EDITOR'S FORUM

"A GULF OF STYLE": EXPERIENCES IN THE PRACTICE OF ORAL HISTORY WITH THE ENGA

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The phrase a "gulf of style" comes from the Australian poet, Les Murray. It was used in 1980 by art historian Bernard Smith as he reflected on cultural conflict in Australia. His lectures were called "The Spectre of Truganini." His words:

> Frontiers are not places, except in Antartica, where men meet nature but where they confront other cultures, and systems of law conflict. Malinowski has called such frontiers 'a third cultural reality'; and they produce, in Professor Stanner's words, 'a queer set of shapes'. Les Murray has described them as a *'gulf of style'*. (Smith 1980:18; emphasis added)

On first coming into those high, green valleys of Enga in the July of 1971, within a few weeks of leaving behind almost two years of graduate school in America, and a lifetime of more than thirty years in Australia, I experienced an acute sense of crossing a threshold or a gulf into another life.

Pacific Studies, Vol. 12, No. 2--March 1989

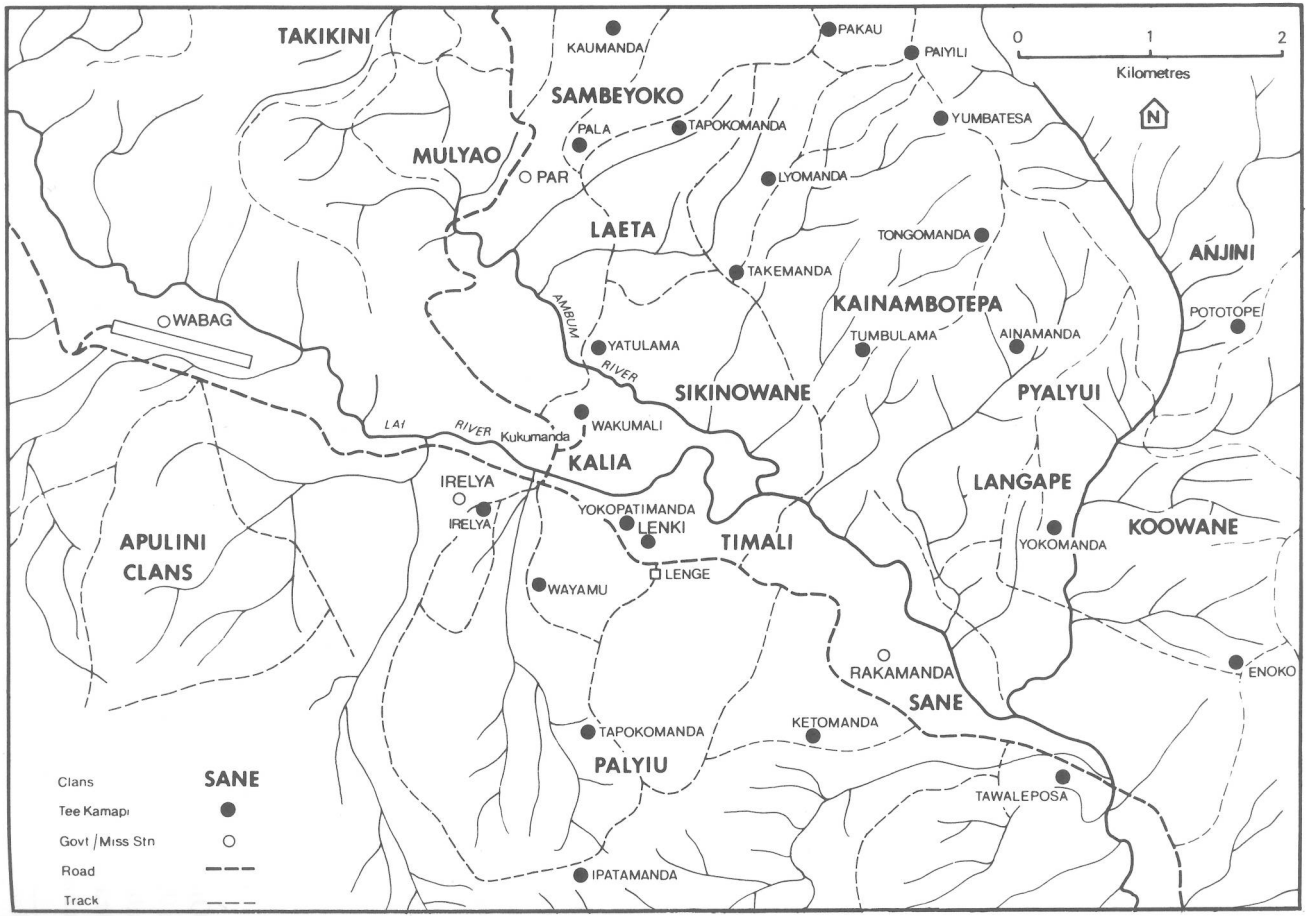

FIGURE 1 **Enga region, Papua New Guinea, showing clans and principal *tee kamapi* (ceremonial exchange grounds) of Yakani phratry.** (Reproduced from Lacey 1975; original by Cartographic Laboratory, *University of Papua New Guinea.*)

This was not only a gulf of communication, a difference of language. That difference did put a screen, a filter on discourse; even on everyday conversation. Three months' diligent, constant schooling with my teacher, Rupaina, with language manuals and tapes prepared by experienced missionary linguists, gave me a sense of "hearing" the language and yet not the confidence to speak it. The verb endings at the close of each sentence would elude me, despite constant drilling. So I would launch into questions and greetings, and then my side of the dialogue would lapse into silence.

