

NEW GUINEA RESEARCH UNIT BULLETIN

Number 10

THE SILANGA RESETTLEMENT PROJECT

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February 1966

Published by the New Guinea Research Unit,
Australian National University,
G.P.O. Box 4, Canberra, A.C.T.

and

P.O. Box 779, Port Moresby, Papua-New Guinea

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INTRODUCTION

From 15 October to 27 November 1964, I was at Silanga in Central Nakanai, New Britain, to observe the organization of a resettlement, the history of which was similar to the resettlement of the Papuan Kuni people at Bakoiudu which I studied intensively for eighteen months between July 1963 and April 1965 under the auspices of the Australian National University. The remarkable similarity between the two resettlements had been pointed out to me by Mr Ken Brown, Assistant District Officer, Central District, who had been associated with both. The purpose of my visit to Silanga was not to describe or analyze the situation there, but to provide a broader comparative background against which I might more profitably channel my Kuni research.

This paper attempts no more than to give as complete an account of the origin and present state of the Silanga resettlement as I could obtain during my brief stay there. Considering the shortness of the time spent at Silanga and the language obstacle,¹ the information presented here is conditional and tentative. Many points may later be modified or disproved, and it is hoped that this paper may prompt somebody else to undertake a full study of Silanga, which it undoubtedly deserves.

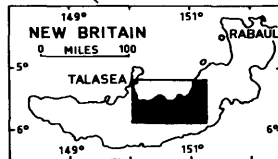
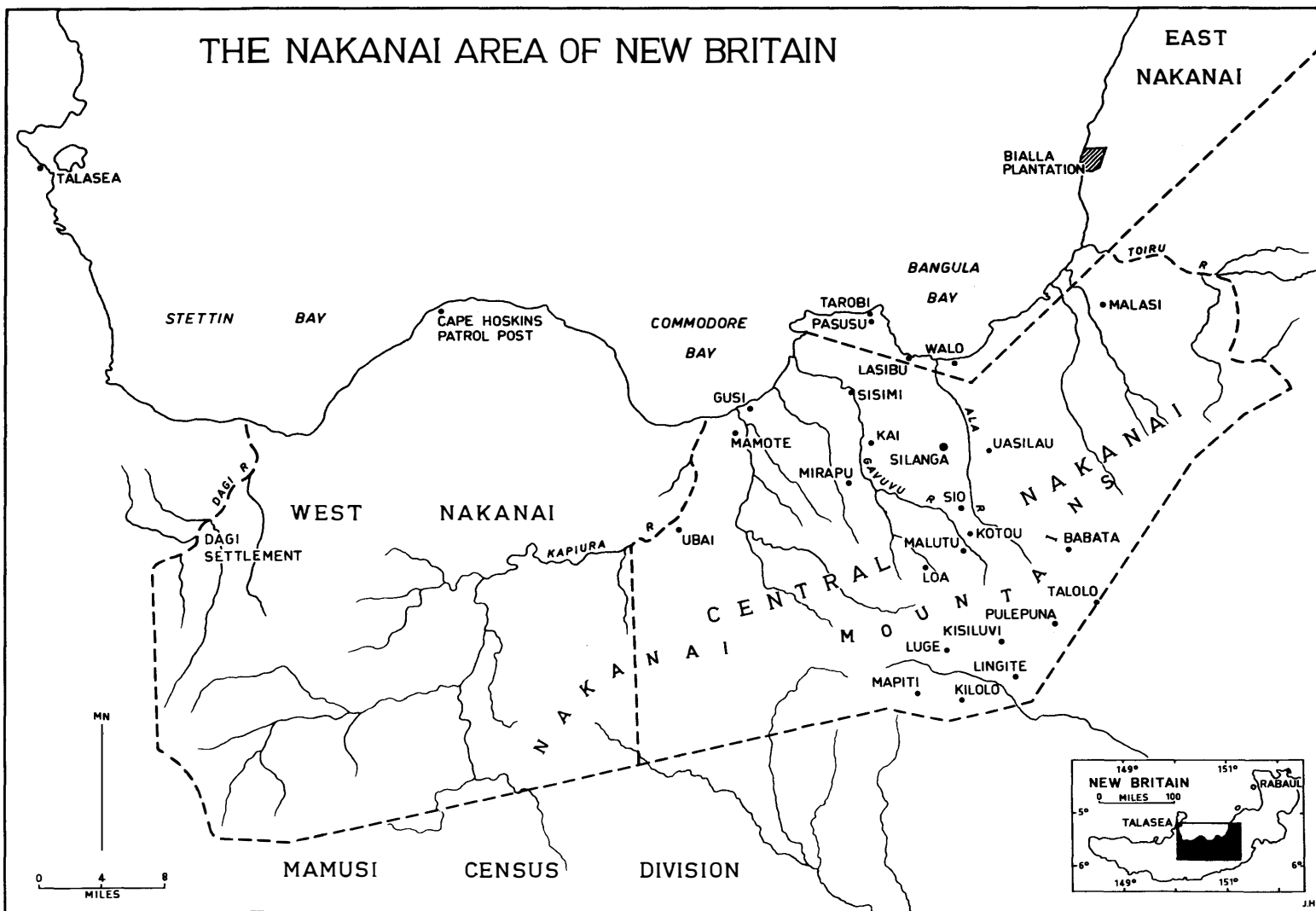
It is a pleasure to acknowledge the generous hospitality, unfailing co-operation and sustained interest of Father F.X. Wagner during my stay at Silanga. My thanks are also due to Mr Foldi, then District Commissioner, Mr E. Hicks, District Officer, Frank Liebfried, Patrol Officer and residents at the Cape Hoskins Patrol Post for their co-operation and numerous kindnesses preliminary to my going to Silanga. To the people of Silanga as a whole, to their warmth and open-heartedness, goes whatever merit this paper has. While my gratitude extends to all, it focuses in particular on John Maneke, the head of the resettlement and a personal friend who, together with the Tolai school-teachers To Luana and To Kamuk, proved an indefatigable interpreter and staunch helper. Last but not least,

1

Although pidgin-English is used by all three language groups at Silanga, it is unsatisfactory for thorough investigation.

my special thanks go to the Sisters at Silanga who know themselves the extent of my indebtedness to them. My thanks are also due to Dr R. Crocombe, Dr Ann Chowning, and Messrs Hans Zeick and R. Evans who read the draft of the paper and commented on it; also to Mrs Nan Watkins for typing the paper and making valuable suggestions.

THE NAKANAI AREA OF NEW BRITAIN



Chapter 1

BEFORE RESETTLEMENT

The area with which this paper is concerned lies within the Central Nakanai census subdivision, Talasea sub-district, West New Britain. With the exception of a forested coastal plain,¹ interspersed with mangrove swamps to the north, varying in width from two to ten miles and stretching from Walo to the Kapiura, the area is covered by the rugged forest-clad Nakanai mountains. To the east the area is bounded by the East Nakanai census subdivision; to the south by the Manang and Mamusi census subdivisions; and to the west by the Kapiura river and the West Nakanai census subdivision. The waters of Bangula Bay are its norther boundary.

There have been no controlled weather recordings in the area, but annual rainfall has been estimated as 180-200 points, the wettest period being that of the north-west monsoon (December-April). The south-east monsoon (June-October), blowing from the south coast over the central ranges deposits its moisture on the leeward side of the mountains. Nevertheless, even during this drier period, convectional afternoon rains are the rule. The north-west monsoon disrupts communications all along the north coast of New Britain. This does not directly affect the Central Nakanai census subdivision, since it has neither airstrip nor

1

For a general account of the coastal Nakanai, see Hees (1915-16). In writings on the area the term Nakanai has been used interchangeably and confusedly to denote either a census division, a geographical area or a language group. In the present context Central Nakanai refers to the census division of that name, including all language groups contained in it. Nakanai is used to denote the geographical area embracing the East, Central and West Nakanai census divisions except when it is used with reference to the Silanga resettlement when it is used with linguistic connotations to refer to the Ouka-Loso (Nakanai dialect) speakers as opposed to the Mamusi and Wase speakers at the resettlement.

wharf,¹ but it is relevant to the economic development now taking place in the area, primarily because of the settlement schemes discussed in this paper.

The Central Nakanai cannot be isolated from the economic development projected for the north-west coast of New Britain, partly because of land shortage in the Gazelle Peninsula and the relatively low population density and untapped agricultural potential of coastal Nakanai, and partly because the Nakanai themselves are anxious to participate in a cash economy.² However, the spontaneous developmental schemes in Central Nakanai³ may be distinguished from those in west and east Nakanai which, like the Dagi River Settlement, have been originated and sponsored by government.

The 3,600-odd inhabitants of the Central Nakanai do not form part of one linguistic or tribal group.⁴ Indeed, to speak of a tribal unit in this setting is inappropriate for independent villages seem to have been autonomous political and social units, with only tenuous economic and social relations with other villages in their immediate vicinity. These links decreased in proportion to distance. Fighting occurred between and within such villages, women and pigs being the main causes. The people speak of clusters of huts (hamlets) separated by small, often nominal stretches of bush, whose members formed a relatively compact socio-economic

1

But there are anchorages at Walo and Lasibu serving the Uasilau and Silanga settlements respectively.

2

Proposals for developing the Nakanai area are detailed in McIntyre, Spinks, Gray and Langton (1964).

3

There are two major and two minor projects in Central Nakanai, all spontaneous: 1. the Silanga resettlement (pop. 1,200); 2. the Uasilau cacao project (pop. 770); 3. the Malasi cacao project (pop. 440); and 4. the Mamote cacao project (pop. 250). See map. Patrol Report 4/58-9: Central Nakanai.

4

Throughout this paper references to the 'Central Nakanai' relate specifically to the mountain people who later became involved in resettlement; that is, those living on the foothills or within the Nakanai ranges, at altitudes varying from 1,500' to 6,000', and not to the Nakanai living in the plains and coastal areas. (The importance of this distinction was pointed out to me by Dr Ann Chowning.) Three distinct linguistic groups are involved and there is no doubt more fundamental cultural diversity than my generalized and tentative account suggests. What generalizations I have made, however, did seem to apply to all three groups.

unit which I have referred to as the village. The number and location of such villages in the past is difficult to gauge. The people are shifting swidden horticulturalists, and hamlets if not the wider village unit, were constantly on the move as gardening needs changed. Besides, villages split and fused according to the fluctuations of warfare.

Nor can the linguistic trait be taken as a basis of unification in Central Nakanai. There are at least three major linguistic groups, with numerous dialectical variants. Despite this, in pre-contact days and even now to some extent, the people do not identify themselves as members of one linguistic group as opposed to another. Kinship and physical proximity were the bases of solidarity and these were usually contained within the confines of the village. The main linguistic groups are those found in the Silanga settlement: Ouka-Loso (spoken by the group collectively referred to as Nakanai); Sa spoken by those collectively known as the Mamusi; and the Wase speakers.¹

Nakanai was not contacted by Europeans until 1877-8, when Wilfred Powell, a businessman-explorer, visited north-west New Britain.² Since 1840 trading vessels had been calling frequently though irregularly at New Britain, mainly in the area of Blanche Bay and the coastal Nakanai through their trade in trochus shell with the Tolai had probably heard of and possibly seen Europeans. Even these transitory and tenuous contacts did not include the mountain dwellers.

