

Zeitschrift: Acta Tropica
Herausgeber: Schweizerisches Tropeninstitut (Basel)
Band: 25 (1968)
Heft: 3

Artikel: Kukukuku : Medical Patrol into one of the last restricted areas in the New Guinea Highlands
Autor: Stöcklin, Werner H.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-311536>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 09.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Kukukuku

Medical Patrol into One of the Last Restricted Areas in the New Guinea Highlands

WERNER H. STÖCKLIN

‘There was always this feeling that in New Guinea the time wasn’t much later than the morning after Creation — and that this island’s creation had been a last hurrying job of throwing together a wilderness too ruggedly wild and wet and careless to be an Eden. — God made New Guinea on Saturday night.’

(COLIN SIMPSON)

Contents

A. Introduction	193
B. Patrol Report	196
1. Purpose of Patrol	196
2. Diary	197
3. Ethnological Remarks	198
Contacts and ‘political’ relations	198
Social organization	199
Religion and mortuary customs	209
Native medicine	211
4. Conclusions regarding a ‘Morei Health Service’	214
References	215
Zusammenfassung	216
Résumé	216

A. Introduction

Though the earliest references to New Guinea date from the sixteenth century, this island does not appear to have been of much interest to European powers till 1828 when its western half was claimed by the Dutch. In 1884 the eastern portion of ‘Melanesia’ was annexed by Germany (Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land and Bismarck-Archipel) and Great Britain (Papua). After World War I the German possessions became an Australian Mandated Territory under the League of Nations. Since World War II the former German colony has been a United Nations Trust Territory, linked with Papua as an administrative and legislative union, the ‘Territory of Papua and New Guinea’.

For a long time European influence was limited to the coastal population. The mountainous inlands, however, were not even penetrated before 1933.

‘Take Switzerland and drop it down into the Southern Ocean near the equator’, the leader of the first expedition said later, ‘overspread its peaks and gorges with a rank growth of tropical vegetation, put it in a wide barrier of malarial swamps to guard its borders, pollute it with tropical diseases, add a malignant assortment of poisonous snakes and insects for variety, and you

have a good idea why New Guinea has remained one of the last spots on this planet to be explored and mapped . . .¹

A few hardy gold prospectors (LEAHY, TAYLOR et al.) have opened the way for civilization to enter the interior of this 'land that time forgot'.

In 1950 the Minister of External Territories expected the entire Territory of Papua and New Guinea to be 'under complete control' by 1955. Nevertheless, there are to this day a number of 'restricted areas' left over — resistant to progress and pacification.

Probably the most refractory people in Australian New Guinea are the ill-reputed Kukukuku who have been described as notorious killers, living in independent groups, isolated by valleys and ranges and by mutual hostility (Fig. 1).

Most of the Kukukuku tribes have been contacted repeatedly by Government patrols during the last four decades — and dozens of Patrol Officers and other trespassers have been wounded or massacred by the little 'devils in bark cloaks'. No wonder that, in 1952, an American ethnologist still found the Kukukuku country to be unsafe for anyone but a strongly armed party, except for some groups in the upper Watut Valley (i.e. proximate to the Wau and Bulolo gold mines) which were considered to be under control².

So far the general attitude of the Kukukuku towards any invader has not become much friendlier. Not even the establishment of Patrol Posts at Menyamy (1950) and Wonenara (1961) has been able to pacify these 'stubborn' stone age warriors.

In COLIN SIMPSON's book 'Adam with Arrows' (1953) the western boundary of the Kukukuku country is supposed to follow more or less the upper Vailala River (Fig. 2), touching a mountainous region marked as 'unexplored'. This unexplored terrain was later crossed by various patrols who discovered the

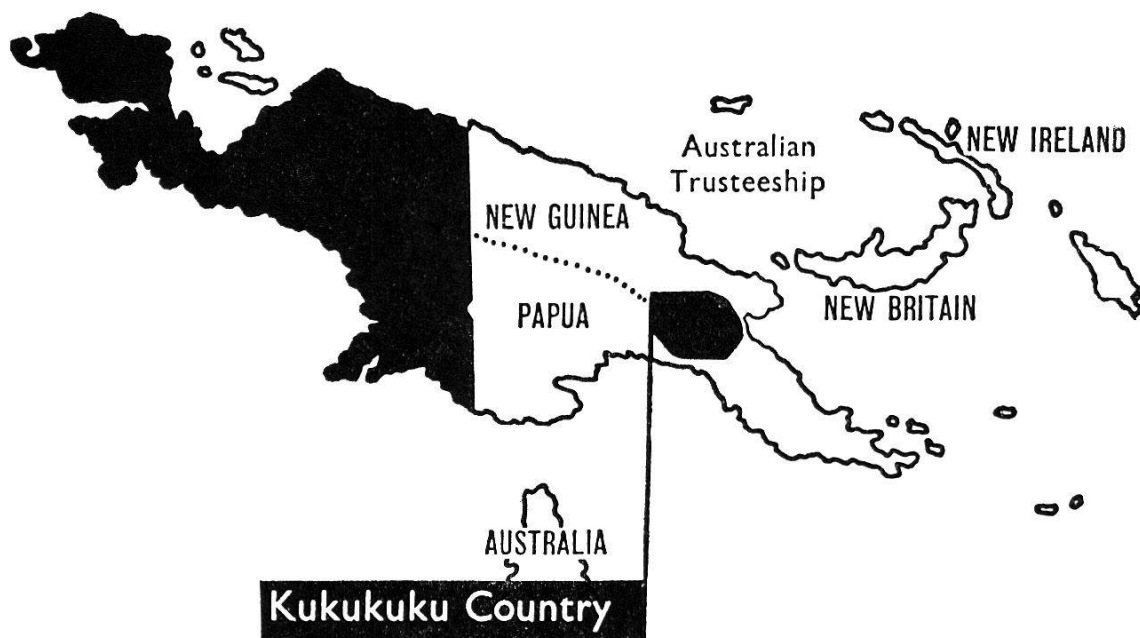


Fig. 1. The Melanesian Islands and the domain of the untamable Kukukuku (SIMPSON, 1953).

¹ LEAHY, M. J. & CRAIN, M. (1937). *The Land that Time forgot*.

² GOODENOUGH, W. H. (1952). *Univ. of Pennsylvania Museum Bull.* 17, 36-37.

