

750 Papua New Guineas in Search of a Literature

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In 1970 the prestigious A.N.Z.A.A.S. Conference was held in Port Moresby. To mark this occasion each delegate was given a publication put out by Collins, Longman and prepared, in the main, by staff of the University of Papua New Guinea. Perhaps because it abounds in maps, the editors called it an atlas. It is crammed with fascinating statistics about the then emerging nation. By the date of publication over 750 distinct languages had been identified, which implies over 750 different cultural groups. Superimposed on these culture groups were the spiritual and material expatriate cultures of eight major christian missions and an uncountable number of minor sects. At one stage these mission groups claimed the adherence of something like 92% of the population. What kind of adherents and what were their purposes was not questioned. Peter Lawrence in *Road Belong Cargo* develops the well documented theme that imported christianity simply reinforced and modernised existing local religions with disastrous results in the case of the Rai coast indigenes who form the subject of his book. We can hardly view christianity as a unifying cultural force through cargo cultism, though the cult of cargo is still a major area of concern to government and missions alike.

The very thought of attempting to delineate or describe a national literature for a nation of 750 cultures is appalling rather than daunting. The anthropologist would attack an attempt to so do. Yet the casual observer would see little difference between the vast majority of these cultures. Coastal people and highlanders are obviously different in dress, ornament, style of house and building materials but village organisation, agriculture and food gathering would seem to have many similarities to the less than expert observer. This presents us with something of a dilemma. Are the differences between the products of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler (before the demise of the last) different in any significant way? Clearly many of the loyal customers think so, but stripped of superficialities of styling the products of the three motor giants, range for range, were

remarkably similar in price, performance and engineering. In like manner, can we argue that the similarities between at least large groups of Papua New Guinea cultures are more important than the differences? (Except, of course, to the anthropologists.) Broadly speaking all cultures share one important factor. They had no written tradition until the arrival of the foreigners who were usually missionaries. An attempt to develop a vernacular literacy is very new indeed. There is, shared by almost all cultures, an oral tradition of myth and story. In addition there is universally a non-technological culture in the European sense though not an unskilful one, an extended family system, and a subsistence food producing way of life. Dance, decoration of goods and persons and some form of music is also shared. Most cultures have also some spiritual beliefs, usually of the kind labelled *animist*.

Until the late nineteenth century, what is now the nation of Papua New Guinea was a number of islands, some large, many small, inhabited by groups of slash and burn agriculturalists, fishermen and hunters who scrubbed along with minor wars, raids and cooperative ventures more or less successfully. The penetration of European missionaries heralded the annexing of the islands by the British, Germans and Dutch and later the Australians who inherited the British sector, and the German part as well by League of Nations mandate after the First World War. The period from the late nineteenth century until the Second World War can reasonably be called the first period of colonial exploitation. During this period there was little attempt to change the indigenous population and their way of life. Such wealth as was possible was taken from the land, the Bulolo Valley gold, for example, and the native people when used at all were in conditions little better than slavery, though naturally nobody called them slaves. The second period of colonial exploitation dates from the Second World War. Those years saw a strong but patchy upsurge in attempts to 'educate' the native people in low-level European skills, a tremendous rise in exploratory and administrative activity, the employment of younger natives in minor administrative posts, a more sophisticated wealth removal in forms like coffee and timber and the rise of nationalism, albeit a somewhat 'parochial' one. The last owed some of its origins to well-intentioned and doubtless sincere emotive farewells by Australian soldiers who promised goodies from the future to their erstwhile loyal 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels'. Alas the goodies proved to be subject to the Protestant Ethic and most Papua New Guineans had little cash nor means of earning very much. This period was also characterised by expatriate masters who genuinely loved the people, though with a strong paternalism and almost as much superiority as the arrogant whites of the first period.