In 1896-7 the missionary Father Rascher accompanied Dr Habl on an expedition in Nakanai, investigating the effects of a smallpox

1

Allen and Hurd (1963) refer to three languages in Central Nakanai: Nakanai, Kakuna and Ata (corresponding to what I have termed Ouka, Sa and Wase), but I have not heard the two latter terms in current usage. Ouka (and loso) mean 'no' in the vernacular of the 'Nakanai', and they are called so by the Mamusi. The Mamusi in turn are called Sa or saule ('no') by the Ouka speakers. The people called Wase by both Nakanai and Mamusi (they are located between the two) call themselves Mimeri. The plains folk (Kai, Sisimi and Tarobi villages) speak a dialect of Ouka and call themselves Fele. The situation is by no means clear-cut and indicates that these groups must have been in such limited contact in pre-European days as not to have crystallized thought patterns in relation to one another beyond the present state.

2

The history of contact with Europeans is given by Valentine (1958:61 ff.).

epidemic which had ravaged the north coast. In 1912 Bishop Couppe' toured coastal Nakanai through areas recently contacted by Methodist missionaries. Though the Roman Catholic mission flourished in coastal Nakanai, especially in the years 1924-30, the mountainous hinterland was avoided. It was the Methodist mission, in 1922, which began the evangelization of the mountain areas.¹

Despite this missionary interest, mountainous Central Nakanai remained relatively unknown and uncontacted until the murder of four European gold prospectors at the present site of Silanga in October 1926 brought the area into notorious prominence.² Following this incident a government punitive expedition penetrated the area.³ In 1927 a patrol post was established at Malutu and this remained in occupation until 1932 when a post was established at Walo. During this period the area was extensively patrolled and brought under government control. At about this time too, the first Roman Catholic missionaries penetrated into Nakanai, settling at Tarobi and undertaking brief patrols into the foothills. Though they had been preceded by the Methodist missionaries, the impact of neither mission was forceful or continuous since both had their regional headquarters in West Nakanai. The main task of evangelization was left in the hands of resident (mostly Tolai) catechists and preachers.⁴

Recalling pre-contact days, informants speak of continual inter-clan and inter-village warfare. No social or kinship barrier to warfare seems to have prevailed. Physical separation appears to have been the only effective deterrent. The people speak of small villages perched on mountain ridges, surrounded by broad, deep, hand-dug protective trenches; of destructive raids leaving complete devastation in their wake, for none was spared in a successful

1

Valentine (1958:470) suggests that even by 1954 not all villages in the Nakanai mountains had been contacted.

2

For a detailed account see McCarthy (1964:20-3) and Valentine (1958:625-8).

3

The coastal villages of Pasusu and Tarobi provided carriers and guides for the punitive expedition. This act coupled to reasons given later, gave rise to an antagonism between the coastal and mountain folk which persists to the present day in attenuated form.

4

Religious instruction was then exclusively in Tolai which is still the current medium in Methodist missions.

onslaught;¹ of the dread of sorcery, and the great inroads on population made by war and sorcery.² Old folks describe how villages were growing smaller and smaller.³ It appears that in pre-contact days there had arisen a tendency to unite the remnants of several villages into one, under the leadership of local 'big men'. Physical proximity and socio-economic ties were the basis of such associations, though informants tell (and present evidence confirms) that it was only in rare cases that anyone married outside the natal village.⁴

The traditional kinship system is based on the principle of dual organization.⁵ Every individual belongs to one of two main exogamous clans (whose membership is determined matrilineally) which are again divided into several smaller units or sub-clans. Data suggests that the practice of exchanging women has led to the linking of given sub-clans within the two main clans into bride-exchange partnership. The principle of the equal exchange of women underlay all transactions involving women. Marriage was by bride-price; traditional

1

There was no cannibalism, though the blood of a dead enemy was licked off the conqueror's spear, and was said to imbue him with the strength and courage of his victim. Fighting was by spear and shield.

2

Except for the very aged, death from natural causes was not believed in. Supernatural and non-natural causes were sought, and expressed in sorcery-belief. See further Valentine (1965).

3

It is difficult to gauge the size of such villages, but village books give a range of population between 30 to 270 in post-contact times.

4

Village endogamy in Silanga is discussed further on page 29 ff. It is still strikingly the rule in such non-resettled villages as Ubai where, in the words of a patrol officer, 'the amount of cretins and in-bred idiots is a lasting monument to the xenophobia of these people'. Similarly, the village of Kai was reported by a missionary as 'alarmingly devoid of children and pregnant women. There appear to be no more marriage partners for these folk, short of marrying out or incest'. There were at least two cases of irregular unions at Kai during my stay at Silanga, one of which was classed incest according to traditional custom.

5

According to Chowning, the account of kinship organization which follows is different from that found among the coastal Nakanai. See Chowning and Goodenough (1956) and Hees (1915-16).

riches and pig being handed by the groom's family to that of the bride. The bride's brother and mother's brother were the main recipients and they had the final say in matters relating to her until marriage transactions were completed. Residence after marriage was virilocal. Preferred partners were the mother's brother's child, and father's sister's child.¹ Individual preference was not considered a relevant issue in marriage. As in most socio-economic matters, the kinship group with the accent on the mother's brother was the prominent group. Despite this stress on matrilineal relatives, succession to land and movable property was through the father's line, though in the case of traditional valuables such as trochus shell, these were also distributed among the matrilineal relatives of the deceased.

The two component clans in the dual organization kinship system derive their names from two bird species, the cockamor (toucan) and cockatoo, which are believed to have existed at the time of creation. These species have totemic overtones, for clan members cannot eat the flesh of their ancestral bird, and have to marry members of the opposite clan. 'It is like eating your grandmother or marrying your sister, born of the same parents: you will have big shame, and in days gone by the people (of the same clan) would have killed you.' Children follow the clan name of their mothers and adhere to all the taboos of that group. Clans and sub-clans (the latter seem to be roughly equivalent to lineage groups) are dispersed, i.e., found throughout any one linguistic area (indeed, some names are identical in the Ouka and Wase linguistic groups).²

Membership of a clan or sub-clan did not assure immunity from warfare within that group, though members of a village did have some sense of socio-economic solidarity, especially considering the danger of attack from outside.

Traditionally there was no system of ascribed leadership. Individuals reached positions of renown, respect and thence authority by virtue of their prowess as fighters, lavish feast-makers and generous hosts. Deference shown to such 'big men' was simultaneously an acknowledgment of their achievement, and an expression of fear and respect for the skill in sorcery and magic

1

The past tense is used because some of the comments are not applicable to post-contact and especially post-resettlement times.

2

This appears contradictory to what has previously been said about physical immobility and restricted intra-village marriage practices. More detailed research into clan histories and composition would no doubt clarify this point.

which they were believed to possess. Despite their sometimes considerable authority, no 'big men' were secure in their positions and in the constant spirit of competition which prevailed, the stable and operative authoritative unit remained the extended family, with the father and mother's brother as chief spokesmen.

After 1927 increased government control brought institutionalized warfare to an end, and the arrival of the two missionary bodies (Catholic and Methodist) about this time brought Christian faith and religious rivalry. There were not a few clashes between the catechists and preachers of the two faiths and a corresponding shuffling from one denomination to the other. With Christianity also came the abolition of polygyny (which had been practised widely and was an index of status for 'big men'); the prohibition to marry what hitherto had been preferred marriage partners, and the lifting of the ban on intra-clan and intra-sub-clan marriage which had up to then been considered incestuous and unthinkable.¹

One would imagine that the combined influence of government and mission would have resulted in increased social interaction (and thereby the possibility of wider-spread marriages),² but in fact it seems that pre-contact isolationism was maintained practically unchanged until the second world war.

With the war came a hasty attempt on the part of the government to gather scattered hamlets into larger units, but it was not in this respect that the war contributed to a new group consciousness in Central Nakanai. Cargo-cultism was breaking out particularly in

1

In addition there were the missions' teachings on traditional beliefs relating to magic, sorcery and associated practices. It is difficult to reconstruct the reaction of the people to these early teachings, but a clear dichotomy is at present discernible between the Uasilau (Methodist) and Silanga (Catholic) settlers. The Methodists declare that the beliefs and practices of their forefathers were either directed to evil ends like warfare and sorcery which are prohibited by the church, or were performed with good intentions: garden magic, healing the sick by rite and incantation, love magic and so on. The general attitude is that if a custom proved beneficial to the forefathers, it could surely not be counted evil by their descendants. The Methodists tend to scorn the Catholic approach where all forms of sorcery and magic are considered incompatible with true Christian practice.

2

Of a sample of 92 marriages which I took at Silanga during my stay, there were 3 intra-clan unions, only one of which was intra-sub-clan.

West Nakanai, and the war and arrival of the Japanese occurred at a time when the people's expectations were running high.¹

Several coastal villages hailed the Japanese as the bringers of the cargo and sided against the Australian Administration. In Central Nakanai, the coastal villages which had already brought mountain disfavour upon themselves at the time of the murder of the gold prospectors now led the Japanese into the mountainous hinterland. It is difficult to assess to what extent the isolationism which had hitherto characterized mountain life was broken down by the general conditions of war and the new solidarity which had arisen amongst mountain dwellers, in the face of the rift between coastal and mountain people which became very pronounced at this time.² Nor does one know to what extent credence should be given to the tales of war veterans who speak of the co-operation and mutual aid arising between hitherto hostile mountain villages in the face of Japanese aggression.

There is little doubt, however, that the war brought a forceful relaxing and breakdown of the social and physical barriers of the past and a new consciousness of the outside world. At war's end there was an increased exodus of young men to Rabaul and other urban centres. Whatever the post-war years may have contributed to a broadening of outlook, by 1953, nine of these mountain villages, numbering a total of 1,000 inhabitants drawn from three distinct linguistic groups were in the process of resettling as one community at Silanga, scene of the 1926 Nakanai murders.

1

For an account of the bearing of the war on the Nakanai see Wright (1965:109 ff.).

2

In addition to these events, the coastal people have always looked upon the mountain folk as dirty, regressive and ignorant, reproaching them for their ignorance of skills such as canoe building and sailing, and sea fishing. The mountain diet, consisting practically exclusively of taro, is also a source of derision, and the coastal folk pride themselves on having been the first to acquire European goods. The mountain dwellers are contemptuously called 'bush-dwellers'. The mountain folk are aware of this attitude and smart under it.

Chapter 2

RESETTLEMENT: REASONS AND PREPARATIONS

The resettlement at Silanga cannot be appreciated without fuller consideration of the activities of Roman Catholic missionaries in the area, particularly of Father F.X. Wagner, M.S.C. Since their penetration into Central Nakanai in the early thirties, the Catholic missionaries had not ventured further than the area inhabited by the Ouka speakers. A couple of exploratory trips into Mamusi had been made by the first Fathers: Schweiger, Franke and Berger, but at no time had the area had a permanent station. The bulk of evangelization in the Nakanai foothills was done by Tolai catechists.

On 20 June 1951 Father Wagner, newly arrived from Germany, landed at Walo and journeyed inland to set up a permanent station in Central Nakanai. He had been warned about his new parish: high mountains, precipitous slopes, steep down-grades and isolated villages in forsaken and forbidding surroundings. But on his way to Gaikeke, the first Nakanai village on the foothills of the mountains, the missionary observed a vast stretch of flat to undulating land, well-watered and practically uninhabited - the present Silanga site. 'It was providential. Why walk for two days into the mountains and search out villages if one can unite in one spot? I decided then that I would one day bring the people down and resettle them.' Thus, three hours after landing in Central Nakanai, Father Wagner resolved on the scheme which he was to set into operation two years later, which is the subject of this paper.

