

**new ireland:  
coming and going 1970**

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An anthropologist's view of the people he studies is complex. First of all, he comes to them with previously acquired scholarly knowledge of their history and their culture, both material and nonmaterial. Second, the anthropologist has often learned more about certain aspects of their life than many members of the society themselves know. This is particularly true when he has gained an historical view of their culture or a regional overview, neither of which is usually possible for people who live in a small, nonliterate, and isolated society. Third, the personal relationships the anthropologist develops while living with a people may lead to knowledge and feelings that differ from his prior scholarly knowledge and expectations.

For these reasons (and many others) an anthropological field trip is often an emotionally moving, even trying, experience. Perceptions shift as abstractions and personal involvements must be accommodated. Besides this difficult intellectual adjustment, the anthropologist must also adjust from living an urbanized Western life to living in a tiny village in a culture close to subsistence level. During my stay in New Ireland last year I had to make these adjustments and at the same time compare my current observations with my recollections of life in New Ireland in 1954 when I had last been there.

My feelings about these adjustments seemed most acute during two particular periods. One was the first few days of arrival; the other, the last few days as I left to return home. These were periods of heightened sensitivity for me, in that they were like passing through rites of transition between our two cultures.

From January 3, 1970 until December 7, 1970 I lived in Lesu (official spelling, "Lossu"), a village on the

northeast coast of New Ireland in Melanesia in order to continue my study of New Ireland art and its social context. I had begun this work in 1953-54, when my wife and I lived in Lesu for seven months. In the intervening years, I had studied collections of art and other cultural objects from New Ireland found in museums in several parts of the world. When I returned to New Ireland in 1970, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and Field Museum, it was with a suitcase full of photographs of those specimens to show to New Irelanders, in an attempt to learn more about this fascinating art and the social and ceremonial system within which it functions.

New Ireland art consists mostly of fantastic, filigreed, painted wood sculpture representations of human, animal, and supernatural beings, often intertwined with floral designs. They range from relatively simple figures to exceedingly complex multiple images carved on "totem-pole"-like columns to masks and various minor accessories such as dance paraphernalia, musical instruments, canoe ornaments, and house ornaments. All this is known to the Western world through over 15,000 objects in various museums, most of which were collected while New Ireland was a German colony from 1884 to 1914. The majority of New Ireland art objects are in German museums, the largest collection in Berlin's Museum für Völkerkunde, and second largest in Field Museum.

It is too soon to write here of the results of showing the museum photographs. I have yet to complete analyzing the many responses, searching for the meanings of the many different statements about specific objects, sorting out and reconciling contradictions, correlating responses from the various informants and data from the published literature, and relating everything to my ideas of how the whole system worked.

I was also able to observe present-day survivals of the *malanggan* ceremonials (memorials for the dead, for which much of the art was made) and to study social change since 1953 and earlier in my home village, Lesu.

As I drove toward Lesu my feelings were a mixture of excitement and anticipation at seeing the village and its people again after sixteen years and some apprehension about possibly unpleasant changes. I hadn't written ahead, and no one knew that I was returning. I wasn't particularly worried about that—I knew that I could just arrive and be welcome—but I wasn't sure about what temporary difficulties would arise; for example, in the kind of housing I could obtain, and the kind of life I'd have to lead in the first few days. In 1953 I hadn't had a car, and my wife and I had arrived with many cases of supplies on a truck owned by a local villager. We lived in the *haus kiap* (Pidgin for government rest house). By 1970 the system of administration had changed in that the government official, the *kiap*, drove everywhere, making rest houses obsolete. I knew that there was a Women's Clubhouse in Lesu in which I might be able to live, but that had not yet been arranged. I had been in Kavieng, New Ireland's principal town and port, for a few days, where I took delivery of the car I was to use and bought supplies, before heading for Lesu down the East Coast Road.

The road had been built in German colonial times, before 1914. In 1953 it was narrow and barely passable, with deep ruts and potholes. The eighty-mile trip to Lesu then seemed like a day's uncomfortable drive. In 1970, however, I found myself passing the villages of Tandes and Libba (eight and six miles north of Lesu) in under two hours, so improved had the road become.

