

AN EXPEDITION TO THE

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NEW HEBRIDES

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MELANESIA JDH

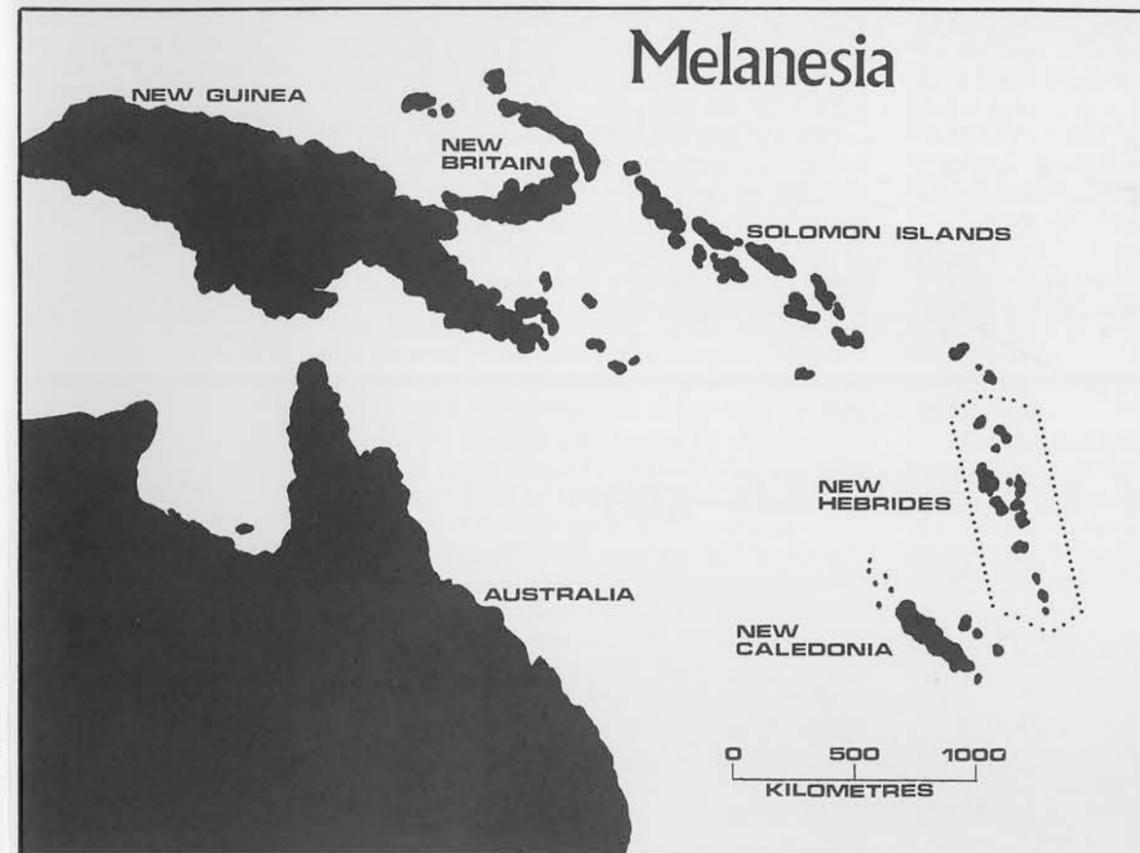
Melanesia—literally the black islands—stretches from New Guinea more than 4,000 kilometers southeastwards to Fiji. Some of the smaller islands in this massive archipelago are raised coral reefs and atolls, but the majority are "high islands"—the result of violent volcanic and tectonic activity constantly taking place on the sea floor. In the dense tropical rain forest and rugged mountain regions of these islands live some of the last people on earth to remain relatively isolated from the effects of European civilization and 20th century technology. In the more remote areas of New Guinea and the New Hebrides remnant populations conduct their lives in much the same manner as their ancestors, oblivious through their isolation to the vast changes taking place around them.

Politically divided, Melanesia is administered by four separate world powers. New Guinea, the world's second largest island, is divided into two parts—Papua New Guinea and West Irian. Australia administers the eastern section, Papua New Guinea, while Indonesia controls West Irian. The islands of Solomon are administered by Britain, with France maintaining control of New Caledonia. The New Hebrides archipelago is ruled jointly by France and Britain under an "entente cordial," a truly unique governmental system known as the Condominium.