The golden noon of the second exploitation reached its zenith in the early 1960s. Independence and self-government were now seen as feasible goals, but not in its near future. Then the United Nations, men like Michael Somare and groups within Australia itself began to upset the carefully stacked cart of coconuts. By 1970 the Australian administration was mounting a major effort, somewhat too little, certainly too late, to prepare for independence within a decade. It is a tribute to a large band of patient and hardworking men both black and white that, in 1975, when it came about, it

was so successful. A criticism of Australian efforts in this regard was made by a small group of New Zealanders at the University of Papua New Guinea. They argued that Australia should have behaved so badly that it forced a war of liberation which would have clearly united the divergent island tribes. Perhaps such a course of action would have affected the development of prose literature for it will be argued later that independence stopped the protest writing by removing the excuse. It is a course of action most of us would oppose even at the cost of obliterating a Melanesian Dickens as stillborn.

Somewhat akin to the three periods after European contact—first and second exploitation and now independence and emergent nationhood, there are three levels of literature to be distinguished. Remember that the 750 Papua New Guineas had a long tradition of oral culture and that this continued in spite of some missionaries and encouraged by others until this day. What I call the first period of literature is the ‘pretty-pretty’ publication. Anthropologists had been noting myths and legends for many decades but in the late 1960s a market bloomed for illustrated books relating stories and pictures. This still persists, though less commonly. The characteristic of such publication is the Anglicisation (or Europeanisation) of the story and the selection of the more ‘romantic’ styles of story. Authors are often coy about the degree to which their text is a direct translation. The following extract could not possibly be close to the vernacular original in any of the vernaculars known to me.

The night was full of the voices of the bush and in the background was the gentle lap lap of the waves and the low groan as pebbles pulled back one over another. . . *The Shark Callers*, p.57

In another publication, Glenys Kohnke, the author of *The Shark Callers*, presents artifacts, artworks and short mythological stories. This volume is entitled *Time Belong Tumbuna*. Though much less ‘Europeanised’ than *The Shark Callers* it provides an interesting comparison with the style of the myths to be quoted shortly from one of the collections of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Kohnke entitles this story “The First Taro”. The origins of food plants are the subjects of many myths of Papua New Guinea over a whole geographical area. The following is the opening paragraph of Kohnke’s version, and about one third of the whole.

Long ago in New Ireland there was no taro. The people ate sweet potato, bananas and fish. One day the women went into the bush to look for food and left the children to play in the village. The women who had walked far into the hills did not return before sundown. The children were very hungry and were thinking of food when they saw large, leafy plants come singing and dancing into the village clearing. The moonlight played along the dark, silvery green leaves and the children were frightened and hid in the houses. However, the dance of the taro was so graceful that the children ventured out to watch again. (p. 38)

No doubt the substance of the original story remains much the same in this version of "The First Taro" but one cannot use Kohnke's version as a source of material for a literary appreciation of the original. Some of Shakespeare's plots allegedly derive from *The Arabian Nights* but one would hardly use his plays as a source to write a criticism of the Arabian classic.

In 1974 the Summer Institute of Linguistics published a volume edited by K.A. McElhanon, entitled *Legends from Papua New Guinea*. The prime purpose of the "S.I.L." is proselytising christianity through vernacular translations of the christian Bible. In my experience the organisation contains many true scholars and a number of those whose zeal is more obvious than their linguistic science. In the preface to this volume, McElhanon makes the point that the translations are close to the vernacular form, only being changed to remove redundancies and to fit the English form. I am inclined to accept this as accurate. The following extract from "The Brothers and the Old Man" has a ring of authentic translation to me, since I have tried to render stories into English myself.