I drove by these villages I had known thinking the houses looked small and weatherbeaten. Was Lesu going to look

Karake, left, and Biga, right, performing Pondewasi dance at author's farewell party. Their *kapkap* breast ornaments, formerly made of shell, are now made of paper.

that way, too? I thought glumly of the possibility of Lesu with rusting iron roofs and other unlovely results of "progress." Would the people still be as cheerful and positive and outgoing as I remembered them, or would they have become reserved, withdrawn, sullen, perhaps even hostile? I had seen some signs of that in the bigger towns such as Port Moresby and Rabaul.

Soon I was passing the entrance to No. 2 Lesu (the Catholic half of the village), just north of No. 1 Lesu (the Protestant United Church half). There was the new brick primary school and finally there were the houses of No. 1 Lesu itself. I stopped at the side of the road and looked. Nothing looked as I remembered it. The layout of the village was different and the houses all seemed to have shifted position. Tree-bordered paths had changed to an open treeless plaza. In 1953 many of the houses were raised a few feet off the ground on piles. Now they looked tiny, squat, close to the ground, only a few of them raised on short posts.

I had just traveled through many large metropolitan centers—Honolulu, Auckland, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney—and had come from Chicago. In contrast, Lesu looked tiny, its houses seemingly too small to house full-sized people. The houses did seem mostly to be made in the style I remembered from 1953, with peaked, sago-leaf-thatched roofs and split bamboo walls nailed to sapling frameworks. That hadn't changed, although I saw a couple of houses with flat, sloping iron roofs.

I pulled into one of the openings in the low stone wall between the village and the road, unwittingly using the very one I would use often during the coming months, the one leading to the Women's Clubhouse. I stopped the car and got out.

Some people approached, and I began to regret not having written ahead to say I was coming as I

scanned their faces, not recognizing anyone. Could they all have changed so that *everyone* was unrecognizable? I began talking in rusty Pidgin English, casting about in memory for names. Faced with a half dozen Lesuans, I couldn't think of a single one. Suddenly the name Biga came to mind, possibly because I had turned into Lesu right where his house had been in 1953. I asked for him. Some children indicated him approaching. It was indeed Biga, tall, spare, bespectacled (nickname, Eyeglass). He had been the Methodist minister of No. 1 Lesu in 1953, and here he came, walking over to see who was coming to visit Lesu. I involuntarily glanced at his eyeglasses, even before greeting him, to see if they were the same pair I had left with him in 1954, when he had complained of poor eyesight and had asked for my spare set. These were different, I was relieved to see. But it was Biga, marvelously recognizable, and as we greeted each other, with tears in our eyes, I knew I was home again in Lesu. Soon other old friends came forward and the welcome deepened. My wife, Sally, and I had been especially friendly with a group of high school boys in 1953-54—Kuba, Karake, Marangot, Emos, and others—and here they were, young men in their thirties.

Where was Sally, many people asked? I showed photographs of my family, which proved to be a favorite subject for the next few days. But the openness, amiability, and hospitality of Lesuans came to the fore. No arguments or recriminations. (Why didn't you write? What were you doing?) They knew it was rather a long time since I had been there, but here I was again and they seemed pleased at the idea.

Other people began to appear, and I began to recognize old friends, especially younger men and women who looked in 1970 not unlike the way they did in 1954. People who had been infants or young children were

much more difficult to recognize, as were persons who had been of middle age in 1954.

My perceptions were rapidly shifting. The anticipated difficulties in recognizing the village and the people, in arriving too suddenly and unexpectedly, were fading in the warm glow of friendship and hospitality. I found that I had been reacting to superficialities in the village, the houses, and the people. The village plan had changed somewhat, but was beginning to look familiar again. I found later that the shifting was simply the result of continuous replacement of the ever-and-quickly deteriorating houses. Each new house was built next to the existing old one, which was destroyed when the new one was completed. The houses, which at first glance seemed so tiny and battered, began to assume a more reasonable appearance. They didn't seem so small as I got closer and could measure their size against their occupants, and as the memories of American and Australian skyscrapers began to fade from my mind. Indeed, the whole village was large and spacious, and house sizes and land coverage would compare favorably with many an American suburban town plan. In the days and weeks to follow I could not account for my initial view that Lesu was other than the neat, clean, and beautiful village which it was.