Although the random political boundaries in Melanesia developed through historical pressures that had no relationship whatever to the Pacific world, the indigenes themselves maintain a loose cultural and genetic unity. The languages of Melanesia, except those spoken in the central and southern regions of New Guinea and in parts of the Solomons, form a distinct linguistic subgroup within the larger Austronesian family, of which Micronesian and Polynesian languages are also members. Melanesian economy is based on small villages or dispersed homesteads with the people exploiting a horticultural complex

Jimmy Stephens, known as Prophet Moses, with dancers from Ambryn Island, New Hebrides. Moses is the spiritual leader of the Na'Griamel movement which has its headquarters on Espiritu Santo Island.



of starchy tubers (yam, taro and sweet potato), sago, and tree fruits; their only domesticated animals were pigs, dogs, and chickens. Because of the insular nature of the environment, the sea provides a wide range of food products that are often traded to inland peoples, and shells are traded over great distances. This maritime orientation, of canoes and trading networks, has in the past been the major vehicle of population dispersion from island to island and region to region.

The earliest inhabitants of these islands were probably a dark-skinned people of old Southeast Asiatic stock who filtered into New Guinea from the Asian continent about 30,000 years ago. This early population movement has been linked with the non-Austronesian, or Papuan, language family found in New Guinea and sporadically through the Solomon Islands as far as Santa Cruz. At a later period in time (as yet to be determined), another group of people speaking Austronesian languages dispersed into this same area and continued into the eastern Pacific to colonize Polynesia. Although the problem of explaining the apparent racial diversity between Melanesia and Polynesia has been one of the thorniest questions, strides have recently been made in this direction (see "The Problem of Polynesian Origin," *Expedition*, Summer 1972). Similar advances in linguistics, comparative ethnography, and prehistory are beginning to clarify many of the heretofore

unanswered questions.

With the advent of European domination Melanesia's indigenous population began to dwindle sharply. Where great villages once stood only a few families could be found at the turn of the century. Several factors combined to accelerate the population decline. Europeans began flooding into the area carrying with them exotic diseases for which the natives had no natural immunity. Measles, whooping cough, smallpox, and tuberculosis ran rampant from village to village killing scores of people. The exportation of Melanesians to Australian and Fijian sugar plantations and mass poisoning by local copra planters further drained human resources and freed more land for copra production and quick profit by Europeans. Coupled with these factors were the endemic hazards of malaria, filariasis, and dysentery, so that Melanesia rapidly became devoid of its once vigorous inhabitants. Not until passage of the Pacific Islanders' Protection Bill in the latter part of the 19th century did European exploitation in the form of slavery and overt usury cease.

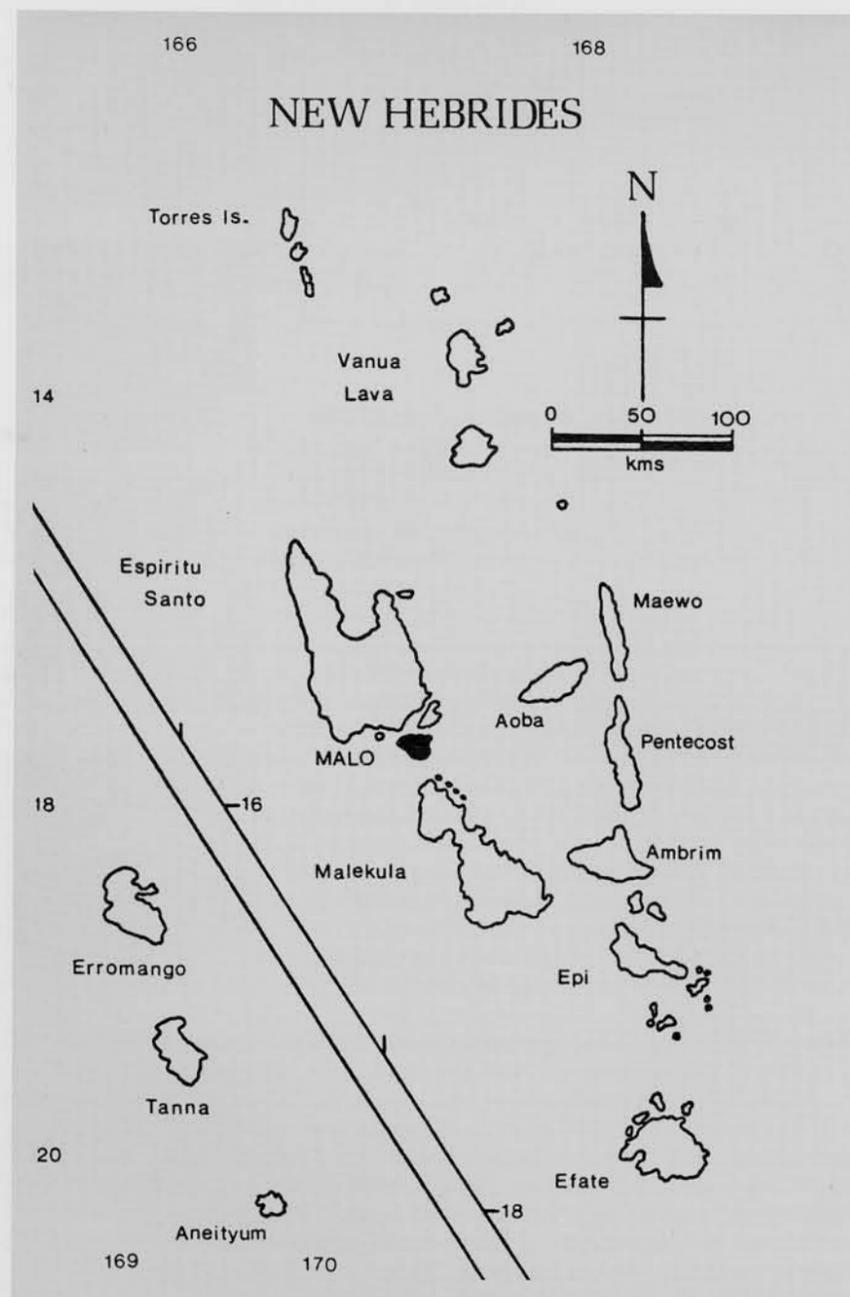
The dislocation caused by Western contact has deeply disturbed the people's view of themselves and of the world they live in. Part native, part European in their outlook, they are actively searching for a new, meaningful, and satisfying way of life, one that will restore their self-esteem by giving them access to the products of Western technology,