As Rupaina and I launched into a pilot survey of the clans of the Yakani phratry across the Lai River valley to the north, we rapidly scaled our thirty questions down to a handful: about genealogies and settlement history, fertility rites, exchange patterns and male purification rites. These, we agreed, were the traditions and customs by which Enga men became Enga in the times before Jim Taylor had walked through the Lai and Lagaip valleys from east to west in 1938 and ushered in a colonial age (Taylor 1971). As Rupaina and I, and other guides, moved out to converse with key "men of knowledge" in other clans scattered through the wide expanse of valleys inhabited by Enga speakers, I could signal to these men that I knew something of the elements of their traditions. So we could proceed to explore together some deeper areas of tradition.

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But language, though a large issue, was not the only "gulf of style" between us. My hosts signaled others too; I could sense them also. There were, for instance, those fluid chains of reciprocal exchange that lay at the heart of Enga life. Very early after I moved with my family into a small house with *pit pit* (woven bamboo cane) walls and a tin roof on the edge of the central station of the Wabag Lutheran Church at Irelya, people came to our door and offered gifts, or goods for us to buy.

Soon we sensed that these were not all commercial transactions, though often on market days down in Wabag town, callers would be coughing at our door from first light. These were the women taking garden produce to market to raise money for government taxes and fees for school, or tithes for the church. Our house was the first one occupied by *kone* (foreigners, "red people") on the walking tracks that led from higher valleys in the south and east, across the mission station, to the town road. Whether we gained a reputation as good and fair buyers or soft and easy prey, we never discovered. But to be able to sell some of

the heavy loads they carried in net bags on their backs to a family who ate well must have been a relief for these women gardeners and traders.

But these early morning women traders were not the only ones to stand and cough at our door with goods at their feet or in their bags. Men would come with firewood. Some negotiated through the medium of the man who worked from time to time in our house, or washed our clothes. He was a keen go-between and his kinsmen, from near and far on the scale of relationships, would seek us out.

Other men came and offered precious items from their stores of custom and tradition: stone axe heads, stone carvings, and an array of bird-of-paradise feathers. The mission linguist and resident anthropologist had begun, some time before we arrived, a linguistic survey based on the terms for axe heads (Brennan 1982:198-205). He was also assembling artifacts for a regional museum that he later established. The colonial government frowned upon trade in traditional objects; the selling of bird-of-paradise feathers for distribution overseas was outlawed. So, I had a number of legitimate escape routes should these men become persistent about our striking a bargain.

What I did begin to sense, slowly and painfully and with the help of both Enga and foreigners who were more experienced than I, was that this was--for me--a time of testing. My work was becoming known. I was here from a "big school on the coast" and I was gathering information about ancestors and the times before. But what were my credentials, what ties was I seeking to build with and between the people among whom I lived and worked; what sources of wealth and power did I have; what kind of person was I? That probing agenda was expressed and acted out by these offers of gifts and the attentive listening and watching for my response.

Some probed more openly than others; some were very subtle in their approach. Kepai, the man who taught me much, in a very formal way, about bachelor purification rites (called *sangai* by his and other clans around Wabag), was wise and graciously subtle. His approach was as one teacher to another. It began with his walking down to our house from his home far up on the high ridges to the south and approaching me through his distant kinsman, Nakepane, who worked in our house. He inquired as to my work and purpose and took some well-worn and beautiful axe heads from his woven shoulder bag. Was I interested in their story and, perhaps, would I, like the linguist across the river, wish to purchase them to begin a collection of my own? he wondered.

My refusal to purchase them, or rather my advice to him to take them to the linguist for the Enga museum, did not break the chain of exchange and communication he was weaving. I now knew his name

and his status as a serious man of knowledge who would be willing to teach me of the old ways. So it was no wonder that, some months later, when I needed some detailed teaching about the *sangai* and other traditions, he was ready to come and begin.[1]

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Another of my teachers, Busa, became so in a different set of circumstances. He lived across several ridges to the north of the neighboring Ambumu valley. His son, Waka Busa, was soon to leave home and go down to the Lutheran seminary on the coast. Waka took me to his own house, located close by his father's house on a high terrace. That was a long journey: by jeep along winding roads, and then a long walk over a narrow path on a moonless night. We carried bedding, food, and various utensils. I was seen as one unfamiliar with such journeys, a *nongo pingi* (awkward man), and so was entrusted with one or two light things including a kerosene lamp for which we had no matches. I stumbled and almost shattered its glass. After a day of rather fruitless inquiries, it seemed, we gathered in Waka's house for our evening meal and were later joined by Waka's father, his mother, and family. Busa, Waka's father, inquired into what I was about, though he had been watching and listening carefully as I questioned other men that day. He then told Waka to ask me to switch on my tape recorder, He wanted to record something important.

