

Gábor Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History of North-East Papua New Guinea*. Translated by Zs. Bánhegyi. Occasional Papers in Anthropology, no. 1. Budapest: Ethnographical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1986. Pp. 90, plates.

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Lajos Biró, Hungarian naturalist and ethnographer, spent six years (1896-1902) in the Madang area at a critical time in the history of German New Guinea. He traveled widely and made huge collections of artifacts; his "catalogues" of these (Biró 1899, 1901) were, until now, the only written product of these sojourns generally available to the scholarly community. But a virtual treasure trove of diaries, photographs, and other publications (in Hungarian) have survived and we are all indebted to Vargyas for bringing some of these to light and our attention.

In his foreword, Tibor Bodrogi introduces this new Occasional Papers series as a venue for publication of materials, such as field notes and genealogies, "usually left out of other journals and periodicals" (p. 8). A selection of Biró's writings and photographs has been chosen by Vargyas "to illustrate an epoch in the colonial history of Papua New Guinea" (p. 8), and this they do magnificently.

Though he was not formally affiliated with the Neu Guinea Compagnie or the government, Biró's long-term residence at Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen and his participation in the European community there gave him intimate knowledge of the colonial bureaucracy on a day-to-day basis. Vargyas provides long excerpts (in English) from Biró's Hungarian writings that are invaluable in their detailed and candid portrayals of company and government employees, club and social life, domestic servants, and Chinese and Malay workers on the German tobacco plantations.

Of special interest is a section on "Papuan Wives and European Husbands" (pp. 41-53), consisting of translated extracts from a series of articles Biró published in a Hungarian periodical in 1923. Following the advice of his Neu Guinea Compagnie associates, who were required to be unmarried but established "marriages of convenience," Biró himself took *three* "wives" in the region. His affectionate descriptions (and photographs) of them and of his negotiations with their relatives are fascinating and perhaps unique in the literature.

Also of extraordinary value is Biró's previously unpublished account of a punitive expedition that he accompanied to the Bismarck Archipelago. The photographs of Vitu village before and after shelling by a German man-of-war, as well as of "prisoners-of-war," are both poignant and priceless historical documents. Biró also describes other European lashes with native populations, including incidents that have been conspicuously missing" from published accounts such as those concerning the Lauterbach expedition of 1896 (p. 71).

Vargyas has reproduced here sixty-nine photographs from the large Biró collection of glass negatives in the Archives of the Ethnographical Museum. The contrast is poor in some of these, but all provide superb documentation to accompany the text, and many have detailed captions written by Biró himself.

It is obvious from the samples provided in this slim volume that Biró's writings and collections would repay detailed study by any scholar concerned with the colonial period in Papua New Guinea. The Ethnographical Institute and Vargyas are to be congratulated on such an auspicious beginning for this new series.

## REFERENCES

Biró, Lajos

- 1899 Beschreibender Catalog der ethnographischen Sammlung Ludwig Biró's aus Deutsch-Neu-Guinea (Berlinhafen). Budapest: Ethnographische Sammlungen des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums, I.
- 1901 Beschreibender Catalog der ethnographischen Sammlung Ludwig Biró's aus Deutsch-Neu-Guinea (Astrolabe-Bai). Budapest: Ethnographische Sammlungen des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums, III.