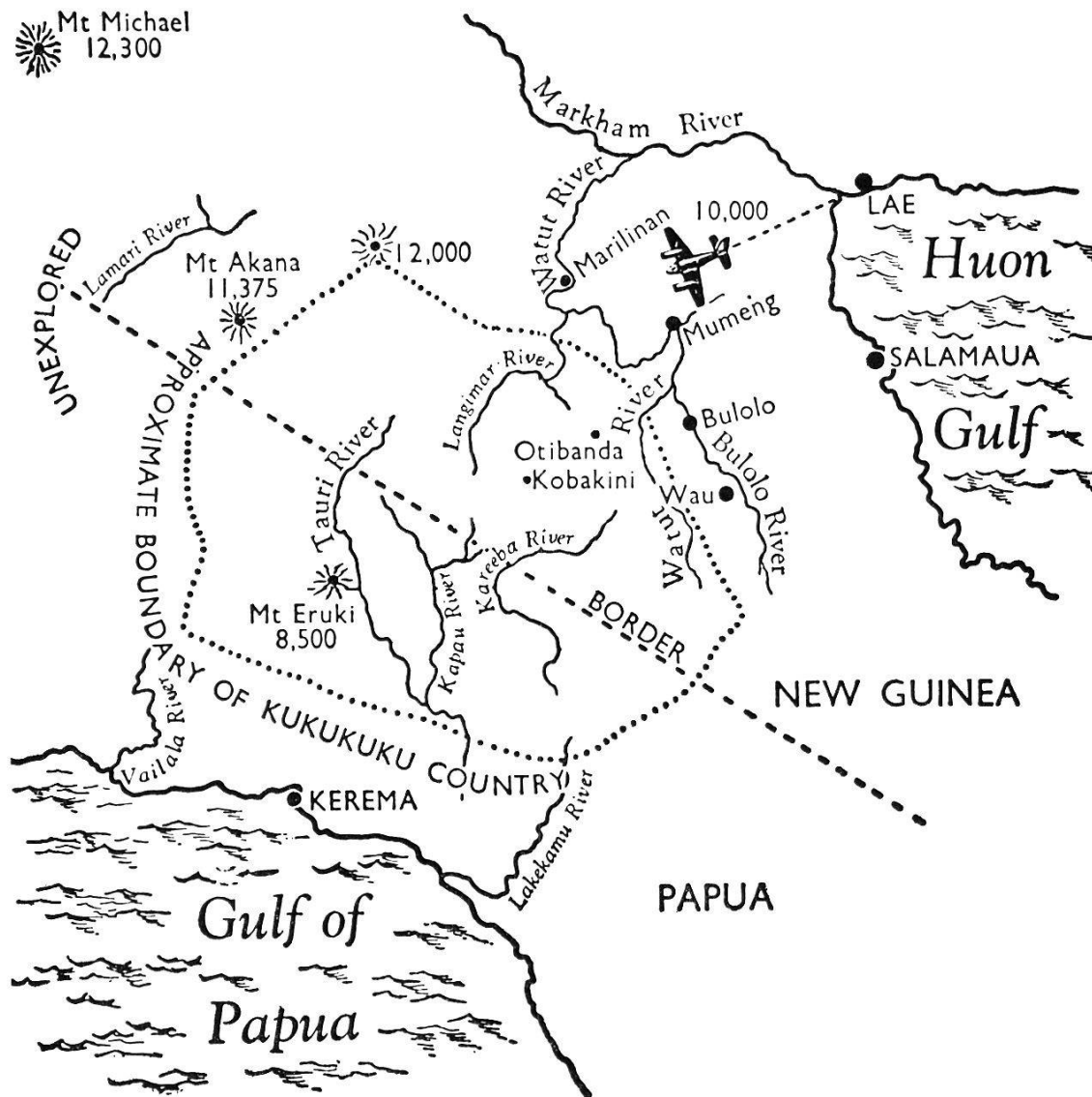


Fig. 2. The "approximate boundary" of the Kukukuku country — according to SIMPSON (1953).

Lamari River to be the actual line of demarcation between the Kukukuku and their neighbours to the north-west, the Fore³.

One of the last groups of Kukukuku traced out in this zone were the 'Morei' (patrol GAJDUSEK & BAKER, 1957/58) whose domain is represented by steep woody ridges and slopes high above the left bank of the river Lamari.

During my service as a Medical Officer of the Public Health Department, T.P.N.G., I was posted to Okapa (North Fore) from May to September, 1962. Among many other fascinating opportunities this post offered me the challenging possibility of paying a visit to the Morei-Kukukuku who lived less than a three days' walk from the Government station (Fig. 3).

The following is a short and unsentimental account of my venture into the uncontrolled area beyond the Lamari — of a last glimpse into a neolithic world on the eve of its decay.

³ Anthropological notes regarding the Fore see e.g. STÖCKLIN, W. H.: Kuru — the laughing death. *Acta trop.* 24, 1967, 193-224.

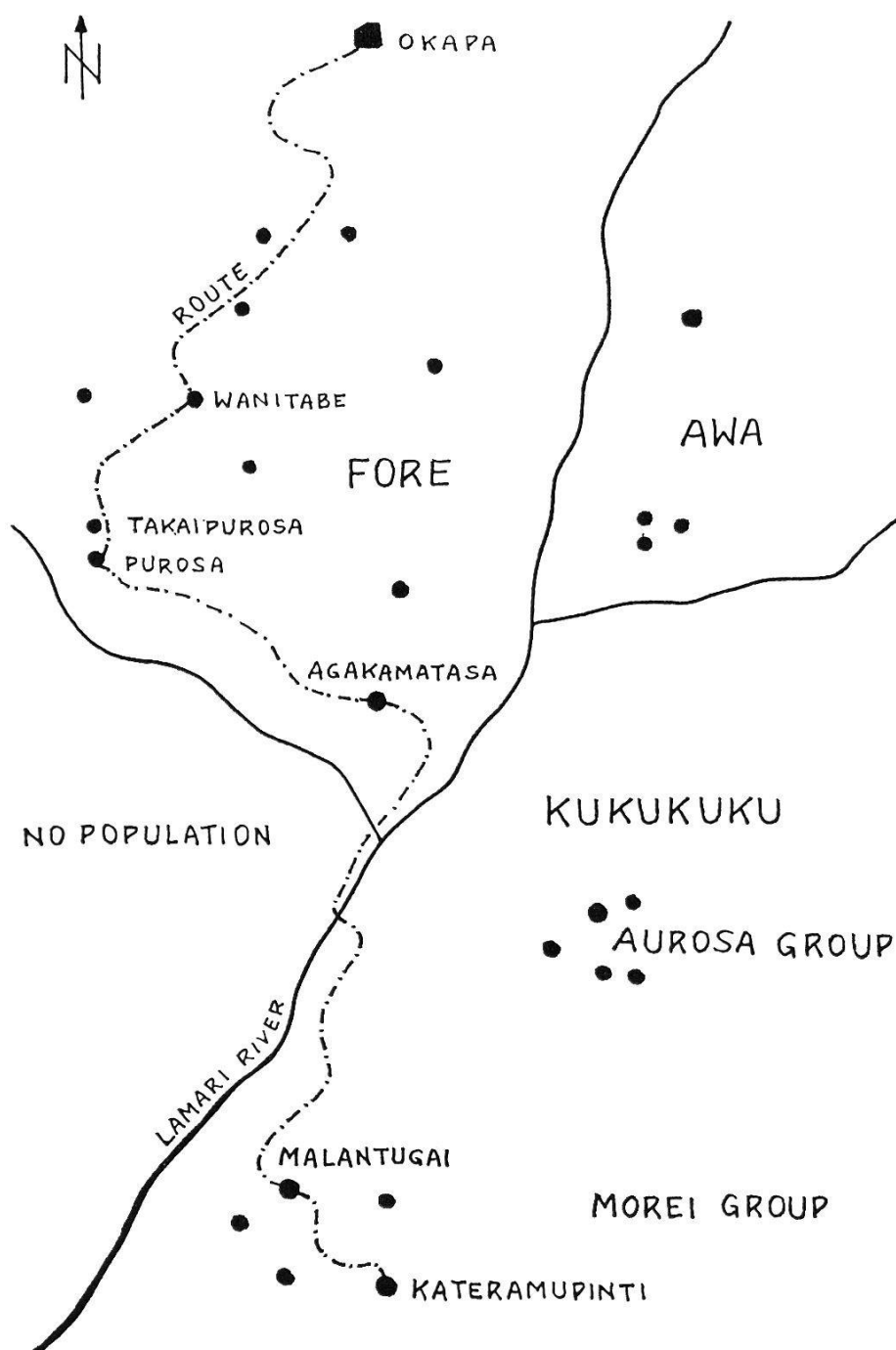


Fig. 3. Sectional map showing route and villages referred to in this Patrol Report.