I wrote down in my field diary for Wednesday, 19 January 1972, what he did:

> In the course of the conversation, Busa said he would like to recite a *nemongo titi pingi* (ritual poem) about the coming of the *lepe wai* (the sacred plant for the *sangai* rituals) into Kombane-Kokope (clan territory) in the time of his grandfather Makatai and grand uncle Katalu. This was a special ritual poem he [Busa] had learnt at the *sangai* and he knew it by heart. We recorded both this and then his own praise poem cast in the same form. The whole performance was a *tour de force;* the little audience was spellbound, because it was the first time they had heard it. I think his concern about losing Waka was the motive behind breaking the ritual silence surrounding such a performance. He felt he should teach Waka and others before it was too late. . . . He would allow me to play [this tape] elsewhere to stimulate others to record their treasures of tradition.

Waka Busa was full of wonder, surprise, and tears in the silence that followed. Then he spoke through his tears onto the tape to say how this was great poetry that he did not know existed, since he had not been initiated into the *sangai,* but had gone away to study at the mission high school.

At Busa's insistence, I went away with his tape and played it to others, including Kepai. Some were startled with the way he had played with tradition and elaborated it into a poem praising his own power and achievements in exchange. Others saw it as praise for these powerful plants and for the hero-ancestors who had endangered themselves to gain a great prize for their people. Quite a number responded to Busa's challenge and chanted their own people's praise poems, which had been bound in the silence of their memories from the time of their youth.

But Busa did not stop at that. Two months later, on the evening of 23 March 1972, he knocked at the door of our house, presented us with some cabbages he had grown, asked to come in, and told me once more to switch on my tape recorder. He had, he told me, only chanted a short version of the *sangai nemongo titi pingi* when we had first met. The reason was that he had to struggle with his memory after so long a silence. Over these weeks, he had worked on that memory and now he wished me to record a richer, longer version. So we sat there, before the fire, and this great chant flowed forth, wave after wave, until he was finished.

When it was over, Busa and I drank cups of tea. As he left he scolded me, saying he had traveled far to chant for me, had brought me cabbages, and what was I planning to give in exchange? He left me with a dilemma, which I later sought to resolve in negotiation with his son, Waka Busa. One thing Waka and I did was to work together for several weeks in January 1974 to translate the poem into Tok Pisin. The mission also, with Waka's help, published in their vernacular magazine an article on Busa as a poet with some extracts from that chant (Busa 1974). Perhaps his appearance, with photograph and text, in that magazine gave Busa standing as a man of wisdom among the literati and rising generation in the mission church. Was this an adequate response to his coming across the ridges with gifts of food and his chants to my house? Reflecting on that exchange between us in the light of anthropologists' writings on the significance of reciprocity in relationships among peoples of Papua New Guinea and their disjunctions in colonial contexts (see, for instance, Burridge 1969 and Feil 1984), I know now that inequalities and ambiguities between me and Busa are difficult to resolve.

For Busa and me, who had met and conversed in this way, an

exchange did take place. Its unresolvable dilemmas are many and still remain. We spoke to each other from different worlds and a "gulf of style" separated us.

* * * *

Then there was a different kind of exchange with another teacher in which he made that gulf even more obvious than did Busa. His name was Pangia. Like Busa, he was of the older generation shaped by the values and worldview in place before the effects of the "red men" were felt. He, too, had a son, Philip Pato, with whom I worked. And, too, at Philip's bidding, I had gone into Pangia's territory near the Lutheran station at Mulitaka many kilometers west of Wabag, in the Lagaip River valley.

That first abortive visit was in July 1972. It was there that I sensed acutely how some Enga were "reading" me and my work. Philip took me to a house at Yoko along the road southwest from Mulitaka. Pangia was there with other men. He greeted me coolly and asked me my business. I launched into my usual explanation about wishing to record some traditions and teachings from him as a "man of knowledge," so that the rising generation would have them on tape and in writing. In this way, I said, their valuable teaching may not be lost in a time of change. I also wanted to try to write a history of Enga people and clans. He heard me out in silence, so I went on to ask about his knowledge of the Mulapini phratry genealogy and his ancestors' patterns of dispersion and settlement in their territory.