The mountain locality called Sio had been chosen by mission headquarters as the site of the future permanent station in Nakanai. Father Wagner at first attempted to concentrate the surrounding mountain populace at this site,¹ but soon abandoned it because

1

To understand this stress on concentration of population round the mission station, it is necessary to take account of the aims and methods of evangelization. Proximity of the pastoral flock facilitates the task of the missionary and enables the faithful to discharge their religious obligations with comparative ease. More importantly, from the mission standpoint, a strong unified parish

although the landowners (from nearby Kotou village) were willing to cede the land for a mass resettlement, no sufficiently large area of suitable ground could be found to accommodate it. The second obstacle was that the luluai from Kotou was prepared to give land for the resettlement of Nakanai folk but was unwilling that the Mamusi should take part in the scheme. Father Wagner therefore shifted his attention to the foothills in the north.

During this period the reasons for resettlement crystallized themselves for the missionary. They were threefold:¹

(i) evangelical: with Sio as central station evangelization of the homelands would nevertheless have been hazardous and discontinuous. The south-east monsoon over the ranges turned streams into impassable torrents which isolated the Mamusi from the station from July to September and the north-west monsoon over the plains similarly cut off certain Nakanai villages from November to March;

(ii) socio-economic development: distance, communication and topography all conspired against any economic venture in the mountains. Besides, the area had suffered loss of manpower to the urban centres following the war;²

(iii) change of attitude: as a result of increased contact with urban centres, and broadening of world view following and resulting from the Japanese war, the people themselves were beginning to think in terms of economic development. Even before the war, the Central Nakanai and Mamusi areas had been favourite recruiting grounds for the government agricultural experimental station at Keravat in the Gazelle Peninsula. Recruits acquired first-hand knowledge of cash cropping, besides obtaining agricultural tools, implements and seeds.³ Returning home, these men awoke an interest

1 (continued from previous page)

in constant close contact with its pastor enables the latter to 'follow through' his teachings (e.g., concerning the eradication of so-called pagan practices) and to mould the people according to ideas of Christian living, which are to some extent a matter of individual approach and organization. As will be seen, Father Wagner had very definite ideas as to what constituted Christian community living.

1

As told to me in conversation and noted in his personal diary in which, in 1951, Father Wagner wrote about his 'five-year plan for social and economic development' of his parish.

2

Patrol Report 6/55-6 puts this at 16 per cent of all the male labour potential between 16-45 years.

3

Ibid.

in business there, and this found expression in 1953 when a Kotou villager returned from Keravat with cacao seeds and decided to start a plantation in the homelands. Father Wagner was himself seeking an economic outlet for the people, and his negotiations with the landowners at Silanga were sufficiently advanced for him to urge that the plantation be started at Silanga, to be followed by the mass migration of the people.¹

1

From 1951 to 1955 when the resettlement took place, Father Wagner continued to consolidate his position and evangelize in the mountains, but all the while he was preparing for the move to Silanga. As early as July 1951 he had obtained a fingerprinted statement from the main landowners to the effect that they were willing that the mountain folk should settle on their land, and that the Mamusi would not be discriminated against should they come down too. In the meantime he familiarized the people with the idea of moving to the plains and urged that gardens be started there prior to the mass descent.

Chapter 3

RESETTLING: IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The move to Silanga, on the land pointed out by the main owner, luluai Wulai of Gaikeke village, who had been involved in the scheme from the outset, took place during 1953 and 1954. Father Wagner's original intention had been that the movement should take place progressively as newly planted gardens in the resettlement area came into production. However, it was precipitated in 1953 by the return of the Keravat recruitee with his plans for a plantation. With the south-east monsoon approaching, the Mamusi had to come down en masse or wait for the next 'dry' season and the catechists warned Father Wagner against letting the move to Silanga be anything but unified, decisive and final. If it was not, they claimed, deaths in the new area would be attributed to evil conditions there and further migration would almost certainly stop.

As it was, it took several months and much hardship before the people, a total of 1,000 from 8 villages,¹ were settled at the new locality. The Mamusi villages of Kilolo, Mapiti, Kisiluvi and Lingite were the first to come down, assembling first at Sio, and moving thence to Silanga. These were followed within months by the Nakanai of Kotou, Babata and Loa,² plus one Wase-speaking

1

The ninth village in the resettlement is Gaikeke which was moved from its old site, about a mile from Silanga to the heart of the settlement.

2

One-third of the inhabitants of Loa village, all Methodists, stayed in the homelands and afterwards moved to a new site, Movai, closer to Uasilau when that resettlement became effective. Besides these Nakanai mountain villages, two plains villages are part-resettled at present, exhibiting dual residence patterns alternating between Silanga and the homesite. These are Kai and Sisimi villages, and both are involved in cargo cultism.

village, Luge.¹ There was no selection or restriction on the coming down of any villages, though in effect, these turned out to be (not all of) those contacted by Father Wagner whilst in the homelands.²

Reminiscences on the early days of resettlement show that for Mamusi and Nakanai alike, resettlement involved much the same problems and adaptations. Silanga was then covered by thick virgin rain forest. The preliminary task of clearing the forest was undertaken on a collective basis by all who were fit to work. The aged, the sick, as well as pregnant and lactating women were left in the homelands for the time being, since there was an acute shortage of housing and food at that stage. Each village worked as a unit to clear its residential site, with individuals and groups working on individually or communally-owned garden plots. Most villages had started to prepare gardens before migrating, but none were actually in production at the time of the mass descent. The only permanent village with established gardens in the vicinity of Silanga was Gaikeke, and although Wulai harboured the settlers (especially the Nakanai) on their first descending, he could not cope with the influx, and each group had to fend for itself. Supplies bought by the mission were insufficient, and the people speak of periods of hunger and living off the bush, whilst their womenfolk made the journey between the resettlement and the homelands, bringing food and root-stocks for planting and consumption.

1

All other Wase-speaking villages are predominantly Methodist, and most of these are now resettled at Uasilau. The Luge settlers are not altogether 'sold' on the Silanga scheme. There is periodic talk of their joining the Uasilau group. To date, there has been only one defection from Luge (a school-girl), though some Ti (Wase-speaking) villagers who had originally settled at Silanga with the Luge folk, have all left for Uasilau. (They are Catholic and occasionally come to Silanga for devotions.) Much of the confused thinking in these two villages (Luge and Ti) seems to trace back to the appointment of a Methodist luluai in a predominantly Catholic village, prior to resettlement. At the time of resettlement the first cleavage was on religious lines, but when the luluai opted for Uasilau, all Ti villagers joined him.

2

Several Mamusi villages, including Polipuna and Talalu, were in the process of resettling but were stopped by administration authority following an outbreak of epidemics at Silanga in 1954-5. These are discussed later (p.16).

All the while increasing numbers were coming down, including the young and the aged, so that the combination of poor food,¹ poor housing (makeshift shelters housing a whole village group until individual houses could be built) and poor sanitation, led to a dysentery epidemic in 1954. Hardly had this been quelled, with a considerable loss of infant lives, than whooping cough broke out, resulting in further loss of life in an already debilitated populace. Immediately in the wake of this last attack came an outbreak of broncho-pneumonia.²

If the prediction of the catechists about death in the new area were to eventuate, a mass exodus from Silanga should have followed. There was a temporary movement back to the homelands in the belief that the sickness would abate in the familiar setting and cold climate, but contagion was too well entrenched, and when the death toll maintained itself in the homelands, the people returned, resigned: 'maski (so what), we die. We came down for lotu (church), not so? So we stay. And look were we not right? Nobody dies nowadays'.³

By June 1955, Patrol Officer D. Goodger gave the following permanent settler statistics for Silanga:

1

The people ate copiously of edible bush leaves, but it seems that one of these eaten in large quantities has a toxic effect, and contributed to the outbreak of the epidemic.

2

The aftermath of these epidemics led to an enquiry into health conditions at Silanga, which led to the closing of the settlement to further settlers. One wonders to what extent the susceptibility to disease was the result of debilitation caused by migration to a malaria-infested region.

3

This is no post-facto rationalization. The people understood the reason for their coming down (primarily religious) and interpreted the troubles of the first years as tests of their faith and endurance. Religious overtones pervade attitudes towards most things in the settlement, and the religious fervour of the early days was even a source of concern for Father Wagner: 'I had to stop them, because they were going too far, living like saints and martyrs.'

<u>Village</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absentees</u> ³
Kisiluvi	91	7
Lingite ¹	91	4
Mapiti	55	1
Kilolo	72	6
Luge	65	4
Kotou	154	10
Babata	215	14
Loa	103	7
Gaikeke	59	4
Kai ²	49	3
Sisimi	25	2
	<u>979</u>	<u>62</u>

- 1
Subsequently Welu villagers came to join Lingite and in 1958 the population of Lingite was 138
- 2
Both these villages subsequently returned to their homelands in response to cargo-cultist propaganda by Lima of West Nakanai.
- 3
Mostly away in Rabaul and Keravat.

Chapter 4

BEGINNING BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AND THE CACAO PROJECT

The first attempt to bring economic development to Central Nakanai was by the Germans before 1914. Coconuts were introduced into the mountains but the area proved unsuitable, being too cold and too high. In 1951, only one palm at Sio was left standing as a witness of this first venture.¹ After the second world war an interest in cacao sprang up under the impetus of Nakanai agricultural trainees at Keravat. Nothing came of this until 1953, when the aspirations of a returning foreman from Keravat coincided with those of Father Wagner to establish a plantation as a means of economic advancement. In 1953, therefore, the descent of the people to the settlement and cash cropping began simultaneously.

The first problem was to obtain planting material. Pursuing his idea of unified concerted effort, and in an attempt to break down coastal-inland antagonism, Father Wagner suggested that one West Nakanai (or coastal) village should supply one inland village with seed coconuts for planting in the resettlement area. The first 100 coconuts were brought by Lima, luluai of Rapuri West Nakanai, and leader of the cargo cult then strong in those parts. The second were brought by Ume of Koimumu, an officer in Lima's movement. Then Ume told Wulai, as head of the Silanga resettlement, that future supplies of coconuts would be conditional on the settlement's joining the cultist movement. Wulai refused and a new source of supply had to be found.²

The Catholic mission supplied 2,000 coconuts from Vunapope and Witu missions, another 500 were obtained from the Department of Agriculture, and Bialla, the nearest plantation, supplied another

1

The data in this section is drawn primarily from Wagner (1960:57-63).

2

Wulai and Father Wagner were in close consultation in all matters during this period.

8,000 seed coconuts as payment for labour. Silanga villagers worked in rotation at Bialla, returning with coconuts for planting on the land which had been cleared collectively and since subdivided on a village basis.

In October 1954, an agricultural officer from Keravat came to survey the area with a view to establishing cocoa planting amongst the people. At this time the Uasilau resettlement was also under way (see Appendix 1), and Soa of Uasilau had planted 300 cacao trees there. The agricultural officer attempted to establish a joint Uasilau-Silanga cacao project under the leadership of Soa, but this was unacceptable to the Silanga settlers: 'we are Catholics and different; let them have their own cacao'. Besides, as the result of some misunderstanding about land ownership and inheritance (see Appendix 2), and the destruction of the cacao planted at Silanga on the grounds that it was overshadowed, the Silanga settlers lost interest in cacao. For several years they reverted solely to their coconut plantation.

