the ditch. One stray arrow found its mark and hit Piru from the back, right through his ribs and lung. We had to carry him all the way to Auwaka, where he is buried now. A few days later we heard that the war was called off because of the death of the enemy leader. He was the first man we had killed at the fort."

When the old man finished reciting his experience, Mangove felt strange — a mixture of fear and sadness.

He feared the hard struggle ahead when he too would become a true warrior like his father and grandfather. But he felt sad because his mother would not be near to help him and he would have to become an independent man on his own with his uncle always ready to abuse him.

He was disturbed from his deep thinking when — "Paeu, uru paule pu napiaka tabe" — was the order given by the old man, telling him that it was time for bed. ♣



Illustrated by Andreas Wabiria

KITA BASARA, THE LONE TRAVELLER

by Shem Yarupawa

The small plane taxied to the end of the small airstrip, made an about turn, taxied for some time before lifting off the ground. As soon as it was airborne, Kita looked down at a small group of people who gathered outside the box-like terminal and briefly waved at them. When the plane went higher above the hills, he looked out to sea, far over the bouncing waves towards his native land, and his heart leapt within him. His heart ached at the thought of all the wonderful things he was leaving behind at home, the charm of a simple, healthy life, his mother's calm outlook and her cooking. He knew he would be away for a long time. He would be missing the land and the people he loved so dearly.

The plane flew low. For some time he could see below him rugged grey precipices of rock dropping sheer into the sea. The flight was uneventful except that Kita saw a huge school of dolphins in the sea off the coast, which made him long to be back home, to be near the sea, to feel peace. Why leave the place and the life that I love? he thought to himself. But he knew he had to go.

Twenty minutes later, the plane touched down at Gurney airport. A fifteen seater bus owned by the Lauwasi Bus Service was already there waiting to transport passengers to Alotau town, about fourteen kilometres away from the airport. As the passengers disembarked from the plane and moved towards the bus, Kita fell back behind everybody. He let them board the bus and he went over to the driver and asked in his careful Tawala for the rates.

"Two Kina," the driver replied.

Disappointed and without saying a word, Kita turned and slowly, with uneasy steps, made for the nearest corner of the air-terminal. He heard a young woman next to the driver giggle and mutter a mocking comment in Tawala, then in English: "Hey, you no money fellow, eh? He! he....he....he..." Kita did not mind as long as nobody in the bus knew him.

In the corner, after he made sure that nobody was observing him, he dug up a lone two kina note from his shirt pocket and closely observed his only wealth in the world. He wondered whether he should pay to get a ride down to town, as he fingered the two kina note. If I take a ride to town now, where will I find money to return to the airport tomorrow to catch my flight to Port Moresby? As he wondered, he heard the bus start and watched as it sped down the road leaving a whiff of dust. He watched the dust slowly disappear into the hot morning air.

Well, that solved one problem: having to decide whether or not to spend the two kina to get a ride down to town. The next problem is how to get to town. If there were no road for vehicles and only a track, this would not be a problem. Kita knew he could not walk down the road because he would be humiliated by people shouting mocking remarks from the comfort of vehicles as they drove past him. It was alright for him to wait until evening when the road was free of vehicles, but he desperately needed to get to town to confirm his reservations. Otherwise his seat would be given to somebody else. That would mean more trouble for him, for he had to leave Alotau for Port Moresby. He knew no one in Alotau who would be willing to offer him accommodation.

Kita sat down, his back against the wall of the terminal, his chin resting on his two arms crossed on his upraised knees. The place was quiet except for the sounds of nature and the lazy murmurs of the four airport labourers lying around on the benches at the other side of the terminal. Kita did not know whether to hate himself or feel sad for himself for not having enough money to make his journey a bit more comfortable. He thought about how his sister had to carry vegetables to the market, twelve kilometres away, to sell them twice every week and reserved twenty toea every time so that he, Kita, would have enough money to travel. He did not have to worry about his airline

ticket because, as a student on National Scholarship, he was entitled to one. But other expenses like bus fares had to come from Kita's pocket money.

A vehicle speeding up the road interrupted his thought. It was a utility owned by Talair Airlines. A man got out of the vehicle when it came to a stop near the terminal. He wore a light blue shirt tucked neatly into a pair of ocean blue shorts. On his feet, he had shiny black shoes and a pair of light blue socks pulled up just below his knees. Fixed to his face was a pair of dark glasses.

"Hey boys," he called out to the labourers who were outside the terminal some ten metres away from him. "This one, already work finish. We go back to town." And looking at his watch, "Better we go back quick and I finish some paperwork where my office."

Kita approached one of the labourers as he moved to board the utility and asked in Tawala as he looked towards the vehicle: "May I come with you on that vehicle?"

"You ask our boss," was the reply. Kita walked up to the boss and asked if he could be given a lift to town. The man looked him up and down for some two minutes before he started speaking.

"What you want, boy?"

I told you already, you bloody pig, Kita thought of saying, but he had to shut up because he had a feeling there may be some chance that he'd be given a lift.

"This one not bloody passenger vehicle. This one company vehicle. You hear that boy?"

Kita did not say anything. He bowed his head and watched his toes slowly dig into the ground.

"You see the Lauwasi bus or not? Why you did not get that one. I don't know you, what kind this one. Maybe you stay in the bush long time and where your head already MC full up. Tch, tch, tch," the man muttered, shaking his head. "Alright, we help you now. Jump in where the back."

Kita hesitated a moment.

"Jump in where the back," the man repeated more angrily this time. "You want to ride or not?"

Kita looked up and his eyes met with the man's. His anger was already

welling up. He thought of spitting in the man's face but abandoned the idea. Then looking away, he slowly climbed onto the back of the vehicle. The engines started and the utility sped along the road to Alotau town.

Kita just sat quietly on the moving vehicle, staring at the trees and shrubbery on the side of the road swiftly flowing by. He thought about the man in the front of the vehicle behind the steering wheel. He must be one of those villagers who either have no schooling or are poorly schooled. When they get employed in offices, especially in private firms as cheap labourers — and this was usually the case because private firms preferred to employ those who received little schooling so that they could use them to do anything for a little money without the labourers complaining or asking questions — these men hid behind the facade of expensive clothes and used "pick up" English. They had no better way of showing their authority than to pick on the small mistakes of their fellow village brothers, and humiliate them by scolding them in public.

Quarter of an hour later, the vehicle pulled in outside the Talair Office at Alotau town. Kita nodded his thank-you to one of the labourers and jumped off the vehicle with his small bag. He lazily strolled up the street to the Air Niugini Office.

The clock in the Air Niugini Office told Kita it was almost midday. After he confirmed his reservations, he went outside the office and wondered what he would do next. He sat himself down in a far corner outside the office and watched the heat rise from the tarmac that sealed the street before him. He could see heat. Like steam from a boiling pot, slowly trail into the air and disappear.

The sound of walking feet on the concrete floor changed Kita's attention from watching the heat rise to the person approaching him.

"Oi, you came ah?" the person asked Kita.

"Yes, today," Kita replied in Gayavi, his vernacular.

"Oh, yea, I'm just going over to the Enterprises, Alotau Enterprises to get some lunch for myself." Kita just nodded with a

wry grin.

The man who had spoken to Kita was Mogapa, his uncle. Kita was not surprised when his uncle gave him no chance to ask if there was space at his home to accommodate him for a night, nor did he extend an invitation to Kita to spend the night. Kita had come through this very town twice before and had received the same treatment from those relatives and wantoks who saw him or knew he was in town. Every time they knew he was in town, they tried not to cross his path as if he was a leper.

The first time Kita passed through Alotau, he slept outside the terminal at Gurney. At that time, he spent a short time weeping because he was filled with self-pity.

He had first gone to town that day, confirmed his reservations, and went around the town meeting relatives and wantoks who worked there, in the hope that they might offer him accommodation. But relatives and wantoks alike saw him with indifferent eyes. So, at half past three in the afternoon, he slung his small bag around his shoulder and headed for the airport on foot. Just outside Rabe village he had seen a group of girls washing clothes in the creek and looking most seductive with their wet clothes clinging to their lovely bodies. They had started teasing him but Kita was too concerned about his problems to respond.

When he had arrived at the airport, everyone was gone and the place was quiet except for the singing of birds and the chirping of crickets and cicadas bidding farewell to the fast vanishing light. He had sat down on one of the benches outside the terminal, cupped his face in both hands and wept uncontrollably. He wept because he felt rejected. He wept because his mother — the only person closest to him on earth — had bade him farewell that morning thinking that at nightfall he would be sleeping on a comfortable bed with neon lights above his head. But here he was so lonely, sleeping outside on foreign soil because his own people had rejected him. His mother would have been grieved had she seen him in this situation. She would have wept for his sorrows, and watching his mother

weep for him, would have removed Kita's sorrows.

After he had washed his heart of all sorrows, he had knelt down and prayed. He had prayed desperately to God to protect him from the wondering spirits as well as snakes and other nocturnal creatures. After he had prayed, peace descended upon him. He then lay on the cold concrete floor with his bag as his pillow and dozed off to sleep with his soiled clothes on as he was utterly exhausted.

That was five years ago when Kita had been a mere sixteen. Now he had learnt a lot from his troubles. He had learnt to endure loneliness, rejection and even going with very little food. In fact, loneliness had become a part of him and he longed for it when he went without it for a long time. Now he didn't really care whether he found accommodation for the night or not when he passed through Alotau. There was always a place outdoors where he could rest his weary soul for the night.

So here he was again, in Alotau for the third time and his wantoks and relatives had not yet changed their attitudes towards him because he was still a student. They knew Kita was a penniless creature. What use was he to them? However, when they later met him in the village or in Port Moresby, they would ask him why he had not called to see them when he was in Alotau, and they would tell how they had come looking for him at the market and in shops when they knew he was in town. What hypocrisy! he thought.

Kita felt bitter towards his relatives and wantoks who lived in Alotau because they cared more for their money and things than they did for their relatives, let alone other people. Where did they get this un-Gayavian, un-Papua New Guinea, un-Melanesian attitude? he wondered.

To seek peace of mind, Kita decided to go down to Sanderson's Bay about half a kilometre's walk towards the West side of the town. However, before going, he called at the market to pick up something cheap to stop his hunger, which was already becoming an agony. He strolled down to Sanderson's Bay after he had bought himself a husked green



Illustrated by Sibona Buna

coconut with twenty toea out of the two kina he had.

Kita saw a kwakwamo tree that had fallen over into the water but it still grew because some of its roots were still in the ground. The trunk lay horizontal over the water but its branches that grew upwards provided good shade from the scorching afternoon sun. Kita sat on the trunk and dangled his feet on either side of the trunk. He ate his coconut and lazed — this was what he had dreamed about, complete solitude in the sunshine and silence except for the friendly slip-slap of wavelets against the kwakwamo tree trunk. He just sat there and absorbed the exquisite beauty of the sparkle and dazzle of the wavelets tossing their crests in little showers of spray. The subdued roar of the Pacific breakers and the rustle of the leaves of the nearby sago palms lulled Kita to sleep in a sitting position with his back resting on one of the branches.

When he woke up, Kita found that the sun had already gone down and was just above the tops of the sago

palms. He must have slept in that position for an hour or so. He rubbed his eyes and when he looked towards the road that led to town, he saw two men walking towards him. From his judgement, one was his age and the other was slightly younger. Kita could tell they were from the islands but he could not tell from which particular island the boys came. They stopped a few metres from where he sat and from overhearing their conversation, Kita could tell that they were from the Goodenough Island. Kita could not make out what they were saying but from their point to the small boats that were in the bay, he guessed they could be looking for a boat to sail back home.

Kita rose, picked up his small bag and went over to the boys and asked if they knew of a creek somewhere within the vicinity. They told him there was one, pointing to a path that led into a grove of sago palms. They assured him the creek wasn't far. Kita thanked them and led on. The track then turned to his right. He followed it until he arrived

at a waterfall. The water fell from the top of a boulder about eight metres high onto some hard rocks below, sending sprays of white in every direction. Around the waterfalls the plants looked green: tender, glowing, vivid, sparkling, rich, almost dark, contrasting sharply with the white sprays from the water fall. Kita took a particular liking to the place. He felt he was part of the whole set up — as much a part of the place as were the exotic birds, the winged insects, the slithering snakes and the other wild creatures that inhabited it. Mother nature must have done a perfect job. This was the kind of place in which Kita had spent much of his childhood and so had come to appreciate nature and see it as a part of himself.

After he made sure that nobody was watching, Kita stripped, tossed his clothes onto a boulder nearby and sat directly below the falling water. He let the water smash into sprays on his head so that dirt would be removed from his bushy hair. When he was satisfied, he jumped away from the falling water. He shook off the water

droplets from his body and hair and pulled out his towel from the bag and thoroughly wiped his body. He got into the same old pair of sports shorts and a blue 'T' shirt. Then he searched through his bag, and from among his few belongings, he pulled out his note book. He flipped through his note book and produced a photograph that lay between some pages. It had a picture of a girl that he had known. He stared at the photograph for a good five minutes, reflecting on some old memories. He then turned the photograph over and read the hand printed comment: 1982, taken outside one of our lecture rooms. The house in the background is the college principal's.

Kita thought about the last time they parted from each other, he and the girl. It was in Port Moresby some two years ago. The girl had contacted Kita by phone from Rabaul. At that time Kita had taken vacation employment with Air Niugini and was working as one of the ground crew at Jackson's airport. The two had taken a bus ride to Kita's place that afternoon after the flight arrived from Rabaul. His place was small. It consisted of a study table, a chair, book shelves, a cupboard, a set of drawers and a bed. There was a study light next to the table and a main light above on one end of the ceiling with the fan on the other end. Newspaper cuttings of interest hung on the wall.

"So this is your room?" the girl asked.

"That's it. Small isn't it?"

"It's small but good. You have your privacy. Back in our college, two students share a room. It's good. You have company but there are lots of problems. Sometimes, you tell stories instead of studying. Then, there is this problem of, you know, the hassle of how the room should be arranged and all that."