There he froze and would not respond. Philip conveyed to me quickly that his father was very busy and could not spare time for me on that day. It was 12 July 1972--almost a year since we had come into Enga territory. I still had much to learn.

Philip informed me briefly that the men of Tupimane clan were involved with a land dispute and were being urged by government land officers to settle their clan boundaries so these could be recorded for the Land Titles Commission. That commission had been in operation since the 1960s (Sack 1974). It was seeking to negotiate with people in a number of regions of Papua New Guinea in an endeavor to fix boundaries and ownership patterns. The ultimate purpose of the territory government was to open up land for cash cropping and other commercial ventures by clan corporations or local entrepreneurs.

Both Philip and I were disappointed because we were convinced that Pangia had much to teach about the people of Yoko. After we returned

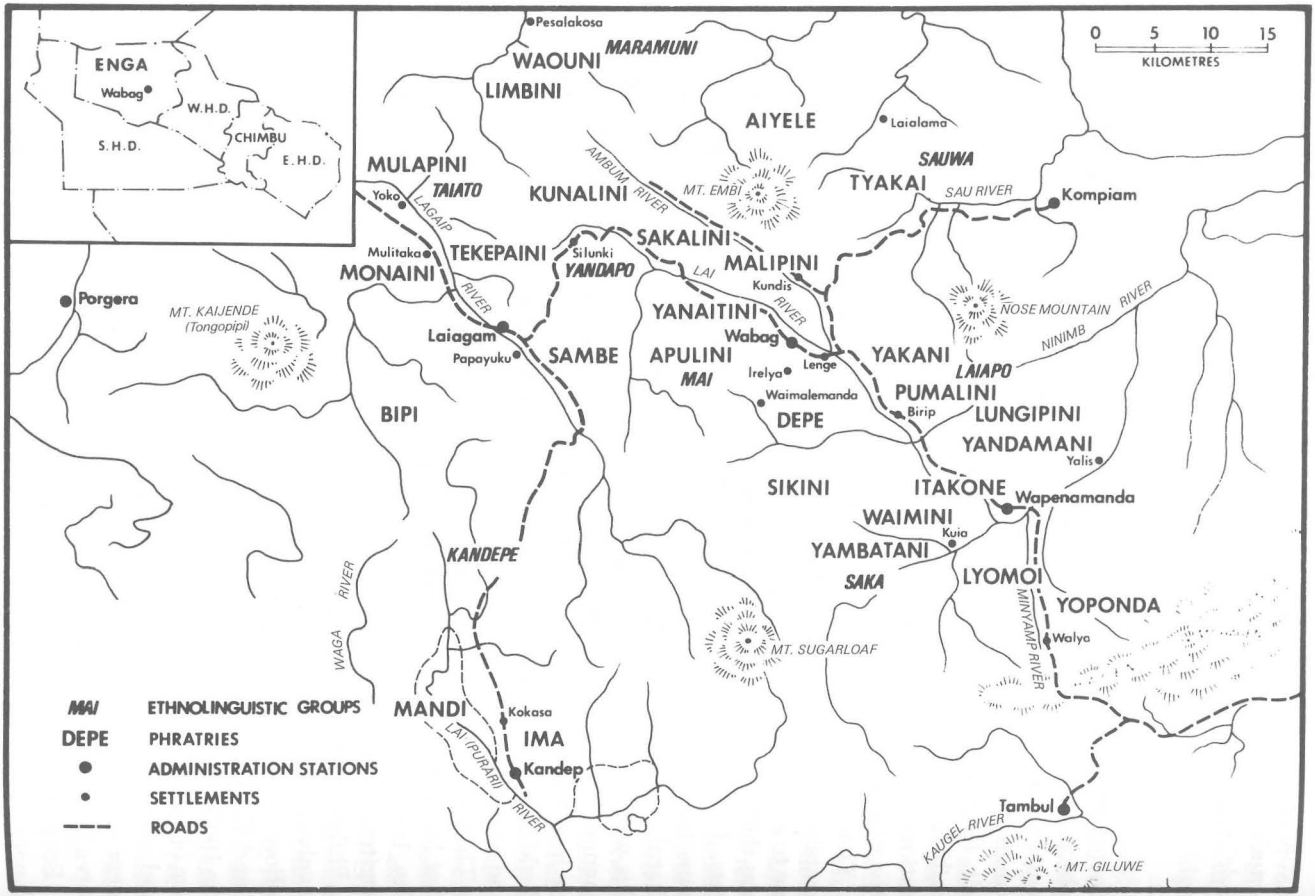

FIGURE 2 **Enga region, Papua New Guinea, showing ethnolinguistic groups and phratries studies.** *(Reproduced from* Lacey 1975; original by Cartographic Laboratory, University of Papua New Guinea.)

to our base at Irelya, two things emerged. Among Enga whose social, exchange, and political relationships were shaped by their clan and subclan identities, there was the habit of seeking to determine which clan "red men" belonged to. These included the following categories: *bingsu* (mission), the subclans being *lutere* (Lutheran), *popi* (Catholic), *esdiaa* (Seventh-Day Adventist), and others; *gavman* (government officers), including *kiap* (district officers), *polis* (police), *didiman* (agricultural officers), and others; *bisnis* (entrepreneurs and businessmen), who included trade storeowners, hotelkeepers, and others; *tisaa* (schoolteachers or researchers, fieldworkers, university staff); and so on.