to them symbols of worth and power, and at the same time be consistent with their own values. This search has expressed itself in the form of "cargo" cults, whose occurrence proliferated in the wake of the Second World War, with its seemingly endless stream of military equipment and food supplies. From New Guinea to the New Hebrides local prophets periodically appear prophesying the arrival of the millennium. Natives are encouraged to throw off the bond of the white

man and take up traditional customs once again, or to engage in cult practices that will ensure the arrival of plentiful cargo for themselves. At the same time, there is increasing education and economic development, and Melanesia is moving steadily, if slowly, into the 20th century. Local rule is expected for many of the islands within the next decade. It will be interesting to see what direction these people will take once they are free of European domination.

THE NEW HEBRIDES KGH



Situated northeast of New Caledonia and southeast of the Solomons, the 80-odd islands collectively named New Hebrides resemble a tiny Y on the surface of the vast Pacific Ocean. The largest islands, including Espiritu Santo and Malekula, began forming during Miocene times through volcanic eruptions and were enlarged through the accretion of coral limestone. Some of the smaller islands are built entirely of coral with new islands being continually built up through tectonic and coral activity.

Because of their proximity to the equator, the islands have a hot and humid climate marked by two distinct seasons. The first, coinciding with the southeast trade winds, lasts from mid-May to October and is characterized by low precipitation, rough seas, and clear skies. The second season, lasting from October until May, is known as the wet season with variable northeasterly winds accompanied by sultry equatorial heat. During this period, especially in December and January, rain squalls accompanied by severe lightning and thunder are frequent. This is also the beginning of the dreaded hurricane season, when wind velocities can reach speeds of up to 150 kilometers per hour. Tectonic activity in the island chain is extremely high, with as many as 4,000 earthquakes occurring annually. Tidal waves and eruptions from the three active volcanoes of Ambrim, Tanna and Lopevi cause periodic devastation.

The first European to discover the New Hebrides was the Spaniard, Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, in 1606, during his search for the legendary southern continent of *Terra Australis Incognita*. Entering the island chain from the north, Quiros stopped at the largest island in the group convinced he had reached the object of his quest, and grandiosely named his discovery "Terra Australis del Espiritu Santo," claiming all the land and its inhabitants in the name of Philip of Spain. Quiros sailed back to Peru never realizing the true nature of his discovery.

Credits

Pp. 5, 6, from Giles, *A Cruise in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas*; courtesy of the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

Pp. 9, 27, Elizabeth Reed Dickie; p. 18 left and lower right, Philippe Cathelain; pp. 21-26, William Clough; all others pp. 2-32, J. D. and K. G. Hedrick.

Apparently Quiros failed to impress his sovereign with the importance of his discovery for the island group maintained its isolation for the next 160 years until it was rediscovered by the French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville in 1768. He recognized what Quiros had not, that the New Hebrides is not a solid land mass, but a collection of separate islands.

Five years later, the group was visited by Captain James Cook who presented the world with the first detailed chart of the islands and a description of its inhabitants. Cook's chart was so detailed and accurate that navigators used it until the end of the 19th century. Within the next twenty years, Cook was followed by La Perouse in 1788; Bligh in 1789, in the open boat in which he had been cast adrift by the *Bounty* mutineers, and in a second voyage in 1792; and by D'Entrecasteaux in 1793. These later visitors made only minor contributions to Cook's major work.