Since coconuts would not provide income for several years, Father Wagner introduced peanuts and rice to give the people a small income. These were planted and harvested successfully, but owing to marketing and transport difficulties, they were not sold and perished in the villages. It was then decided to sell sweet potatoes to the lessee of Bialla plantation who agreed to buy 10 bags weekly on the beach at Lasibu, the anchorage for Silanga. The Bialla crashboat was to pick up the sweet potatoes and if Silanga settlers working at Bialla had collected any seed coconuts the crashboat would offload these at the same time.

The new activity at the anchorage necessitated the building of a road from Silanga to Lasibu. It was hoped that if this were achieved, supplies of foods and goods to be marketed could be taken down to Lasibu by (mission) horse and cart until a tractor could be obtained. In association with the luluai from each of the resettled villages, Wulai divided out the land along the future road site, apportioning a section to each village. Each village was to construct and maintain the portion of road running through its section. Within each village, work was allocated to families by the village headman. One day a week (Friday) was appointed as the day for working on the road. It was completed in 1955. There was no remuneration for this work, nor was there any means to force anyone to do his share. Labour was voluntary, based on a sense of duty and obligation. The pattern of labour organization for the building of the road has prevailed ever since at Silanga.

Then Bialla plantation sold its crashboat. Nothing daunted, each village built its own canoe to convey the sweet potatoes to Bialla and bring back the seed coconuts. Food production soon

began to exceed the needs of Biialla and a new market was sought at Numondo plantation. Five tons of foodcrops were to be delivered each month. The government launch, Matoka, took the first consignment in January 1959, and the second load of 93 bags left in May of the same year. Transport then proved irregular and the scheme was dropped.

Once again attention turned to peanuts and three bags of seeds were obtained from Keravat and planted. The first harvest was retained for additional seed stock; the second failed because of heavy rain, though of the 30 bags harvested, 19 were profitably sold to the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries. The peanuts were first planted under mission supervision by the school-children, and the proceeds used to buy school uniforms. Interest in peanut planting then spread and was undertaken on a family basis. Marketing again proved too difficult and the scheme was abandoned.

The settlers had looked throughout to their coconut groves as their basic crop, but before the palms came into production, they were devastated by insect pests and all but a small part of the plantings perished. An estimated 15,000 trees died in one year, and ever since the toll has continued, though at a lesser rate. Attention was then given to the possibility of establishing a cacao plantation at Silanga as its basic cash crop.

The first six years at Silanga, then, from 1955-9, saw a series of attempts to establish a cash crop, but all failed primarily due to lack of transport and marketing facilities. The ventures were not without positive results, however, for they laid the basis for co-operative labour and enterprise on a scale which had hitherto been unknown. Most of the preliminary clearing work was done on a communal inter-village basis. In the early stages of the coconut plantation, planting was undertaken by whole villages working as units, though once completed, sectors were allocated to families for maintenance. Only later, when it was decided to reintroduce cacao, were the sections reallocated on an individual basis.

Another such experiment in co-operative action was the communal pig enclosure. The homelands had been productive hunting grounds, but in the new setting game was soon exhausted, and one source of discontent among the settlers was the absence of meat. In conformity with his idea of a unified settlement working as a corporate unit irrespective of village and language affiliations, Father Wagner directed in late 1958 that a communal pig enclosure be erected at a location chosen for its hot springs which could be used as natural stoves for cooking the taro. The fence was built by men from all villages, but there was some reluctance, especially by women, to part with their pigs to whose proximity they were accustomed. Breeding boars of good stock were introduced from

Vunapope and the south coast missions, and all was set for a communal pig farm. The idea was that a better stock of pig could be built up, and in due course pigs would be slain as sources of animal protein. Father Wagner did not take into consideration the social and ritual attributes of pig husbandry, stressing instead the nutritive benefits and communal co-operative aspects of the scheme.

Co-operative and communal that is, in the sense that the fence was built by collective effort, and that the pigs were in one location. Nevertheless, individual ownership of pigs was retained. Indeed, it had been Father Wagner's wish that the communal enclosure should be subdivided so that the pigs of each village were kept within distinct portions of the fence in order that in the event of epidemics, large-scale contamination could be prevented. Besides, a check on the progress of village stock could be kept more easily. The people declined to subdivide the communal fence and for the first few months 200 pigs were maintained in the enclosure.

There were objections to the project from the outset: some refused to join the communal enclosure, preferring to build private sties instead; suspicions about pig magic arose whenever a pig died; and the final collapse of the attempt came when a pig owned by a Babata villager broke through the fence and nobody, including the owner of the pig (who astutely claimed that it was a communal fence) was prepared to mend it.

The relevance of the venture is not so much its success or failure, as in exemplifying the way projects were initiated and organized in the resettlement. Besides, it illustrates the difficulties and problems involved in attempting to mould traditionally distinct groups into a corporate body.

With the devastation of the coconut plantation, effort was again concentrated on cacao. The old coconut groves which had up to then been held on a village basis, were reallocated and subdivided in 1958, each village being allocated that portion of the communal block in its vicinity. Previously each village had had groves wherever it had chanced to clear the bush at the beginning of resettlement. Kisiluvi and Lingite, following a clash with Loa and Gaikeke villages, declined to have any of the ready-cleared (ex-coconut) land and cleared a new site below their own villages. Within all village allocations, planting was to be on a family basis. Cacao seeds were obtained from Keravat and work began in earnest.

From the outset there was some difficulty in persuading the people that traditional, extended family work patterns and group ownership of land and goods should be dispensed with, and that each family should work individually, this being the pattern promoted by the mission. Several household heads (who had been

'big men' in the homelands) adhered to the traditional pattern of co-operation, and discharged kinship obligations by working on the cacao plots of maternal and affinal relatives rather than establishing their own. It is difficult to reconstruct the motivations and expectations of these men at the time, but in 1964 when the cacao was coming into production for the first time, they were bitterly and eloquently disappointed with the return they got for the help they had given to a multitude of relatives, and looked gloomily at their own future prospects. 'It serves them right,' says Maneke, the present leader of the resettlement. 'These are new days and new fashions. They were told just like us to work on their own cacao but they wanted a big name. All right, and what do they have now? There are two ways for working at Silanga: one for the gardens where we all work together, and one for the cacao, each one for himself. This is the new way because we get money for cacao; each one takes his own money.'

But even this dichotomy may perhaps not hold much longer. On 7 February 1964 the following entry is recorded in Father Wagner's guest book at Silanga: 'Today a milestone in Silanga's history: £13,764 paid out for 6,882 acres of the Silanga section of the Central Nakanai Settlement Scheme.' The purchase was effected by the Administration to legalize the resettlement since, despite Wulai's assertions of good faith, there was no legal security. Besides, purchase of the land would allow stricter control of the development of the cacao plantation or whatever project the people undertook. The Administration divided the land purchased into equal sized (about 15 acre) blocks¹ which would be leased at a nominal rental to individuals, giving security of tenure and a single unit for cacao plantings instead of scattered plots which could otherwise have resulted. Lessees are expected to use 5 acres for cash crops and 5 acres for subsistence crops. The remaining 5 acres are to be used in rotation with the latter to

1

This subdivision was under way during my stay at Silanga, and individuals had already unofficially chosen the plots of their choice and began clearing them, though formal application will have to be made later to the Lands Board. There was some argument as to the fate of the ready planted and bearing plots in the vicinity of the villages. The Lands officers favoured dividing these into 15 acre plots, with compensation to the owners of trees, or some other compromise. But the people unanimously opposed this and the status quo remains. Land planted with cacao prior to the division into individual blocks is to be retained under the former system of ownership, whether individual, shared or communal.

permit fallow in the traditional manner.¹ The individual plot is to become the basis for cash and subsistence cropping, and this may cause considerable changes in gardening practices.

At present the average family has at least two gardens situated wherever proximity to relatives and soil fertility make it most profitable to establish them. There is no strict rule, no physical limitation, and an individual chooses to make his garden with certain relatives rather than others. This type of association, characterized by its diversity and flexibility, must necessarily change when both cash crop and food gardens are restricted to an individually owned plot, though co-operative work patterns may well persist. In a survey of opinion as to which four neighbours individuals would prefer to have adjoining their cacao holdings in the future, there was an equal preference for full brothers and mother's brothers. This differed notably from the existing garden partners of the same informants, where the combination was predominantly mother's brothers and wife's brothers. New patterns of economic independence and interdependence may lead to far-reaching changes.

Anticipating difficulties in economic co-operation when the time came to shift to individual blocks, Father Wagner asked several prominent men whether the residents of a village should lease adjoining blocks in order to maintain a sense of solidarity. The consensus of opinion was expressed by Giru of Kotou, 'It will never do to have a whole village taking adjoining plots. Suppose a disease comes to the crop, or there is a fire, or the trees in one section bear well while those in another do not. The people will blame anything that goes wrong on another village. They will talk about magic. So it is much better if each goes where he likes, then there will be no talk'.

The concept of individual land-holding and working is not new as in 1958, coconut blocks were converted from communal to family ownership. At this time Father Wagner reported that: 'It was decided to convert all ownership to a family basis so as to make an economic link with the programme of developing family relations being currently undertaken by the church'.² At the same time, all

1

A similar pattern is followed in other land settlement schemes in the country, except that in other schemes plot owners built their homes on their blocks whereas at Silanga the people live in villages a considerable distance from their new farm blocks.

2

Wagner (1958). This matter is discussed further in chapters 5 and 6.

the leaders at Silanga (see chapter 7) met and drew up a charter known as Vok Famili, in which Father Wagner and his 'parish council' drew up rules of labour organization and inheritance which would suit both the new type of cash cropping and also promote the family programme alluded to earlier. The main features of Vok Famili are:

(i) although the coconut block had been cleared communally, planting was henceforth to be on an individual (elementary household) basis. Individuals could extend their blocks beyond the share of the communal block allocated to them, provided they cleared new land themselves and avoided group planting;

(ii) inheritance of cash crops would be from father to son, with sons sharing equally. Girls would not be entitled to any share unless there were no sons, in which case one of the girls could remain in the family after marriage, and her husband act as custodian of the plot. If a man had no children, he could pass his plot to a full brother, or a member of his own clan.¹

The charter did not cover all aspects of labour and inheritance, but was a rough and ready rule implemented in the latter days of the coconut plantation, and applied from the outset to the cacao scheme. From 1958 to 1964, cacao was planted on this basis in the old coconut groves and extensions thereof in the vicinity of the villages. In February 1963 there was an estimated 60 acres planted, plus another 24 acres prepared, and the first harvest was expected to be between 5-8 tons.² But even in this instance the pattern of

1

These regulations were intended to break down the traditional extended family system which stressed the authority of the mother's brother and affinal relatives, to the comparative exclusion of the husband and paternal kin. This correlated with mission teachings on the nuclear family and the role of the husband and father in the Christian household.