Those earlier approaches and negotiations made at the door of our house about artifacts and feathers were aimed at testing my nature and character as a human being, and they were probes to discover my identity and ties. That identity and purpose, and hence the source of potential relationships, was an enigma for many, it seems. We lived on Irelya station, so was I *bingsu?* Yet I asked questions about the past, sometimes about what early missionaries had dubbed "the works of Satan"--fertility rites and other religious traditions like the *sangai.* This was a source of painful contradiction for people who saw me as *bingsu*. Or was I *tisaa?* I claimed to come from "a big school on the coast" (the university) and talked about writing down ways of the ancestors for their sons and daughters.

And for Pangia, that day in July 1972, I came wearing my long white socks and boots, bearing notebook and pencil and asking (naively, I later felt) about the dispersion of his ancestors from their point of origin in Yoko. To Philip, Pangia later revealed that, for him, the signs were clear, there were no ambiguities. I was a *kiap,* a government land officer. My disguise was thin, I was spying into their land boundaries to snare them and catch evidence for the *kiap* and *polis* to come and fix cement markers that would freeze the boundaries of their clan territory. No wonder he gave that steely silence and cold look.

Philip resolved to return to his father with one of my tape recorders but without me; to persuade Pangia that I was neither *bingsu,* nor *kiap,* but *tisaa.* He would ask his father, on his own and my behalf, to teach him about his heritage and traditions as a member of the Tupimane subclan of the Mulapini phratry. This he did, as they sat by the fire, close to the center post in Pangia's men's house on the night of 8 August 1972. What Pangia said as he began to teach Philip became significant, enduring, and disturbing teaching that shaped my approach to Enga oral traditions then and in subsequent years.

* * * *

Pangia revealed:

> I can tell you how our community began and the names of fathers and sons from our founder down to me and my sons. But I know that this knowledge is incomplete. When my grandfather and father taught me in our men's house, they did not tell me that a curious European would come and put me to the test by asking questions about the times before.

Then he proceeded to teach his son some central truths, such as the following:

> The Mulapini people began at Yoko. That is the place I know. But Mulapini men have gone and settled in other places too. . . . Our people are like the root and trunk of a tree which has many branches. They stretch out in many different directions, but they all grow from one root and trunk in Yoko. . . .
>
> The possum Komaipa begot Kombeke in Yoko. These two, Komaipa and Kombeke, are right at the base of the center post in our men's house. Like the center post, these two founders of Mulapini hold together our whole group.

Those images of the generating possum (a totemic emblem), the tree root, trunk, and branches (a central sacred place, stability and change among a people over time), and center post or hearth (a place and way for communicating powerful knowledge and traditions) have become paradigms for reflecting upon Enga and other traditions of origin and migration.[2] They come from a worldview and universe of knowledge different from that of Western categories of history. They began unlocking for me some elements in the Enga world and their visions of people living in and spreading through these valleys. But Pangia's opening words have conveyed to me his sense that we were speaking to each other across a gulf of difference.

Those others, who came offering gifts at our door, were seeking to reach across a gulf to discover in what ways I was human, what tendencies and possibilities I had to weave reciprocal ties between my world and theirs. Some sensed a response and continued the conversation. I sensed, for Kepai, that reaching across the gulf was possible as we engaged in dialogue as one teacher to another. Busa had taught and

commissioned me, had traveled across the ridges and through the valleys, like those hero-ancestors his chant praised. And after that second song came his chiding: What bridge was I intending to cross in response to such a gift and chant?

For Pangia, it was a gulf of knowledge, understanding, and perception that divided us. Implicit in those words of his lies a fear that I would not understand or that I would distort his teachings. Explicit is his sense of being assaulted by questions from a man who probed and questioned and who still represented the threat of colonial power, a man who might well harm the people of Yoko with what he heard. All those images that he used bespoke power: Knowledge, after all, gave power. Knowledge about their sacred emblem Komaipa and the genealogies traced from Mulapini could be seized by others to claim that they were true sons of those founders. If explicit details of the way the branches spread from their roots in Yoko were in the wrong hands, then his people's access to precious garden land and forest could be tampered with.