Similarly, my initial perception of the people changed. I had plunged directly into the village, unannounced and unexpected, in late afternoon, when many people were just returning from their gardens and had not yet taken their daily dip in the sea. Many were wearing their working clothes, not their better clothing. Also, before I recognized many people, I had been scrutinizing their exterior appearance in a way one does not see a friend or acquaintance. One does not look at debris or leaves or dirt in the hair or on the clothing or faces of people one

knows. One looks instead at the expression of the face, listens to what they are saying, or notices their gestures. And so indeed did it go. As we became reacquainted, as we began to recall old times and to talk about those not present, my family in Chicago, Lesuans away at school or working or who had died since 1954, we found ourselves responding to each other as people with shared experience. Lesu and its people were beginning to conform to the basic image I had taken away with me in 1954, and which I had maintained over the years—a lovely place, with friendly, warm people.

I asked where I could stay, at least for the night. I was told I could use a room of the Women's Clubhouse as a bedroom, and I saw that the veranda could be used as an office where I could interview people. The room at the other end was in use as a store, but beyond it, on a lower level, was a room which could be used as a kitchen. I was shown the latrine, located on the bush side of the road. The main thing that remained to be done for that evening was to unload my gear and supplies from the car.

Many people pitched in, and in a short time the veranda of the Women's Clubhouse had all my gear and supplies on it. I got out my cot and bedding and set them up in the bedroom. The kerosene lamps were filled to light the fast-approaching dusk, and the pressure lamp was unpacked from its carton and prepared also. What would in later days be accomplished by me in a routine way—filling lamps and stove, checking the various parts and controls of the pressure lamp, keeping house without benefit of running water, electricity, or gas—that first evening all had to be done at once. I felt then what I remembered from 1954, the pleasant feeling of being helped, freely and generously, by Lesuans. The lamps were lighted, some of the gear and supplies stowed away. We turned

on the battery-powered radio and tuned to Radio Rabaul, which furnished a background of string-band music. Among the groceries I had brought with me from Kavieng was a case of beer, which I had naively thought to consume slowly during the following weeks. But the occasion seemed to demand otherwise, so I opened it up and it was all gone in a few minutes. In 1953 alcohol had been forbidden to the native population, but that was definitely not so in 1970. So we all sat around and talked through the evening, recalling Lesu of sixteen years ago. A steady stream of people kept coming up to say hello—old friends, and some people I had never seen before.

We agreed that I would pay rent to stay in the Clubhouse, that a shower room would be built at one corner of the house, some guttering would be run along the edge of the roof to catch rain water, and a 55-gallon drum set under it. A garage (*haus kar*) would be built to protect the car, and the latrine would be refurbished. All this was roughly settled in the evening, and I retired to spend my first night in Lesu. I didn't sleep well, what with the excitement of arriving, the new surroundings, and thinking ahead to the completion of settling in so I could get to work.

The next day was Sunday, and since the Sabbath is strictly observed in Lesu, none of the proposed building projects could proceed until Monday. So I spent the day unpacking and stowing supplies and talking to people. Cameras and film were put into tins with silica gel to protect them from the very humid atmosphere.

On Monday morning, the 5th of January, all the available manpower of No. 1 Lesu was mobilized, and by mid-afternoon the car was under a roof and the rest of the construction had also been finished. I hung my bucket shower in the shower room and began to consider the work ahead.

The main task was to begin showing photographs to informants who, I hoped, could tell me something of the objects pictured. Since most of the objects in my photos were collected in German times—that is, prior to 1914—that meant that ideal informants would be people who were adults at that time, who could have seen similar objects (or maybe even the very objects I had studied in the museums), so they would now be almost eighty years old. Secondly, younger informants, people in their thirties to sixties, could know something too, by hearsay from older people or by having seen similar but later objects made and used in ceremonies. The people to look for would very likely be men rather than women, since the men would have been more directly involved with the ceremonials, although women would not be completely ruled out. Women tend to be somewhat retiring in New Ireland society, especially when talking to strange Europeans. The kind of people to be considered first were those called "big men," the Melanesian Pidgin English term for traditional leaders in New Ireland and other Melanesian societies.