Except for an occasional whaling ship, the New Hebrides, during the first quarter of the 19th century, were almost unvisited. In 1825, however, sandalwood was discovered on the island of Erromanga and by 1840 a flourishing trade under the leadership of Sydney merchants had developed. Timber camps were set up on Erromanga, Aneityum and Tanna, headed by Europeans whose agents traveled up and down the coast making agreements with the natives to cut loads of sandalwood in advance of the cargo ships.

Many of the sandalwood agents were

unscrupulous adventurers who used firearms and spirits as their principal articles of trade. They frequently instigated, or took part in, native wars. They sometimes sought revenge for imagined grievances in the pillaging of villages and the indiscriminate shooting of their inhabitants. After about 1860 the center of the trade shifted from Erromanga to Espiritu Santo and other northern islands, so that few parts of the group escaped their attention. They began a process of social disintegration and depopulation which, through the activities of other groups of Europeans, has continued in some islands until the present day.

During the height of the sandalwood trade, Christian missions began establishing beachheads in the island group, but not without sacrificing many of their members. In no other part of the Pacific have so many missionaries been killed in the course of their work. Members of the London Missionary Society first landed in the islands in 1839, followed nearly ten years later by the Presbyterian Mission and the Anglicans. These worthies came with the Good Book and good intentions, but they spent little time trying to understand native institutions and imposed upon their converts a fiercely puritanical code. The early missionaries encountered active hostility from most of the European traders and many of the native chiefs. They did not hesitate to ask the commanders of visiting naval vessels to bombard villages where the people had shown resistance to conversion.



An early European plantation in the New Hebrides.

Gradually the missions made headway, but often it was only a remnant of the population that remained to be converted, for along with the traders, the missionaries carried influenza, measles, and other European diseases to the peoples among whom they worked.

By 1865 most of the sandalwood within easy reach of the coasts had been cut down, and the trade dwindled to negligible proportions; but another trade, even more disruptive of native life, had risen to take its place. This was the recruitment of labor, or blackbirding, in the islands for the plantations of the neighboring territories of Fiji and Queensland. It was a Pacific-wide phenomenon; but the New Hebrides was one of the earliest recruiting grounds and it remained one of the most important. Every island in the group was affected by the labor trade. At its peak over 5,000 natives were estimated to be working abroad. By 1890 the labor traffic had passed its peak, but it continued on a reduced scale well into the 20th century.

The normal procedure for recruitment was to send a whaleboat ashore well armed and ready to make a hasty retreat if it became necessary. If the people who assembled on the beach seemed friendly, a party would land and open negotiations. Conversation was usually conducted in Pidgin, which by this time had already developed into the *lingua franca* of the island group. The trader would offer knives, tomahawks, tobacco, or muskets in return for recruits. If the bargain was acceptable, the natives would compel the required number of men and women to go with the recruiting party. This was known as "buying." Alternatively, the recruiter might "steal," that is, accept voluntary recruits without making a payment to their kinsmen. Outright kidnapping was also frequently resorted to.

The consequences to the islands of the labor traffic were depressing and entirely negative. Many of the approximately 65,000 recruits who went abroad never returned, and of those who did only a few became useful members of native society. In their absence their houses and canoes rotted and their wives often went to live with other men. Some of these men became envoys for recruiters, organizing for a fee a new batch of men for the plantations. The disillusioned Melanesians often retaliated against any European who came within their reach. Among the population in general, the labor traffic caused the further spread of disease, the outbreak of many native wars, and the irreparable disruption of the ordered pattern of native life.

To add to the general state of disorder and disruption in the New Hebrides, European settlers began arriving in 1870 to try their luck at coffee, maize, cocoa, and coconut cultivation. In the beginning most of the settlers were British subjects arriving mainly



1
A small boat from a recruiting ship working in the New Hebrides.
2
New Hebridean recruits on board a labor vessel.



from Australia, but by the end of the 19th century an increasing interest in the islands had been taken by colonizing Frenchmen from New Caledonia and metropolitan France. Since the French Government actively encouraged settlement in the New Hebrides through subsidies and other inducements, by the 20th century the French outnumbered the British in the group by more than two to one. This ratio obtains today, although, except for the American occupation during World War II, the European population on the islands has never totalled more than a few thousand.

When France annexed New Caledonia in 1853 there had been no reason for extending her control to the neighboring New Hebrides. Similarly, Great Britain disregarded the request of the chiefs of Aneityum in 1857 that they be placed under British protection. But after the development of the labor traffic and of permanent European settlement, neither power was able to ignore any longer the conditions in the group. Increasing political chaos and friction among the settlers and between the settlers and natives finally forced an open discussion of the problem of handling the New Hebrides at a convention held in London in 1906. The outcome of these talks, following further refinement in 1914 and final rati-

fication in 1922, is the present-day system of government in the New Hebrides known as the Anglo-French Condominium.