That evening, after a dinner of fish and chips, coke and biscuits, they had told stories late into the night. When they were too sleepy to go on, they decided to retire to bed. However, there was a problem in deciding who was to use the bed and who was to sleep somewhere else, on the floor maybe. The girl reasoned that she was the guest so she was to use the

bed. Kita said, however, that he was a man and according to Papua New Guinea custom, he was to use the bed. After all it was his. In the end they decided that since there only one bed they would both use it. When they came to that conclusion, they looked at each other and laughed and laughed. It was a game they were playing, an old game.

The next morning, when her plane arrived, the girl had told Kita between sobs that she had not yet had an offer for a job but she would be enquiring at Alotau while waiting from replies to her applications. After she left, she had written volumes and volumes of letters to Kita pleading that they should be serious with each other since they had known each other for a long time. Kita did not quite know what she meant by being serious but he guessed she could be talking about marriage. He did not totally object to the idea, but preferred not to say anything on the subject since he wasn't sure of himself yet.

Two years, he thought, that's quite some time. Well, it won't hurt to go up and see her now. Having made up his mind, he put the photograph neatly back between the pages of the note book and stuffed the notebook and the towel back into the bag. He then took a last look at the place and left for the main road. When he arrived at the main road, he headed again for town.

In town, Kita walked up the main street that ran through the main shopping area of the town, like a lone cowboy in some Western movie. He carefully read the signs on each building: Papua New Guinea Banking Corporation, Kwan Cho Kai cafe, Jules Deboi and Sons Trading, Christian Bookshop, Alotau Enterprises, Alotau Post Office and on the other side of the street, Ani Gimwala Numana, Paulisbo and Sons Trading, Pentecostals Hall and West Pac Bank.

He sat outside the West Pac Bank in his usual style of sitting, his back against the wall with his chin resting on his two arms crossed on upraised knees. The sun was already setting. He watched everybody that passed before him, observing closely the girls in case one of them happened to be the one he was looking for. Across

the street, outside the town's Post Office, a young couple with their child, a toddler of about one and half years, was in turn observing him. Everytime Kita looked across the street, sure enough, they would be watching him. They would converse and once in a while would look across the street towards him. He was thinking, the couple must be suspecting him of something or they may have mistaken him for somebody they knew. He could not tell. He started to feel uneasy. He was about to get up and walk away, when he saw a girl walking up the street. From that distance he could not mistake her: her height, her hairstyle, the way she dressed, the way she walked and everything about her. She was the one he had come to find.

Kita waited until the girl was passing the bank and he coughed. When she turned and saw Kita smiling at her, she was stunned. She just stood there with an open mouth and gazed at Kita for a whole minute or so before she slowly walked over to him.

"So you have come, have you?" the girl asked.

"O yes, this morning. And how are you?"

I don't know. I just feel like bursting into those you know...."

"You know what? Tell me." Kita looked at her face, smiling, but the girl looked away. He knew what she was about to do so he started to laugh. He laughed and she laughed but she could not laugh with ease as he did. When they finally stopped and she looked up, her eyes were red and moist and tears streamed freely down her cheeks.

"Which way are you heading?" She asked, more softly this time.

"To Port Moresby, from home. I'm leaving at ten o'clock tomorrow morning." Kita maintained that smile concealing his feelings.

"I hope they give your seat to somebody else."

"What do you mean? I have to get to Port Moresby to resume classes. I'm late."

"Oh! By the way, have you been receiving the letters that I have been writing?"

"Yea, I've been receiving them but I was too busy to reply. I'm sorry for that."

"Minor problem, you don't have to be sorry. I just thought maybe you found somebody new or something like that."

"Hey, it's good meeting you but it's already getting late so I think you better go home — I mean to your house. Otherwise your parents might think some stranger is raping you somewhere in the bush."

"Tch, tch, tch, look at him. All he thinks about is raping, nothing else."

"No, I mean it. You better go. It's getting late."

"Alright then. But when do I see you again?"

"O well, we'll see you when we see you. Maybe tomorrow morning or sometime later. Somewhere."

"All right," she said as she walked off.

"So long," Kita called after her. She turned and looked at him for some time before walking on.

After she had gone, Kita walked back to where he was that afternoon, Sanderson's Bay, relieved that for a change he had talked to somebody who liked him. The moon had risen and it lit up the whole place. Kita saw an open shed that housed a dinghy. He went over and briefly inspected it. It was made of old, rusting pieces of corrugated iron and the wind sighed mournfully through it. That's it, he thought. That will be my home for the night. He slept.

When he awoke, he heard roosters crowing at Golanai, a village further down the bay. He jumped up and looked outside. The first grayish-pink light of dawn was already rising from the sea and settling over the sago and coconut palms that lined the shore. He slung his bag over his shoulder and headed for the airport. He walked as fast as he could. He wanted to make much of the distance while it was still dark. By around six o'clock that morning, twenty or so vehicles would pass him going to and from the airport. Many would poke their heads out and laugh mockingly at him. Others would just drive past without noticing him.

Kita came to a bridge and he decided to stop and take a short rest. He stood at the side of the road at

one end of the bridge, broke a twig, tossed it onto a fast flowing creek below and saw it carried by the fast current. Just then he heard a vehicle approaching. Somehow, he had a feeling that the people in the vehicle were going to give him a lift. However, he did not turn to see the vehicle pass him and come to a stop about fifteen metres away. He heard the tooting of the horn and he turned. Outside the vehicle stood the man he had seen the other day with his wife and child outside the Post Office. He signalled Kita over to him with a wave.

"Where are you heading? Airport, aren't you?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Need a lift? Get in buddy."

"Oh, it's okay. It's not far. I can walk," Kita said without really meaning what he was saying.

"You must be joking. Just get in," the man insisted.

"Alright," Kita said as he climbed onto the back seat.

"You comfortable there in the back?" the man asked.

"Sure, thanks."

"Oh! by the way, my name is Geno, Geno Kila. I'm from Rigo and I work for the Department of Primary Industry here in Alotau. What's yours?"

"Kita, Kita Basara is mine."

"That's a nice name. Does it mean anything in your language or is it just a name?"

"Yes, it means 'somebody who is ignored'. Kita means 'see' and Basara means 'refuse', for which 'ignored' would be a better English translation.

"No wonder I saw you looking very sad, like some lost sheep outside West Pac Bank late yesterday afternoon. Your people must have been ignoring you." He looked over his left shoulder at Kita and they both laughed. Kita came to like the other guy. "The impression we had when we saw you there," he continued, "was that you were new in Alotau and maybe you did not have a place to stay. We were thinking of asking you if you needed a place to spend the night when one of your friends or relatives met up with you."

"Thanks for your concern. That was kind of you."

Hey buddy, we better be going. Otherwise, we'll be late." The engine started and the vehicle sped up the road making dust.

Well, Kita thought, Alotau wasn't that bad after all. There are some people who have hearts, people who care. He sighed with relief at the thought that in two hours time, he would be in Port Moresby. ^

JUST DREAMS

by Rex Okona

This play, called "Just Dreams", has no dialogue but, rather is a series of dramatic actions which convey the frustrations and unattainable dreams of youth.

It involves the life and dreams of a young man, called Risiepa, which in Kote language means "I returned from death or hell."

The play starts with a young man seen in the village. He is attentive to morning and nightly religious devotions. He helps his parents work in the garden and fetches firewood and water for his parents. He helps his grandparents and other elderly people in the village. He participates in general community activities.

He goes to church on Sundays and listens attentively to the preacher's sermons.

A pastor is preaching. He is talking about the Devil tempting Jesus in the wilderness when Jesus was fasting. He emphasizes that if people are not strong in belief and faith in the Almighty God the Devil can easily lead them astray into Hades.

In the night the young man sleeps and dreams. In dreams he walks along a beautiful path in a beautiful country such as paradise.

An angelic person appears in the dream and tells him that she could offer him the riches of the world and herself as well. She is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. They walk hand in hand along the beautiful path. They end up making love.

Risiepa wakes up and finds that it's only a dream. He lies awake the rest of the night thinking of the dream. The dream bothers him. Is there

fornication in heaven? Do God's people have promiscuous sexual relations? Do they ever make love in heaven?

Next morning he goes to the pastor and asks him whether it's sinful to have a dream in which one, a Christian like him could be involved in sexual relations with somebody who is not his girlfriend or a wife.

The pastor explains that it would be a sin if he takes the dream seriously. The pastor goes on and tells him the do's and don'ts of society and how to be a good Christian.

Risiepa walks away upset. He is seen by himself, facing the audience. He talks to the audience. "How could a beautiful thing like having sex with a beautiful woman in a dream be sinful..?" He is confused.

He goes and gets drunk with some young men from the village. They discuss his dream and what the pastor has told him. The young men mock the pastor. They think the pastor is trying to stop them from enjoying life.

After the beer they are seen attending a "Karim Lek" ceremony. ("Karim Lek" ceremony is another scene in the play.)

Everything goes well until the drunken mob arrives. They don't observe the accepted rule of the game. The girls scream and their brothers and the men from the village rush in and hit and chase the drunks out of the house into the nearby bush. Others escape. But Risiepa is seen (on the stage) staggering along and falls. He gets up, runs and falls. He picks himself up, looks around, wobbles and falls again. He sleeps where he falls. He does not realize that it is near the village cemetery. Crosses can be seen at the back.

In the middle of the night a sinister sound like that of a disturbed owl is heard, once, twice and then total silence. And then the swishing sound of breeze on leaves. The spirits of the dead wake up from the graves. Ghostly figures advance towards the sleeping man. They stare at him from the distance, then advance nearer. They all stand and look down at him. Some ghosts are scary; they have bloodshot eyes with long tongues hanging out with blood pouring off beer bottles they hold in their bony hands. Others are just skulls and

skeletons with cobwebs on their faces like zombies. Others have animal heads, like pigs, cassowaries and vampires.

The leader of the spirits is more angelic with a white gown but has a bloody mouth like dracula.

The wind is blowing, the spirits are dancing around the sleeping man. Lightning strikes and the thunder is heard. Ghostly noises are heard.

The leader of the spirits is talking. He is talking about the decadence of modern society, particularly young people not abiding by the rules of the society and getting drunk and acting silly, how evil and selfish people are becoming and the eminent calamity that awaits them.

He is talking and everytime he wants to emphasize a point he points at the sleeping mortal on the ground. The other spirits nod their heads in agreement.

The volume of his talk gets louder and louder and his eyes become bloodshot.

In spite of this drunkenness and deep slumber Risiepa feels the presence of the dead. Goose-pimples develop on his body and he senses the presence of evil. He struggles to wake up. But his body feels very heavy. He can't get up. He thinks he is dreaming and mumbles something in his sleep. He struggles to get up. Something heavy presses him down. He nearly suffocates. He struggles and looks up and sees a ghost with a bloody mouth and dracula-like teeth and bloodshot eyes looking down at him. He screams and gets up and runs around wildly bumping into trees and the crosses. The ghosts stand still and stare at him. The cock crows, the daylight comes up and the ghosts disappear.

He still runs around madly screaming and bumping into things. He's like a madman. In fact he has become mad.

The village people hear his screams and rush to the cemetery. He sees the people and screams and tries to run into the bush. They run after him and catch him. He throws some wild punches at them and talks unintelligibly. He then talks something about being Jesus Christ the Saviour of the poor, the wretched and the sinful.

The village children think he is drunk and talking nonsense and laugh and jeer at him.

The village pastor silences them and points out that the poor man is possessed by demons and he (the pastor) begins to pray for Almighty God to drive the evil spirits of his soul.

They take him to the village and try to feed him and calm him but he throws their food into their faces. He becomes quite violent. They throw him into a room and lock him in.

He is seen in the room looking confused and lost. He screams, bumps his head on the wall, scratches his arm and face with his fingernails. This goes on until dusk. He is exhausted and lies down on the floor and goes to sleep.

While his body is lying exhausted on the floor in the room, his spirit is seen getting out of his body (somebody else lies on the floor and Risiepa gets up with a different costume, dreamlike). He is seen running. He is being chased by ghosts and evil spirits. He runs up the hills, crosses a flooded and fast-running river and he cries for help but there is no help. He tries to hide. Everywhere he tries to hide or go, there are evil spirits and monsters poking their heads out and trying to get him. He keeps running and meets the village pastor. The pastor beckons him to him. When he gets nearer he finds that the pastor has turned into a monstrous beast and tries to get at Risiepa's throat. So his so-called friends are in fact his enemies. The pastor grabs Risiepa by his neck and twists it. Risiepa nearly suffocates. He screams and gets up with a violent start. He looks around. The room is dark. It's only a dream, but a bad dream. He weeps for a while and goes back to sleep.

Out in the village we can hear a dog barking. Someone calls. A baby is heard crying and there is the general noise of people in the village getting ready to go to sleep. We can hear Risiepa's name being called mockingly by someone in the night. The word "longlong man" is heard.

Risiepa sleeps soundly on the floor. In his next dream he is seen sitting on the platform in the middle of a canoe. He is sitting up-right and acting

dignified like a chief. The canoe is being paddled by four men. They are going up the river. (The actions can be mimed.) In this dream he seems to have a total control over the situation. He is the chief. He spots a crocodile in the river. A pistol suddenly appears in his hand. He fires at the crocodile and kills it. They paddle on.

Up the river they see an old couple with a heavy bilum and firewood walk down the bank. Risiepa waves at them smilingly. They don't wave back. They only mumble something to each other and continue walking down along the river. Risiepa is upset and fires a shot over their heads. They drop their loads and stand shaking and calling Risiepa's name. Risiepa's paddlers laugh over the incident. They then paddle further upstream. They see two canoes with three people each paddling downstream. Risiepa waves at them but they don't wave back. They look lifeless. They stare at Risiepa and his group with a sleepy glassy look and continue down stream. Risiepa shouts "You dead logs!" and they don't seem to hear him.