B. Patrol Report

1. Purpose of Patrol

In one of the reports filed at Okapa Hospital it was suggested by a former Medical Officer that the Aid Post under construction at Agakamatasa (South Fore Census Division) should serve 'not only the Fore, but also the neighbouring Kuks of the Morei'. Another notice, however, also considered the erection of 'an addi-

tional Aid Post somewhere in the Kukukuku territory, e.g. half way between the Morei and the Aurosa group' (and staffing it with a Fore Doctorboy).

This contradictory advice seemed to justify a patrol into the restricted area, in order to get a clearer view about any future 'Morei Health Programme'.

These were the main questions to be answered:

- What is the traditional 'health service' like among the Morei-Kukukuku?
- How would the Morei, a tribe said to be still backward and unspoiled, feel about any interference with their old-fashioned way of life?
- Provided the Morei were willing to accept medical help from outside, would they really come to Agakamatasa Aid Post for treatment or are there any geographical, historical or psychological obstacles preventing them from coming?
- What is the Morei's attitude towards the idea of having a Government Aid Post in their own free territory?
- Where would the ideal location of this still utopic Aid Post be? What would, for example, 'half way between the Morei and the Aurosa group' mean to them?
- Would the Morei allow one of our Fore Aid Post Orderlies to live safely among them?

2. Diary

Duration of patrol: 6th to 11th of August, 1962. Weather conditions excellent. Route see Figs. 3–5.

My escort consisted of three Aid Post Orderlies (A.P.O.) from Wanitabe, Purosa and Agakamatasa Aid Post and nearly two dozen carriers recruited from Purosa and Agakamatasa village (South Fore).

August 6th: Left Okapa 14.30 h and proceeded to Purosa by Landrover. Interview with native 'smoke-doctor' Akio Yabo of Takaipurosa. Inquiries about native medicine and sorcery. Performance of Fore 'smoke-treatment'. Spent night in Purosa 'rest house'.

August 7th: Recruited carriers and left Purosa 8.30 h. Slippery track through beautiful forest. Considerable ascent for about two hours. Reached Agakamatasa at 13.30 h. Inspection of A.P. Further discussions with local people and A.P.O. about medicine and sorcery. Spent night at A.P.

August 8th: Left Agakamatasa 7.00 h. Extremely hard walk along very steep and scarcely used tracks through kunaigrass and rainforests. Crossed the Lamari River on native suspension-bridge which was in good condition. Arrived at Malantugai village (Morei-Kukukuku) 15.30 h. Patrol party well received by Morei people. Food supply ample (paid with salt and matches). Spent night near Malantugai in a 'rest house' built a few months ago by Dr. C. D. Gajdusek.

August 9th: Left Malantugai 8.00 h. Reached Kataramupinti village (Morei-Kukukuku) 10.30 h. Walking condition same as day before. Steep slopes. Exhausting. At Kataramupinti only a few women with small children and one elderly man were at home. Rest of population away, reportedly working in the gardens and hunting phalanger possums ('karpul') as present for relatives of a newborn baby. — Departed from Kataramupinti about 12.30 h. Arrived at Malantugai 15.00 h. Some treatments (mainly tropical ulcers and 'headaches') carried out by accompanying A.P.O. From 16.00 till 22.00 h visit to Malantugai village. Discussions about traditional customs and management of everyday problems. Investigation into native medicine — and the Morei's feelings in regard to a future Aid Post in their territory. Performance of Morei 'smoke-treatment', called 'kolia'. Spent night in Malantugai 'rest house'.

August 10th: Left Malantugai 8.00 h. Reached Agakamatasa 16.30 h. Runner to Okapa to notify my wife and Assistant District Officer about expected date and time of arrival at Purosa. Spent night at Agakamatasa Aid Post.

August 11th: Left Agakamatasa 7.00 h. Arrived at Purosa 12.00 h. Departed from Purosa by Landrover 13.00 h, after payment of carriers. Reached Okapa 14.15 h. — End of patrol.

3. Ethnological Remarks

The following notes are based on information and observations resulting from my visits to the Morei villages of Kataramupinti and Malantugai. A few peculiar findings have later been compared with Beatrice BLACKWOOD's studies concerning the population at the 'other end' of the Kukukuku country, and with Colin SIMPSON's descriptions in his book 'Adam with Arrows'.

Nagayo, a young intelligent lad (from Malantugai) who speaks the Fore language fluently, joined my party as an extremely helpful interpreter and informant. His explanations in 'Fore' were translated for me into Pidgin-English by Aid Post Orderly Trilbi, the Doctorboy of Purosa Aid Post (South Fore). Having had contacts with the Morei for several years, Trilbi was quite familiar with the habits of this Kukukuku group — a fact which facilitated and enriched our conversation in many respects.

Contacts and 'political' relations

Within the Kukukuku region the Morei's next-door neighbours are the people referred to as the 'Aurosa group'. There is a long history of hostilities separating the Morei- from the Aurosa-Kukukuku. At the present time (1962) no mutual attacks are carried out, but their brotherly affection is cooled by fear and distrust. The last major battle was probably in 1956. The reason for that conflict (as stated by the Morei) was a simple accident: A man of the Aurosa group had been knocked down by a falling tree while he was hunting in the Morei district. The Aurosa people thought he

had been killed by the Morei and took revenges with a surprise attack. This matter has not been settled yet and active hostilities between the two Kukukuku groups might arise any time.

Though divided by the geographical obstacle of the Lamari River and even more by a marked cultural and linguistic 'barrier', the Morei and their western neighbours, the Agakamatasa people (South Fore), have been good friends for years and often helped each other in fights (e.g. Agakamatasa raids versus Purosa). Accordingly the suspension-bridge across the Lamari is said to have existed for a 'long, long time'. There has 'always' been a certain degree of trading intercourse between the two friendly groups. Mainly the Morei have a home-made bark cloth ('blanket bilong kanaka') to offer, while the Agakamatasa people originally traded shells, arrows (?) and vegetable salt (produced from various kinds of ashes), but nowadays use trade-store-salt, steel knives, money and other emblems of progress for 'export'.