Chieftainship is not much developed in Melanesian societies, and in New Ireland very little. Instead, certain men emerge as leaders, to direct work projects, to organize ceremonials, and in former days, in war. Accession to such leadership positions was informal and based on ability and force of personality, qualities obviously not easily transmitted by inheritance. Thus every village had one or more "big men." Sometimes they were the oldest men in a clan; at least, the oldest in a clan would be thought of as the most likely candidates. But if for reasons of personality and ability such a man was unable to muster a following and actually organize and lead the various necessary enterprises, he would not long be thought of as really a "big man," and someone else more able would come to the fore. Thus, seeking out informants knowledgeable about

*malanggan*—the major memorial ceremonial of northern New Ireland, and the main social context for much of the art—meant seeking out “big men,” the organizers and patrons of such ceremonials. Everyone, even children, knew who was a “big man,” not only in Lesu and nearby villages, but in far-distant ones also.

I was thus able to set out for visits to other villages armed with lists of names of such men. But then it was often hard to keep them aimed at my photos and problems and to get information about *malanggan* ceremonials and its art. These “big men” varied in their knowledge of the past, and in their attitude toward being interviewed by a stranger. Some were outgoing and eager to share their knowledge, others were suspicious and closemouthed. Some simply couldn’t understand exactly what I wanted of them and continued through interviews focused on ideas and knowledge other than what I was interested in. But the main problem was that no one man in any locality really knew very much about *malanggan* in general. Some tended to be concerned with the affairs of their own small areas. Others, not having had much recent experience with *malanggan* ceremonials, had simply forgotten much and were unable to give the kind of detailed information I was seeking.

“Big men” were often deferred to. I might ask to speak to an individual whose name I had, and that person would think that there was another, “bigger” man, or more knowledgeable one, but who was unfortunately not around that day. The man I was talking to would then decline to say much, in deference to the absent expert.

Different attitudes toward Europeans came into play also. Most relationships with Europeans are not close, are frequently suspicious, and sometimes even hostile. It was a rare and very

confident New Irelander who could immediately enter into an intimate, knowledge-sharing relationship with a strange European just because he dropped in off the road and wanted to know about *malanggan*. It was possible to get onto such a footing with some individuals, but not quickly or easily. At best, my drop-in visits would produce over-formal but informative interviews. At worst, I was greeted with suspicion, which was manifested by minimum information being divulged.

Carvers were potentially a good source of information, and, indeed, one of the best interviews was with a carver. But so few carvers were around in 1970 that I didn’t learn much from them. The few I met were usually more interested in the photos than was anyone else. They seemed better able to appreciate what they were looking at—remarkable examples of art from the past—for they were the men who had actually tried their hand at making the carvings, even though in recent years the resultant works were not qualitatively the equal of earlier work. In contrast, the patrons, although they were more important socially in the organization and implementation of the *malanggan* ceremonies, and although they too were knowledgeable about names and designs of *malanggans*, were not involved with the art objects at the level of form, style, technique, and execution of the objects as art. A patron would leaf through the photographs looking for “his” *malanggans*, while a carver seemed to be more aware of and interested in the craftsmanship of the pieces.

The main part of my research plans yielded less satisfying results than I had hoped for. The quality of informants often turned out to be different from what I had expected, and I found that structuring the interviews around the photographs was both good and bad. It was good when the informant recognized the objects and knew something specific about

them. It was bad if an informant felt he had to say *something* when faced with a photograph, whether accurate or not. Most informants had an uncritical view of the quality of the pieces they saw in the photographs. They had seen these art objects only in context—that is, made to order for each occasion, and then destroyed. They had not seen many objects at one time, never any *series* of objects, and so had no basis for making esthetic comparisons. They had never seen a series through time or a series from different areas. Not only did the photo interviews rarely elicit judgments of esthetic or artistic value, I felt lucky if there was mere recognition of motifs. It was all rather sad, that the present-day descendants of the people who had commissioned, made, and used the marvelous art of New Ireland should know so little about it.