They paddle up further and see some wild animals on the bank of the river. Birds and insects, rokroks and other jungle noises are heard all the way along the river.

Suddenly in the distance upstream they hear faint kundu drum beats. As they go further and further up, the sound of the kundu gets louder and louder and people can be heard singing. (For the songs get either Bukauwa or Siassi songs from the Morobe Province).

As they get to the bank of the river near the village the noise gets very loud. It's now the Manus garamut beat. It dies down slowly and other welcoming songs and music are sung.

Four men come from the village with a decorated stretcher and carry Risiepa into the village. Four very beautiful girls with grass skirts and bare breasts are chosen to accompany Risiepa into the village and to entertain him.

A new mat is placed on a platform and Risiepa sits on it crosslegged and the four girls sit around him. He sits upright and looks very important. Village women bring food and refreshment and place them before him.

After eating he looks contented and a wide grin is seen across his face. He puts up his hand and suddenly there is a loud Manus garamut beat heard. The four girls look around, shake their bodies and get up and swing their hips. The garamut beat gets faster and louder and the girls swing their buttocks to the beat. People clap their hands and shout. (Four dances can be performed after this, maybe representing four regions of the country.)

In between the four dances a wedding (traditional style) takes place. The village chief's son and two other young men get married. Risiepa sits on the platform and watches all these proceedings. (All these can be mimed.)

Risiepa is then carried back to his canoe and his party paddles up stream. People wave their farewell. As they get further upstream they see ghosts and evil spirits on both sides of the river trying to get them. Risiepa pulls out his pistol and fires at them. The shots go right through them. They keep on trying to get at the canoe. They get very close but for some reason they can't touch Risiepa and his team. They paddle fast and go right past the spirits.

Up ahead in the middle of the river a beautiful island appears. On it a very beautiful woman is dancing. She is beckoning Risiepa to join her.

Risiepa sees the woman and loses control and dives into the river and swims towards her. She dances up to him. He grabs her and they make love.

Risiepa suddenly gets up and finds that it's only a dream, a sweet dream.

Suddenly the door is flung open and the village pastor with a Bible in his hand and the village elders walk in. ☹

Curtain



Illustrated by Gima Segore

WHY ME

by Lassia Steven

I sat up in my bed and yawned....wondering what the time was. I picked up my watch which I had left on the floor beside me and looked at it. It was half-past three. I wondered what had awaked me so early. I listened for a while, then as my eyes became accustomed to the darkness in the room, there beside me was Marko, sound asleep. The night was cold and windy. Marko had the sheets pulled up to his waist and was snoring softly, which was rather unusual. Some times he snored so loudly it made me feel as though I was sleeping with the pigs in their fence. It annoyed me when his snoring woke me suddenly in the middle of the night. But no, not this particular night. The night was windy but quiet. As I sat there pondering, the realization gripped me like some disfigured shadow in the darkest night, leaving me breathless, slowly uncoiling itself onto the memory screen.

It all returned to me as if I were watching myself in a picture theatre. There was a problem with the projector and the picture was not coming clear. I had to encourage it by ordering "Come on", "come on". Each time I repeated this, the picture moved slower. But then, as if by some magic touch, the projector began to work well. And there in front of me, was the reason for my being startled on that particular windy night of 1984.

The day had been like any other working day — the library busy as usual. I sat at my desk clearing the 'in' tray. It was the busiest time of the academic year. Lecturers had given long lists of required texts to go on special reserve to supplement the courses taught at UPNG. I hadn't checked the time for hours. Caring less, I lifted my eyes from the desk and looked up at the clock on the wall. The clock read half-past four pm. I thought of Marko waiting for me as usual. Then I became aware of two eyes staring at me from underneath a black hat. He had been there, like a statue, for some time, mastering the power of telepathy through his penetrating eyes. He had a muscular build, was tall with a dark complexion and a neat moustache, extremely

handsome for his race.

He stood there unblinking. He was in sport wear: black shorts showing off his long beautiful legs, a brown jacket with the front open so that one would see that underneath the brown jacket was a white T-shirt. When he was certain that he had my attention, he walked towards me and in a commanding voice said, "I'll be waiting for you in the car park!" I blushed.

"You mean — ah, you expect me at the car park now?"

His head moved back and forth from behind as he turned, so that his back was to me, acknowledging agreement as a demand. He didn't smile. And I had been so vigilant in the past fearing a confrontation like this.

As he walked past the entrance, he was transformed, so that he became a creature with five or six legs, arms, and heads, all moving in parallel with each other. His keys jingled in his right hand loudly but as if only inches away from my ears. His long legs carried him vigorously swaying to some silent rhythm of reggae music. His whole body moved with dignity. He looked so conspicuous and this eliminated altogether any attempt to protest 'lau ra vi'. Why me?

No, I must, I must do this. I sat there, contemplating, with a lump stuck in my throat. The thing rematerialised, four heads and arms, now only two legs. Then the head became the head of a 'dukduk'. Two arms reached for me while two arms remained dead at its side. I felt darkness begin to envelop me and felt my strength leave me. I blanked out for a couple of minutes, then regained consciousness.

The creature wasn't there any more. Yet I had a feeling that if I did not go quickly to the car park, as he commanded, there would be trouble.

I felt my systems work faster. I could hear my heart beats, so loud that anyone standing near me would have heard them too. By that time, most of the staff members had gone home. Trembling, I quickly picked up my case and walked to the car park. He wasn't there. I went back to the office, but he wasn't there either. So I returned to the car park. Marko, obviously, hadn't come yet to pick me up so I was in a way, glad, but scared

at the same time. Marko is usually a happy and free going character, but if he looses his temper it can be like hell breaking loose. There was a crowd of people who knew Marko and I in the car park area, all ladies obviously waiting to be picked up, but where Marko was, was my immediate concern.

As I was scanning the car parking lot, I heard a voice saying something I couldn't understand. Because I recognized the voice, my gaze followed the direction from which the voice had come. Then I saw him. He had parked his car a little way away from the main parking area. He still wore his black hat, but this time, had a long black dressing gown thrown over his shoulder so that only his nose and lips were visible. And he also was wearing dark glasses. Sighing, I wondered why he had to go through such faking when as far as I was concerned, there was nothing special between us yet. I accepted the fact that the more he disguised himself, the less chance he had of being recognized. For all I knew, he could be married too, just like I was to Marko.

I began to walk away.

"Hey you can't go yet. You're bound to get hurt. I'm coming with you," he said as his long strides fell in step with mine. We tried hard not to betray any feeling. When I didn't show any sign of stopping, his iron hands gripped my right arm and jerked me backward, tripping my right foot. I lost my balance just as we were nearing his car, and before I knew it, I landed hard on the tarmac face down. Then there was total darkness.

I felt a sharp pain on my fore-head. My eyelids were so heavy I could not open them without extra effort. I felt a big hard lump just above my right eye. My left eyelid at least opened a little. There wasn't much light in the room. I sat up as my eyes scanned the room. There was no one else in the room except for a small kerosene lamp standing on an old log at the right corner of a 3 by 4 meter room. There was one single bed on which I was sitting, a few shirts and a laplap thrown over a piece of wire that ran along the wall.

I got up, walked to the door, turned the door knob, but it refused to move.

I began to tremble. A small ticking sound was coming from my left. I turned quickly toward the sound. There, on the wall, was a big round clock and it read half-past seven pm. And there also, It stood against the wall. Tall and much darker, It only had four white teeth — the two below outgrew the two on the top. The monster was smiling with tears in two slitted holes. I mastered the little courage that was left in me and screamed as loud as possible, moving backwards towards the lamp.

"Help! Somebody help!" There was vibration in the room. My voice echoed back at me causing very sharp throbbing pains in my head. I stumbled over something hard and cold. I did a 360° turn, ready to defend myself. In doing so, I bumped my forehead against a pole in the middle of the room. Then, total darkness came over me again.

I felt coolness running down my cheeks. My eyelids refused to give way and the pains were numbing my entire body. I'd been quietly crying but couldn't hold it back much longer. I heard my voice gradually rising to a scream, then as quickly as it began, it stopped because of the sharpness of the aches in my body. And this time I couldn't open my eyes at all.

"Is there anybody here?" There was silence, but it was not golden. "Where am I? Can someone tell me?" Silence yet again. Then I felt around me with my hands. A sharp cutting pain on my right shoulder jolted me and when I felt it with my left hand, there was wet, warm fluid. As I pressed it with my fore-finger it hurt so much my system stiffened with the touch.

"Oh no! God damn it, what's happening to me? Somebody tell me please?" I said between sobs. Still silence. I began to shiver with cold, so using my left hand, pulled a piece of cloth over me. The bed felt to be the same bed I had first awaked on. So I concluded that it was the same room after all. I was on the floor when I had lost consciousness, now I was on the bed. Someone had put me back on the bed. Yes, there must be someone else in the room with me.

"Whoever you are, I know you are in there. Please speak to me." I waited, no response. "Somebody say something to me. Where am I?" All I

heard was my own voice firing my questions back at me. Silent torture was unbearable. I cried myself back to sleep.

When I came around again, it was terribly hot, the piece of cloth I had over me was gone. My lips were dry. I ran my tongue over them, but then I couldn't swallow. My throat was too dry. The pains and aches had doubled. I could only move my left arm. My back was burning. Tears rolled on until there were none left. My eyes were left dry and salty.

Having given up trying to communicate and with no hopes of being helped, I waited silently for the death call in silent meditation.

Life was born beautiful of a virgin
Love was conceived of it by the blood
Silence, the gold its value
Come thou oh death at thy desire
And claim the soul of thy unclaimed.

As I lay meditating, there was movement around the bed. My head was lifted to an upright sitting position by muscular hands that moved my body so skillfully. For a moment I forgot my pains. Something cool was put against my lips. Then I experienced the coolness of water as it was poured into my mouth.

I was helped to lie down on my back while something cool was rubbed over my face, pausing a little longer on the lump above my right eye. I was helped to lie side ways on my side while some kind of dressing was applied to the cut on my right shoulder. I was then made to lie down on my tummy while a piece of wet cloth was used to rub my back.

Nothing had been said so far and I couldn't stand the silence much longer. I was curious and even more scared of my unnatural captor. I took hold of its hand and ran my hand up the arm, feeling every inch for familiarity. The person didn't protest but kept still and let me finish my adventure. I felt the flatness of the chest and concluded that it was a male. He was sitting on the bedside, wearing shorts and a t-shirt. The realisation hit me so hard, it brought my exploring hand to an abrupt halt.

Yes! It's him. He's here. "Do you like me in this state?" I felt fresh tears surging through my closed eye lids, and began to quietly sob. "Please tell me, what's this all about? Where am I? What am I doing here?" I had all these questions coming through my mouth. He tightened his grip around my wrist and began to lightly rub my right arm but he said nothing. Silence still hung in the room and I was dying to know why. I again cried myself to sleep where I found peace.

Once more I was awakened by a touch on my forehead. My eyelids were able to part and I could see. The swelling on my forehead had gone down. The pains were reduced. And I was hungry. I wanted something to eat but I couldn't bring myself to say this to someone I had merely bumped into yesterday. I sat up, facing him.

He stood straight, his hands hanging down at his sides, observing me quietly.

"Don't move. I'm comfortable," I said, making myself more comfortable. I swung my legs over the bed side.

"You stay just where you are," I said, wishing that he could at least talk to me. But he sure took his time.

"Katie listen. Yesterday, like another day, I was standing in my room and I thought of you. I wanted so much to have you with me. I almost called you only it was too late. I get so terribly lonely for you like that. I..."

I listened, my arms about my neck. He walked lazily and sat down next to me, his right arm over my back, and drew me closer to him. "I'm sorry about how you feel. I didn't mean it to be this way. Katie, it's becoming to you, becoming as hell you know. You look as beautiful as ever." His voice rang in my ears. I had stopped looking at him.

"Why me? Surely there are more women from your particular class you can pick from and besides, what..."

"Why should you care what people will say? All you have to do is please yourself," he was interrupting.

Before we both knew what was happening, his lips were warm against mine. His arms were around me tightening like a big black moran snake coiling itself around its prey, giving it no chance to struggle free — a snake with a dukduk head and five long bodies all competing to claim their catch. I was

frantic, fighting with them all. It was from this struggle that I woke up suddenly.

There was cold sweat over my face and the watch was in my hand. Marko was still sound asleep. I put the watch back on the floor beside my bed quietly, not wanting to disturb Marko. I lay down to sleep, pulled my bedsheet up to my shoulders, closed my eyes and dozed off to sleep — but not for long. I twisted and turned restlessly. The night was cool but I was sweating. I didn't like the smell of this. Seeking explanation in vain, led to frustration. I never went back to sleep that night. I kept wondering about what the dream was supposed to mean to me. The next morning was not very welcome.

As I sat at the only table in our house sipping my hot tea in the living room, I was deep in thought. Marko came in.

Darling is there something troubling you? You got up earlier today than usual. Are you alright?"

Ah - ye - yes yes, I'm alright.

While he drank his tea, I continued my daydream. I kept telling myself that the dream meant nothing to me. Yet that person in the dreams looked familiar. I was sure I had seen him before — but where? I didn't know. As I continued my daydream, Marko called out from the dressing room saying that we had ten minutes before we had to leave the house.

I said "Fine. I'm ready." Eventually we left for work. I was at my desk by 7.09 am.

Marko had left that morning telling me to ring him if I did not feel well that day and he would pick me up. Jack, who always came in early at 7.00am, was at his desk. He greeted me without looking away from what he was doing. I responded with a silent nod. Not hearing any reply, he looked up at me questioningly.

"What's the matter? Bad morning?" Again I agreed with a silent nod.

Jack was a very concerned, interesting guy. He seemed to take interest in any female that ever crossed his path. He was in his late thirties but hadn't met Miss Right. I often wondered if he would ever meet her and if ever he did, would it be soon or too late? It is not common to

find a man in his early 40's to still be a virgin. He's either been married and divorced, or married and living separately, or most likely to have done many single girls wrong in a 'one night stand' and left a baby behind with no father to welcome him/her to the world. He'd been acting rather suspiciously to me in the recent weeks, making me feel doubtful about confiding him.