There were six brothers who lived at Kambale. There was an old man who lived at Komba. One day when the six brothers built a fire at Kambale, the old man saw the smoke and came across from Komba. When he saw them he said, "Oh, my grandsons, so this is where you live!" They said, "Oh, grandfather, you have come!" (p. 173)

Assuming my inferences about the validity of this collection are correct we can adduce some evidence as to the truth of my assertion that there are many similarities between the cultures in their stories. The following two extracts are from the food plant myths of two different groups, translated by two different people. Both concern the origin of coconuts, an important part of the diet for a considerable number of people of the islands. The first is from the Abelam people:

When the younger brother stepped back into the water to wait for more fish, the older brother quietly sneaked up, took the head and hid it in the grass. Then he sat down nearby and watched. The younger brother came up the bank, poured out the fish, and put out his hand to pick up his head. But it was not there! He groped around searching for it again and again, but he could not find it. He felt for it all around the place. Finally he fell over and died.

After the older brother was sure that his brother was dead, he gathered up all the fish in the container and took them home to his wife. As he laid them out for her to see, he lied and said, "I cut a line and threw it into the lake and caught some fish. I also dammed up the river, let the water trickle out slowly, and then I caught the fish in my hands." So he and his wife ate the fish together.

Some time later, the older brother went back to see what had happened to his younger brother's body. He found it was rotting, so he left it as it was. Later he returned and found that a

very young shoot was growing out of his brother's head! Curious about this, he went back again some time later and discovered that a big leaf was ready to open. After a long time, he returned a third time and found that a strong young palm was growing there. Some months later, it began to bear fruit. When he returned again and again, he found that the coconuts were getting bigger and bigger. (p. 19)

The second is from Rossel Island:

There was a man at Abaletti called Chima. He and his nephew went fishing in the lagoon. They were looking for clams. While Chima was waiting in the canoe, his nephew dived for the clams. But his nephew was taking the meat out of the shells and eating it in the sea. Chima said to himself, "Why hasn't my nephew come up with any clams yet? He must be eating them". So he pushed the boy down into the water with the pole and held him there until he died. He left him there for the fish to eat, and later on the boy's skull drifted ashore.

One day Chima found his nephew's skull on the shore and took it home. He cut some dry banana leaves, put the head on them, and left it in the house. It turned into a coconut. He waited and waited, and then one day a sprout came from the coconut. After that many coconuts appeared there. (p. 157)

In both these stories the coconut plant grew from the skull of a human who had been murdered and benefitted both the murderer and his people. In some contrast Hans Andersen's story "The Rose Elf" told of a plant which sprang from the victim's head being the ultimate source of revenge upon the murderer. The Papua New Guinea ideas are closer to the North American legend where maize was created from the body of Mondamin, dead after a wrestle with Hiawatha. The coconut from a human skull is probably an easily made causal link through the similarity of shapes. A Sepik river myth that I have never seen written down tells a similar story. A woman was inseminated by a river spirit/devil and gave birth to a child. Later, at the order of the spirit, she killed it and buried the body by a river bank. A coconut palm grew from the skull.

The language of the two extracts quoted is similar, using simple or compound sentences rather than complex ones. This may be an artefact of the translation but I would accept that both the translators tried to render the original as accurately as possible. In any case, however one tries to do it, an analysis of a written translation of an oral traditional form is unsatisfactory. Perhaps this may become possible in some measure now that the Education authorities in Papua New Guinea are collecting local stories written in the vernacular where an alphabet has been devised. Otherwise the task demands the analysis of sound recordings by some superlinguist. The latter is something of an impossible task.

The oral tradition existed before the white man and it still exists. The advent of vernacular alphabets may enrich or stultify the tradition. But it is a tradition which existed before the era I have called the 'first colonial exploitation' and remains relatively unchanged by it. It is very different

from the literature of the second period following World War II when narrow colonialism was swept away and embryonic nationalism began.