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That sense of the gulf of knowledge and power between us grew with hindsight. Coming out of graduate school to fieldwork put me in a different frame in 1972. What I sensed was that Pangia spoke to me from an intellectual and cultural universe different from mine, that we approached history from different vantage points. That opened up a whole arena for academic debate that has been pursued elsewhere and that exercised our minds and hearts in the time that followed when a number of us pursued the task of creating a "people's history" for a newly emerging nation in Papua New Guinea.[3]

Bernard Smith used that telling image, "a gulf of style," in the context of a reflection upon the frontier. A dominant theme in the comparative world history program at the University of Wisconsin during my years at graduate school (1969-1971) was one about "center" and "periphery," "metropole" and "frontier" (e.g., Leach 1960).

My practice of oral history evolved in Enga within that particular framework of knowledge and understanding. To trace its evolution, we need to turn to more Enga imagery. The words are difficult to translate. They come from a *sangai nemongo titi pingi,* those chants to which Busa introduced me in January 1972.

Yuu kuiamo miningi minao waipu leo lelyamo
Apu epeamo tuli soo kipu leo lelyamo.

These words praise the ancestor-heroes who went on epic journeys through deep valleys and over high ridges to gain famed *sangai* plants for new owners. They were chanted in a *sangai nemongo titi pingi* by Imbuni Mulyia one Saturday morning at the end of January 1972 at Irelya.

These ancestors, so the words recall, were traveling at night, carrying the sacred plants. They were guided along shadowy pathways by light sputtering from bamboo torches. They protected themselves with pandanus-leaf raincapes. They had ventured from the familiar territory of their home clan, crossed enemy territory, and come to the place where the owners of these plants resided. After costly negotiations, they had obtained some plants and, following a mutually amicable exchange, set off to carry their prize home. Because of the danger of being seen and thwarted by enemies, they rested by day and traveled by night. These sacred plants that they bore gave their new owners fresh life, understanding, wisdom, and power. So a song in praise of the plants and the brave men who journeyed through danger was made. It was modeled on the *nemongo* that the previous owners held with their plants. The current chant had been handed on by the new owners down to Imbuni Mulyia's generation. Images used, place names, rhythms, and patterns of sound echoed those of the place from which the *lepe wai* (bog iris) had come, as well as the shaping influences of the new owners.

The field diary entry made for 19 January 1972, when I first heard the *sangai nemongo titi pingi,* caught my sense that a new dimension had entered my struggles to record and decipher Enga traditions. That entry ended with the words, "This opened up a whole new door [for me] just when I was feeling that I really was not getting any direction to my work." It was in response to Busa's tape that Imbuni Mulyia recorded his *nemongo.* Others followed as I trekked around. Kepai became my teacher, too, in response to that search for "men of knowledge" to chant and explain to me the meanings of the *nemongo.* Despite severe difficulties in translating symbolic language, dense images, and allusions, these epic chants drew me. I knew then that the Enga had their Homers and that the masters of the plants who traveled through dangers to gain new sources of power, growth, and wealth for their people were other Ulysseses who braved odysseys in the high valleys. And, too, as I went on foot through drenched and muddy pathways along valleys and terraces in search of "men of knowledge," I had these images and chants in my mind's eye. I recalled, too, Frodo's quest for the ring in Tolkien's epic and the quests of Campbell's heroes "with a thousand faces."

In the years to come, working with Enga university students I encountered that same heartbreak that showed through Waka Busa's tears the night he first heard his father's chant. These students, like Waka, had chosen another road--that of Western learning and schooling in the colonial age. Even though the chants moved them to tears with their haunting beauty, the students could not unlock them or turn them into English because they had not been initiated into the language of the *sangai* rituals. These tapes, along with the others I recorded, are stored in the Enga provincial museum waiting for a modern poet to bring them to life for his contemporaries.

Despite hints and shadows of meaning I could catch, with much diligent help from a number of English-speaking Enga, there is a real sense in which I stand on one side of an impassable gulf. From the other side come the haunting songs of the *sangai nemongo titi pingi*, in which I catch glimpses of the hero-ancestors journeying through dangers with their flaring torches.

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It now seems a long journey, sometimes hardly sensed, that brought me to that edge, facing and barely understanding those carriers and masters of the sacred plants. As I moved among those "men of knowledge" who shared their wisdom and teaching with me between July 1971 and January 1973, was I on the "frontier," or on the "periphery" away from the "center" and the "metropole"? The answer is as simple and brief as it is ambiguous. I came out of a center of international scholarship and liberal academic learning in America into those deep valleys at the end of the colonial era. I saw myself, insofar as I could be critically self-aware, in the midst of an absorbing venture, as being out on the fringe, a long way from home. I was intensely aware of the differences in life and culture, and struggling to make sense of a whole new world of experience and knowledge.

Now living in my own country, a little more than fifteen years older and perhaps a little wiser, I sometimes sense that, if categories like "center," "periphery," and "frontier" make any sense, then going to Enga and being there was more like being at a center rather than on a periphery.

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To unravel this paradox may take me more years than I will be given. This discourse on paradox is all too easily misconstrued. On the surface,

it sounds like a hankering after a primitive golden age of innocence that has passed us by and that some romantics desire greatly, while some utopians believe it will break in on us after a great storm.