Jack often went out of his way to please a lady. However, he did keep a watch on all the ladies in the department. Nothing missed him. Most times he made me think he could see through solid. He immediately sensed trouble and was quite outspoken about issues of marital concern, especially to me — even if it didn't concern me. Apparently, he was concerned with my morning's strange attitude. For as I nodded in disagreement to his questions, he refused to believe me. As usual, he would have a time later on to talk to me privately.

The day dragged on ever so slowly while I was trying in vain to work out where I'd seen that face before. I watched people who wore anything black suspiciously. I observed every one I talked to for any kind of sign. I listened attentively to everything said too me and had an ear hooked on the telephone for any strange caller. I was certain that I'd seen that face and that it was recently.

I came to the end of the day. I was just packing up, getting ready to leave when I heard someone saying "Excuse me, I hope I'm not late. Could you please make sure these are made available for the students by next week. The library could make three copies of chapter..." I wasn't listening any more. I was recalling the whole dream again. I was brought back to reality when he lightly touched me on my shoulder looking questioning into my eyes. "Are you sure you are all right?" Pulling up a chair, he helped me to sit down. Then, like the wind, he was gone forever. ☹



THE MYSTERIOUS TAPOU

by John Kadiba

To the north-west of Ilai, there towers the blue mountain of Gauaoro. The mountain forms part of the high, Stanley ranges. On a very clear day, Gauaoro stands out showing the glory of its dark blue and commanding height above the rest of the surroundings. But it is only on rare days that one catches a glimpse of the beauty thrown out from the mountain stirring the viewer with feelings of tranquility and sadness. Feelings of sadness because moments such as these create a nostalgic mood which reminiscently brings back to imagination, the memory of a dead relative who once viewed a similar majestic scene of Gauaoro. The mountain seems to stand ageless and unchanging, while people come out of mothers' wombs, pass on into the ground and live on in the spirit world with their ancestors. The nostalgic feelings bringing the dead relative close to the living, are especially strong if the dead relative had been one who often fondly told of the tale of the mysterious Taupou, whose story obscurely began at Gauaoro. The pity of it is, for the most part of the year, Gauaoro hides behind thick rounded masses of cloud. Only now and then the tip of the mountain is visible.

Somewhere there at the base or on top of Gauaoro is the origin of the Oibada river. Springing out from under the rocks, it descends rapidly and makes its way through the valleys and gulleys. As it runs its course, other rivers run into it, adding to its volume of water. It rushes past Kebei and Tanobada villages, carrying and moving pebbles, but slows down as its depth increases and as it widens, so that when it flows past Ilai village, it glides lazily except when its volume increases and gives force to the current after days of torrential rain. Running its course towards the south-coast of Mailu, the river empties into the sea at Orangerie Bay, some distance, a half-day's walking distance, from Ilai.

Oibada village which gave the name to the river is situated near the mouth

of the river on the eastern side. Oibada is the commonly known name for the river, but the hinterland villages have their own names for the parts of the river flowing past them. Near the mouth of the river, at the side of a steep hill, there is also a cave where Oibada people once placed their corpses. In the decade or so after the Second World War, the remains of bones and skulls could still be seen in the cave.

It was the rainy season and for several days the rain fell in torrents. The river rose above the banks and flooded the plains and then sank to level when the sky was clear again, leaving mud, sand and pebbles on the river bank. There were also deposits of earth, sand, twigs and other material left behind in Boredidiva and his wife, Bagivalele's garden. They were the *sinaegi*¹ and *sinaavesa*² of Ilai village. From their years of experience, Boredidiva and Bagivalele knew that their *madava*³ had been under water. When the rain ceased and when they thought the water had gone down they waded their way through mud to the garden. It did not come to them as a surprise to find what had happened to the *madava*. They accepted it as part of their matter of fact living. Some replanting of taros and banana suckers had to be done. But they had to wait till the ground was properly dry before the sweet potato and the yams could be put into the ground. They made a fire and with some effort, kept it going. The thick dark smoke rose above the forest and could be seen from some distance away.

As the thick smoke rose vertically into the sky, its perpendicular stance showing the stillness of the moist air, a raft was being carried by current down the river. On the *dabara*⁴ was the mystery man, Taupou, and his two grandsons, Dialobo and Diaivasa. A shelter of palm leaves had been built and Taupou sat under it. Among their possessions was a string bag containing pig bones, which Taupou nursed with great care. The grandsons managed to control the raft with poles as it floated swiftly down the fast flowing water. As they drew nearer to Ilai village, Taupou looked up and saw the rising smoke.

"Steer the *dabara* to the bank of

the river where the **eu bautu**⁵ is rising from," said the old man to his grandsons. Dialobo and Diaivasa obeyed their grandfather's words. Once alongside the bank, they tied the raft to two big trees with cane ropes. Taupou gave more orders to the boys.

"Go to the people who are making the fire. Greet them. If it is a man and his wife and if they look slightly young, call them father and mother. If they are old, call them grandfather and grandmother. If they return your greeting, say to them, 'our grandfather is cold and he wants an **au urua**'." "

Boredidiva and Bagivalele looked to be in the age where Dialobo and Diaivasa would be more comfortable addressing them 'father' and 'mother'. Boredidiva was digging holes for banana suckers and his wife was planting the shoots. Boredidiva lifted the heavy and sharpened digging stick in his muscular hands, and was about to drive the pointed stake into the ground when he saw the two strangers approaching. He relaxed his hands and rested the stick on the ground. Bagivalele also looked up.

"Agutoi abai ele adei,"⁷ greeted the boys in unison.

"Agutoi oeva ava,"⁸ the couple returned the salutation.

"Our grandfather has sent us to get some fire from you. He is cold and wants to warm himself," the boys told the Ilai **sinaegi** and **sinaavesa**.

"Where have you come from?"

"We have come from Gauaoro on a dabara," replied the boys. The man and his wife turned their eyes towards the direction of the mountain, which could hardly be seen.

"Where is your grandfather?"

"He is on the dabara."

Boredidiva and Bagivalele gave them the fire and some wood. They also gave them some taro, a bunch of banana and some sugarcane. The couple escorted the boys to the part of the river where the raft was afloat. When the old man saw the man and his wife, his heart was filled with

gladness and his wrinkled face lit up.

"Agutoi ina oeva ava,"⁹ Taupou greeted them warmly, putting his right hand out to them.

"Agutoi abai,"¹⁰ Boredidiva and Bagivalele returned his greeting and shook hands with him.

"Why did you come? I have nothing to give you," Taupou said.

"Diada eidema. Neada la da suna siba."¹¹ They gave comfort to the old man's troubled mind.

Boredidiva and Bagivalele helped Dialobo and Diaivasa to make a fire on the raft. They built a fireplace with sticks, out of the reach of the water. They placed some leaves on the fireplace and put some soil on top of the leaves and made the fire on top of the soil. When all was ready, the couple said to the boys:

"Bake some banana and give them to your grandfather to make his body warm. And keep your eyes on the fire. It might go out. The wood is wet."

When Taupou and his grandsons were ready to continue their journey down the river, Taupou said to Boredidiva and Bagivalele:

"You have been very kind to us, my two good children. I have nothing to give to you. But take this and eat it. With this I bless you. You and your people will always show kindness to strangers." The old man cut off the tip of his tongue and gave it to the Ilai **sinaegi** and **sinaavesa** to eat and with it Taupou bestowed his blessing on the Ilai ancestors. And so it is said that in the days gone by, an Ilai would not let a stranger pass through the village without giving him some food or a coconut drink.

The unusual old man and his grandsons, shrouded in mystery, bid farewell to their hosts and took their departure. No sooner were the cane ropes untied from the trees than the fast current took the raft round the bend of the river. The mystified pair stood on the bank until the **dabara** disappeared behind the bend, leaving behind it trails of smoke from the fire. Boredidiva and Bagivalele returned to their **madava** with the experience of

the strange encounter with Taupou, an out of the ordinary figure, who seemed to possess some kind of **odaoda**¹² or supernatural power. Not only would they tell the story of this experience to their children and grandchildren but also they would be good to strangers with the gift of kindness that had been imparted to them and the people of Ilai village.

The sun was just above the horizon, when the raft arrived at the mouth of the Oibada river. Dialobo and Diaivasa pulled up their wooden float onto the sand. Taupou looked around for a place to rest for the night, and his searching eyes fell on the cave near the hillside not far from where they had put ashore.

"Take the things to that cave. We will sleep there this night," the old sage pointed to the direction of the place that would shelter them. The boys took the few belongings they had to the cave. The grandfather held on to the string bag with the pig bones.

The cave provided a warm resting place. The boys made a fire place close to the opening of the cave and roasted some of the banana and taro which the Ilai man and his wife had given them. A coconut tree conveniently stood near the cave, and one of the boys went up the tree and dropped a few green nuts. There were already dry nuts on the ground. The green coconuts provided them with refreshing drinks, while they broke open one or two of the dry nuts and ate the meat with the roasted **tebere**¹³ and **lavasa**.¹⁴ The sun had disappeared behind the horizon and the silhouette of the Baibara Island, a few kilometres from the mainland, was soon absorbed into the dark night.

Taupou unfolded his **eba**¹⁵ and lay down on it. He placed the bag of bones near his head and curled up and was soon sound asleep in the warmth of the cave. Dialobo and Diaivasa put more wood on the fire to keep it burning till morning. They put their mats near the fire place, and lay listening to the waves pounding on the beach before falling into a deep sleep.

The trio slept so soundly that they did not see the dawn breaking and did not know that the sun was already up and warming the cool morning air. But they were awakened by shouts and shell horns sounding from people

going along the beach past the cave. The **moilage**¹⁶ seemed never ending. Taupou woke up and yawned, and scratching his body, said to the boys, "Go and find out what is that all about."

Diallobo and Diaivasa came back and told their grandfather that crowds of people were travelling to the East, and that men were carrying other people with hands and feet tied and dangling on poles. The old sage got up and went to the beach to prove to himself what they had told him. Many people had already gained distance, others were just passing, and some were still coming. The horn sounds and **moilage** kept going as the excited crowd hurried to the place they were bound for, with their captive people.

"Agutoi. Where are you from?" the old man asked some of the crowd.

"Agutoi. We are from Borebo, Unevi, Sabiribo, Geagea and Oneone villages," replied the people.

"Where are you going?" enquired Taupou.

"To Tauboina village. There is a **maduna**¹⁷ and we have been invited to go to the feast."

"What day will the feast begin?" the old man wanted to know.

"We stay tomorrow. We stay again the next day, and the feast will begin on the third day," the people said.

"Why are you carrying those people with hands and feet tied, dangling on poles?" Taupou asked.

"They are our captives for the feast. Some will be eaten at the feast. Others will be given away," the people told him.

"You go first. We will come to the feast later," He turned and walked back with Diallobo and Diaivasa following him.

It was now mid-morning and heat

from the sun was already rising from the sand. The boys and their grandfather ate the **mao**¹⁸ from the previous evening and prepared to join the crowd travelling to the **maduna**. The boys removed the husk from a few of the green coconuts to take with them, to slake their thirst on the way. They left the Oibada village by mid-day and the sun was blazing hot. But the heat did not worry Taupou. As the trio walked along the beach, travelling to Tauboina, the place where the feast was to be held, some kind of mysterious power went out from the man and pulled all the trees to bend towards the beach and provide shade for them. They walked under the cool shade trees until they reached Tauboina. Although the trees provided shade miraculously, the hot air blowing to the land from the open ocean was depriving them of water from their bodies and the green coconuts they took with them became handy in wetting their dry throats and quenching their thirst.

The Tauboina village was prepared and decorated for the climax of the event. The **walatevas**¹⁹ erected for the feast in the middle of the village were each piled high with taro, yam and sweet potato. Rows and rows of bananas of every type were hung in front of every house in bunches, tied on poles which were put on pronged sticks staked into the sand. The captives of people were tied against posts under the houses. With only two days to go for the actual feast, the tempo of activities was gathering intensity. People danced jovially throughout the night, putting everything into the spirit of the occasion. The palms that were beating the **gabas**²⁰ never seemed to get tired.

The word had gone out that an old man and his two grandsons from Gauaoro had also come to the **maduna**. The next morning, the day after they arrived at the village, the old sage walked from one end of the village to the other end, pacing to and fro. It is not unusual for chiefs to do this ritual on such occasions to make their **paina**²¹. Taupou did not have to demand the people's respect. He looked old and wise enough. In any case there was something unusual about this man. He possessed in himself an inexplicable spellbinding

dignity. As he went and came, from one end of the village to the other, with his hands behind, all eyes were fixed on him and noises kept low. He had to make his speech in Mailu.

There were plenty of Mailu speaking people present at the feast who would translate the **paina** to the non-Mailu speaking Tauboina people and other visitors from the far east. Hanging from his right shoulder, under his arm, was the string bag of pig bones. Taupou began his speech.

Aura la onaea. Aura la iana²². Listen carefully to these words I see tied against the **tevas**²³ under your houses are people. They are your own kind. You have been killing and eating your own kind. It is not a good thing to do. This day puts the mark that you will not capture, kill, and eat each other again." He paused for a while to take a breath and then continued. "I want all of you strong men to go under the houses and untie the people and let them go. When you have done that, I will bring our **boraa**²⁴ and give them to you. From this day on you will kill and eat pigs only for your **madunas**. You must not eat your kind again. Now you young men do as I have said. Untie the people and let them go."

The young men acted as Taupou had instructed. The old man stood and watched with guarding eyes, to make sure that every captive was set free. All was done and he gave them more instructions.

"Now listen you strong young men. See this string bag here?" He pointed to the bag under his right arm and went on speaking. "In this **oisa**²⁵ are **boraa kisa**²⁶. You must get ready. Each time I throw a bone down on the ground, it will turn into a pig. You must chase it and catch it and tie its feet." The people half believing and half not believing, waited with awesome expectation. But there was confident command and **odaoda** in the man himself and in what he said, and the young men obediently got ready to go into action.