Briefly, the system works as follows: The French and British are responsible for the protection of their respective citizens—separately—but they are responsible *jointly* for the governing of the native population. In effect, the New Hebrides, which has a total population of less than 100,000, must labor under a government that comprises not one but three distinct systems. In practice there is a great deal of overlapping and unnecessary duplication of services. The British and French maintain separate police forces, school systems, hospitals, and printed money. In addition, there is a third judicial system for natives and all radio broadcasts are repeated three times—once in English, once in French and, lastly, in Pidgin.

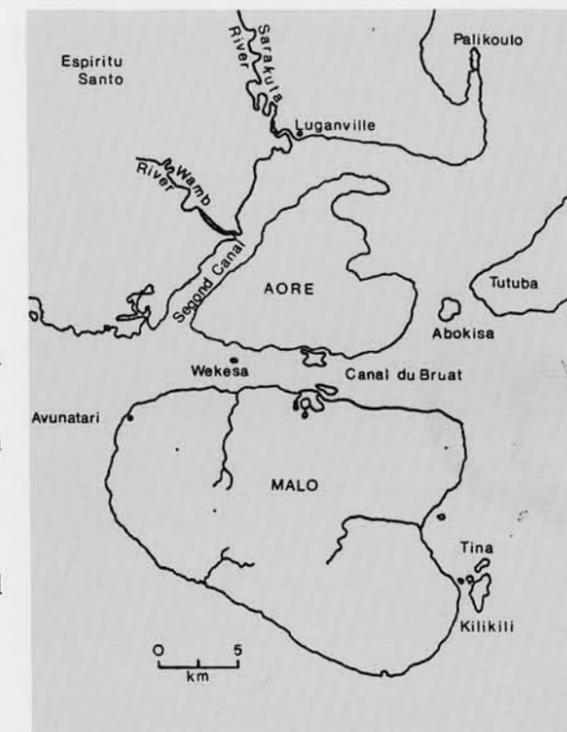
How long the Condominium will be maintained in the New Hebrides is not certain. The French are opting for outright annexation, the British for independence free of all external influence. Perhaps the answer lies with the natives themselves who have formed the small but growing National Party, whose primary interest is in gaining the right to self-determination, free of British and French control.

LIFE AND WORK IN A TROPICAL PARADISE:

JDH

The Family in the Field

When I began graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 1969, I already had plans to do my doctoral research in the New Hebrides at several early sites that I had located on Malo Island in 1968, sites that contained a distinctive type of pottery known as Lapita. Lapita pottery was discovered in 1908 on Watom Island by Father Otto Meyer, but its recognition as an early cultural horizon in Melanesia and Western Polynesia was not understood until similar discoveries were made in New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga some forty years later. Although several vital aspects concerning the Polynesian region and the relationship of Lapita culture had been recently clarified, certain questions regarding the Melanesian status of Lapita remained unanswered and could be resolved only through continued excavation.



In mid-May 1972, after months of uncertain waiting, I learned from the National Science Foundation that my wish was to come true. I was on my way to the field. A hundred thoughts raced through my head: passport, visas, ticket, equipment, Karen and David. My family! Should they go along or stay behind in Philadelphia? Karen and I would have to make a decision that we had put off until the last minute, and that minute had arrived. Douglas Oliver's description of the New Hebrides in his book *The Pacific Islands* immediately came to mind:

"Between the Solomons, New Caledonia, and Fiji lies the cluster of islands, reefs, shoals, and live volcanoes which Captain Cook, with singular inappropriateness named the New Hebrides. To a confusion of topography, vegetation, and native peoples white man has added his destructive genius, so that the archipelago now stands unchallenged as one of the unhealthiest, wildest, most mistreated, and most mismanaged spots on earth."

The prospect of taking the family into the field seemed rather bleak especially when we considered the \$2500 that would have to be withdrawn from our rapidly dwindling savings account to pay for the additional airfares to the South Pacific. We considered all the factors involved, or at least what we *thought* were all the factors, before making our decision:

Disease: there would be adequate medical facilities available within easy reach in an emergency since they would be required by the British and French administrators.

Malaria: a call to the U.S. Public Health Service assured us that it had been eradicated years ago, but if we were still concerned, pills could be taken to prevent catching the disease. Public Health could not give us the proper dosage!

Food: government officials live in the islands with their families, as do other expatriates, and they get along just fine.

Money: it would be cheaper for three to live on a small island in the Pacific than in Philadelphia, including transportation costs.

Family: it is easier to establish rapport in an alien culture as a family and it would be an experience that we would remember for the rest of our lives.

Needless to say, some of our ideas were sound, others not. We had obtained our ideas of "the field," where students are somehow transformed into hardened professional anthropologists, from reading Elanore Smith Bowen's *Return to Laughter* and Hortense Powdermaker's *Stranger and Friend*, and from the good counsel of Ruth and Ward Good-enough who had taken their family to Micronesia. We were prepared for *everything*.