In recent months (and years?) some Morei individuals (especially young males) have shown a desire to see more of the world. They occasionally go as far as Okapa or even down into the Markham Valley (e.g. to Kainantu). One result of these excursions is that step by step they become quite open-minded for 'civilization'. Though this new attitude has not so far expressed itself in a 'visible' revolution, the Morei state that they are impatient for the Government, the Schools and the Missions to come — in order to modify their old-fashioned institutions as quickly as possible: 'We have lived long enough like this. Now we have seen how the Fore have changed their ways of life. We have seen that they are better off than ever before and that they do not fight any longer. This is good. We want to change our customs too' — the headman of Malantugai village emphatically confessed — 'So the Government may come now. We shall do whatever they tell us to do . . .' — Nagayo, my interpreter, who does not wear anything of European origin on his skin, is collecting 'souvenirs' from cotton shirt to handkerchief and plastic portefeuilles (with Lana Turner's picture) and keeps his treasures in a red wooden case which he purchased on one of his trips to Okapa. He hides this box in Dr. Gajdusek's 'rest house' and will undoubtedly wear and use all these magnificent items as soon as the modern times for his tribe break in.

Social organization

There are only five small villages within the Morei territory: Malantugai, Kataramupinti, Monari, Induropunomo and Watcherapinti. These settlements are one to three walking hours apart

from each other. They consist of half a dozen to a dozen thatched round houses on stilts and are fenced in with pallisades (Fig. 6–9). Except for the 'haus man' — which is the residence of the unmarried young men only — each house in the village is occupied by one family, consisting of a husband with up to four wives and their children (minus boys after the second age grading). Each village or hamlet has its headman who has a certain amount of authority in everyday life and in warfare (Fig. 10). The chief's eldest wife is said to be the 'boss' of the women.

Among the Morei-Kukukuku only the males have to undergo age grading procedures. At the age of five to seven years blood is drawn from the boy's nostrils by injuring them with a small bundle of file-like pitpit-leaves. In addition, the septum of the nose is pierced at this stage, and the boy's name has to be changed. The next age grading ceremony takes place when the lad is considered to be an adolescent (i.e. when he is at least twelve years old). Epistaxis is produced again by the same method which is called 'sutimnus' in Pidgin and 'kawatneraa' in Morei-language. Once more the youngster's name is changed. After this second age grading the boy has to leave his parents' cottage and moves into the house of the unmarried men.

Age grading ceremonies among other Kukukuku tribes (mainly Menyamya area) have been described in detail in COLIN SIMPSON's book 'Adam with Arrows' (1953), pp. 100–105. According to his reports piercing of the septum and the habit of giving the boy a new name is mostly completed by seclusions of up to four months duration, by food taboos, by killing of tribal enemies and other often rather cruel procedures which are not admitted (and possibly not committed) by the Morei group.

A Morei-man is not expected to choose his wife (or wives). The woman and/or her parents have to elect the future husband. In each settlement the law of exogamy seems to be strictly respected. Girls are exchanged in marriage between the Morei villages. It is not customary to introduce women from adjacent groups (i.e. Aurosa-Kukukuku; Fore). Payment of a bridewealth is unknown but the husband has to give some food (pigs, sweet-potatoes, sugarcane etc.) to his wife's siblings on the wedding day and usually later on. These habits are quite different from those met with among the Fore, where as a rule the man has to look out for his wife, and where a considerable bride-price has to be paid. This difference in the pattern of traditions connected with marriage appears to be the main reason for the lack of intermarriage among the Morei and their friendly neighbours, the Fore.

A Kukukuku Folk story (from the Upper Watut), mentioned by BEATRICE BLACKWOOD (1939), fits quite well into the versions presented by the Morei:



Fig. 4. A view from Agakamatasa village (South Fore) towards Upper Lamari Valley and the 'Kukukuku mountains'.

Fig. 5. The suspension-bridge crossing the Lamari is the only connection between the Morei-Kukukuku and their Fore neighbours.

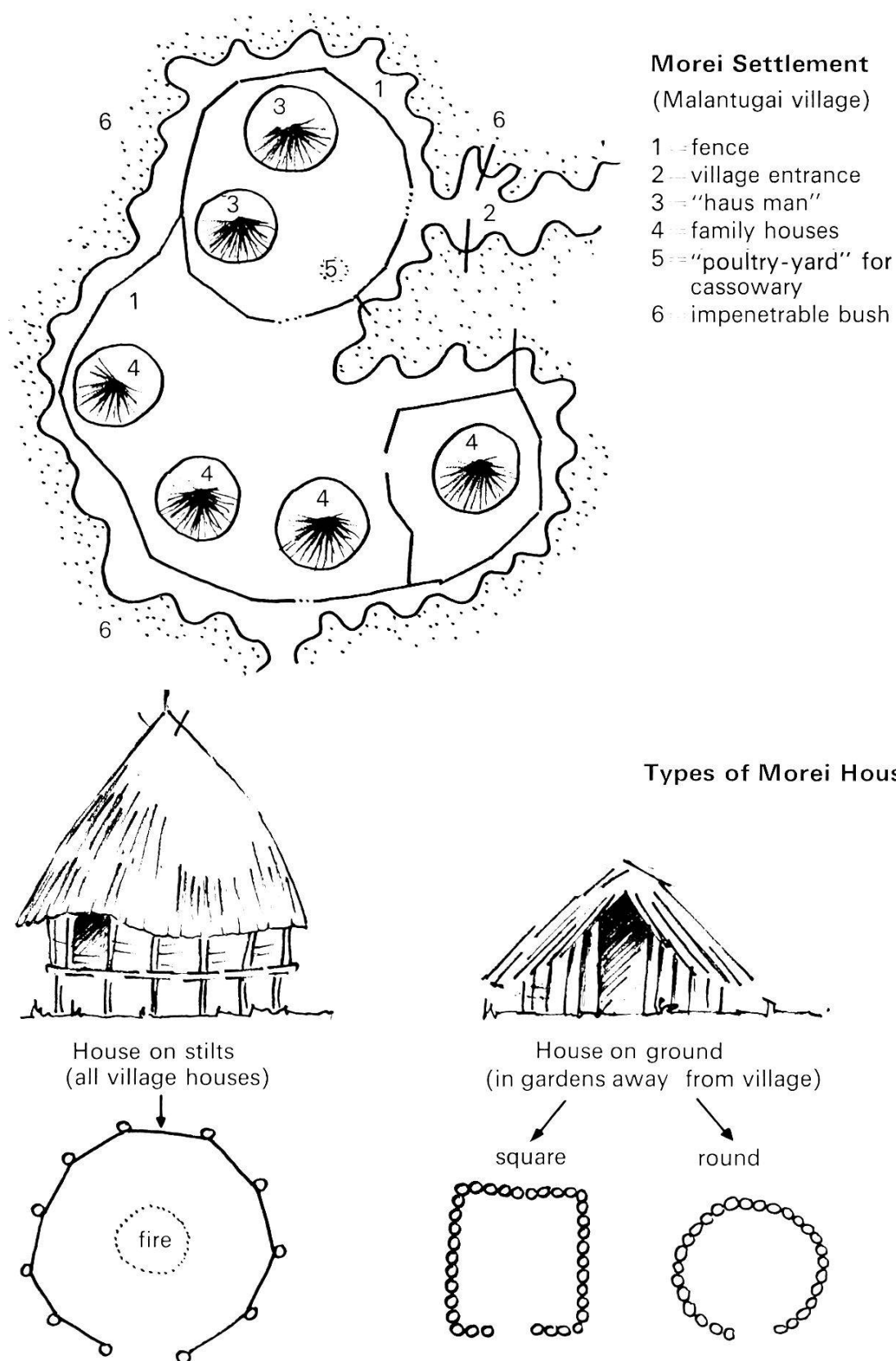


Fig. 6

Fig. 6. Example of a settlement and types of houses (Morei-Kukukuku).