2

The first harvests of wet beans were carried from Silanga to Uasilau, and sold to the co-operative there at 4d. a lb. (Corresponding figures of cacao production in Uasilau for 1963: 82 acres planted, 57 cleared, and 20 to 30 tons expected to be harvested.) In early 1964 the Silanga settlers established their own bush-material fermentary, and opened a branch store of the co-operative at Silanga. Employees in the fermentary are paid by the co-operative which ferments, dries, bags and despatches the beans. Six men are thus employed at a wage of fl a month. During my stay there was a dispute over the fact that all the men thus gainfully employed were Nakanai tribesmen. As a result, the number of employees was cut to 4, one of the new appointees being a Kisiluvi villager. The same criticism was made of the two (Nakanai) storekeepers, but there was no one suitable to replace them from Mamusi. (Replacement was, however, never really seriously envisaged.)

ownership and the division of proceeds are by no means clear-cut. There are combinations of individual, shared and communal ownership, mostly hang-overs from the early days of settlement when group activity was the very foundation and condition of success of the resettlement. Thus, whether Vok Famili has really affected anything, and whether it will in any way change patterns of labour and inheritance, remains a question for future research, especially within the confines of the new individually held blocks.

Chapter 5

THE SOCIAL ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF RESETTLEMENT

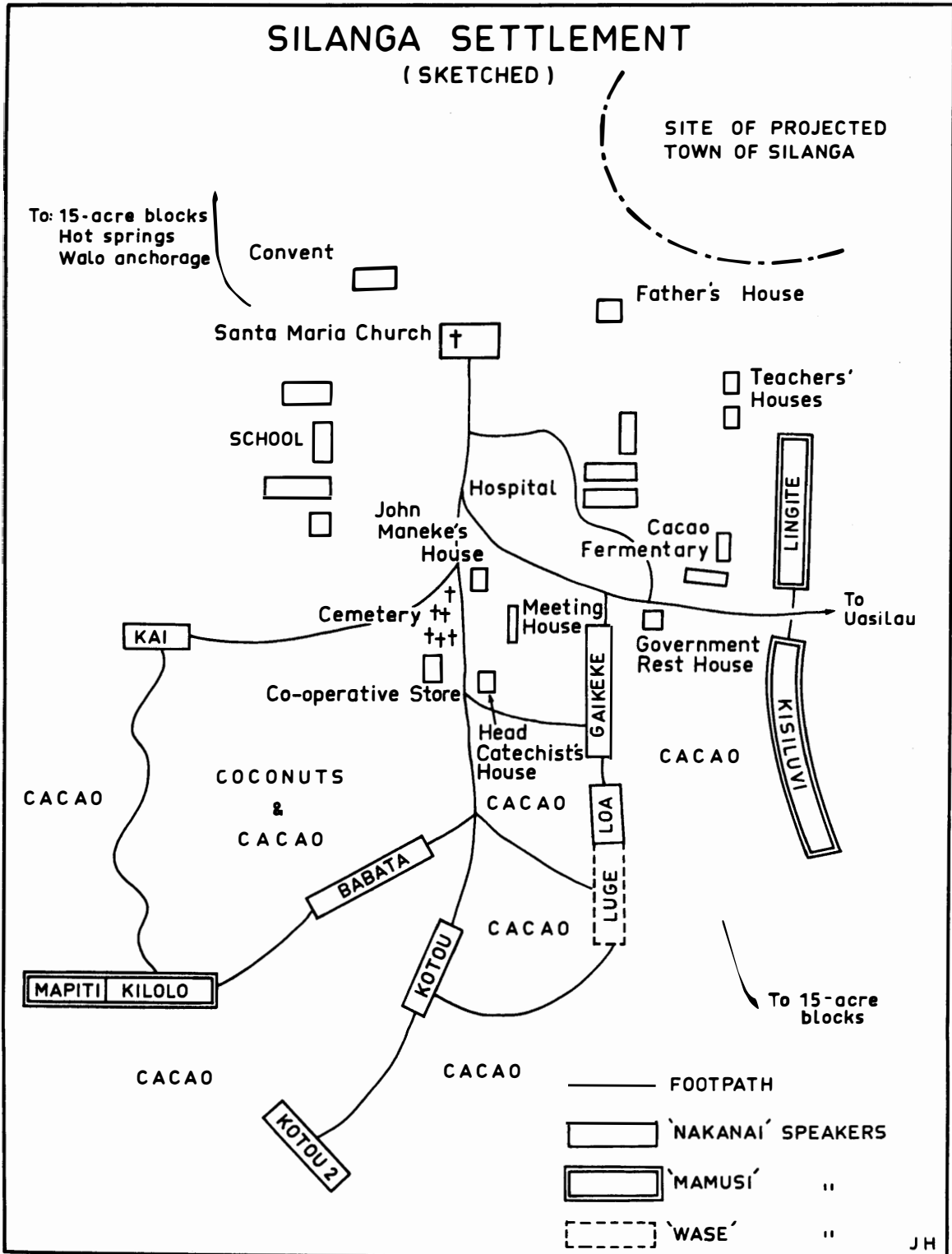
For the sake of clarity, the settlement has been discussed as a unit, but one would hesitate to speak of it as a unit (other than in its location) except in the religious context. Whatever may be the stresses and arguments at the individual, village or linguistic group level, there is no cleavage or discord in religious matters. It has been expressed too often and in too many contexts to doubt that the people, up to the present at least,¹ consider themselves primarily a community resettled for religious reasons, and that whatever their historical and other differences, their common faith is the primary unifying factor. If one reconsiders the isolationism of the traditional way of life, where at most one or two villages were linked in economic and kinship associations, one wonders how the resettlement could have originated or succeeded without some such extraneous unifying factor.

The attached sketch map (following page) gives an introduction to the social organization of the settlement, and problems associated with resettling nine villages from three language groups within the radius of half a mile. It will be noted that all villages have retained discrete village sites following the homeland

1

The settlers are relatively recent converts and do not yet have the attitude towards religion in which familiarity breeds contempt or indifference. In addition, economic development has not yet reached the stage where the people feel secure in their own right, without the feeling that their present status is the reward for religious perseverance and faith. I do not suggest that these attitudes will necessarily develop, but there are signs that 'material rationalization' as opposed to 'supernatural justification', may already be appearing at Silanga. If such attitudes do develop, stresses and strains now resolved in the name of religion may become major social crises.

SILANGA SETTLEMENT (SKETCHED)



pattern,¹ with the exception of two combined villages: Kilolo-Mapiti and Luge-Loa, the latter being particularly noteworthy as it combines two language groups (Wase and Nakanai). Note also the physical separation of the Mamusi villages, on the periphery of the settlement, at its two extremities. One would have expected some solidarity expressed in residential contiguity between members of the same language group.² Both points find their explanation in the situation in the homelands, prior to resettlement.

In the homelands, Kilolo and Mapiti used to be feast partners and to some extent used to exchange their women in marriage. They had little contact with other Mamusi villages, except Lingite and Kisiluvi on which they descended in swift and bitterly remembered raids. Kisiluvi and Lingite were in the same relationship towards each other as Kilolo to Mapiti. In addition, Lingite had some relationship through marriage with the village of Welu,³ and at present there are four Welu households in Lingite village at Silanga, Welu houses being grouped at one end of the yard. When the village sites were cleared at Silanga, the Kilolo folk asked the Kisiluvi-Lingite villagers to settle close to them, so that they might be together as one language group. The latter, however, refused, and village insularity prevailed in the new setting even in the face of a common foreign element (the Nakanai, numbering roughly as many as the Mamusi: 600).

Likewise there had been links between Luge and Loa in the homelands. These villages were relatively close and a Loa villager had been appointed as catechist at Luge. At the time of resettlement, the luluai of Loa offered his house to the few Luge settlers who had come down, and the relationship has been maintained ever since. There are few intermarriages between these two villages.

Apart from the joint villages, and the close relationship between Kisiluvi and Lingite, all villages keep very much to

1

There are two Kotou villages because cacao trees planted close to the first site prevented expansion.

2

Though Kisiluvi and Lingite have little to do with Kilolo-Mapiti in everyday activity, they support each other in quarrels with Nakanai villages. Luge seems to be non-partisan in such cases, though it tends to lean towards the Nakanai as the dominant group.

3

'The girls of Lingite were attracted to Welu men because they are such good hunters and gardeners. Several of them ran away to them, but we never got any girls from Welu in return. Now at Silanga we are getting our grandchildren back. It is rightly so.'

themselves at Silanga. There is minimal interaction between Nakanai and Mamusi villagers, the explanation being 'we can't speak their language'. But this is scarcely a valid argument as pidgin is generally known, so the reason must be sought deeper. The Nakanai pride themselves on having been the first to have contacted Europeans and missionaries and regard themselves as superior to the Mamusi, despite a reluctant respect for Mamusi sorcery. Indeed, the very name Mamusi (reputedly coined by the Nakanai) is resented for its derogatory implication of 'obstinate bighead' and exemplifies the entrenched resentment and rivalry between the two groups.¹

Conditions at the time of resettling were not propitious for the Mamusi either, even though they were the first to come down. The landowner Wulai offered the land for resettlement without asking any remuneration. Following the traditional practice of gift-giving in recognition of the acquisition of gardening rights in a new area, the luluai from each of the Mamusi villages gave traditional riches to Wulai, in addition to a self-imposed 'head tax' of 1/- per Mamusi man, woman or child who came to settle. Wulai did not refuse these payments; but neither did he claim gifts from the Nakanai who never offered any. The Mamusi felt slighted by this, and several express the view that they are like second class settlers who pay rent. In the new environment too, the Mamusi had to learn to make use of new building materials. These involved the use of sak-sak (sago palm) where they had formerly used only pit-pit (wild sugar cane) leaves. The new material entailed weaving split sago leaves into mat-like walls, and Wulai and a team of Gaikeke residents set about teaching the settlers. Some misunderstanding took place and the Mamusi again felt slighted and refused further aid in house building. To this day they have poorer houses.

Against this background of past rivalries came the new stresses associated with establishing a new community, and living in close proximity with an unprecedented number of neighbours. Though at present there are few overt clashes (no doubt thanks to village solidarity and insularity) the Nakanai-Mamusi dichotomy is still apparent.

The position of the mission is anomalous in this regard. Father Wagner was aware of the risks in attempting to weld

1

Soon after arrival at Silanga, the Mamusi asked Father Wagner not to call them by that name, and to refer to them as 'no.2 Nakanai' instead. A Mamusi informant telling of his war exploits related with glee: 'I first chased the Japanese, then on my way back, I devastated their (Nakanai) gardens and spoilt their houses'. True or not, it is symptomatic of a frame of mind.

hitherto scattered and hostile villages into one community. He operated primarily in terms of religious motivation and ends, and in this did not misjudge the people. Despite the apparent peace of the settlement, he did not underestimate the potential for friction, and all his efforts were, and are, directed towards creating a new 'community consciousness'. To this end (as shown on the Silanga sketch-map), he is hoping to establish a model township in the near future, and to do away with the present distinct village sites.¹

Incompatible with this policy are several mission-originated practices, such as the separation of Mamusi and Nakanai worshippers by the aisle in church, and the request that the faithful sit in village groups.² Similarly, at the hospital, separate cooking facilities were provided for Mamusi and Nakanai patients. On the other hand, sports teams which had spontaneously split along the Mamusi-Nakanai lines have been forced to mix, even though teachers say that children maintain the dichotomy on the playfield. Perhaps it is unfair to detail these incongruities in mission policy for they are not the most important factors in promoting group distinctiveness. Nor would the creation of town anonymity necessarily foster 'Silanga consciousness' as opposed to Mamusi or Nakanai mindedness. The future unity of the settlement depends on the mental disposition of the people, and nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the attitude towards, and incidence of, inter-village and inter-language group marriages.