I wrote to the British Government in the New Hebrides requesting residency permits for the family for one year, stated our source of income, provided proof of return passage to the U. S., stored our furniture in the attics and basements of four friends and flew to California with the family to await their reply. Two months later I received a letter from the British Government stating that our request could not be acted upon until a duplicate letter was received by the French Government in the New Hebrides. When both letters were on file, we could expect a favorable response and plan entry for July 1972. We were already experiencing problems not encountered in our source books and we had not even left yet. How many more unforeseen problems would there be?

PanAm's flight 121 started our trip and set the pattern for the forthcoming year; it took off from Los Angeles International four hours late and somehow left behind our 300 pounds of baggage. Five days and four planes later we were reunited with our luggage, less two cameras and \$500 in film, at Port Vila, the capital of the New Hebrides. We were scheduled to leave the same day for Espiritu Santo, the closest aerodrome to Malo, but heavy rain and high winds delayed the flight for four more days. We arrived at Santo with our luggage (somehow the missing cameras and film had been located) on July 18, 1972. Eighteen days of our year had passed and we were ready to go home.

Next day our spirits were considerably brighter after sleeping for twenty hours, taking a hot shower, and eating a delightful French meal. Karen took David for a walk down the main street of Santo Town (about five blocks containing more than fifty Chinese trade stores) while I went off to fill the provision list. About five hours later canned food for six months, cooking utensils, mattresses, a kerosene refrigerator, a propane stove and our 300 pounds of luggage were deposited on an old quay at the mouth of the Sarakuta River where, we were told, a boat for Malo could be hired. It was one of Michener's idyllic tropical days—blue sky, calm water, and a gentle breeze rustling through the palms; everything had gone smoothly. Then it began to rain. The cases of cans began to change color and then break, sending tins of tuna, tomatoes, mackerel, jam, and flour in every direction. The 300 pounds of clothing and equipment that had been packed in duffel bags to conserve weight began to swell as it soaked up the downpour like a sponge. The rain stopped as abruptly as it had started and a native who had been crouched under a tattered piece of plastic sheet in a nearby boat looked at us and burst out laughing.

"Masta, where calico blong cargo blong yu?" he asked.



Main Street of Santo Town, Espiritu Santo Island.

He began laughing uncontrollably again holding his sides with pain. I could barely understand what he was saying, but from his gesticulations I understood fully what he was trying to communicate. Mustering up my courage and in my best Pidgin I said, "You go Malo?" He stopped laughing long enough to say "Yes Masta, me go. Ten dolla Masta." "O.K." I said, "three fellow man with cargo." "Bot blong mi small falla tumas, Masta," he said.

After much verbal exchange and wild gesturing we agreed (I think) that two boats would be required to carry the 1,000 pounds of water-logged cargo and three passengers. At that point all we wanted to do was to get to Malo. Once there all our problems would be over.

I had stayed on Malo for a short time in 1968 while making an archaeological survey of the island and had gotten to know several of the islanders fairly well. Before leaving Philadelphia I had written ahead asking that a house be built for us and announcing our intended arrival sometime in July. Since I had received no reply, I *naturally* assumed that everything was going ahead according to my plan.

The one-hour boat ride to Malo went without a hitch, but when we arrived off

Avunatari Village we could not get the boat across the reef and had to float for another five hours waiting for high tide. By the time we started ashore the entire village was waiting on the beach. We must have appeared as strange apparitions as we emerged from the boat, lobster-red, with clouds of steam issuing from our rain-soaked clothing. I recognized Vira, the man to whom I had sent the letter about the house, and whispered through my dry and cracked lips, "Is the house ready?" "Oh, sorry John. Me no mekem yet," Vira said very apologetically. Vira confided that he really did not believe that we would come, but he would get some men together and start the house first thing the next morning. Vira made hasty arrangements for us to stay in the Presbyterian Women's Club, a house made of galvanized iron with two tin windows and a door, which was, on a good day, no hotter than 120°F inside. It took the villagers two weeks to complete our house and we were overjoyed at the prospect of moving out of the village "oven" into our own house.

Our house, like all the others in the village, was made with split bamboo walls and a thatched roof. Unlike the other houses, it was divided into separate compartments: a large sitting room, two bedrooms, work and storage room, and even a small closet. Next to the house was a kitchen that had been fitted



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with a corrugated galvanized iron roof to catch rainwater and a 200-gallon water tank. Construction costs for the entire complex came to a little less than \$200. We moved in and found the small kitchen pantry filled with the rusty tins that we had purchased in Santo along with bunches of bananas, yams, taros, manioc and fresh oranges. The village women had woven pandanus mats to cover the coral floor and had hung our molding clothes in the tiny closet. We felt at home at last!