Fig. 7. 'Family houses' in Malantugai village (Morei-Kukukuku).

'...Some women had no husbands. They went up to the men saying, "This man is mine" and seized them, and the men married them, and the women became pregnant and bore children, and here we are all...' But there is a little discrepancy between the Morei's statements about this chapter of social life, and the information (concerning the Menyamya area) discussed by COLIN SIMPSON: After the second age grading the young man may marry 'if his family has the bride-price, and a suitable arrangement has been made by the fathers. Usually the bride is from another hamlet, and she may have been betrothed to the young man, without ceremony, in childhood... The bride-price can be paid in various goods including shells, bark cloth, arrows and possum meat as well as pigs and, nowadays, steel, tomahawks and knives... The girl may be only twelve years of age and has just reached puberty when she comes to live with her husband-to-be's family... Not all girls like the prospective husbands who have been picked for them by parental arrangement. Some run back to their families... If a girl persistently runs away the families realistically dissolve the arrangement — which entails return of the bride-price... The girl signifies her willingness to take up full marital relations by cooking the young man some food and bringing it to him. Prior to this his food has been cooked by his mother or his sister... Informants say that marriage is not a formal affair... At this stage the young man and woman take new names... The Kukukuku are polygamous, and a man may acquire several wives — two and three are common and, in one case Hurrell heard of a man had six...' (Adam with Arrows, pp. 106-107).

If the husband dies, his wives will be taken over by his younger brother (junior levirate) or, if there is no younger brother, by any other man in his village. The widows do not go back to their parents' settlement.



Fig. 8. Typical Morei house on stilts (Malantugai village). The man in front is smoke-doctor Dikuta.

Pregnancy seems to be recognized as a consequence of sexual intercourse. A special little hut or shelter outside the village fences serves as a primitive 'delivery-room'. Midwifery is done only by expert elderly women who have given birth to children themselves. They do not betray their secrets, and therefore the Morei-men have no idea about the obstetrical procedures. When a baby is born the father's 'lain' (i.e. village, family) has to hunt and kill phalanger possums and offer them to the mother's relatives. The animals will be eaten, including — of special importance — their testicles. Mother and baby do not return to the community before five days have passed. During this period sugarcane is taboo for the father if the newborn is a boy — for the mother if it is a girl.

SIMPSON says in this context (talking about the central part of the Kukukuku country: '... the wife becomes pregnant and her time draws near to give birth.



9



10

Fig. 9. High palisade-like fences protect the Morei settlements against surprise attacks of still hostile Aurosa-Kukukuku.

Fig. 10. Headman of Malantugai village with some members of his family.

She goes into the bush with women relatives, and they build a shelter hut, where the lying-in takes place and where the child is born. Assume it is a healthy child — a malformed baby will be taken away by midwives and disposed of. The mother gives birth, the umbilical cord is cut with a bamboo knife, and one of the women goes back to the village to tell the father the news. He, immediately, with male relatives, goes hunting for possums (or birds). When a good bag is collected of say, ten, these are all sent to the women; the men keep none of the meat themselves. This meat is to strengthen the mother and is also in recognition of her attendants' services . . . From the fire-dried skin of a possum armlets are made for the child . . . Keenan reported that the group he questioned fastened the testicles of a possum to a necklet, or round the child's biceps, as strength-giving magic . . . Until these amulets are removed — which may not be for six months — the father cannot eat meat . . .' (Adam with Arrows, pp. 109–110).

Reportedly, the father is not allowed to eat meat until the child (boy or girl) has two teeth. The original reflections behind this 'law' are unknown to the Morei, but it is no doubt reasonable to spare the protein rich food for the nursing mother. (Moreover sexual intercourse — and therefore the risk of a new pregnancy — has to be avoided till the little one is able to walk without help⁴.) The baby is fed with nothing but breastmilk until he has three teeth. Then he may start with sweet potatoes and sugarcane. Meat will be added to his diet as soon as he has 'all the teeth'.

It may be noteworthy that the Morei menu — unless restricted by the temporary taboos just mentioned — consists of quite a variety of foodstuffs.

Some important vegetables, such as sweet potatoes, taro, yams, bananas, sugarcane, etc. are cultivated in the gardens (digging-stick agriculture). Others are collected in the bush (seeds, nuts, berries, fruits, certain leaves and roots).

Meat is said to be rather difficult to come by. Wild animals (which are relatively rare) are hunted with bows and arrows or caught with traps. Sling- or even spring-traps are used for cassowaries, possums and for wild pigs. Rats are generally killed by an impressive transmission system, releasing a heavy log to fall down on the little animal, while it is occupied with a lure. Cassowaries, possums, wild pigs and rats are not the only creatures the Morei's stomachs are interested in. Any other animal may also be looked at as a potential supplement of the Kukukuku diet (e.g. cockatoos, pigeons, birds-of-paradise, flying foxes, snakes, frogs, fishes, and even larvae of beetles and maggots).

Among the 'domestic animals' only hunting-dogs, pigs and perhaps a locked-in cassowary are mentioned by the Morei people. 'Domestic' pigs live quite independently. They are killed with a club 'when they are big and fat'. Though pigs are considered to belong to individuals, the whole community is invited for the joyous meal which lasts up to five days (the meat being kept in edible condition by smoking it above the fire in the house). Except for the bones and the contents of the intestines all parts of the pig are said to be eaten. Abdominal pain and diarrhoea are well-known consequences of these 'banquets'. —

⁴ SIMPSON's information about other Kukukuku tribes: 'Evidence of family regulation is sketchy and conflicting; but Patrol Officer Moloney (now in charge at Menyamya) is sure that there is a ban on sexual intercourse during pregnancy and suckling.'



Fig. 11. A friendly young couple (Morei-Kukukuku).

Cassowaries may sometimes be captured as chicks and then be brought up in a narrow 'poultry-yard' inside the village fences. The cassowary kept at Malantugai village is regularly locked in above the door of the young men's house during the night time — thus apparently serving as a living alarm-bell, similar to the famous geese of the Roman Capitol. Ducklings and hens are not raised or kept by the Morei. Dogs are mainly used as hunting assistants (but may probably also be regarded as a direct source of proteins).

It should be added that cannibalism is strictly denied by the Morei-Kukukuku⁵.

The distribution of work among both sexes is partially similar to that found in the Fore region. The houses are built by the men only, while the women bring the materials like wood, grass and bark to the place. The heavy work in the gardens (cutting and burning trees, erecting hedges) is done by the men, while the women do the rest of the work there. Bark cloaks, skirts, adornments and even nets are made both by men and women — each sex reportedly taking care of its own items.