Taupou put his hand into the string bag and pulled out the first **kisa** and threw it on the sand. As instantly as the bone touched the sand, a huge pig sprang onto its feet and started running into the bush. The young men went into action, while the awe-stricken

women, children and old men watched the miraculous and dramatic event. The first pig was soon caught and its feet tied up and bound against the posts of the nearest house. The drama continued with increasing excitement from the onlookers. Soon from under every house came the piercing and deafening **kue**²⁷ of pigs. There was now only one bone left in Taupou's **oisa**. This time instead of throwing it to the ground as he had done the others, he threw it up skyward. As soon as it hit the ground a big sow came to life. She hesitated for a while and took off into the jungle. She ran faster than the men and was soon lost in the thick jungle. The men returned to the village without the sow. The pig would become a **uleai**²⁸ and would bear pigs for the jungle. When everybody was back in the village, Taupou made his last **paina**.

"From one end of the village to the other end, men, women and children, hear these words. Today you see under your houses, pigs tied to the posts. From your generation to the next generations this is what you and they must do. Eat pig meat in your feasts from this day on. My last word is that you must not eat your own kind again. I will not stay to see your **maduna**. My two grandsons and I will go away from you this afternoon." Having made his last speech, he walked slowly back to the house where he had stayed the night, with his eyes fixed to the north-east direction.

On the way, the old man noticed that one of the men running after the last pig had a red mouth and lips. "Is that **lala**²⁹ on your mouth?" asked the old man. "No. While I was running in the bush chasing the pig, I got tangled by a vine. This vine had seeds too. In a hurry, I bit off the vine with my teeth and kept on running. This redness in my mouth is from the vine." The man ended his story.

Did you chew betel nut with lime before you ran into the bush?" asked somebody.

"Yes," said the man.

"That explains it. It looks good on the mouth. It looks attractive," said another old man. And he told the children, "Go and look for the vine and bring it with all its leaves and

fruits. From now on we will eat our betel nut with lime and this **oraora**³⁰. When the vine with its leaves and fruit were brought, the old men chewed betel nut with lime and some men tested the vine, leaves and the fruit. The result was exactly as it appeared on the discoverer's mouth. So from that day on the people added **arava**³¹ to their **ueni**³² and **lele**³³.

It was mid-afternoon when Taupou, Dialobo, and Diaivasa said good bye to the feast-makers and left Tauboina village. The village elders brought some of their treasured gifts of armshells to Taupou and his grandsons but they politely refused to accept the gifts. They only took what few things they had brought with them from Gauaoro minus the pig bones. They also took some roasted taro and banana to eat on the way and a few green coconuts to water down the food.

They travelled towards the north-east to the Tuaeabina area. By sunset they reached a mountain called Duabooro. From the mountain they could look back and view the sea at Orangerie Bay. Baibara Island was barely visible. On top of the mountain stood a gigantic tree. Winding around the tree from the bottom to the top was a huge vine called **doveleneta**, which looks like a wide thick belt. With notches on the vine, it formed a convenient ladder for Taupou and his grandsons to climb on to the tree. The top of the large tree disappeared into the clouds. Just as they hailed mysteriously from Gauaoro, so they disappeared in the same manner into the clouds from the top of the tree at Duabooro. ☼

Notes.

* There are different versions of Taupou's story, told by different people. But the salient features of the story remain the same. The version that appears here was told to me by my late father, who was an Ilai himself. Ilai is about six kilometres from the coast. It is one of the Mailu speaking villages situated inland, Tanobada being the other village.

1. Sinaegi: ancestor man.
2. Sinaavesa: ancestor woman.
3. Madava: garden.

4. Dabara: wooden raft.
5. Eu bautu: Fire smoke or smoke from the fire.
6. Eu urua: a piece of burning wood.
7. Agutoi abai ele adei: greetings father and mother.
8. Agutoi oeva ava: greetings two sons.
9. Agutoi ina oeva ava: greetings my two children.
10. Agutoi abai: greetings father.
11. Diada eidema. Neada la da suna siba: So what. Do not think of that.
12. Odaoda: power.
13. Tebere: taro.
14. Lavasa: banana.
15. Eba: mat.
16. Moilage: long drawn exuberant shouts which accompany shell horns, especially when carrying pigs to feast. These shouts also act as warning that a group is approaching the village where a feast is held.
17. Maduna: feast.
18. Mao: left over food from the previous night.
19. Walatevas: platforms or tables.
20. Gabas: traditional drums.
21. Paina: a speech or an oratory.
22. Aura la onaea: Aura la iana: (Often this phrase is used at the beginning of a speech)— go from one side of the village to the other. Or go to one side, come to one side.
23. Tevas: posts.
24. Boraa: pigs.
25. Oisa: string bag.
26. Boraa kisa: pig bone(s).
27. Kue: pig noise.
28. Uelai: literally means bring it out. At mating seasons, some domesticated pigs bring to the village some wild pigs that they are mating with. These are called **uleai**.
29. Lala: blood.
30. Oraora: vine.
31. Arava: mustard eaten with betel nut and lime.
32. Ueni: betel nut.
33. Lele: lime.



SA'A HUNTING

by John Job

Long, long ago in my village there lived a man called Balen and his son Lakap. Balen's wife had died when Lakap was a young child.

Each year during the dry season, the men from the village went out into the bush to hunt for opossum. This was a cherished occasion and men looked forward to it. They stayed in the bush, hunting, anywhere from a few days to a month.

In the local language this hunting season is called Sa'a Eke Tenge, meaning 'Opossum Hunting Time'.

In this story, the Sa'a Eke Tenge season arrives with the dry season and Balen and his son Lakap leave the village for the mountains. They stay in the woods hunting each night for about two weeks.

As they sit in their bush hut one evening, preparing for the last night of Sa'a Eke Tenge, Balen tells Lakap that tonight they are going to a particular part of the woods. This place is heavily forested and even during the day it is dark and cold under tall towering trees.

Lakap's heart thumps at hearing this. 'Wasn't this the spot where one of his great grandfathers had been found dead?' he asks himself. He brushes the thought from his mind, knowing that there must never be one flick of fear on this hunting expedition. Apart from the joy of catching opossum, it is a testing time for skill, endurance and bravery, especially for the younger boys who go with the older men.

It was always great fun sitting in the akalyanda (men-house) listening to adventures in the woods.

As soon as dusk falls Lakap and his father take their bows and arrows and walk stealthily into the woods. They arrive at a special place after ten minutes of walking.

Balen expertly surveys some of the trees and spots two sa'as high up in a tarr tree. He tells Lakap to stay below while he climbs up. Balen slowly and carefully works his way up through the many branches of the tree, for a slight rustling of the bark and little branches, always alerts the ever curious sa'as.

Standing down below, Lakap thinks how dark it is down on the ground. The unending cries of the night birds and insects fill his ears. Although the moon is bright this night, the thick moss leaves and the heavily leafed branches of the taro trees darken the place.

Suddenly, a night bird utters a sharp sound which takes Lakap by surprise. He hadn't expected it so close. Such a sound would have scared the life out of any newcomer to the woods. Suddenly again he is frightened by the nearness of two jungle rats, bigger than domestic rats, rushing off into the night.

Another bird's cry, this time an owl, hoots from a nearby branch in reply to a distant mate's call disturbing the peace in the air. Lakap tries hard to bury the thoughts of his dead old great-grand-father but it is impossible with all these happenings.

To ease things down a bit, Lakap hastily climbs up the same tarr tree and sits on a big branch about ten metres from the ground. He feels a lot safer up there, for he feels a lot closer to his father than while on the ground.

A few minutes later he hears the string of his father's bow let loose, instantly accompanied by the frenzied death cry of a sa'a falling through leaves and branches. It lands on the ground with a heavy thud. A second sa'a is brought down in a similar way. Balen calls down and asks, "Have you got the sa'as?"

"Yes father," replies Lakap. But Balen does not hear his son's reply. He thinks Lakap is still on the ground so he begins to descend. Lakap thinks that his father has heard his reply and thinks his father knows where he is sitting. Balen is about one branch above Lakap and since he cannot see properly down below, he asks Lakap, "Where are you?"

"Here right here," replies Lakap.

Judging from the nearness of Lakap's reply Balen thinks he is a few metres off the ground so he jumps off the branch. Instead of landing on the ground, he falls through the branches and leaves, is hit by a mighty branch which breaks his ribs and on the ground he lands on a curling ageless root which crushes his knee bone.

Stupid Lakap, instead of bringing home scores of opossums he and his

father have killed, has to carry home his poor sick father. The lesson, as they say in this story is, "There is no place for fear in man's heart when going Sa'a Eke Tenge." 🐾



Illustrated by Sibona Buna

I WAS THERE

— by Loujaya M. Kouza

I saw nine pins gunned down by a king pin
I was there
one after another they fell like lead
and lay dead
I saw

Swept off the street like leaves
they were bundled into bags
sealed and tightened
I was there

Thrown in the back of a jeep
undercover at night no one knew
I saw

Them nine pins were taken to the big pit
and released into the merciful depths of dark waters
only to defy the king pin
they rose
bloated, floated on the waters
and washed by the tide to shore
I was there I saw and buried them.

ROOTS

— by Loujaya M. Kouza

Thin
thickly fibrous
elongated arms
pronging earth
poking
forcing way through debris
way up
way down
deep deep down
where warm bed of silt
sand
rock lay
split arms
left then right
leech like
just veins
so dark down under
getting bigger bolder
growing longer stronger
heave core
crust
earth
cause an upthrust
arriving at the surface of the earth
still below the stump
and always being the roots.

EVERYBODY'S DAY (NOT MINE)

— by Daniel I. Kumbon

Blessed by the timongos from above
the floodgates open up
to an influx of turas and wantoks.
They dart in and out of the shops
jamming the narrow alleys of Wabag
like stray mongrels.

Looks like the anxious parents and curious relatives
visiting an open day at High School.
Resembling the D'Day
of the allied troops, chasing the Swastika
in the Normandy Beach.

The hut, after all, gets filled during the 'meri singsing'.
They share jokes and laughter.
That's Enga.
Every fortnight they self invite to a pigkilling
and everyday an evening yarn in
somebody's yard.

Their heads droop in the lus wik
as if a labouring mother repents for her pregnancy.
Not sure how to face the pay clerk—
tambus and palingis are everywhere,
turas and wantoks cage you tightly.

The blessed ones, at last, go to the Malya Hostel
only to be drowned by the long necks.

MT. WILHELM

— by Godfrid Samgur Edipau

Mt Wilhelm,
you dwell in our heart.
You rule over our land:
Your head held high above others
like the bigman among the leaders.

Your neck and arms are decorated
with beads and shells of snow,
your body clad in bright tapa sheets of fog.
You dwell elegantly in our land,
O Mt Wilhelm.

You often hide yourself behind the clouds.
So, many of us haven't seen you in our own eyes.
But we all know you reign supreme in our heart
spreading your cool shadow over us all
in the great land of ours.

THE ACE

— by Joyce A. Kumbeli

they fly so high
they tend to forget their height
and their audiences
who watch
and listen
dumbfounded.

when time for counting comes
they pretend to care
and go preaching
from highway to byway
where most count their chickens
maybe ten too many.

when they have gained the numbers
they sit back and relax
they toast and smile
and wait impatiently
to begin their flights again.

THE DAY I WAS BORN

— by Joyce Kumbeli

the day I was born
it was drizzling
clouds were hanging low
dark clouds, that is
it was chilly outside
and my hair stood up
like pimples all over.

I cried and cooed
not because I was a new comer
not because I was hungry
I was not cold either
I don't know why I cried
but that's what I did
so does mama tell me.

nobody knew what to do
mama washed me
though I didn't need one
she wrapped me up
which didn't stop my cooing
she put me in a bilum
and sang me a lullabye.

mama still doesn't know
why I cried that day
the day I was born.

NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT-BIRD

— by Ben Nakin

The clock on the wall has struck twelve.
Just a fraction of a second to be added.
The shrill cry pierced the darkness.
Cries of "Pis off" with a stino
could be heard next door
with a quick sign of the cross
as an extra ingredient.

Doors slammed in disgust,
shutters drawn hastily down.
For this was the distinctive call
of the so-called spirit-bird
out to claim an innocent soul.
A victim of the social problems
of today's frustrations.

Another shrill to disturb the peace
and sweat beads brought forth
meant the time was at hand.
Who then could be the victim?
For the spirit-bird's prowls
surely draws blood and sorrow.
Only time will tell,
for at dawn the secrets are revealed.

Dawn breaks.
Mother is wailing,
Grandma has chopped off her fingers.
Father is cursing the day he brought forth a life
for the spirit-bird was on the prowl last night
and laid up stiff in bed.
Lies a victim
as a memo of spirit-bird's shrills.
Oh! Can't we just live our natural life in peace!



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S&S ADV

THE FIRST CONTACT AND JOURNEY TO TOWN

Review by
Kalyan Chatterjee

Literature is alive and well at the University of Papua New Guinea and this last year has brought in a fresh harvest; numerous contributions to the *Ondobondo* by known and unknown authors alike and two remarkable novels by Michael Mel and Toby Kagl*. Both are students at UPNG and both completed the novels in the Creative Writing courses.

Mel has qualified for a Bachelor's degree in Economics, a craze subject at UPNG, but Mel now wants to study Literature and Creative Writing for the writing of the novel seems to have brought out something in him. He has discovered his expressive ease and spontaneity, which seems to be the natural endowment of the youth in this country.

Mel's novel is titled *Kumdi Bagre*, the name of its boy hero whose memories of growing up in a (Western) highland village provide the substance of the novel. The novel ends where the boy hero made his beginning, his entry in a school in town, for that is how his life diverged from the tribe and the village. The theme of school boy hero, journeying to town, leaving the village behind, along with the theme of the first contact with the whiteman/pro prospector, missionary, or *Kiap*, which is the theme of Kagl's novel, are current themes in PNG literature. Between these two themes has grown the persistent mythology of the new colonial tension.