The output of this period is not large. Indeed, most of the bulk of it is scattered in "letters" to newspapers and in the duplicated "publications" of secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Two major prose works are excellent examples of the political and literary climate of the second period up to independence. These are *The Crocodile* by Vincent Eri and the autobiography of Michael Somare, *Sana*. Both Eri and Somare received their elementary education before the post World War II expansion and both write in what is effectively their third language. Eri became, and still is, a public servant. Somare, as is well known, began as a public servant and entered politics to become his country's first Prime Minister. Eri has been a first assistant Director of Education, High Commissioner to Australia, and is currently the Secretary of Defence. He is regarded by many of the second stage colonialists as having a "chip on the shoulder". His book is a novel, though undoubtedly autobiographical in parts, and relates the story of its hero, Hoiri from his boyhood before the war with Japan through his experiences as a carrier with the allied armies to a period of post-war disillusionment. There is no apparent attempt to romanticise village life—Eri's narrative has considerable verisimilitude. The descriptions of Hoiri and his family in their relations with the Australian *raj* are from a one-sided viewpoint, not unreasonably, but they do not strain credulity if the reader is familiar with the country over a period of years. I would suggest that Hoiri and his group were more than somewhat unfortunate in that they do not meet any official who deals fairly with them by any culture's standards, but all of the incidents related would be possible. Indeed, I have no doubt they did happen, though probably not all to the one victim.

Hoiri's village had been subject to many years of missionary contact before his birth. Eri's description of village life is matter-of-fact. The village had incorporated the intrusion and gone on with living with it. Eri describes a typical morning.

They were mostly married women, young and middle-aged. They too had had their early morning bath, but for a different reason. It was a price they had to pay for the honour of being lawfully married. The unwedded women did not have to prepare meals for their husbands and children—although their full breasts showed that their male visitors frequented their beds at nights.

Just before Councillor Morafeae blew his whistle, Hoiri had heard the chattering of women and the creaking of their cold knees and ankles. They were the "masusa" who had just had babies. Fresh smelling mud over their bodies was meant to take away the odour of motherhood, to cool the milk in their breasts and to soften their nipples. The further away from the village, the better the mud. . .

At school Hoiri sat crosslegged on the rough palm floor, nursing a heavy heart. Suaea, his aunt, was a lovable woman and near-perfect mother substitute. But it was the presence of his father that made Hoiri feel secure.

Not all the Government officers visiting the village took the

trouble to see the schools. But nevertheless it was better to be prepared than not. Painstakingly, the teachers shaped and reshaped their blackboard writing as near as they could to that shown in the copy-book. The older male pupils supervised the nose-washing of the younger children at the river; the girls swept the school grounds. (pp. 20,21)

The reader gets the impression that the descriptive narrative is a vehicle for the revelation of the oppression of the Australian *raj*. Hoiri is continually coming into contact with Australians and other Europeans, usually as officials. In his village, in Port Moresby, when he accompanies his father on a trading venture, as a carrier conscripted by the patrol officer and later by ANGAU (the Australian civil administration unit) and finally when he receives his meagre pay and compensation after the end of World War II. This statement may be unfair. The book is about Hoiri and his growth to manhood. Where Hoiri lived and at the time he grew up, contact with and influences by officials of the colonial and missionary powers was inevitably an important part of his life. Yet the loss of Hoiri's young wife to the crocodile, as it is inserted in the novel, really points up the inhumanity, ignorance and arrogance of the young patrol officer who will not release him from his conscripted duty to perform his familial duties to his dead wife. There are also constant minor side references as the narrative unfolds which are not to the Europeans' credit. Consider the following extracts:

(In the village)

You've only got to go to the patrol post or the big Government station to see what people mean by 'European sleep'. The policemen, the clerks, the prisoners, and all the workers start work at eight o'clock when the conch-shell or the bugle blows. The Europeans usually arrive a little ahead of the morning tea; it takes a long time for the little teapots to run dry. (p. 21)

(In Port Moresby)

A loose-fleshed, middle-aged white woman leaned lazily over the counter, eyeing the trio suspiciously. With the same hawk-like gaze she spied upon the other native shoppers.