Though village endogamy relaxed somewhat following the pax Australia, the stage was never reached where one could speak of villages linked by marriage. Inter-village marriages remained the exception rather than the rule. At Silanga, however, not only does spatial proximity widen the range of possible marriage partners, but mixed marriages and freedom of choice of spouses are constant subjects of mission teaching.

Changing attitudes and practices in the choice of marriage partners is shown by an analysis of the 141 church marriages which

1

In the early days of resettlement, village solidarity was the only unifying element in the foreign environment, and Father Wagner did all he could to promote it. But this is now an impediment to the wider interests of the settlement as a whole.

2

This enables the priest to spot what sector of the populace fails to come to services.

took place in Central Nakanai between 1952 and 1964.¹ Of these, 51 were contracted between individuals of different villages, though in the period 1952-6 only four inter-village marriages are recorded, all between villages which had been in traditional association (1. Kai-Gaikeke, 2. Kai-Sisimi, 3 and 4. Welu-Lingite). A closer look at the 51 inter-village marriages reveals the following:

Intra-Nakanai marriages: 25, of which 14 are between villages which had been traditionally linked. Another 3 include non-settler partners from West and East Nakanai.

Intra-Mamusi marriages: 14, made up as follows: 4 Welu-Lingite; 3 Welu-Kisiluvi; 1 Kisiluvi-Lingite; 2 Mapiti-Kisiluvi. The remaining 4 involve non-settlers.

Intra-Wase marriages: 1

Mixed, cross language-group marriages: 11

It is in the sphere of cross language-group marriages that indices of future assimilation (or lack thereof) must be sought. They are analyzed below:

	<u>Village of husband*</u>	<u>Village of wife</u>	<u>Residence at Silanga</u>
1.	Kotou (N)	Kisiluvi (M)	Neutral (mission)
2.	Gaikeke (N)	Kilolo (M)	Gaikeke
3.	Kotou (N)	Kisiluvi (M)	Kisiluvi
4.	Kai (N)	Luge (W)	Kai
5.	Loa (N)	Luge (W)	Loa
6.	Luge (W)	Loa (N)	Luge
7.	Luge (W)	Loa (N)	Loa
8.	Luge (W)	Loa (N)	Luge
9.	New Guinea (?)	Tarobi (coast)	?
10.	Tarobi	New Ireland (?)	?
11.	Tolai	Aona (M)	Aona (catechist)

* In brackets are the tribal groups of the subjects: Nakanai, Mamusi, Wase.

¹

Mission records from which this data was taken include a wider area than that brought under resettlement. Since some marriages include non-participants who later joined the resettlement, the figures have been taken in toto.

The last three marriages do not involve Silanga settlers, so that there were only 8 mixed marriages in the resettlement over a period of 12 years of co-existence at Silanga, the first taking place in 1956. Three are between Nakanai-Mamusi, and five between Nakanai-Wase. There have been no Mamusi-Wase marriages at Silanga, though the people say that they were relatively common in the homelands.¹

More significant, however, is the fact that none of the three Nakanai-Mamusi marriages has involved a Nakanai woman.² This is the sorest point in the mixed marriage situation, and was summed up by a Mamusi man who had refused his daughter in marriage to a Nakanai: 'Look, I have a banana tree which I have planted and cared for. I have tended it and now when it is about to bear fruit you want to come and cut it; to take it to your garden and plant it there so that it can bear you its fruit. What have I got left, I ask you? Nothing. Nothing but the hole where my tree used to be. Because you give me nothing in return, will you? That is why you cannot have my daughter. I will keep her for myself and let her bear children for us.'

A Nakanai said: 'If our women do not want to marry Mamusi men because they cannot speak the language, and do not know who will look after them; if our women don't like Mamusi men because they are lazy and don't work like us; and if our women say that the Mamusi are unskilled in house-building, are poor hunters and worse gardeners, what can we, men of Nakanai say? We cannot force our sisters to marry. But if one of them wants it, sure, let her go. It is good so. It makes us one.'

1

This would seem to suggest that the Wase are seeking to identify themselves with the dominant Nakanai at Silanga. Much would be gained from a comparison of the incidence of Wase-Nakanai and Wase-Mamusi marriages, before and after resettlement.

2

Father Wagner actually had to pay the bride price for one of his catechists (p.30, marriage no.2) as the man's family was not prepared to co-operate to such a union. As a rule, however, the objections are more on the part of the woman's family.

Chapter 6

THE ROD KATOLIK

If flexibility and a measure of ill-definition characterized economic organization and social adjustment at Silanga in the early days, this was not the case in religious matters. Indeed, one is tempted to look at the settlement as one in which religious organization, or at least religious sanctions and arguments to a large extent direct secular activities.

The resettlement was undertaken primarily for religious purposes, with material development and social welfare as important, but secondary adjuncts. Whereas to the people this religious aspect implied principally the discharging of religious obligations and observances, to Father Wagner the religious ends entailed major changes in the way of life. These were and are still being effected in three major spheres: (i) changes in family and social organization; (ii) modification and eradication of customs deemed undesirable; (iii) steps implementing new religious values and consciousness among the settlers. These three aspects of change with religious ends as their basic motivation, can collectively be called by the term which the people themselves use to describe the spirit and aims of the settlement: the rod Katolik (Catholic road). Each is discussed in turn.

(i) Changes in family and social organization

One of the first aspects of traditional social life which Father Wagner set out to eliminate at Silanga was the extended family organization which pervaded traditional society, extending to residence patterns, co-operation and socio-economic activity. The Central Nakanai have matrilineal descent and the mother's brother plays an important role in family life. Children often reside with their maternal uncles to whom they have recourse with their everyday problems and secrets: 'The father is always cross and correcting us, but the mother's brother gives us good things to eat, fondles us and never hits.'

This type of family organization was incompatible with the doctrine and aims of the missionary, who sought to inculcate

Christian values and domestic life revolving round the family unit of father, mother and their children. This immediate family unit was to form the core of the wider Christian community, and as long as it included divided or shared interests with another nuclear family it could not perform this function effectively.

Accordingly, one of the first rules at Silanga was that settlers should reside, work and co-operate as family units with the father as family head. The old system of multiple and compound households was abandoned and every family had to provide itself with a house, built on stilts wherever possible, and to erect a kitchen house built flush on the ground, containing a stone oven. Each house was to have a latrine built at a convenient distance from the family house.¹ Under no circumstances were two families to inhabit the same house.² Couples deciding to marry had to finish their house before Father Wagner would perform the ceremony. There were, and still are, exceptions to this rule, but on the whole the new residential principle is well established.

Of a sample of 64 households whose composition I analyzed,³ only five were multiple, comprising two full nuclear families. The composition of these was as follows, children being omitted for the sake of clarity:

1

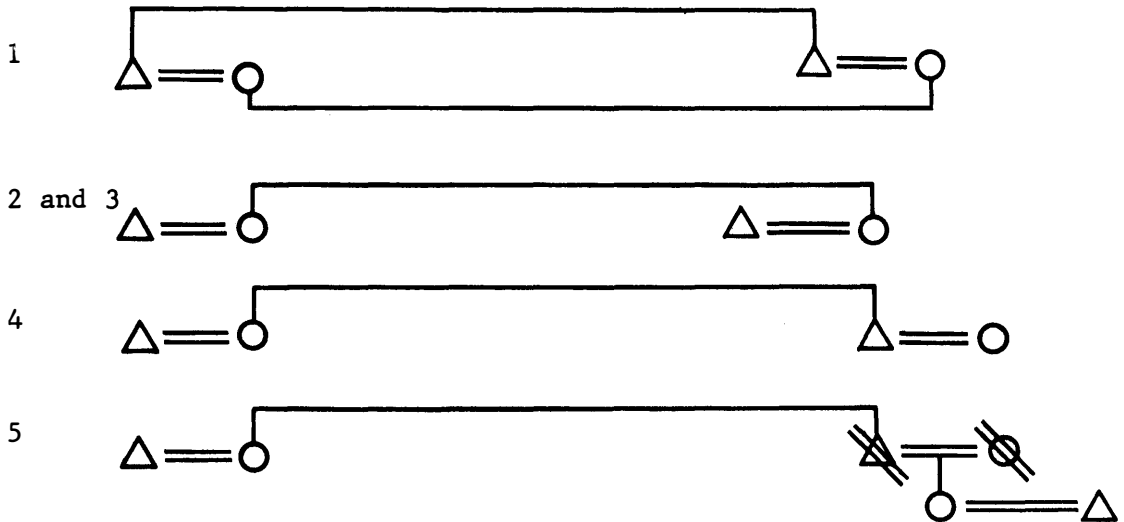
Traditionally the excretory function was a source of great shame, especially for men. There were well hidden and distinctly separate paths for men and women. The pit latrines, introduced for sanitary reasons at the settlement, have served to break down old taboos. They are being used at Silanga, not merely erected under official edict and unused as is often the case in New Guinea.

2

Some do share the kitchen with a relative - most often an aged or widowed parent.

3

This comprised a full sample of each of the 42 houses in Babata village (Nakanai) and the 22 houses at Lingite (Mamusi). No corresponding data for household composition prior to resettlement is available.



However, of the 64 houses (69 households) only 44 comprised the husband, his wife and their children. The remaining 25 households included the following accretions:

In 17 households the accretions were relatives of the household head's wife, comprising the following relations to the wife:

- 3 x 1 unmarried full brother
- 2 x 1 married full sister (husband present)
- 1 unmarried full sister
- 2 x 1 full mother
- 1 classificatory brother + full sister with illegitimate child
- 1 widowed brother and children
- 1 husband's full brother and own full sister married to each other
- 1 mother + unmarried brothers and sisters
- 1 mother + sisters
- 1 mother + married brother
- 1 mother + widowed brother and children
- 2 x 1 children by former marriage.

In 8 households, the accretions were relatives of the household head, being:

3 x 1 full sister
 1 mother
 1 father + unmarried brother
 3 x 1 sister's child.

Thus, although 64 per cent of the sample households are composed of the nuclear family only, of the balance, 68 per cent are extended through the wife's relatives and 32 per cent through the husband's relatives. The sample is too small to warrant extensive conclusions, but it does show that traditional patterns of residential association are not yet eradicated. In the economic field, time did not permit a statistical survey of gardening patterns and associations, but it does appear that affinal relatives of male ego are his closest work mates. This is in contrast to the attitudes with respect to the cacao plantation. The relationship between these contrasting stand-points has already been discussed in relation to the vok famili.

However, patterns of association are less easy to break than residential form, if only in the sense that the latter is primarily a physical association, and once broken or modified, retains a measure of finality. In an attempt to consolidate the elementary family as the basic economic unit, Father Wagner instituted Saturday as family work day. On this day only he does not say Mass in the morning, and families go as units to their gardens to get food to tide them over Sunday. Since Saturday is also the day set aside by the villagers for working and checking on the progress of cash crops, it follows that the economic unity of the nuclear family is more apparent here than in gardening where, for the time being at least, it is still a joint (extended family) activity.