Within the journey-from-the-village-to-town theme, *Kumdi Bagre* stands for the school boy hero, who by the power earned by the colonist's science, will help the parent and the village in future, and turn the tables against the colonial authority and its unchallengeable power — again a familiar pattern of thought in PNG literature. At the end of the novel, the boy hero is going back to school after spending his holidays in the village. His father who has been released from

prison after six months, holds his hands tightly and says, "Bagre, be a good boy in school and one day you will pay back the hardship I faced against the police, warders, and *Kiaps*". And the boy answered "Dad!...one day I will do what you want me to do. It's only a matter of time" (p. 53). There may be an ambiguity here, a double-think even.

For it is not evident whether the dialogue is natural or realistic. There is no mention of the hardship suffered at the hands of the police in jail. On the other hand, jail has given Bagre senior a cleaner, Europeanised appearance. But he was put in jail in the first place for stealing a neighbouring enemy-clan's pig and sparking off, by this prankish act, a full-scale tribal war in which a number of people died. Indeed he seems to have quite a flair for getting into trouble and making it for others. The novel opens dramatically showing him settle an argument with his wife by hitting her on the head with a wooden post, causing her to bleed profusely. Mrs Bagre had earlier pulled off his headdress, an insult for a man, and thrown a cooking stone which missed him by inches. Bagre senior has to pay dearly for this assault — the Councillor sentencing him to pay fifty dollars and a pig to his wife's brothers to get her back from them. And thus moves on the narrative around pay-backs, pig-giving, quarrels and reconciliation, escapades like the pig stealing and a near rape, the retaliation by the aggrieved clan; the truthless cycle of existence to be broken by the linearity of the journey theme.

The novel, like its companion piece by Kagl, does not so much offer a conflict-reversal structure as we are familiar with in a western novel as a sequence of events in the manner of oral history. The question of an inner conflict, or symbolisation such as the journey pattern coming to reflect an inward journey to resolve the problem in which life is caught, imaginative rendering of scene and character, and related means of putting together a plot and an action may not be all that evident in such youthful ventures. But there is no doubt that there is evaluation; there is an attempt to come to terms with history and

envision life in an order and scheme. It is essentially an act of understanding and making meaning of his life that turns the author to paralleling the narrative to an autobiographical stance. The sequel that Mel is writing to this novel is supposed to lead us through the young hero's school life and subsequent growing up.

The second novel, *Kallan* by Toby Waim Kagl is both longer and more elaborate in scenery, landscape, people, and events; its titular hero is more central in the narrative; it is in the form of oral history, especially in the latter part. It includes descriptions of real historical personages like the Leahy brothers and Catholic missionaries like Brother Eugene, named here as Br. Frank, killed by hostile tribesmen. How much of the fictionalisation of real historical events is due to the demands of fiction and how much of it owes to oral history may be difficult to establish, may even be merely academic, because facts and fiction exist side by side in many PNG novels without any mutual change of relationship. The philosophy of fiction is different in PNG from that in the West. It is more a document than a dialectic.

The first part of the novel is a description of customary life in the village in the "time before". And the description is very vivid, invoking the sense powerfully. It starts skilfully with a village elder, Manda, and his diseased battered body struggling against the hardships of life and nature. *Kallan*, the eighteen year boy hero, is sent on errands to a medicine man, and moving around his adventures and amorous interests, the novel takes the form of a picaresque. Manda dies nevertheless, in spite of the treatment by the much-respected medicine man, and the next highpoint of the narrative shifts to a young wife in the family. She is suspected to be a witch responsible for Manda's death, being found to be out of her cottage late at night. The suspicion is immediately put to action: the woman is mercilessly killed and then burned along with all her belongings in the cottage, with her husband taking part in this action. There is then the inevitable cycle of events, preparation for possible retaliation by the slain woman's tribesmen, although that never

happens. The narrative also weaves around the central character Kallan's friends and lovers, giving the story the dimension of personal interests and proving the existence and knowledge of love and courtship in highland social life. The narrative climaxes, in an exterior, rather than interior, fashion, with the historical sighting of a whiteman, namely the Catholic missionary, who is, at first believed to be a dead ancestor, his skin having been cleansed white after death. His coming and martyrdom is a turning point — history is now going to be different, but the novel does afford a lingering look behind.

This novel, a full 65 quarto pages long, has many lively points and very readable; it cannot be entirely dismissed as an oral legend which could easily be heard related by an elder. There is a point of view in the novel, although concealed, and subtle signals as to how the narrative is to be interpreted. For example, after Mambulo was killed and burned by her husband and other clansmen for suspected witchery, although there is no more convincing proof than the fact that she is found to have left the house for a while at midnight, her qualities as a hard-worker and good wife are described. She never gave cause to her husband. In a shrewd detachment, the novelist lays bare the killers' state of the mind as the cause: "Mambulo was a witch — yes a real witch. The people's suspicion about her strange behaviour had been confirmed. She had left her house in the middle of the night like this when everybody else was supposed to be asleep and had gone to plunder and kill innocent people. Fear gripped them" (p. 67). Then comes the description of the brutal killing, led by her own husband and the painful death. The irony is concealed, but perceptible.

Kagl's pen also evokes with all its starkness the ruthlessly Darwinian universe of the war ethos that governed the tribe. The village fearing reprisal from Mambulo's kinsmen braces itself for war, the all too familiar climax in the ceaseless cycle of inter-tribal friction, such as the one described in Mel's novel. Kagl's further points out the forest-fire aspect of these conflicts:

When one tribe challenged another because of a rape, theft of a pig or very humiliating insult, they were putting the strength and resources of the whole tribe, their collective effort, to the test. If one tribe lost, it would call on its allies to come to its rescue. The winning tribe, to further contain any reprisal, would do like-wise. So, what was an argument or a war between two rival tribes very soon became warfare for a whole section of the region. It is inconceivable to think of all the damage that could be done in such a situation.

Another interesting historical insight that we get from this novel has been pointed out in Strathern's Introduction. This is about the killing of Brother Frank. While Kagl's story about the missionary's death is essentially the same as in the life story of the American missionary "from Kagl's account we learn much more about what these people (Barengigle/tribesmen) were actually thinking at the time and why the Barengigle men tried to save the Brother's life with the best means available to them" (p. 1), but the missionary misunderstood the offers of help. It may be pointed out here that the tribal war described in Mel's novel is also a true incident.

In these two novels, as in many other novels and plays, history and fiction converge. Both the novels are biographical in structure, but there are many personal sketches in *Kallan* to fill it out as a novel. There may be a bit too much packing of incidents and speeches, as particularly in *Kallan*; a little more condensing and focussing on the central character may have given the novel a tighter unity and an inner form. The authors in fact aim at the structure of the epic rather than of the modern character and plot based novel, the *is-nes* of external reality being the focal point rather than a fictional interiority. Characters in such novels tend to be opaque and the significance of the incidents as structural combinations may not be apparent readily. But it is within the broader thematic patterns mentioned above that the novels make their meaning. In their turn each novel advances the theme and enriches the pattern waiting for another shaping

hand to take up its cue. ☛

*Two Highland Novels from Papua New Guinea. By Michael Yake Mel and Toby Wiam Kagl.

Introducing by Andrew Strathern IPNGS, Port Moresby, 1984.

THE DRAMA AND ARTS SOCIETY

Interview by
Bernard Minol

The one person who has left a great impact on PNG drama history is Mr Peter Trist. In the pages that follow, Peter Trist tells about his intimate involvement in the beginning of drama at the University of Papua New Guinea. This interview was the result of a yarn I had with Peter in his NBC Port Moresby office in early 1975. I have tried to be as faithful to the yarn as possible.

Question: Peter, I understand you initiated the Arts and Drama Society. Could you briefly give an account of how the Society started and the direction it took?

Answer: The Creative Arts Society was formed through a desire of a group of University students at the Administrative College. This was before the University complex at Waigani was completed and the students were living at the Administrative College in 1967. I approached some of the students to see if we could form some sort of a society which could involve all the people interested in drama in order to present plays to entertain and to instruct the students and also to attract some town people to come out to Waigani and have a look at some drama.

The students were concerned at that stage because the University was quite separate from the local community. It was physically isolated. The road was unsealed and very muddy and it was quite a long distance from town. There was no suburban settlement around the

University as we know it today. It was a very isolated place. People used to refer to it rather contemptuously as a school in the swamps in those days. So the students were concerned that they were cut off from the community. They weren't doing enough to involve the people of Port Moresby and they felt that through drama they would perhaps reach the community and perform some sort of community entertainment.

There was a great shortage of PNG plays as such, so the first programme we presented at the Administrative College consisted of quite a strange mixture of plays. One was a one-act play, a version of a Greek myth, the second was a scene from Bernard Shaw's play, *Saint Joan of Arc*. The audience sat through both of these with a deal of interest but somewhat uncomfortable through the strangeness of the language and the situations that were presented. Finally the third play of the evening brought the audience to a great deal of excitement and understanding. This play was the Pidgin play that was presented in Port Moresby to an audience of expatriates, Papua New Guineans from all over the country and people from other parts of the Pacific. This was Leo Hannet's **Rod Bilong Kago** which was directed by Leo himself and Leo was also in the cast. The effect of this play on the audience was absolutely amazing. There was a tremendous excitement and life in the audience at witnessing this rather simple play of Leo's. But it made a great impact because it was written in a language that people understood. There was a great deal of excitement.

After this initial production the students became very enthusiastic to do some more plays so we decided to do an African play by Christina Aidoo, *A Nigerian girl*. This play was called **Dilemma of a Ghost**, and it was about a conflict a young University graduate had with his village people when he returned home with a sophisticated American Negro wife and, about the problems this girl had fitting into the traditional community at home. It was quite an interesting variation on the common Papua New Guinea dilemma where someone from the village has to fit into an urban situation. This was quite

the reverse. It was a sophisticated American Negro girl trying; instead of adjusting to the urban situation, she was going to the village.

Later on when we moved up to the University, the Drama and Arts continued. Among the productions that I remember that we did were **The Good Woman of Konedobu** by Rabbie Namaliu. Rabbie was a student at the University at that stage. This again was a Pidgin Play and it was produced by Kumalau Tawali. Kumalau had been involved in the Drama and Arts Society as had people like Ekeroma Age, John Waiko, Leo Hannet. **The Good Woman of Konedobu** was another sensational success. We played it to an audience of more than 600 I think, packed into the Forum. The audience was a cross section of the community as it was at that stage and most of the vocal and enthusiastic members of the audience were the labourers and gardeners from the University. They roared in delight at comic situations about the role of the prostitute and her unwilling customer at the Kone Tavern which was a situation most people in the audience recognised. I don't mean the situation of the prostitute necessarily but the Kone Tavern situation and the force of the play. That was a very successful production. Then we did John Waiko's, **The Unexpected Hawk**, a play about the conflict of government on the traditional village society in the thirties or forties based on an actual incident in the Northern District. This play had an interesting side line in that the Australian Patrol Officer was played by a Papua New Guinean actor. This actor was made up to disguise the fact that he was a brown skinned man and he played a very convincing Aussie Patrol Officer with a very thick Australian accent. This was considered a very novel idea and shows that it doesn't matter what nationality an actor is as long as he is a good actor, he can play anybody.

Another play that was performed was **The Ungrateful Daughter** by Leo Hannet, a political parable studying the conflict of the Australian administration or should I say the Canberra administration at that stage on PNG policies. It was subtitled, *A Political Parable*. It included a very

harsh caricature of the then Minister for Territories, Mr. Charlie Barnes, in the part of the uncle. Leo saw the Australian attitude in those days as being very paternalistic and patronising.

This play was a comedy but was also rather bitter comedy reflecting the author's attitudes. One interesting comment after this play came from the wife of a very senior administration official to Kumalau Tawali who played the part of the haus boi and said in an apologetic voice, "We are not all like the white people in the play." She evidently felt guilt stricken or conscience stricken at the white characters in the play and felt it necessary to apologise for them.

Another play that we successfully did was **Scattered By The Wind**, by Russell Soaba. This play was performed in the new Outdoor Theatre which the Drama and Arts Society built or had built with the University's assistance. It was the Drama and Arts Society's initiative that the former Vice Chancellor, Dr. Gunther agreed to allow the University to fund and build an Outdoor Theatre. This was one legacy of the Drama and Arts Society which will remain on campus.

Other plays that were done were Bernard Narakobi's very sensitive and very deeply felt play, **Lait Bilong San na Tait Bilong Si**, and Arthur Jawodimbari's dramatic adaptation of a legend from the Northern District called, **The Sun**. Both these plays were performed at the Outdoor Theatre. **Death of A Muruk** by Bernard Narakobi was performed at the Outdoor Theatre at this time. (I am wondering whether Peter's reference to **Liat Bilong San Na Tait bilong Si** was in fact a slip of the tongue).

The involvement of the student body as a whole in Drama and Arts was quite enthusiastic at first but because of other pressures and commitments, only a very small group, a nucleus of students remained closely involved with the Drama and Arts Society. There were outstanding personalities such as Leo, John Waiko, Kumalau Tawali, Elijah Titus, Meg Taylor — people like that who remained active in the Drama and

Arts Society. But the general student body after the first enthusiasm found other commitments more attractive. I personally felt that the Drama and Arts Society as such now is not functioning on campus anymore. I felt this is a unfortunate thing. The facilities are there—the Outdoor Theatre is there, the Forum is there. Both these places are ideal for production of PNG plays or any sort of plays I have done.

Personal additional information: Peter used to hold previewed performances in his E flat on Fifth Street to which quite a number of students and staff were invited.

Other personalities very much involved in the later part of Drama and Arts Society were Apisai Enos, Arthur Jawodimbari and to some extent John Kasaipwalova and Barth Philemon. The PNG Arts Festival was in fact a descendant of the Drama and Arts Society of UPNG.