⁵ BEATRICE BLACKWOOD says that the Kukukuku people of the Upper Watut told her themselves 'that they regard the bodies of their enemies — men, women and children alike — simply as meat. While they usually find some excuse for a raid other than the necessity of replenishing their larder, they consider it very wasteful not to utilize in that way any spoils that may result'. And P. O. MOLONEY states: 'It's usually the people over the hill who kai-kai man — never the group you're talking to.'

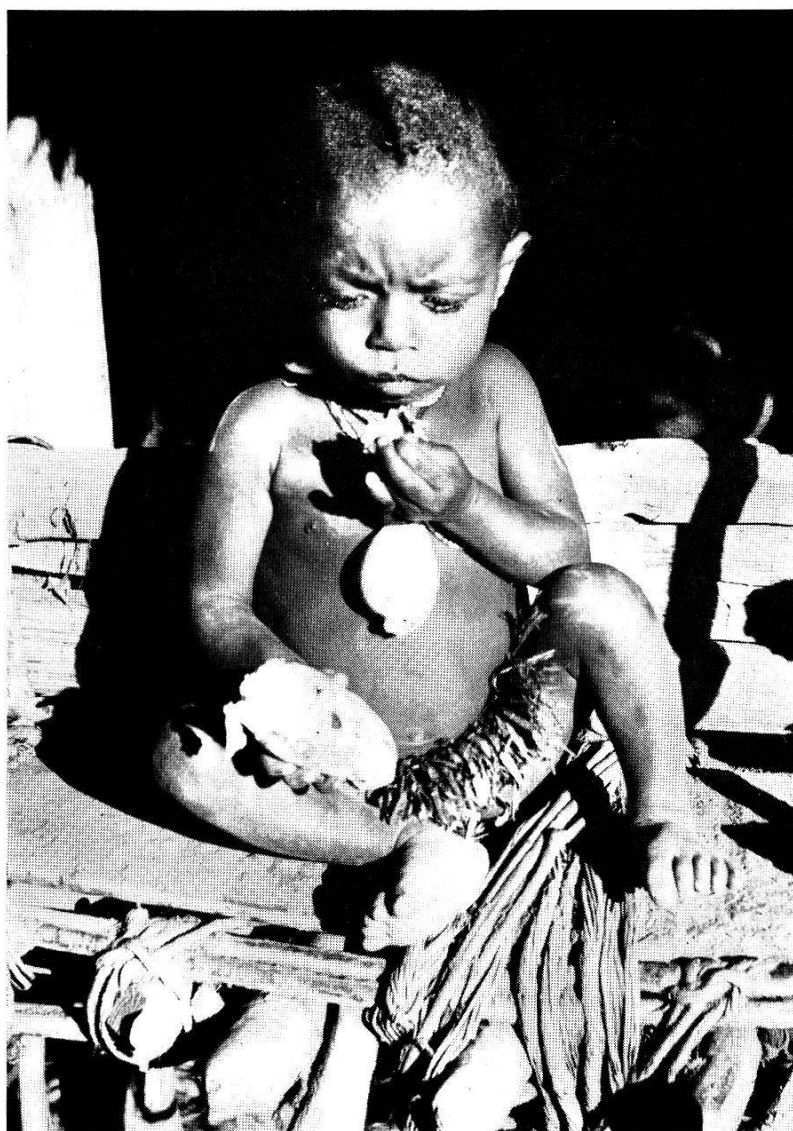


Fig. 12. The smoke-doctor's daughter, occupied with a piece of sweet potatoe (Malantugai village).

The list of these items is short enough, as the material culture of the Morei is very poor indeed.

Clothing and adornments (details see Figs. 10–12): skirts, bark cloaks, neck chains, waist ropes, waist bands, cassowary-bones used as men's waist decoration, breast bands (men only), armlets, nose-plugs, head ornaments consisting of front bands and simple feather adornments (made and worn by men only). No special ceremonial adornments are known.

Household implements, tools and weapons: The Morei have no plates, no spoons, no neckrests, no stools, no mats nor any similar luxury. Netbags are, reportedly, made and used by both sexes. Bamboo tubes serve as cooking containers (for pitpit roots, meat, etc.). Bamboo smoking-pipes, bows and every single type of arrows appear to be identical with items seen in the Fore area (the arrows are even 'labeled' with the original Fore names)⁶. One kind of

⁶ I could not find out whether these things were copied or imported from the Fore. It seems, however, impossible that the Morei should have been the original creators of these models: The usual Kukukuku arrows look different from the ones found among the Morei people; the 'Morei-arrows' again are

weapon, however, which looks much like a baseball stick, has no double in the Fore 'arsenal': it is called 'kabaase' and, connected with a long rope, it can be used as a deadly 'boomerang'. Traps based on sling- and falling-log-system have been referred to above. Stone adzes are no longer popular. Steel blades and knives have modernized or replaced these tools in recent years.

Music: Musical instruments are unknown to the Morei. Their sense of melody and rhythm does not seem to be excessively developed. They have only two songs which are not very different from each other and sound most barbaric and monotonous to the 'random visitor'.

First song: aioaioaioaio aioaioaioaio aioaioaioaio aioaioaioaio , etc.⁷

Second song:

wauwauwauwau wauwauwauwau wauwauwauwau wauwauwauwau , etc.

A moderate degree of variation is produced by occasional changes of speed and by the fact that at regular intervals the choir quiets down in favour of a single voice.

Religion and mortuary customs

Information about religion was mainly of a negative nature: Moon and sun have no religious significance — 'we can see them, that's all'. The same indifference is shown with regard to atmospheric phenomena (such as lightning, thunder, clouds), trees, rocks, water, etc.

Among the Upper Watut tribes (B. BLACKWOOD) the origin of sun and moon and even of rivers have been described in short legends which either are unknown to the Morei — or just were not found worthy to be talked about at all. The Kukukuku culture is, as COLIN SIMPSON puts it 'a culture where creative imagination gets its main expression in the creation of opportunities to kill. Wonder is primarily in the "I wonder if it is safe to go over the ridge today"'s order. Life is a steep path, an ambush, an armed camp where the artist is out of place, and fancy is a film on the sentry eye. Life is a nervous pattern scribbled with the hard points of arrows on a background already washed in — with blood' (Adam with Arrows, p. 79).

According to their statements, the Morei's religious thoughts and feelings concentrate on the spirits of their dead relatives, their 'Tumbuna' (as it was translated into Pidgin by Trilbi). Without hesitation the Morei admitted that they were afraid of these spirits

known and used not only in the Fore area but also in other parts of the Eastern Highlands. The fact that the Morei bamboo pipes are nicely decorated with ornamental scratches underlines the probability that the Morei have been the cultural 'consignees' — the absence of decoration being (according to B. BLACKWOOD) a very significant aspect of Kukukuku life.

⁷ A similar song is referred to in one of the Kukukuku stories collected by Miss BLACKWOOD in the Upper Watut district: '... They all fought, they sang while they fought. They sang "aie, aie, aie, aie" ... That is what we sing when we go into a big fight.'

— even of the spirits of harmless little children who had died. These spirits are believed to bring sickness and disaster rather than anything good.