(ii) Modification and eradication of practices deemed undesirable

The resettlement and the changes described above took place when the majority of the settlers were pagans or very recent converts. Traditional customs relating to so-called superstitious beliefs, magical practices, sorcery and all the paraphernalia of beliefs and practices of pre-literate peoples, were in vogue. The majority of these were considered to be incompatible with Christianity.

Accordingly, Father Wagner set about doing away with certain features of traditional life, and the approach varied according to the nature and deemed incompatibility of the custom. Abortion, which had been a common practice in the homelands, was forbidden. All forms of magic, sorcery and incantations were publicly renounced at a ceremony which took place soon after descent. The people had lined up before the church with whatever objects they had in their possession which were associated in any way with magic, sorcery or incantation, and had thrown these into a fire blazing at the entry of the church. As they did so, each one declared his faith

by reciting the First Commandment.¹ The use of spells and leaves supposedly imbued with special properties to make pigs and plants grow, were denied as ineffectual and superstitious. Instead, every Sunday during Mass, all food stocks and pig food laid to one side of the altar are blessed by the priest and sprinkled with holy water. In earlier resettlement days, the people had been invited to sprinkle holy water in their gardens themselves as a substitute for spells, but this was subsequently stopped.

The methods used to eradicate or modify traditional practices differed according to their estimated seriousness. Some changes involved little more than condemnation of an established practice (e.g., the use of love magic), whilst others involved the introduction of new patterns of behaviour with far-reaching socio-economic implications (e.g., changes relating to burial and mourning practice). Traditionally, death was followed by a relaxation of sexual taboos. The deceased was buried with his or her possessions and in due course the relatives slew pigs as payment to the mourners and others who had assisted at the burial. The mission objected to these customs as being immoral as well as wasteful and uneconomic. Father Wagner established a communal graveyard and required that the dead be brought to the church before burial, after which the entire congregation would proceed to the cemetery. No personal belongings were to be buried, and four men appointed from the village of the deceased would carry the body free of obligation on the part of the bereaved. The sexual licence of the mourning ritual was forbidden.

Without a knowledge of the extent to which pig distribution took place at burials in the old days, it is difficult to determine how the new custom has influenced the socio-economic manipulation of pig capital. In the changed setting there is room for the alternative use of such capital. In the same way, mission teachings on freedom of choice of marriage partners has socio-economic implications as equivalence in the exchange of women was the primary consideration in the past. This innovation will alter the relative state of equilibrium within the traditional exchange system.

More evident effects follow the change in residence patterns for men and youths. Traditionally, boys past the age of about ten years ate and slept with the men, widowers and unmarried youths in the men's house. Connection with the family house was severed

1

There was an upsurge of magical rites and practices at Silanga following a sizeable earthquake which occurred while I was there. In the wake of this, the renunciation ceremony described above was to be repeated on Christmas Eve, 1964.

until a youth married and set up his own home. Even then a man avoided going to the family house often, or conspicuously, lest he be ridiculed and considered a women's man. Besides, the sexual act was believed to have a debilitating effect on the strength of a man. Men's houses were thus the pivotal point of male activity in the village.

At the time of resettlement, however, in accordance with his idea of family unity, Father Wagner ruled that no married man was to sleep outside the family house, and that the men's houses should be maintained primarily as meeting places for men during the day, and sleeping quarters for unmarried youths only. Even young men had to join their families for meals.¹ Young boys were no longer allowed to sleep in the men's houses as it was considered that the talk of the older youths could have a detrimental effect on them. Nor were these youngsters to sleep in the family house once they had reached school age.²

A big communal house called Boystown was built near the mission for all the boys in this category, most of whom were schoolboys. The children were separated according to age, and were supervised by the teachers and catechists. The concentration of the boys near the mission enabled closer supervision of both religious and secular education. The boys had evening conversation classes in English, and recreational activities were directed towards breaking down the insularity of village consciousness. The midday and evening meals were eaten in their respective family homes, after which the children returned at night to Boystown to sleep. There was opposition by the parents to the retention of their children away from the family at night, and when Father Wagner went on leave in 1960 Boystown was disbanded. In its stead each village erected its own small boys' house to be used as a dormitory. At present a big village, Babata for example, has more than one such boys' house (called haus skool) based on clan membership. This new pattern was maintained by Father Wagner on his return, but in October 1964 the teachers and catechists reported that many boys were returning to their family homes, and that bad language and jokes were rife. They requested the missionary to re-open a communal Boystown.

1

I was not able to assess how far this rule is adhered to, nor its implications for traditional taboos and customs relating to eating.

2

Girls invariably stay in the family house until they marry, though in the early days of resettlement there was a mission boarding-school for girls.

(iii) Steps implementing new religious values and consciousness

The disciplinary and organizational aspects of the rod can best be summarized by giving a summary of weekly (optional, but widely adhered to) religious and secular activities sponsored and directed by the mission.

Sunday: 6.15 a.m. Mass at which vegetables and food are blessed, and one village (in weekly rotation) brings an offering of money, food, etc. to the altar. 11 a.m. gathering at the meeting house by leaders of the settlement to discuss work for the forthcoming week. Since January 1963, Father Wagner has not attended these meetings: 'It is their place, and must be run by the people for the people'. Evening Benediction followed by religious instruction on the sermon of the day to the villagers whose turn it was to make the offering.

Monday: 6.15 a.m. Mass,¹ followed by questioning of the school children on the preceding Sunday's sermon. (There is a sermon every day except Monday.) In the afternoon Father Wagner accompanies the Sister in charge of the hospital on her round of half the villages, checking on patients and urging the sick or those suspicious of hospitalization to come for treatment. (All deliveries at Silanga are at the local hospital.) Evening prayers followed by the Legion of Mary for young boys and girls.²

Tuesday: 6.15 a.m. Mass, followed by a talk by Father Wagner to the unmarried girls on the responsibilities and meaning of womanhood. In the early days of the resettlement the girls used to work on mission projects after this talk, but the luluai objected and the practice has fallen away. In the afternoon Father Wagner completes the medical round started the day before. School children work on mission gardens or other projects, while all persons who made the Sunday offering come to work on a designated mission scheme. Attendance is a matter of conscience and voluntary. Tuesday is commonly referred to as mission day. Evening prayers followed by the Legion of Mary for unmarried girls.

1

Attendance at Mass and other religious ceremonies involves the whole community every day. There is little difference between Sunday and week days with over 800 worshippers every morning. Evening prayers are less well attended (200-400). There was a notable relaxation in attendance during Father Wagner's absence during my stay.

2

The Legion of Mary is an organization whose members unite at meetings and report on problems and happenings around them. They set out to remedy these by example and persuasion.

Wednesday: Morning Mass followed by a talk to all teachers and catechists. Afternoon round of all villages by Father Wagner, checking on attendance at school. Evening prayers.

Thursday: Morning Mass followed by a talk to the unmarried men. If there is mission work to be done, the men undertake it. Evening prayers.

Friday: Morning Mass. Work on government projects undertaken by the settlement as a unit. Evening prayers followed by Benediction and a talk to all married folk on the responsibilities and duties of married life.

Saturday: Children compulsorily join their parents in the gardens. Settlement leaders check the weekly progress of labour on the cash crop. Afternoon Mass followed by the Legion of Mary for adults.

This programme of religious and secular instructions shows that not much has been left to chance to ensure that the people adhere to the rod Katolik. It enables one to appreciate the full significance of the people's assertion that they have come down for lotu, and that Silanga is their Catholic road.

Chapter 7

LEADERSHIP

Prior to and in the early stages of resettlement, the three figures who dominated the scene, who directed and gave impetus to the scheme, were Father Wagner; To Pen his chief catechist, a Tolai who had been resident in Nakanai for 27 years, and who, in the words of the people was 'the one to bring us the lap-lap'; and Wulai, who as landowner of the future resettlement site, was an indispensable mediator, holding meetings in the homelands and urging the people to come down, assuring them of the security of their position at Silanga.

Though To Pen gave his whole-hearted support to the scheme, expanding on the religious reasons for descending, and though Wulai gave assurance of security of residence at Silanga, the initial success of the descent rested on the big men of each of the homeland villages which came down. It was they who gave their blessing for the descent, cajoling and sometimes threatening the laggards into action. They were the driving force in organizing the descent, clearing village sites, establishing gardens, building shelters and settling tensions and apprehensions which must have been rife in those early days. They also were the vital link between Father Wagner and the mass of the settlers, relaying his ideas and orders to them and conveying their problems and aspirations to him. In the early days of the resettlement, therefore, the long-established post-contact village hierarchy (comprising luluai, tultul and 'big men') was one of the active sources of leadership. The leaders were given recognition when Father Wagner founded his parish council comprising all luluais and tultuls, all catechists (one per village) and other prominent men chosen by the missionary. The parish council was a sort of advisory body to the missionary, who also used it to express his plans and put them into operation. Thus, for example, it was in conjunction with the parish council that Father Wagner drew up the rules of vok famili. The parish council was dissolved in 1963 when the local leaders took over the management of local affairs with an officially recognized body to do it.

Throughout this early period Wulai was the undisputed head of the settlement. He was closely seconded by To Pen who held a prominent position of respect and authority in the resettlement. To Pen had been 'signed into' the Gaikeke village book, had been given ground by Wulai on which to plant his coconuts, and to all appearances was a full-fledged member of the community. He is invariably recalled as one of the prime movers of the scheme. As for Wulai, he was called papa by the settlers, who thus acknowledged their indebtedness to him. As father and benefactor, it was to him that they turned for guidance and arbitration in their difficulties. Gradually Wulai became the recognized leader of the settlement, a position partly shared with Mama of Kai who was a co-landowner of parts of Silanga. Both men attended all the meetings of the people. In fact, they were big men in the traditional sense, backed by considerable status and prestige.

As the settlement took shape, however, and the settlers went beyond the stage of merely erecting houses and establishing gardens, Father Wagner found that he could no longer count on the traditional, for the most part aged, leaders to implement his plans for socio-economic and religious development. It was not a question of support, for in the majority of cases he was assured of this; but he needed a young, progressive and boldly-thinking new elite, which could infuse the populace with ideas of social and economic progress. To effect this, Father Wagner required each village to elect two men who would sit as a council of elders and be advisors on all matters relating to the settlement. Between 1958 and 1963 the leadership of Silanga was primarily and effectively vested in this council of elders. At the monthly meetings of the council, with chief catechist Giru (N) as Chairman, Wulai (N) as President and Tolai schoolteacher To Luana as Secretary, the main lines for the running of the settlement were drawn up: residence rules, Boystown, mission work, the building of the road to Walo, sanitation, allocation and distribution of work, and so on. Minutes of these meetings (since lost) were kept and sent to the officer in charge, Cape Hoskins Patrol Post, for perusal and comment. Catechist Mimbuna of Kilolo (M), also chief spokesman of the Mamusi at Silanga, was chosen to represent the settlers before administrative authorities, and he delivered the minutes to Cape Hoskins.

During this latter formative period, Wulai gradually lost prestige at Silanga. Because of ill health he was unable to attend meetings, and the people began to reproach him for withdrawal from current affairs. Moreover, the Mamusi never forgave him the affront of accepting their gifts and not requiring a similar acknowledgment from the Nakanai. More importantly, Wulai was involved in an unfortunate polemic concerning the sale of Silanga to the Administration. He was unwilling to relinquish the land, claiming that he had brought the people down in good faith

and had no intention of ousting them. He desired to retain his position as paternal head of the settlement. For reasons elaborated in Appendix 2, Father Wagner was anxious that the land tenure situation should be regularized by sale without delay, and in this he was strongly supported by the Administration. The sale of Silanga brought an end to the role of Wulai as leader and benevolent father of the settlement.