Peter took his dramatic talents with him to NBC where he has produced radio plays and thereby continues to encourage young Papua New Guinea playwrights. In his leisure moments he has directed and produced plays at Waigani Arts Centre and he himself played roles in a number of these productions. From time to time Peter has been invited to assist in National Theatre Company Productions. Peter has been a member of the Board of Governors of the National Theatre Company since its inception.

Peter Trist has been and continues to be a central figure in PNG drama. In more recent years Peter has been passing his skills to Papua New Guineans in the National Broadcasting Commission.

Drama is in Peter's blood and therefore wherever he is, one will always find some form of drama or theatre activity. ☘



THE MYSTERY SMUGGLERS

Review by J. Sukwianomb

Countries of the Third World have to suffer multiple development problems. The hard cash and expertise that these countries need must come from outside — usually from the more developed ex-colonist nations of Europe and North America. In order to obtain the money and foreign experts required, important characteristics of nominal independence must be foregone because of undue outside interference in political, economic, social and cultural processes in the developing countries concerned.

The **Mystery Smugglers** by Mwangi Ruheni takes place in Nairobi, London, and Johannesburg. Here, internationally reputed smugglers work under the trade name of Westbrook Enterprises, based in England with Delta Medicines and Cosmetics, in Belgium, and the South African Atomic Authority, S.A.A.R.A., in South Africa.

The story begins when the central character Michael Magana is sent to England to read for his O—level in Holland Park School. This is after Michael's father realized that Michael had no chance of continuing his schooling at home because he failed his Kenya African Primary Examinations, KAPE.

In England, Michael abandons school to become an errand boy for the international smuggling company of Westbrook Enterprises. His first assignment is to Belgium to pick up three million dollars worth of uranium to take to Nairobi via London. From Nairobi, an agent of S.A.A.H.A., an Israeli called John Shapiro, is to meet with Michael who then organises the shipment of the valuable stone to South Africa's atomic warhead manufacturing plants.

The height of the novel comes during the events in Nairobi where Michael Magana bows down rather overtly to his natural instinct of curiosity and opens the box containing the valuable stone. Through communication with his brother, a smart Physics student at the University of Nairobi, he finds the actual name of this white stone — uranium.

Radio-active leakage had claimed one life, a Masaai, who was a co-worker of Michael's. The Masaai

had been prospecting for what he thought was lead in Lunga on the Southern Kenya Coast.

The young Masaai, called Lemomo, died of intensive radioactive leakage from the uranium confirmed by the post-mortem findings of Dr. Kembo and Dr. Gumba. Kahiu Kimotho, Kenyan Police Superintendent, immediately suspects Michael Magana who had forgotten to replace the uranium stone into its box and had hidden it under a pillow used by Daniel Lemomo. Very strong radiation had killed Daniel.

When Solomon Gitonga, a brilliant student of Physics at the University of Nairobi, brother to Michael Magana, comes to know about the uranium racket in the city, he quickly informs his college Physics Professor, Frank Winter. Michael is arrested and the uranium retrieved by the state with help from the police and Professor Winter. The Physics Department of the University of Nairobi, through Professor Winter, becomes the official state custodian of this valuable stone.

But it doesn't last long. The state wants to use the metal to develop electricity powered by nuclear energy. But in order to successfully set up this project, some foreign expertise has to be sought. One, Dr. Dan Libman of the Delta Medicines and Cosmetics of Belgium, an official agent for Westbrook Enterprises in mainland Europe, is contracted to assist Professor Winter of the University of Nairobi. Solomon Gitonga is to be national assistant to the project.

Dr. Dan Libman and Professor Frank Winter become colleagues. Dr. Libman's sole purpose is to retrieve the uranium which had been lost during transit to Nairobi. As part of an international syndicate, he solicits and bribes Professor Winter into accepting a job in the South African Atomic Authority. But Michael Magana, Solomon Gitonga, and Superintendent Kahiu Kimotho outplay the international syndicate by taking the first opportunity to smuggle the mineral out of the University of Nairobi's Physics Laboratory, a day before Professor Winter and Dr. Libman had planned to smuggle the mineral to South Africa.

From this moving episode I learnt one lesson in the **Mystery Smugglers**: We should not rely on

foreign academics (experts) because they can easily abort national initiatives. This is to do with research and experiments in the Universities and similar organisations set up to investigate and organize viable national projects. Professor Winter is a typical example of a foreign academic whose interest is in his personal ambitions rather than in the ambitions of his resident country.

Another point to make is that the book is enjoyable, refreshing, and makes a point without falling into the over-use of revolutionary slogans. The present day young generation of readers which prefers to read a book which is exciting, somewhat romantic and has some mystery will certainly enjoy the **Mystery Smugglers**. ♣

The Mystery Smugglers by Mwangi Ruheni, Spear Books, Nairobi, 1975.

PACIFIC WRITERS MEETING HELD IN SUVA, FIJI

Report by Regis Stella

The Pacific Writers meeting was held from Monday, 5th October to Friday, 12th October, 1984, as part of Pacific Week, held annually by the University of the South Pacific where Pacific Island cultures, traditions, and arts are honoured.

Delegates to the Pacific Writers meeting came from many South Pacific Island countries: New Zealand (Maori), Australia (Aborigine), Tonga, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Western Samoa, Kiribati, Fiji, Hawaii and Papua New Guinea.

The delegates were Writers and Poets, Publishers, Editors and Curriculum Development Officers. The meeting was informal and consisted of panel discussions on topics in the field of writing.

The Guest Speaker, Mr. Raymond Pillai, was a Fijian short story writer and author of a collection of short stories, "The Celebration". Mr. Pillai highlighted the fact that Fiji creative writing is dominated by the elites. He stated that he wanted to see writing focus on a cross section of issues by creative writers in all sectors of the community from the villagers to the elites.

Professor Albert Wendt, Chairman of the Organising Committee, introduced all the overseas participants to the over fifty people in the audience who gathered to hear the proceedings.

The first day's topic was, "State of Writing and Publishing in our Countries". Here I stated that Papua New Guinea has two major problems confronting it: one, the lack of publishing outlets and two, the absence of a copyright law to protect all writers' works. These two problems are also problems confronting other South Pacific countries except Australia and New Zealand. The participants at the meeting decided to put pressure on our respective governments to institute such a law in the interest of Writers, Musicians, etc. I also proposed the possibility of forming a Pacific Writers' Union similar to the African Writers' and the Caribbean Writers' Union. This was welcomed by all the delegates.

The afternoon session was a public recital of delegate's works.

On Tuesday, the topic, "Oral literature and vernaculars", was discussed by a panel of writers: Pesi Fanua, Tunumafano Apelu, Selwyn Muni, Ruby Kawena Johnson, and Tevita Nawadra. I was included on the panel which touched on the topic, "Poetry in the Pacific". Other panelists included Imaikalani Kalanele, Jolly Sipolo, Ruperaki Petaia, Nemanu Mati, and Selwyn Hughes.

I touched briefly on Poetry in PNG, what our Poets are doing, and how long the Government can tolerate them. Another topic was discussed later in the afternoon, "Prose in the Pacific", with panelists: Frederick Webb, Leialoha Perkins, Leonard Garae, Raymond Pillai and Rajieli Racule.

On the third day we talked to different classes at the University about the state of creative writing in our respective countries.

Thursday, the fourth day of the meeting, we talked on the following issues: (1) Drama in the Pacific (2) Television and film.

During the afternoon we talked to high school students from Suva High School.

On Friday, the meeting was an all female affair during the morning session. The topic, "Woman's Writing in the Pacific", was discussed by a group of women writers. Included in the panelists were Jolly Sipolo, Ruby Kawena

Johnson, Leialoha Perkins, Marjorie Crocombe, Konai Thaman and Rajieli Racule.

The final session in the afternoon was on Editing, Publishing and Small Magazines. A group of Editors and Publishers talked. On the same day we drafted a resolution which was unanimously passed. The resolution states: We the delegates of the Pacific Writers Meeting, 1984, resolve to (1) Advise all educational authorities in the Pacific Islands and those outside the Islands of the great increase in the volume and quality of writing by Pacific Island authors. (2) To request these authorities to make full use of those writings to encourage Pacific Writers and to give students the benefit of their insights and perspective. (3) Request that this resolution be brought to the attention of those concerned.

The Writers who participated were again invited to attend a course on Pacific literature in January, 1985.

Thus ended the Pacific Writers Meeting, held in Suva, Fiji, October, 1984. ♣

BA ORO

Review by William B. Ferea

In preparation for the 4th South Pacific Arts Festival in Noumea in December 1984 (which was cancelled due to the Kanak political turmoil) the National Theatre Company created **BA ORO**. This dance-opera, performed at the University Open Air Theatre was based on the Binandere traditional dances and the activities of the Baigona Taro Cult of the Oro Province which had occurred in the 1870's. The Director of the dance-opera Rodney Kove (a Binandere himself) attempted in this creation to depict events that constitute the Baigona Taro Cult. Implicitly, he tried also to reveal the philosophy underlying this important cultural phenomenon, that which presupposes the Spirit-Man relationship. Made realistic by the traditional costumes and the excellent stage lighting, Kove allowed Scene 1 of Act 1 to take the form of a dramatic traditional funeral procession. **Kosiwas**, the prophetess and the main character in **BA ORO** was featured

painfully descending from her house and thereby cursed to death by the voice of an ancestral spirit (represented by a prelude narrator from back stage). In the end of an unsuccessful effort to bring her back to consciousness, **Kosiwas** agonisingly promised her grieved husband and son that she would return from the immortal world with taro for them. Such would eventuate, according to **Kosiwas**, only if people (with the exception of her husband) abstain from the usual long periods of mourning and instead continue on with their daily activities of life. This meant that they should even dance and be happy despite her recent death.

Scene II of Act I, as anticipated, featured **Kosiwas'** journey back to the mortal world to deliver the taro she promised, a phenomenon so possible in Melanesian world-view. The climax of this delivery however consists of the necessary rituals of protection and purification prior to communicating with the spirit of the dead. For this matter it was **Kosiwas** who had ordinarily permeated the non-empirical to the empirical world. Though she took the form of a **Mortal Being** her purity as a spirit remains intact. The taro was delivered.

Scene I of Act II was the feasting of **Akoupirigari** or the re-introduction of the widower (**Kosiwas'** husband) and the welcoming of taro from the underworld. Whilst the performance of **ORO VIGANI** and **GASITWO** dances may manifest this occasion, a more symbolic gesture was the eating of the delivered taro from the immortal world. The widower's act of eating the taro only makes himself as an individual satisfied in experiencing the fulfilment of his wife's (**Kosiwas'**) promise, but he as representative of the Binandere mortal world is encountering the obligation of spirits to aid their living counterparts in their daily lives. Such is what has prompted one to declare the **BA ORO** is a manifestation of the Melanesian cosmological thinking, a fact the Melanesians of New Caledonia could have assimilated as a cultural reappraisal had the festival eventuated. More of such dance-operas should be created by our theatre groups. ^

Contributors

Chatterjee, Kalyan: from Santiniketan, Bengal, India. Lecturer in Literature at U.P.N.G.

Edipau, Godfrid Samgar: from Aitape, West Sepik, graduated from Goroka Teachers College in 1982, currently teaches at Rosary High School. This is his first publication.

Job, John: From the Highlands of P.N.G. His first publication appeared in Ondobondo 4, Mid 1984.

Kadiba, John: From Mailu, Central Province. Established writer of short stories and his first poems appeared on Ondobondo 5.

Kouza, Loujaya M.: From Lae. Popular writer currently studying music at the National Arts School.

Kumbon, Daniel I.: From Enga Province where he was attached to the Provincial Media Unit. Currently a student of Media Studies at U.P.N.G.

Minol, Bernard: From Manus Province. A member of the Language and Literature Staff at U.P.N.G. Currently working on a Doctorate Degree from the University of Queensland.

Mokno, Franz: From Jimi, Western Highlands. A journalist by profession, this is his first publication of creative writing.

Nakin, Ben: From Eastern Highlands. Currently teaching in the North Solomons High School. His poems have appeared in the **Times** and **New Nation** and in 1982 a collection of his poems was published under the title, **POEMS**.

Ngwele, Sampson D.: From Vanuatu. Law Degree student at U.P.N.G. Active writer and organizer of writers.

Okona, Rex: From Morobe. Published writer of fiction. Currently a Research Officer at the Institute of P.N.G. Studies.

Stella, Regis: From North Solomons. Active in the P.N.G. Writers Union. His poems have been published in **Mana** and **Ondobondo**.


Steven, Lassia: From New Ireland. Currently completing a Diploma in Library Studies. This is her first publication.

Sukwalanomb, Joseph: From Abunti, East Sepik. Currently teaches in the Education Faculty of U.P.N.G. His Review has appeared in Ondobondo 4.

Wabiria, Andreas Hara: From Koroba, Southern Highlands. Third year student in Literature and Creative Writing at U.P.N.G. Currently he is working on an oral Epic.

Yarupaa, Shem: From Milne Bay. His creative writing story appeared in Ondobondo 5.

Kumbell, Joyce: From Milne Bay. Established writer of plays and poems.