This fear of the 'Tumbuna' helps to explain certain aspects of the Morei's mortuary customs which they describe as follows: When a member of the group dies, the 'whole family' (including more than one village) comes together, in order to mourn and lament for five days ('olgeta lain i-bung na sindaun na krai, krai krai inap long faipela de'). Then the body is carried away to a remote place (several walking hours away from the village) where all the deceased people are 'buried' (even enemies who have been killed in a fight — so they say). A wooden frame (?) is made and has to be covered with a series of parallel lying pieces of sugarcane which are tied on to this construction. The body is then put down on the sugar-bed without any adornments or clothing ('skin nating'), and the whole set-up is fixed in the branches of a tree. No food supply is given to the corpse (except the sugarcanes he is lying on?). Months or years later, when only the skeleton is left over, the rotten roast is pulled down, and the bones are thrown 'into the bush'. It is said that until a few years ago it had been the rule to put the mandible, a clavicle and a tibia into a netbag which the women used to hang around their necks.

The funeral customs are — as SIMPSON reports — not the same throughout the Kukukuku country. In the Menyamya area some kind of smoking 'mummification' is practised for battle victims, clan leaders, young warriors and young women (while 'ordinary' elderly people and children are placed on stone ledges or in specially-built cages in the forest). In other Kukukuku groups earth burial (in sitting position) is the rule. — SIMPSON does not mention directly the fear of 'Tumbuna' spirits, but he quotes Lloyd Hurrell who gave the following reports in 1951: 'Should, during the smoking (among the Upper Tauri-Banir people), the fat drip on the ground, then the belief is that the soul is lost and doomed to eternal torment... In the early stages of the smoking procedure the relatives give way to paroxysms of sorrow... then, as the body becomes smoked and hideous, they lose their sorrow... they become fairly impersonal towards the body... When the smoked body is placed in the tree-house the natives avoid looking at the place, but don't seem to care when anyone else does. I have noticed that carriers will walk an extra distance to avoid any place where a body is... After removal of the bones to a rock ledge all interest in the dead appears to cease...' (Adam with Arrows, pp. 164–165).

It should be added that black magic (which is common among the Fore people) is apparently not practised by the Morei⁸. The 'Tumbuna' may do enough mischief without specially being asked to and they are considered to be quite independent in their activ-

⁸ Sorcery — especially 'poison-magic', the malignant look and actual poisoning of the food or water — is said to be quite common among other Kukukuku tribes (SIMPSON, 1953).

ities. Contrary to the Fore who have to hide their excrements because of their 'sorcerers', the Morei do not use deep pit latrines (or any other kind of closet): 'Ol i-pekpek nambaut' — they relieve nature anywhere, not within the fences of the village, of course, but in the kunaigrass and in the bush immediately adjacent to the settlements. So their excretory hygiene is of a low level, and their rubbish disposal, too, is not confined to prescribed places.

Native medicine

The Morei can hardly accuse the spirits of their deceased compatriots of being the one and only cause of all their diseases and ailments. However, I could not find out whether they try to distinguish between different etiologies.

They have names for many disorders, such as 'minde' (headache), 'nambalia' (shivers, malaria), 'kwanle' (whooping cough), 'danitne' (measles), 'maliaume' (pneumonia), 'nikablendite' (diarrhoea), 'misalika' (dysentery) . . . This enumeration could easily be extended, but this would be of little interest, as the 'names' are said to be mainly descriptive, pointing out the most obvious symptoms only.

As for therapeutic methods, the Morei-Kukukuku have (seen from a European angle) two groups of procedures which might be called 'rational' and 'irrational' treatments.

'Rational' treatments:

They include some simple surgical manipulations and examples of symptomatic therapy, not expected to be curative. For headaches a small band or rope is tied around the head in the same way as this is done anywhere else in New Guinea. Fractures of the extremities are straightened and fixed with a piece of bark cloth. Lacerations of the skin and tropical ulcers may be covered with bark or remain untouched. Arrow wounds enjoy exposure to the fresh air after the arrow has been pulled out. Abdominal colics and other localized pains are relieved by external applications of special leaves 'bilang kukim skin' (in Fore language named 'kusa'). Thus a painful urticaria like skin-reaction is produced which subsides within about half an hour.

BEATRICE BLACKWOOD found the Kukukuku of the Upper Watut to be using quite a lot of additional plants for medical purposes: e.g. leaves of a *Coleus* (put into water and then applied like nasal drops) for colds and coughs; certain *Schefflera* leaves (chewed together with salt) for abdominal pain; a balsam-species plant (soaked in water and thus swallowed as a vegetable extract) for toothache; leaves of a *Croton* (chewed and eaten) to produce abortion. —

Serious illnesses are treated by a doctor man with leaves called 'wongdzipata' (blown on the patient's skin and/or used like a whip to get rid of the illness).

'Irrational' treatment:

The Morei's most important medical procedure certainly may — from their own point of view — be considered 'etiologic' rather than 'irrational'. This procedure is called 'kolia', smoke-cure. By 'kolia' the evil spirits causing the disease are chased or eased out of the patient's body.

Any Morei man may try to be a 'kolia'-doctor but only a few individuals have proved to be successful experts in this field.

I had the privilege to watch a full 'kolia'-ceremony at Malantugai village. The actors were Dikuta, the local smoke-doctor, and a healthy little boy who was doing his best to behave like a seriously ill patient for the duration of the show (Fig. 13).

Telling from what I have seen, a complete 'kolia'-treatment consists of three parts:

At the beginning of the performance the doctor and his patient sit quietly near the fire. The doctor thoughtfully lights up his pipe (a regular bamboo pipe with usual tobacco) with a glowing piece of wood. Now he blows one mouthful of smoke against the patient's head. This is followed by an 'angry', commanding blowing of pure air towards thorax and neck — and at last, with marked enthusiasm and concentration, towards the patient's vertex. This noisy blowing is accompanied by frequent 'threatening' glances in various directions, apparently prohibiting the escaping spirits to return to their victim. After a while, a new mouthful of smoke is taken, and a new series of noisy blows and hostile glances follows. This is repeated several times.

After a short break the session goes on with a bundle of fresh pitpit leaves which is grasped and twisted by doctor and patient. The doctor blows smoke and air into the 'tortured' bunch of leaves and at regular intervals he looks around in the same manner as he did in the first 'act'.

The third and last scene presents the doctor and his patient holding each other's hands and getting up on their feet simultaneously. Then they lift their arms straight up like two boxers at the end of a match . . . and the 'kolia'-ceremony is over.

This treatment, during which no word is spoken, no spell uttered, is believed to be successful only if done at night-time (preferably indoors). It is said to be 'sometimes effective'.

The practise of 'kolia' is (probably for want of better remedy) still rather popular among the Morei-Kukukuku, and reportedly, it has always been highly thought of by the neighbouring Fore who often come to ask the Morei for the favour of this smoke-cure.



Fig. 13. Performance of a Morei
“smoke-treatment” (Malantugai vil-
lage).