Things began to go much more smoothly over the next several months and by late October we were handling Pidgin fairly well. David had stopped speaking English and would talk to his friends in *Tamambo*, the village language, and converse with us in a mixture of Pidgin and English. Daily life had fallen into a routine and we had learned to live by native time rather than by our watches.

Native time is quite different from European time and it took a while to catch on to the difference. During the first few weeks I would assemble the excavation crew at the end of each day and instruct them very carefully that they should be ready for work at five o'clock the following morning. Each day Vira would be on time while the rest of the men would straggle in sometime between six and seven o'clock. Several weeks later I realized that Vira was the only man among them who owned a watch and they were all too tactful to bring it to my attention.

During the first few months on Malo the archaeological work had been progressing about as smoothly as our adjustment to island culture. I spent endless hours tracking down stories about little people who had been sealed in caves sometime in the past (I actually saw some sealed caves), tramping through mangrove swamps to see a house post that had turned to stone, and climbing to the top of Malo Peak to see where, during World War II, an American soldier had been killed by a "spirit" snake. Slowly, and somewhat painfully, I began to learn:

1. There is probably some truth to every myth, but not necessarily.
2. The farther you have to walk to check out a story, the less productive it is.
3. People tell fantastic tales just to test your gullibility (you often have to walk a long way for this one too, but the walk back is even longer).



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Many of the wild-goose chases that I went on (I now prefer to think of them as archaeological site surveys) turned out to be very productive. I began to learn why houses or villages are located in a particular place, what spirit names are and where the spirits live, how people used to bury the dead, the names of the steps in the graded society, how you roast taro, where you take shelter when you want to rest or when it rains, what you eat along the trail, how coconut crabs dig holes in the earth, the ground pattern left by an uprooted tree, etc.—things that are not normally found in a reference text, but are of vital importance to archaeological interpretation.



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- 1 Our house at Avunatari village, Malo.
- 2 All the comforts of home.
- 3 A traditional house near Vatuemba, Malo.
- 4 Vira, in traditional dress.
- 5 Men's hut known as *Rombu*. Note the large numbers of pig tusks exhibited along the left wall.
- 6 Coraline platform called *Vota*, where pigs are ritually executed by men when progressing in the graded society.
- 7 A typical New Hebridean family today. Malo.

Other problems arose. I made a two-day trip to Malekula to look at a site that had been discovered by Mr. Barry Weightman, the agricultural officer at Norsup, and in my absence Vira decided to put identification numbers on the artifacts that had been excavated. Each level bag had a number and he dutifully spread all the potsherds, bones, adzes and other items on our work table, carefully separating each lot. During a lunch break one of his children saw the scraps of paper mixed in among the artifacts and proceeded to straighten up the table, disposing of the unsightly papers in a nearby fire. On my return from Malekula I spent several days coaxing Vira out of hiding (he feared for his life) and we set about reorganizing the hopelessly jumbled piles. That very day I received an unexpected visit from Les Groube, an archaeologist with the Australian National University. The image of Les peering through the workroom window shaking his head will remain with me forever!

By mid-December, preparations for Christmas were well under way in the village. Everyone was practicing carols, gathering large quantities of food from the gardens, and making beautiful flower garlands; excitement seemed to be mounting with each passing day. Two weeks before Christmas, Karen gathered together about twenty of the village children and formed an impromptu choir and began practicing "I Saw Three Ships," "Jingle Bells," "Deck the Halls," and "Away in a Manger" for a Christmas day debut. Each evening Karen would arrange the group according to voice and harmony, and the next evening the children would arrive for practice and form into two "natural" groups—boys and girls. After a week of practice Karen's guitar and my feeble screechings on the recorder began to blend in with the harmony. "Jingle Bells" became our theme song and would mark the beginning and end of each practice even though "dashing through the snow" was an experience that none of them could fully understand. By December 22nd the voices and instruments were ready; our only concern was how we were going to get them in front of the congregation to sing on Christmas morning!

On December 23rd we went into the rain forest to try to find something that resembled a Christmas tree. We came home with a branch of an orange and promptly nailed it

to our bamboo wall. We decorated it with scraps of tinfoil that we salvaged from the inner liners of Australian breakfast cereal packages, tops of tin cans (those that were not too rusty), and a number of interesting seed and nut pods that we found around the house. Despite all the festivities and preparations David seemed troubled. I asked what was bothering him, and he said that Santa Claus would probably leave all his presents at the old house in Philadelphia; besides, even if he could find our new house he could not get in because there was no chimney. Karen and I tried to assure David that Santa always knows where to find good children and has not missed a delivery yet. We were both concerned about what Santa would be able to think up this year. David made out his list (with our help) as he had done for the two previous years. It was short; all he wanted was a canoe. The next day I asked Vira if he could make a toy canoe for David to play with on the reef and he said that another man would be glad to make it and the cost would be about five dollars, depending on how much time was involved.