'Yes, boy, what do you want?' she asked Aravape in a gruff voice. This set Aravape in a frenzy. He tried to communicate this to Sevese with his stiff arm gestures and frowning looks. The shop assistant's fat fingers began to tap the seconds away. 'Come on, what is it you want?' she said after five taps. 'I haven't got time to be waiting while you boys think.' The sudden release of energy set Sevese's pointer-finger towards the roll of canvas, narrowly missing his relative's eyes. 'Five pounds,' she said stretching the palm of her hand out. Her fingers started tapping again as Sevese counted the money. Aravape and Hoiri helped too, just to stop those stubby fingers from tapping.

'Here, Sinabada,' Aravape said, turning toward the counter with the money in the palms of his both hands. 'Parentless woman!' he cursed, when he realised what the woman had done. 'She made us hurry as if she had many buyers for the same roll of canvas. Now a white man shopper has come in and

she has gone over to serve him just like his money is more valuable than ours. And look at that Orokaiva who has been waiting to be served. She went straight past him as if he wasn't there.' (p. 45)

Incidents of this nature occur whenever Hoiri comes in contact with Europeans. They are almost 'throwaway lines' compared with the force of these that follow. The first takes place when Hoiri's wife is taken by the crocodile and his relatives chase the patrol to fetch him back to his religious and tribal duties. John Smith, the patrol officer, has already been the butt of a number of incidents like the two quoted above, so we are prepared for what follows:

'That's not true. You want the whole patrol called off. Yes, that's what it is. And how cunning. You pick the right moment when I am drunk. I must say I wasn't wrong thinking you were a cunning bastard.' He laughed in mockery.

'No sar. Story he true. This here people he come from the village bring bad news.'

'If it is true—so what? What's that got to do with me?'

'I ask you sar, more better Hoiri and Meraveka he go to village look for crocodile.'

It was too much to ask of John Smith. Releasing one of his carriers was too much to ask, but the idea of losing two was too ridiculous to even think about. It would throw several months of planning into confusion, a thought he wouldn't bear. What did it matter if one woman was eaten by a crocodile? So much the better! At least it was one less mouth to feed. But the work of the Government must go on unhindered. The people were the Government's children and therefore his children. It was his job to see that they did not make unnecessary requests or that they did not make major issues out of minor ones. Whatever happened, the interest of the Government must come first. (p. 100)

The second is a wartime incident. Hoiri and his friends are employed as conscripted labour by ANGAU and paid very poorly indeed. Camped with the allied armies they make and sell souvenirs to the soldiers. Hoiri amasses £50, a considerable fortune at the time. About to be returned to their village, the armies are inspected by ANGAU officials. The following description speaks for itself:

Hoiri emptied his pockets. Then Mr. Hill's eyes fell on the small bag. 'What's in there?'

At school Hoiri's catechist had often said that telling lies was a sin against God. But he had not been told what happens when a lie is told for a good reason. Maybe that, too, was a sin—perhaps a less serious sin; there wasn't time to think out the whole matter. He decided on telling the truth rather than a very good lie. The man facing him would only have to snatch the cloth bag to find out what was in it.

'It's my money, sir'.

'What? Don't give me that rubbish!' Mr. Hill nodded. 'So,

you're going to make it difficult for me—as if I haven't sweated enough for one morning—are you?' He stood back, pushed the hat away from his forehead and placed both hands on his hips. 'Since when did you get paid? As far as I know, none of you were paid any time.' He ground his teeth as he said, 'Just tell me you stole the money and you won't be in trouble.'

'Sir, I made canoes and bows and arrows. So did other carriers present here. I got this money from the American soldiers who bought what I made.'