Opportunity for another kind of work, which I had little hope of pursuing, loomed far beyond my expectations, however. This was the chance to observe on-going memorial ceremonials for the dead, which are the modern successor to the traditional *malanggan* ceremonials. In 1954, when a person died, he got a Christian burial, and a few days later a concrete slab was poured over the grave as a marker. Then about a year later a *malanggan* ceremonial would be staged which would feature a carved *malanggan* object. In 1970, I found that after the burial the grave marker was not immediately constructed; rather, it was delayed so that its construction and erection took place at the same time as the *malanggans* of the past, about a year later. Also, the 1970 grave markers were constructed in a series of group work projects, each one celebrated by feasts and distributions of food, just as *malanggans* used to be. In fact, the scope of the ceremonies had grown, so that much larger amounts of money, foodstuffs, labor, and cement were going into the new grave-marker system than had gone into the

Christian-burial-*malanggan* system. In 1954 the largest *malanggan* celebration I had seen featured the killing and distribution of twenty-two pigs; in 1970 two different celebrations I saw had seventy pigs each.

I attended all funerals and associated and related memorial ceremonials I could get to. Sometimes I went as a stranger, along with other strangers who came to see the large-scale festivities and dance presentations, but mostly I followed the lead of Lesu people as they frequently were drawn into participation in such affairs by their social and kinship relationships. It was best to go with Lesuans, because I could then better observe and understand the system of contributions of food and money and involvement as it all came alive in terms of real people whose social and kinship relationships I knew. For Lesuans, there was the advantage that if I went along my car furnished transportation, especially for the women, who often had to carry their baskets of contributions to the feasts and distributions for distances of up to ten miles; and then had to bring back heavy loads of distributed foodstuffs. With the increased ownership and use of trucks in 1970, often villagers hired trucks to do that, especially for longer distances, but a free ride was always appreciated.

I had many opportunities to observe this kind of funeral-memorial complex in 1970, the surviving social context of *malanggan*, which, instead of declining, was still very much alive and apparently expanding.

A third kind of study I found myself drawn into was of social change in Lesu itself.

One great change was population growth. Population decline in the Pacific has been a long-term concern for many years, to the point that in the 1920s and 30s there was worry that it was irreversible and that populations

were decreasing to dangerously low levels. Not so in 1970. Pacific area populations are now on the rise.

In Lesu the population is now about 67 percent greater than it was in 1954. The increase between 1929 and 1954 was only about 5 percent. However, a dysentery epidemic in 1948 made the population lower than it would otherwise have been. In 1954 it was rare for a family to have more than two or three children, and there seemed to be many childless couples who said that they wanted children but didn't have any. In 1970 there were families with four, five, even seven or eight children, all alive and well, and beginning to make their presence felt in society.

The population increase must be partly explained by better health resulting from better nutrition and medical services. In 1970 general health seemed better and the younger people seemed larger and heavier. A number of years of malaria control and mosquito eradication were apparent, for far fewer people seemed to be suffering from malaria. Increased and more efficient motor transport (better roads, more cars and trucks, and a daily bus service) made the hospital in Kavieng and the several other medical facilities on the island much more available than formerly for treatment of illnesses and accidents.

Another change was that the people of Lesu were wealthier in 1970 because of increased cash crop production. More copra was being produced and sold, cocoa was coming into production, sale of timber was beginning, and there was greater involvement in wage and salaried employment of various kinds. More European foodstuffs are used, such as tinned fish and meat, rice, sugar, tea, and coffee. Consumption of tobacco in the form of cigarettes, trade (stick) tobacco, native grown tobacco, and newspaper (for rolling "cigars") has increased. More European style clothing was worn, such as shorts,

shirts, tee shirts, rubber sandals, hats. A number of battery-operated transistor radios were owned and used, also more kerosene (wick) lamps and some pressure lamps were in daily use. A number of people owned bicycles. Three trucks were owned in Lesu in 1970, and a fourth was paid for and on order at the time I left. Considerable amounts of money circulated in the memorial ceremonial system and in bride-price payments, and undoubtedly money was being saved. The local government council has built two large school buildings of brick. A private entrepreneur has built a number of brick houses and a brick church in No. 2 Lesu. The United Church congregation in No. 1 Lesu wants to construct a brick church building, and some individuals would like to build brick houses for themselves.

There was much more interest and participation in education in 1970 than in 1954. The Territory government has spent more money on education, teacher training, and construction. One consequence of the increased level of education is that many Lesuans can speak and read English and are more aware of the rest of the world. The increase in radio broadcasting has also helped to broaden the horizon for Lesuans. On their radios they hear local and world news among other offerings, in Pidgin English, English, and sometimes in their own languages.