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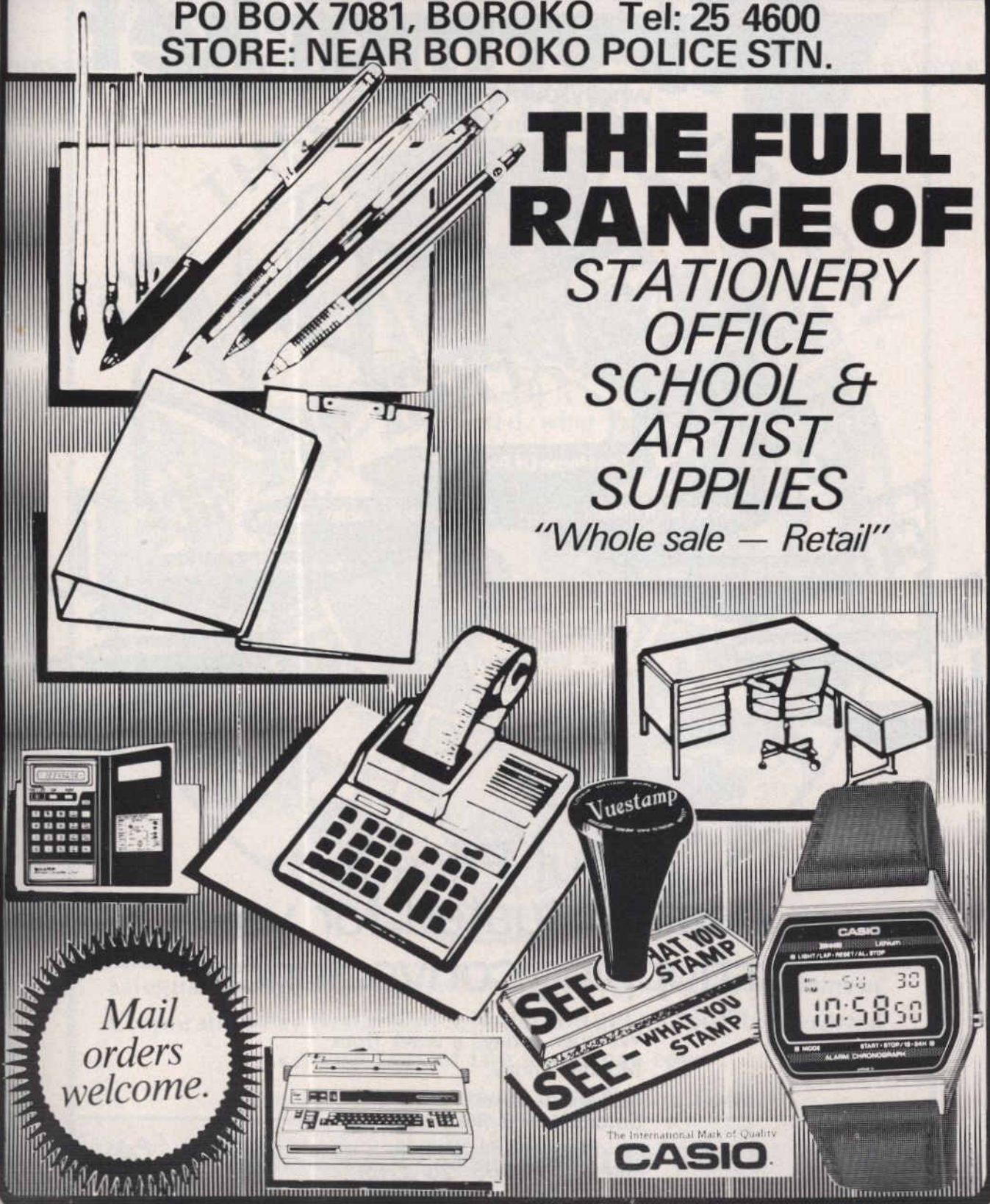
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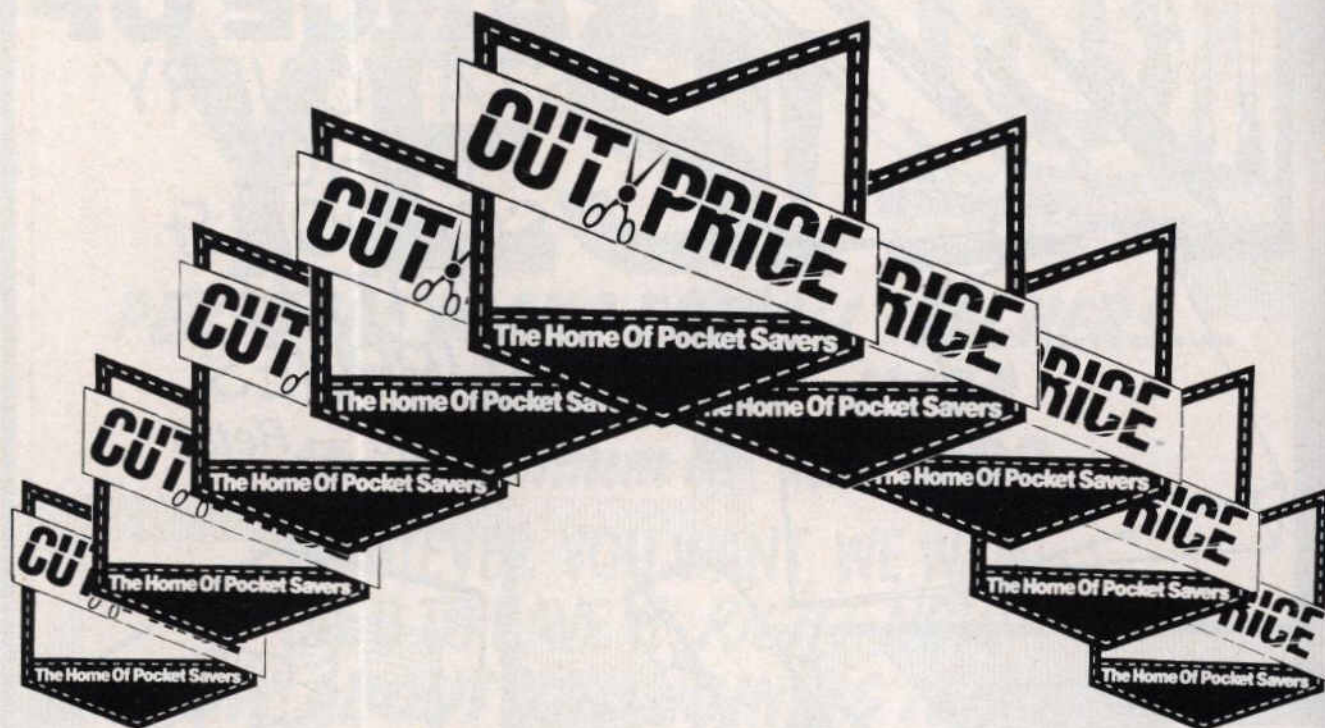


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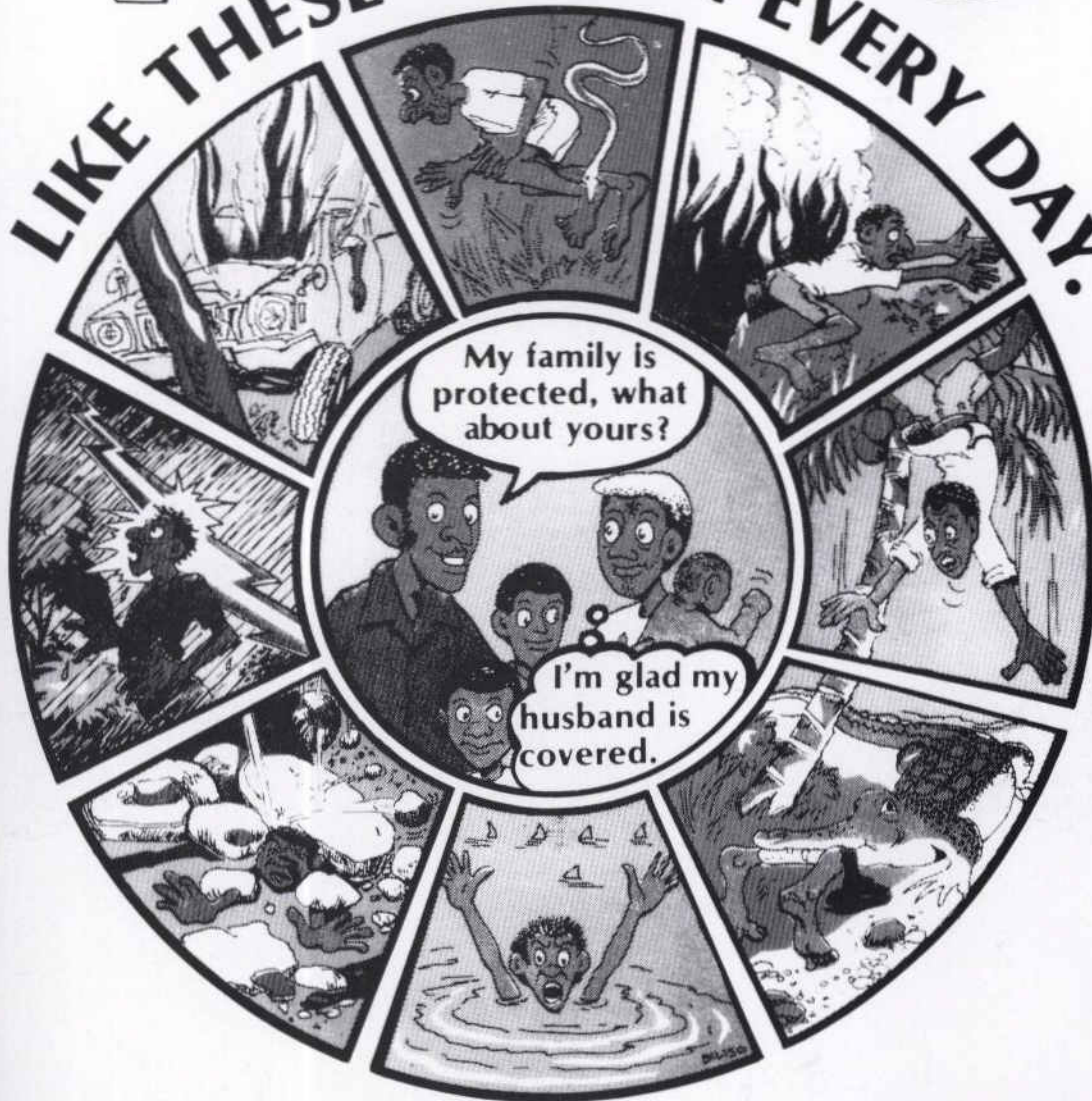
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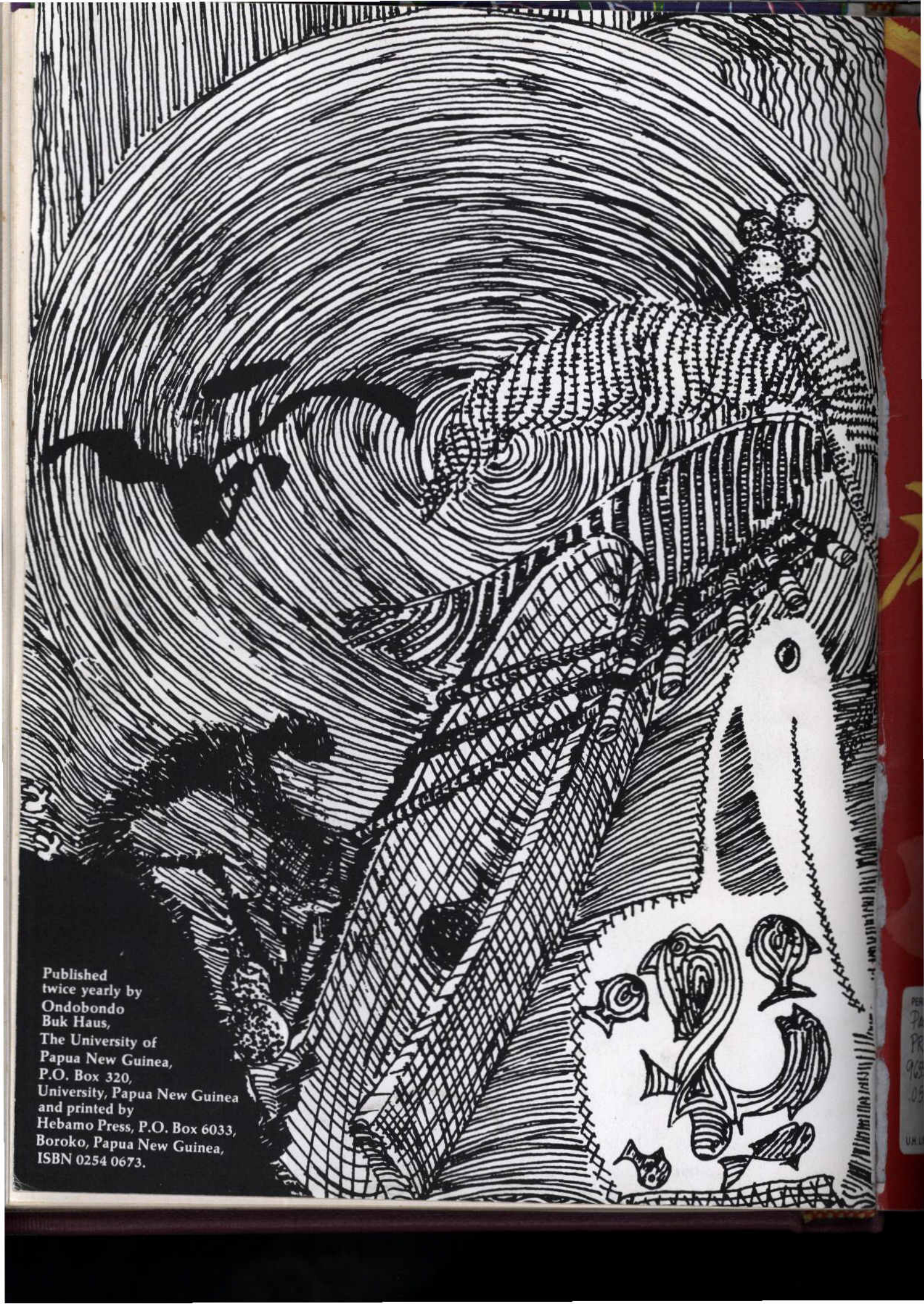
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The University of
Papua New Guinea,
P.O. Box 320,
University, Papua New Guinea
and printed by
Hebamo Press, P.O. Box 6033,
Boroko, Papua New Guinea,
ISBN 0254 0673.