'You certainly are a clever one to cook up a tale like that.' With that Mr. Hill snatched the bag of money from Hoiri's hands and put it into his own pocket. (p. 169)

The third extract is indeed the last paragraph of *The Crocodile*. Hoiri has returned to his village, his profit from his industry stolen by the ANGAU official, his reward in legal ways amounting to eleven pounds, his wife dead and his disillusionment and confusion complete. We are prepared for the final injustice which heralds the second age of exploitation. The war with Japan over. The colonial war goes on:

He felt cold in his heart and incredibly lonely. His life seemed a confused mess. He was insensitive to the noisy shouting of the people around him. In a flash he saw in front of his eyes all the wasted years of carrying the white man's cargo. He knew that the white man, with all his wisdom and power, could not help him to get his wife back. He did not see the policeman striding up to him and he was only vaguely aware of the hot rusty grip of the handcuffs around his wrists. As he started walking, he felt the square shape of the bank book in his pocket. 'Maybe this money will send Sevese to the white man's school, maybe he will grow up to understand the things that baffle me,' he thought numbly, as he was led back to the office he had wished never again to see. (p. 180)

I have said that I find all these incidents credible in themselves even if not as misfortunes happening to the same character. The political impact of Eri's book rested on the credibility of the incidents not the coincidence of the continuity of the victim. **It was easy for the Papuans and New Guineans** in minor Government jobs on wage scales very different from Europeans performing similar jobs and debarred from the European amenities to identify with Hoiri and feel that he had voiced their grievances. The appearance of Eri's book was followed by short stories with a similar theme appearing in student publications such as those from Goroka Teachers' College. However, five years later a Papua New Guinean became the leader of his independent country. Those who might have followed Eri lost their *cause celebre*. Perhaps the New Zealanders had been right, at least in the area of literature. Five years may seem time enough for other social criticism to appear in novel form but we must not forget the outstanding effort required to write a publishable novel in England when the author has had **limited educational opportunities** and is a member of a socially and economically inferior group. Eri's book will remain as the only represen-

tative of its class.

If *The Crocodile* represents the Papua New Guinean militant (or at least potentially so) *Sana* is the Papua New Guinean triumphant if I may borrow from the language of the missionaries. In style, language and tone the two books are very different. It is difficult to say whether this represents different editorial influences, the fact that Somare was a professional journalist, or a possible choice by Eri of a style he considered appropriate to Hoiri in telling his story. Where Eri's style is simple, Somare's is confident and more polished. Where Eri's descriptions of village life seem to have a perspective from within the village, Somare's descriptions seem to come from outside. *The Crocodile* is from the personal viewpoint of Hoiri and his experience is limited as is his power. *Sana* is expansive, general and gives the impression of an author confident in his position giving a balanced view in hindsight of great events. Which of course the book does. Whatever else, *Sana* is, it is the story of the political manoeuvring of the politicians who took independence and power for their countrymen in 1975.

In an extract typical of Somare's description of village life in his childhood, he is looking back on it. Eri in the first passage quoted is still inside his village but *The Crocodile* does not purport to be autobiography. Hoiri/Eri is still travelling. Somare has arrived.

We spent whole days fishing. We boys went out in groups to sit on the beach and roast the fish we had caught. Sitting on the beach and resting after our meal we often held drawing competitions. Each boy would draw his 'muntai' designs into the sand. He might draw his canoe marks or the marks his clan used on their paddles and spears. No one had as yet taught us how to draw these marks, but we watched the old men at work and copied them as best we could. Girls would draw their tattoo marks. Then we decided who was the best artist. (p. 7)

Although very different in so many respects, *Sana* makes many points about the effects of European influence which are of the same kind as those made by Eri in the opposite part of mainland Papua New Guinea. Somare is dealing with a later time and he does so in a less personal way. The missionaries rather than the *raj* are the main target for Somare's ire.