Political activity has increased too, in Lesu as well as the rest of New Ireland. The government-appointed native officials of 1954 have given way to elected officials with considerable power over the conduct of local affairs. In 1970 there was much discussion of rapidly approaching self-government and ultimate independence.

New Irelanders thus find themselves drawn increasingly into the modern wider world. In 1954, although they had already considerably changed from a pre-contact condition, they lived close to subsistence level and

knew very little of the outside world. By 1970 there had been a considerable and qualitative leap into the world community. For purposes of my study this meant that they were much further away from the part of their past I was interested in—their art and ceremonial life—but, paradoxically, a flourishing ceremonial life continued.

These changes seem one-way and irreversible. There remain possibilities of various syntheses between the indigenous culture and that of the wider world, so that as New Irelanders push into this world, they may yet retain elements of their traditional culture too.

Thus my work continued through 1970, seeking out and interviewing informants about the old art, attending the ceremonies still carried on, and observing the changes in Lesu society during the recent past. I was living in the present-day Lesu, but my inquiries were aimed at a period from the past, going back from 1970, through 1954, 1930 (when Powdermaker had been there), and to the German colonial period, back to before the turn of the century.

Finally, the last weeks of November arrived and I began to prepare for the return journey—to disengage myself from Lesu in order to go home again.

If my arrival at Lesu had been abrupt and without warning to the people of Lesu, my departure was anything but that. Everyone knew that I was going to leave December 7th. Weeks ahead of time planning started for farewell parties, and various suggested affairs shook down to two: a large general feast and program, and a smaller, private party scheduled by Karake, to symbolize our friendship. In earlier times there were no going-away parties, because no one went anywhere. Now more and more New Irelanders go away from home to work or attend school. To mark such occasions, farewell parties are given,

consisting of feasting, oratory, and singing.

The main party began on the evening of November 27th, a Friday, at about 8 p.m., with a string band from Lamussong, a village about eight miles south of Lesu. String bands are a very recent phenomenon in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and seem to have sprung up in the wake of spreading radio broadcasting in the area. A string band consists of men playing guitars and ukeleles—both purchased ready-made and homemade of bush materials—plus various other homemade instruments. No traditional instruments are used in these bands. Formal dance presentations and informal participation in the dancing are part of the string band complex. The music is simple but engaging, and the songs are in Pidgin English and local languages and tell stories of love, friendship, and everyday happenings. The dancing looks like a joyous blend of the Twist and the Hula. The Lamussong band played constantly for thirteen hours, joined for a while at night by two other bands. *Tu-lait* (dawn) saw many onlookers departing but the band played till 9 a.m. After one hour's rest the main program began. Feasting, speeches by friends in Lesu, traditional dancing, and food distribution are characteristics of Lesu celebrations and marked this party as well.

On the 3rd of December I had another busy day, delivering the last two crates to the shipper in Kavieng, turning over the car to its purchaser, closing my bank account, picking up my return air ticket, and returning to Lesu on a truck owned by a Lesu man, Patrick De. My friends had urged me to stay in Lesu until after midnight of the 6th and let them accompany me to the airport by means of Patrick's truck. I agreed to do that because it seemed appropriate to leave New Ireland directly from Lesu.

Karake's party was December 4th at

his house. It started with presentation of gifts, many for my family in Chicago, especially the children, each gift being offered while shaking hands goodbye. We then had a feast and spent the rest of the night singing songs, which I recorded on the tape recorder. *Tu-lait* was more easily reached this time, it seemed, after the practice at the big party previously. I slept a few hours on Saturday morning, and during the day took photos of people I had missed in earlier photography. On Saturday evening I talked to friends, with the sad feeling that this was the next to last evening I would see them for a long time. Finally I retired to spend what turned out to be my last night of sleep in New Ireland, for Sunday night proved to be far too busy for sleep.

Sunday, December 6th, was obviously the last day for packing, or for anything else. A recurring question was, "Do you think you'll come back another time?" I thought over the elements of an honest answer to that question, such as research possibilities, financing, and the like, and fell back on the lame position that I hadn't known I would come back when I left in 1954, and I did come back, so maybe I would be able to come again in the future. It was suggested not altogether jokingly that my son David (now 13) could come back and live with them as a second generation anthropologist and study their succeeding generations. But none of this talk really convinced any of us that I thought I would be able to return soon.