Perhaps it is so, For me, now, in this age when a fragile and turbulent world is threatened with extinction, an image of what I am seeking to say comes from a *tindi pii* (an explanatory legend) chanted around the fire in a mission guesthouse on 8 August 1972 at Pesalakosa, a Lutheran station on the northwestern edge of Enga country in valleys near the Sepik River. The teller was Saka. That was his baptismal name. His body was crippled by leprosy contracted in recent years. He was a significant elder in his local church community. Saka's name means "new, green, flourishing." It signified the new life he embraced through his baptism.

He was a famed chanter of *tindi pii* and responded warmly to an invitation to tell and have me record a tale. His audience, by that fire, before which he lay as if asleep while the chant flowed forth like a rising melody, was close family, the American missionary, the Enga bishop of the church, and me. Philip, Pangia's son, later helped me translate the story and I have used it many times as a way of unlocking some elements in the Enga worldview to others. Here the sinews of the legend will suffice, because its substance and detail are not an immediate concern.

Saka told of Pandakusa:

> Pandakusa was born of an earthly mother and unknown father. He grew strong and tall; moved from his mother's house and made his own gardens across the terrace, close to the house he built for himself. On a hunting expedition in the high forest, he met a beautiful woman whom he loved and whom he saw as being an embodied sky spirit. On his return home with his beloved and great crop of animals from his hunt, he met in his mother's house another woman, her guest. When Pandakusa looked on her, he became afraid because he saw her as the embodiment of a forest spirit, a dangerous person. Though he tried to reconcile the tension between himself and these two women and his mother by gifts of food, his anger and fear broke out when his mother and her guest sought to seize him. In his terror and rage, he ran from her house to his to snatch up his weapons. When he returned, mother and guest were gone. Running back to his own house, he found his beloved had disappeared too. He searched far and wide for all the women, but thought they were drowned in a nearby river. When he recov-

> ered from his days of grief and mourning, he saw again that tracks led to the trunk of a huge tree which pointed to a high mountain. Gathering his possessions, he climbed the trunk of this tree by a vine and crossed over into the place where sky beings dwelt on the roof of this high mountain. A search led him to his beloved, who invited him to participate with her brothers in an exchange which, if he did well, would signify his acceptance among her people. This he achieved next day. As they were dancing, a hush came as guests arrived led by an old man with white decorations painted over his body. This man beckoned Pandakusa to come to him in the center of the dancing ground. He then revealed to the young man that he was a sky being and Pandakusa's father. He also revealed that his son had been tested in the tension of his relationships with the two women guests and his mother. He informed his son that he had erred by favoring one guest and rejecting the other. He must now go through rituals of reconciliation with each, which he did. On completion of those tasks, Pandakusa became a culture hero and founder of a people and their exchange cycle. Then he joined his father and the women and traveled higher into the mountain to become a sky being.

A legend from a golden age of healing and reconciliation told by a leper who puts Christian overtones upon the founding myth of his people? Maybe that is what it is.

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It could also have a more universal sense to it. In the closing months of my fieldwork at the end of 1972, some of the mission officials, upon whose land we had lived while in Enga, asked me to communicate some of the discoveries I had made while listening to those "men of knowledge." I used Saka's *tindi pii* as the medium and told them that it expressed in narrative form some fundamental Enga values. To me these are as follows (Lacey 1973) :

- A person does not live in isolation as a single individual. His life, identity, and way of acting flow from the heritage that has come through generations of ancestors. He and his ancestors share in a common life.
- A person lives in a community that is made up not only of men and

women who are now alive and present, but also spirits, all of whom are alive. One needs to seek to relate to all these persons and beings in a balanced way.

• Living is a continual, changing, dynamic pattern of relationships between persons, some people, some spirits; all living. The good life is nurtured and maintained by working towards appropriate relationships with others.

Values such as these, which focus upon interdependence and the quest for balanced relationships and which perceive humans as living their lives out in a cosmos not simply of other persons, have significance for the quest for peace and justice in our troubled times.

More recently, as part of a community seeking to build structures and develop programs that enhance the possibilities for justice and a balanced world order, I have worked with people who have kept alive that original vision embodied in Saka's *tindi pii.* Joanna Macy, in her workshops on despair and personal power in the nuclear age, drew upon aspects of Buddhist tradition to propose the embracing of the values of *karuna* (compassion for our fellow beings in the cosmos) and insight into the interrelatedness of all life and reality *(prajna).* One medium she used for her teaching was a Tibetan Buddhist legend about the coming of the Kingdom of Shambhala (Bodian 1985; Macy 1983). At another workshop, conducted by Elise Boulding, the Quaker peace scholar and feminist historian, the focus was upon imaging a future without weapons (Boulding 1981). As I engaged with others in tasks of imaging such a future, the world of Pandakusa woven in Saka's *tindi pii* broke in. It became clear to me, and those with whom I explored that world, that some convergence was possible between that Enga world and the one we sought to bring about.