4. Conclusions regarding a 'Morei Health Programme'

In spite of the occasionally good results of their 'kolia'-rites the Morei seem to have become more and more sceptic about the usefulness of their 'curative' endeavours. Impressive yaws campaigns carried out by Dr. D. C. Gajdusek, Aid Post Orderly Trilbi's private 'medical patrols' within the Morei territory — and especially Trilbi's operative treatment of a most respected elderly Morei man (who for months had been 'bed'-ridden with a huge tumour of the sole) have helped to convince this Kukukuku tribe that easy access to European medicine might be quite desirable.

In order to realize a 'Morei Health Programme' as quickly and as economically as possible it would appear reasonable to offer the services of the new Agakamatasa Aid Post not only to the Fore, but also to the 'neighbouring Kuks of the Morei' (as had been suggested by my predecessor).

This proposition, however, obviously does not appeal to the Morei. They would like to use an Aid Post — but not outside their own grounds.

Certain facts make it hard to understand the Morei's refusal to visit the Agakamatasa institution:

— At first sight there are no striking psychological obstacles preventing the Morei from going to and staying at the Agakamatasa Aid Post:

The Agakamatasa clan and the Morei-Kukukuku have been friends and partners for years.

The Morei have no objections against A.P.O. Levite, the Doctor-boy at Agakamatasa.

The Morei pretend to be not afraid of sorcery as met with in the Fore area.

The language difficulties would be of a short duration only, as some basic Pidgin-English can easily be picked up by any linguistic group.

— The Agakamatasa Aid Post can be reached from any Morei village within 6–10 walking hours, and there is no geographical barrier (except perhaps the steep and often slippery tracks) as long as the native bridge crossing the Lamari river is in adequate condition. Some Morei men have even gone as far as Purosa Aid Post for treatment.

There are other points, though, which may explain the Morei's hesitations and help to answer the question as to why they want an Aid Post of their own:

- So far, reportedly, only a limited number of Morei men undertake regular excursions into the Fore district; and it is doubtful whether children and women would be allowed to cross the Lamari and visit Agakamatasa for medical care.
- But another aspect seems to be of even greater importance: To have an Aid Post (which, by the by, should 'look exactly like the new Agakamatasa Aid Post') within their own boundaries would definitely be a matter of prestige for the Morei-Kukukuku. How could they be satisfied with the permission to visit a 'health centre' belonging to some friendly neighbours — whom they have started to envy a bit and in whose presence the 'poor Kuks' feel more and more inferior because of their rapid progress towards civilization!

Considering the Morei's general situation, an additional Aid Post erected in their domain would certainly be justified. As for the site of such a Morei Aid Post, the mutual hostilities, referred to above, have to be taken into account. So it can hardly be advisable (as had been proposed before) to put the new buildings 'half way between Morei and Aurosa' intending to serve the two Kukukuku groups at the same time. The Morei themselves have chosen a spot less than five minutes away from Malantugai village. This place offers a beautiful view towards the Upper Lamari Valley and is not far from a brook. It would be ideal in every respect.

The Aid Post, of course, would have to be staffed with a Fore Doctorboy, as no Morei individual could be trained for this job at present. Judging from their uniform 'election returns', even this problem must have been seriously discussed among the different Morei villages. And it is not astonishing that Aid Post Orderly Trilbi, my friendly companion and interpreter, has been named as one of their first class favourites.

References

- BLACKWOOD, B. (1939). Life on the Upper Watut, New Guinea. — *Geographical Journal* 94, 11-28
- BLACKWOOD, B. (1939). Folk-Stories of a Stone Age People in New Guinea. — *Folk-Lore* 1, 209-242
- BLACKWOOD, B. (1940). Use of Plants among the Kukukuku of South East Central New Guinea. — *Proceedings of the Sixth Pacific Science Congress, California* 4, 111-126
- BLACKWOOD, B. (1950). The Technology of a Modern Stone Age People in New Guinea. — *A Pitt Rivers Museum Monograph*, Oxford University Press
- GAJDUSEK, D. C. & BAKER, J. (1958). Patrol Report (First Contacts with Kwatnunga-, Mononi- and Morei-Group of Kukukuku, December 1957 to January 1958). — Manuscript

- GAJDUSEK, D. C. & ZIGAS, V. (1961). Studies on Kuru I: The Ethnologic Setting of Kuru. — *American Journal of Medicine* 26, No. 3
- HUMPHRIES, W. R. (1923). *Patrolling in Papua*. — London
- LEAHY, M. J. & CRAIN, M. (1937). *The Land that Time forgot*. — London
- MIHALIC, REV. F. (1957). *Grammar and Dictionary of Neo-Melanesian (Melanesian Pidgin-English)*. — The Mission Press, S.V.D., Techy, Illinois, USA
- SIMPSON, C. (1953). *Adam with Arrows (Inside New Guinea)*. — Sydney, London (Reprinted 1958).
- STÖCKLIN, W. H. (1962). Visit to the Morei Group of Kukukuku Villages. — Patrol Report, Department of Public Health, T.P.N.G.
- STÖCKLIN, W. H. (1967). Kuru — The Laughing Death. (Medizinische und ethnologische Aspekte einer rätselhaften Krankheit im Hochland Neuguineas). — *Acta Tropica* 24, 193-224

Zusammenfassung

Das Wohngebiet der Kukukuku ist einer der letzten «unkontrollierten Bezirke» (restricted areas) in Australisch-Neuguinea.

Im Unterschied zu den meisten andern Kukukuku-Gruppen sind die (1958 entdeckten) «Morei» bereit, ihren traditionellen neolithischen Lebensstil möglichst bald gegen den sogenannten Fortschritt einzutauschen.

Die Errichtung eines «Aid Post» im Morei-nahen Dorfe Agakamatasa (Süd-Fore) gibt Anlaß zur Diskussion über einen lokalen Kukukuku-Gesundheitsdienst. Das wesentliche Ergebnis einer zur Beurteilung der Verhältnisse durchgeführten Patrouille (August 1962) ist die Erkenntnis, daß auch die vernünftigsten Beschlüsse, die am grünen Tisch gefaßt werden, nicht immer mit den Vorstellungen und Gefühlen der Eingeborenen zu harmonieren vermögen.

Résumé

Le territoire des Kukukuku est une des dernières régions non contrôlées de la Nouvelle Guinée Australienne.

Au contraire d'autres tribus Kukukuku, le groupe Morei (qui n'a connu son premier contact avec des Européens qu'au début de 1958), désire abandonner son traditionnel mode de vie en faveur de ce qu'on appelle « progrès ». Cette attitude positive envers la civilisation est probablement due à la longue amitié pratiquée entre les Morei et leurs voisins immédiats plus modernisés, les Agakamatasa, dans le territoire des Fore du Sud, contrôlé par le gouvernement.

Quelques problèmes concernant un « Programme de Santé Morei » ont été discutés en rapport avec l'ouverture d'un « Aid Post » au village Agakamatasa (bureau dirigé par un infirmier indigène). Des informations directes, en provenance du pays Morei-Kukukuku, ont été obtenues par une patrouille médicale, en août 1962.

Une analyse des résultats montre que les programmes, même très raisonnables, établis au cours de tables rondes ne correspondent pas nécessairement aux idées et sentiments du peuple pour qui ils ont été élaborés.