The problem of disposing of my household gear hadn't really been tackled yet, and as the afternoon wore on, I began to dismantle my living arrangements so I could give away the various items. Through the evening, many people came and stayed with me and helped in the packing. It was not unlike the vigil carried out traditionally for a person thought likely to die. About midnight a group of men

came from Tandes, to shake hands and sing a few songs. They left and I distributed my gear, and finally I was left with only my luggage, and began to await the arrival of the truck to take us to Kavieng.

The truck was to be driven over from No. 2 Lesu at about 3:30 a.m. so that the drive to Kavieng would get us to the airport before 6 a.m. We began to await the arrival of the truck, for at that time I would have to say a final goodbye to the majority of the Lesuans, since only a few would come with me to the airport.

But my sadness at leaving soon began to be replaced by anxiety about the arrival of the truck and the beginning of my fear that I would miss the plane! 3:30 came, but no truck. At 3:45 I began to fear that I would miss the plane. 4 o'clock came and still no truck, but finally at 4:20, headlights appeared and soon the truck pulled up before the house.

We shifted my luggage down the stairs and into the truck. People crowded around to shake hands. Tears were in many eyes, and those who were to come with me climbed in the truck. Sau, one of my best informants and a close friend, was crying openly. Last goodbyes were shouted and the truck pulled out at about 4:30 a.m.

I rode in the cab of the truck, grateful for the chance to be relatively alone. Fortunately Talawe, in the cab with me, chose not to say much either. We concentrated on smoking cigarettes and watching the night-time East Coast Road unreel before us in the glare of the headlights. At about 5:30 we passed a village I knew to be half way to Kavieng, and thus knew that we had a chance of making the airport on time.

At about 6:05 with the sunrise cheerily spreading, at a point about fifteen miles from the airport, we stopped for a few minutes to wash up and toilet

some of the children at a nearby beach. Before that the people had been huddled in the open rear of the truck, with their flimsy shirts buttoned up against the wind and they had looked cold and bleak. But now with the tropical sun rising rapidly and the familiar warmth again beginning to be felt, everyone seemed in better spirits. The children scampered back to the truck. We all climbed back in and went on, to turn in at the airport at about 6:40 a.m.

We pulled up to the terminal, I checked my bags and I turned to my friends. We said our last goodbyes and I walked onto the plane.

As the plane took off, and headed south toward Rabaul, I tried not to think of them there waving and watching the plane vanish. I wondered if I would ever see them again. Lesu was so far from Chicago, in miles and in difference in culture. But their lives would go on and so would mine. We would think of each other often, but communication would be slow and incomplete.

And what of my work, what had I learned in a year? That eliciting the past, even the relatively recent last seven or eight decades, is not readily done, that there is much that I don't know of New Ireland art and ceremonial. I considered the work ahead, the task of shaking down, abstracting something significant from the minutiae in my notes. The still functioning memorial ceremonials, the new-style cement grave markers, could be considered to be part of the system of art and ceremonial. Also my corpus of photos of museum specimens provided evidence that there really had been a rich and fantastic world of art in New Ireland and that it had flourished as recently as forty years ago.

Their new interests and activities such as politics and cash cropping were signs of New Irelanders "emerging" into "our" world and away from their

traditional culture. My feelings were mixed about that; I hated to see the riches of the traditional past abandoned, but on the other hand the people of New Ireland liked many aspects of their new life, and I shared their pleasure.

The plane angled away from New Ireland, and the island shrank in size so that what I remembered of the luxuriant vegetation, dotted with peaceful villages of calm and pleasant people faded away in the distance into misty blue shapes. The petty routines of air travel began to assert themselves. I thought ahead to the transits through the various increasingly large and complex and bustling air terminals, Rabaul, Lae, Port Moresby, Brisbane, Sydney, then Honolulu, Los Angeles, and finally Chicago. In 9 hours I landed in Sydney, and in about 17 hours more at O'Hare Field in Chicago. I thought of the problems of lag of one's biological rhythms after being hurled thousands of miles from the other side of the world, but knew that such adjustment was going to be much, much easier and quicker than learning to adjust to living away from Lesu.

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

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