The missionaries who tried to destroy our culture never properly understood our system of values. They considered all our customs evil and pagan. They forbade the blowing of flutes and the dancing of masks. They pushed the *haus tambaran* out of our village squares and built their churches there instead. They did not understand that the *haus tambaran* contained the very spirits that motivated our people. (p. 13)

Those who had been to mission schools usually isolated themselves when they returned to their village. When I came home on leave and saw the missionaries attacking our culture, I felt more closely drawn to my own people. I became incensed when I saw a missionary breaking some of our sacred flutes. This was the first time that I had ever opposed a white man. I

cried out angrily, 'Who do you think you are? What makes you think you can come here and do that to us!' It was on this occasion that I learned to respect the old priest, Wino. He was the one who put up the strongest resistance to this destruction. I said to him 'You protect these objects. Look after them, for one day you will have to hand them down to me'. (p. 41)

As Somare develops his narrative, other sources of friction appear.

If civil servants had kept entirely out of politics, the country would have been without leadership. Every time I was brought up for questioning, and my boss said to me, 'Why do you do this when you know it is against the rules?' I answered, 'Because there is injustice in this country'.

Adverse reports were building up in my personal file. I realized that I would not receive any promotion in this job. In 1965 I applied for a scholarship to Administrative College to improve my education. (p. 44)

These organizations became very active when C. E. Barnes, the minister for territories, announced the freezing of all local salaries. The argument was that Papua New Guineans should be given salaries that were compatible with what the country could afford. Accordingly, when new appointments to the public service were made, local officers would receive smaller salaries—one half or even less than their expatriate counterparts who were doing the same job. Those of us who were already employed were to have our salaries frozen so that, even if we were promoted, our salaries would stay the same. This new rule angered all of us. It was typical of the high-handed manner of the colonial government that the announcement was sprung on us suddenly, without any warning. There was probably no other single issue that made Papua New Guineans more aware of the injustices of colonialism. (p. 43)

The first fifty pages of *Sana* are more autobiographical than political. From the fifth chapter, 'Leader of the Opposition Pangu pati' Somare's history is virtually the political history of the country from 1967 to 1975. It is a story of deals and compromises, of alliances and defeats. There were two serious challenges to the infant coalition, trying to rule and learn to rule. The Gazelle Peninsula land problem and Bougainville copper almost wrecked the fragile "home rule" government before independence. Somare and his helpers literally balanced a see-saw of shifting alliances to calm the dissidents. Politics was Somare's life and Somare's life was Papua New Guinea politics. In his antepenultimate chapter, Somare says 'I soon realized that I was no longer master of my own time and that my scope for a separate private life was drastically reduced' (p. 95, Somare as Chief Minister).

Even on the eve of independence Somare and his supporters were confronted with 'Papua alone' movement (Papua Besena). Fortunately it was 'a real anticlimax'. The book ends on a confident note.

When looking for solutions to our problems I will continue to rely on the tradition of *Sana* that I was born into, brought up in, and initiated into. The modern nation state faces us with problems my grandfather never dreamed about; but the wisdom of *Sana* is just as relevant today as it was in his time.
(p. 144)

The lack of a *cause célèbre* seems to have temporarily ended Papua New Guinea's major prose works. The Papua New Guineans are not yet geared to a culture of major written works. However, the oral and visual tradition is reshaping itself in drama. Short plays in English and Pidgin have begun to be written and performed, in the main concerned with the impact of 'Modernisation' or 'Europeanisation' on a variety of people from traditional cultures. An outstanding recent example is Nora Brash's play 'Where do we go from here?'. Others to be watched are Ignatius Kilage, Eri Kiki, Wilham Takaku and John Kasaipwalova. It seems logical to me that this artistic form—the drama—with its associated literature will develop rapidly and spectacularly. This may well lead to a rise in production of prose works. Certainly five or ten years from now there will be sufficient live drama to provide material for literary appreciation, a worthwhile activity indeed. The development of the literary arts has been, and I suggest will be, largely a peaceful expansion of village story telling, ritual and dance spectacle, quite like the political growth of the new nation. If the lack of bitter conflict with the colonial power lost us a Melanesian 'War and Peace', it may well produce in its stead a Motuan Galsworthy or a Sepik Christopher Fry.