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Issues about center and periphery now become a little clearer. In those exchanges between me and "men of knowledge" in the early 1970s, I sensed that I came as a man from the center of my world and the colonial world to encounter and be taught by these men from across that gulf of difference. We were on a frontier; they were people at the end of the road to whom the benefits of "modernization" trickled down from centers of power. On the eve of independence some Enga sang about that sense of frustration and dependence that was developing for them as people distant from the emerging national capital.

Oh, Moresby,
You are far away
Behind the Blue Mountains--
Where the mighty Waghi River flows--
Through the giant valleys.
Oh, how unfortunate we are,
We sent letters to you--
But Waghi River sweeps them away,
All--all the letters we sent to you.
Here, helpless, we stay behind.

(Talyaga 1975:3)

They sang, too, of the ambiguities of a new age brought by red men who broke into their valley as travelers from that distant land, Australia *(Sali).*

For so long,
The Red men have lived in *Sali.*
But now they have travelled up,
Through the forests,
The Red men have walked,
Over the valleys and gorges.
The men of *Sali* have come,
To get us out of the forests,
They have cut their way through,
To deliver us out of the forests,
Sing about the men of *Sali,*
Who have broken the forests--for us,
Yes, do praise them.

(Talyaga 1975:9)

Perhaps their song in praise of these red men echoed their *sangai* praise chants that commemorated those hero-ancestors who brought great power and wealth with the sacred plants and songs and who had returned home from dangerous journeys into an enemy world beyond their clan lands.

My search with others for pathways to peace and justice carries echoes from encounters with Enga wisdom. In these times, the news from those valleys is often ugly. The people are torn apart by violence and war and riven by frustrations (Lacey 1987). These echoes of wisdom and insight into a world of better possibilities come from an ancient cen-

ter and that wisdom shares a congruence with other worldviews, alternative to our own. So perhaps if it were possible to thread a bridge across the gulf between different worlds, we may bring into being the conditions for human beings to recover creative capacities for "inventing our history," as Jean-Marie Domenach puts it.[4] In that way, we might build conditions for a future with hope.

So, if history is a way of musing upon oneself (Hillman 1983:46), then these musings of mine upon my practice of history with the Enga have reverberations that are more than simply personal.

NOTES

The field research in Enga Province, located to the west of Mount Hagen in the Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea, in 1971-1973 and 1974 was funded by grants from the University of Wisconsin, the University of Papua New Guinea, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation. The paper from which this article is derived was read at the Pacific History Association Conference held at John XXIII College, Australian National University, Canberra, in December 1987. This foray into autobiography has arisen from two sources in my recent research. One is investigation with a small group of fellow Australians into life history and changing religious perceptions, which has focused on taped interviews and conversations, and in which I have been interviewed by some of the participants. The second is my participation with a small number of Pacific Islanders and expatriates in a workshop on movement dynamics through time coordinated by Professor Murray Chapman and Dr. John Waiko and held at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii, in January 1986. Both these experiences have confirmed for me the view espoused by Jerome Bruner that there is a reciprocal relationship between life as lived and life as narrative: that "narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative" (1987: 13). So a distilling and telling of fragments of my experience with the Enga fashions and refines my growth as historian, and person. Not to be too pretentious or place too heavy a burden upon the fragments that follow, they are an attempt to interpret what happened to my historical understanding and craft in those encounters.

1. This changing relationship with Kepai and what he taught are explored in R. Lacey, "Coming to Know Kepai: Conversational Narratives and the Use of Oral Sources in Papua New Guinea," *Social Analysis,* no. 4 (September 1980): 74-88.

2. Reflections on Pangia's teaching are explored in R. Lacey, "A Question of Origins: An Exploration of Some Oral Traditions of the Enga of New Guinea," *Journal of Pacific History* 9 (1974): 39-54; and "Traditions of Origin and Migration: Some Enga Evidence," in *Oral Tradition in Melanesia,* ed. D. Denoon and R. Lacey (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea/Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1981), 45-56.

3. A number of the articles in *Oral Tradition in Melanesia* (see note 2) explore these issues, in particular the introduction by Donald Denoon and the papers by John Waiko and Anthony Ruhan. The phrase comes from D. Denoon, *People's History (Inaugural Address)* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1973). See also J. R. W. Smail, "An Autonomous History of South-East Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, no. 2 (1961): 72-102.

4. The full text of Domenach's statement is: "Development is not a matter of dressing in other people's clothes and imitating their way of life but of using the instrument of technology to achieve an honourable style of existence. It is not a matter of escaping from one's society and one's history but rather of creating a society capable of inventing a history" (in A. Amarshi, K. Good, and R. Mortimer, *Development and Dependency: The Political Economy* of *Papua* New *Guinea* [Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1979], 60).

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