The shift in leadership had in the meantime been tending towards young men newly returning from Keravat, teacher training colleges, and other such institutions. To Pen died in 1960, and Giru of Kotou (N) became chief catechist - a position of considerable authority and status in a settlement where religion plays such an important role.¹ In 1961 a prominent 30-year old teacher, John Maneke from Babata village (N) replaced To Luana as Secretary of the council of elders. Maneke was imbued with ideas for the future of the settlement and for its effective running, which not only mirrored those of Father Wagner, but sometimes surpassed his in ambitious planning. In 1963, when a branch of the Uasilau Association was established at Silanga, Maneke was popularly chosen as the Chairman of the new society, though in effect he had been at the head of the settlement since 1961.

As leader, Maneke is assisted by seven directors (of the society) who are his spokesmen and expound his instructions in their particular villages. Meetings are held in the meeting house under the chairmanship of Maneke, assisted by two secretaries (both Nakanai, and also the storekeepers of the co-operative) and all matters relating to the settlement are discussed. Meetings are generally held on Sundays, though in special circumstances, any time will do. All men are invited to attend. Women used to come in the early days but were dissuaded later as 'all they can do is talk and feed the children'. Anybody may speak irrespective of village or position, and resolutions approved by a show of hands are implemented by the directors and luluais of each village.

There are no sanctions such as fining, punishment or similar means to enforce the decisions of the leaders. Nor does Maneke

1

The luluais have voiced complaints against the unprecedented authority held by the catechists at Silanga, in particular against the pervasive action and interference of the Legion of Mary. Although the parish council was disbanded, its main function of acting as intermediary between the people and the mission persists. There are few items of village interest which the catechists do not report to the mission. Reflecting on this concentration of authority in the hands of the catechists, Father Wagner ruminated pensively: 'Why yes, we do have a sort of a theocracy running the place here.'

feel the need for such powers: 'We must get those people (i.e., all Silanga settlers) with us from the inside; it is not by punishing that you will stop humbug. That is why I talk so much. But look, all the work gets done. If one fellow gets bigheaded and won't work, then I'll talk to him; I'll do his share of the work before his eyes and he will have shame. Or I will take a stick of tobacco and we shall sit down and talk about it. You will see, I'll get him to eat out of my hand.'

Without physical or legal sanctions, the superstructure of leadership at Silanga is rather tenuous. The final appeal is to the good sense and willing disposition of the individual; to his feeling for public opinion and his sense of Christian duty and obligation. Nevertheless, trends can already be detected (as suggested on p.26) which indicate that more rational and flexible grounds will have to replace religion as a basis for the structural organization of the settlement if Silanga is to cope with the problems which development brings.

Appendix 1

THE UASILAU CACAO PROJECT

Whereas resettlement at Silanga took place under mission incentive and supervision with religion as the primary motivating factor, resettlement at Uasilau (one hour's walking distance from Silanga) took place spontaneously at about the same time for primarily economic reasons. This was done under the leadership and planning of a local leader named Soa.

At the conclusion of World War II, during which he had been in training as a soldier at Brisbane, Soa (a Wase speaker from Central Nakanai) returned to his homeland imbued with the desire to do something for the future of his people. In 1947 he and his four brothers, three sisters and their husbands left their mountain village of Mulusi and came to the present Uasilau site. The land was owned by the clan of Soa's mother and here the family started planting coconuts and cacao. The former crop failed but the cacao flourished. It was, however, only in 1953 that Soa began planting cacao in earnest. Ever since his appointment as tutul in 1951, he had spent considerable time in the homelands trying to convince more people to join him. Some did for one to two weeks during which they worked on gardens and to a lesser extent on cash crops, after which they returned to the homelands for months at a time. (It is to this gradual descent and progressive acclimatization to the malarial region that Soa attributes the absence of mass deaths at Uasilau, as compared to Silanga.) In 1954 Soa became a luluai and succeeded in convincing the people of several villages to come to settle permanently at Uasilau where the plantation had already reached a fair size. Some villages abandoned their old sites and moved half way to Uasilau, thus maintaining the familiarity and benefits of the hunting life of the homelands, and securing a share in the cacao project, which was worked on a clan and extended family basis.

Only in 1959 was the settlement of Uasilau recognized as an entity in its own right. This was in the wake of a mass descent of hitherto wavering villages when Soa at a general meeting displayed the takings from current cacao sales: £180 in pound notes.

'Before this, they did not believe me when I said that cacao means money. They thought I was lying to them. So I told the Patrol Officer that I would like to show the people all the money I had in the bank. I did so and they saw that money comes from work.' (There had apparently been the beginnings of cargo cultism in the homeland villages.)

At present there are 770 settlers at Uasilau, mostly Wase speakers and Methodist, with the exception of 140 Ouka speakers and about 40 Catholics. In addition there is a migrant population of 200 who still have homeland residences and are not fully settled at Uasilau. The leadership of the settlement is vested in Soa and his elder full brother Lea. They are assisted by a Village Committee consisting of one member of each settled village (ten in all), chosen by the village members. The Village Committee does the same work under the direction of Soa as that undertaken by Maneke with the councillors at Silanga. Indeed, it was under the same guidance of Ken Brown, acting Assistant District Officer, that the structure of leadership was crystallized in the two resettlements.

The principle of economic organization is essentially the same as at Silanga, except that production is more advanced and cash returns correspondingly greater. In 1963 the Uasilau settlers were in a position to open a co-operative store and branches of the association have since been established at Silanga and Malasi. The project has a modern open-air cacao drier, though the hot air processing is still primitive. The business aspects of the settlement, as well as all matters relating to the association, fall under a board of six directors with Soa as chairman. When the Administration offered to buy Uasilau so that the settlers could have security of tenure, there was no objection by Soa (compare the reluctance of Wulai at Silanga) and the transaction was effected in 1963. This was followed by an immediate demarcation of the land into individual plots of 15 acres. By 1964 the settlers had already applied for their blocks according to preference and work on an individual basis was under way.

Not surprisingly, in the absence of the pressures and regulations prevalent at Silanga, the Uasilau settlers have maintained much of their traditional patterns of association. In the selection of sites in the newly allocated blocks, for example, affinal and matrilineal relatives tend to group together. Nevertheless, the settlers assert that they will pass their blocks to their sons when they die, and not to their mother's brother's children. (If, indeed, this was ever the practice - see Appendix 2.)

Relations between Uasilau and Silanga range from neutral to cordial. In the beginning, the Silanga settlers brought their wet beans to Uasilau for drying. Silanga was also dependent, and still

is to some extent, on Uasilau for its storegoods. What business of this transitory nature has to be transacted is done without fuss, but as far as I could gauge during my short stay, social interaction between the two settlements is virtually nil. The first soccer match between the school children of both settlements took place while I was there and the match never ended owing to some misunderstanding.

The attitude of the two settlements towards each other can best be described as a mutual 'hands off' tacit agreement. The position was best expressed at the time when the site of the future coastal road for the two settlements was being decided upon. The Silanga settlers wanted the Lasibu road (which has since been agreed to by the Administration), and the Uasilau folk wanted the Walo road: 'We are one people, we have one thought, one talk, one business, one religion and we want one road for ourselves'. In the words of Patrol Officer D. Goodger: 'The Ala river is a geographic, social, economic and now, a religious barrier to the people' of Uasilau and Silanga.

Appendix 2

LAND TENURE

The land tenure situation at Silanga is very confused. In the mountain areas proper, i.e., roughly in the hinterland of Gaikeke village, land is inherited patrilineally though descent is matrilineal. Amongst the coastal folk, say from Kai village northwards and thence all along the coast up to the Gazelle Peninsula, succession and inheritance are both matrilineal. It is possible that had Silanga not been bought, rights to it might never have had to be defined and the status quo might have been preserved. That is, Wulai was the caretaker of a vast stretch of land as the indirect male successor of a matrilineal ancestor who had acquired the land by fighting. When Father Wagner sought the owner of Silanga he was unhesitatingly directed to Wulai; nor was Wulai's position ever queried until the question of buying arose. As with many Melanesian systems of land tenure, rules tend to be flexible and mostly validated by usufruct, where the vital factor appears to be kinship filiation and the ties existing between given individuals, entitling them practically as a matter of course to use the land of other relatives. There are ancestral groves and other features which associate stretches of land with one group more than another, but social realities appear to be the more relevant criteria than fixed rules of land ownership. This seems to have been the situation at Silanga, and was stated as a reason why the Nakanai settlers made no gift to Wulai when they came down, since they felt they were descending on ancestral land.¹

However, with the decision to buy the land, the question of land ownership had to be finalized in a way quite alien perhaps to the traditional conception of land usage.

1

The dispersed clan system is obviously a vital feature in explaining the adaptability of land tenure rules, since every village had representative members of clans dispersed throughout the linguistic group.

The decision to buy Silanga resulted from several considerations: the desire of the Administration to legalize the situation in order to avoid litigation once a valuable plantation has been established and to annul fears of eviction from Silanga in the future. But one incident brought the matter to a head. In 1958 Tolai school teacher To Luana gave f10 to Wulai for the rent of land used for planting a peanut crop with the aid of the school children. The sum represented one-fifth of the takings for the crop. Remarking on Wulai's acceptance of the money, a Patrol Officer notes, 'I feel sure that rental demands will be made in future for land carrying economic crops. We have the stirrings of landlordism here, and the embryo for much future stress and bitterness'. (Gaikeke village book.)

From 1958 to 1964 when he finally acquiesced to the sale, Wulai refused to cede the land. As far as one can reconstruct the reasons for this stand (for the subject is painful to him), they were four-fold. Wulai had been advised against selling the land by To Pen, who as a Tolai had had previous experience of Administration purchase of land in the Gazelle Peninsula. Neither was Wulai prepared to cede the land for prestige reasons. He considered himself the father of the plan, a position which he could not maintain if he were to sell the land. Thirdly, there was possible future income through rental; and finally, the people themselves were wary of administrative intervention, as they regarded the movement primarily as religious and did not see the relevance of selling the land.

Eventually Wulai gave in and the landowners had to be found. The position was complicated by the fact that two stretches of land were involved, one owned by Mama of Kai, where succession and inheritance were clear-cut and matrilineal; the other under Wulai, who, as far as one can reconstruct, hesitated to declare himself as following either the patrilineal or the matrilineal rule of inheritance. Both his parents were from Gaikeke and in an attempt to maximize his advantage (the exact demarcation of the land to be bought had not been settled at the time) he missed out altogether. The determining committee went to Uasilau first where Soa categorically asserted that inheritance was matrilineal. (It must be remembered that Soa had abandoned his father's land in the homelands to resettle at Uasilau on his mother's land.) When the committee subsequently came to Silanga, matrilineal inheritance was taken as a matter of course, even though Wulai had by this time decided that Gaikeke had always followed the mountain rule of patrilineal succession. The money for Silanga was accordingly handed over to the members of the appropriate clan, the main recipient happening to be the brother of Wulai's wife. By an ironical twist, therefore, the father of the settlement emerged penniless and statusless after the transaction, though following the rule of matrilineal inheritance (to which Father Wagner was opposed) his two sons are the heirs to the Silanga monies.

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