Christmas morning David was up with the sun eagerly peering under our tree to see what Santa had left. We had been able to buy some candy and a few plastic toys at Santo the week before and David was delighted. He ran outside to show the other children what he had received. Sitting in front of the house was a bright red outrigger canoe large enough for two men and a small boy. The canoe was perfect but apparently my Pidgin was not. At 10 o'clock the bell atop the Presbyterian church began sounding the call to service. Karen quickly tuned her guitar while I went about the village collecting the choir. We all marched to the church and took our seats. Our moment of glory was to come immediately after the Doxology. Minutes seemed like hours and our choir looked nervously at the back door, ready to bolt at any second. Finally the moment arrived and with a solemnity beyond their years they began singing. The next ten minutes were indescribably beautiful. The children were so successful that they were asked to sing at the afternoon service and again for the adult candlelight service that evening.

January 1st we flew to Australia for a two-week working holiday. I wanted to visit the Australian Museum and the Australian

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Sound: A Study of Cargo
Cults in Melanesia*.

National University, and Karen wanted to do some much needed shopping. When we landed at Sydney we felt very strange—all the people rushing about, cars, horns, noise, and electric lights. We were still on native time and it took several days to adjust—culture shock, only in reverse. Our hotel in the Kings Cross section of Sydney was equipped with all the modern conveniences—electricity, elevators, television, hot water, and indoor plumbing. We thought David would be fascinated with T.V. but he could not stop flushing the toilet long enough to look at it. Hot water, clean sheets, and no lizards or spiders crawling across the bed at night; it all seemed like paradise.

After two weeks of wining and dining and visiting museums, David and I flew back to the New Hebrides. Karen stayed on in Sydney to try her hand at folk singing. David and I arrived back on Malo at the height of the wet season, when temperatures rarely drop below 90°F and the rain falls incessantly. About 140 inches of rain fall in the northern part of the islands each year and it all seems to fall in January and February. The humidity began affecting everything—cameras would not work, notebooks became soggy, and mildew began growing on my leather watchband. Every small nick or scratch became ulcerated and the mosquitoes seemed to form brigades attacking everything that moved. In late February I had a severe attack of malaria that lasted for four days. When it began, I weighed about 165 pounds and when it was over I scaled out at 135 pounds. David was infected with head lice, worms, and tropical ulcers but had escaped the ravages of malaria, at least so far.

Karen returned in April full of enthusiasm and energy. She began teaching a course in American culture at the tiny British school in the village, organized the girls into a modern dance class, and gave guitar lessons to a number of budding local musicians.

The archaeological work progressed at a much faster pace with the beginning of the dry season in early May. Titus, one of the men of the village, discovered a very extensive Lapita site while working in the bush one day. The area, called *Batuni'urunga*, is sacred to the islanders because it is believed to be the place where all men came from. The site appeared to be very rich and I discussed working in the area with a number of the



1
David in the field.

2
David's red canoe on the reef at Avunatari.



older men in the village. After several long discussions about observing all the taboos associated with the site, speaking softly, not talking about sexual matters or discussing women, and not drinking the water that came from the fresh-water spring, we began work. It was difficult getting an excavation crew together because most of the younger men said that although they did not believe in the old men's spirits they did not want to work in the area just in case the elders were right. I knew that nothing would happen and I finally convinced two men to work with Vira and me for three weeks at \$2.00 a day.

The second working day at the site my speedboat sank, ruining the motor. The fourth working day Vira's daughter fell out of a coconut tree and broke her arm. The fifth working day a large tree crushed the kitchen of one of the workmen, his two children narrowly escaping death. The eighth working day I became ill again with malaria. Several of the village elders approached me and indicated in very strong and direct terms that the spirits had sent these signs and that we should stop working immediately. I had never believed in spirits before, but now...? We stopped working at the site for two months and then resumed. The first day back there was an earthquake that registered 6.8 on the Richter scale. That was enough!

We had excavated at three of the nineteen Lapita sites that I discovered during the year, obtaining information of an economic nature. We found the remains of houses, earth ovens, cooking stones, large in-ground storage pits, large quantities of pottery, stone and shell adzes, scrapers, chert and obsidian cutting implements, and a number of shell beads, rings, and other ornaments. Our excavations had been designed to obtain information regarding the presence or absence of agriculture associated with the Lapita culture and, though we were unable to find any direct evidence such as garden plots, carbonized vegetable remains, etc., agriculture can be inferred indirectly through the pattern of artifacts established at each site. Shell middens, principally of maritime orientation, were associated with each site but their density is insufficient to have sustained even a very small population for any length of time. Preliminary interpretation of our data indicates that *Batuni'urunga* was continuously occupied over a long period beginning about 1300 B.C., based on radiocarbon analysis, and ending sometime between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100.

Through analyses of pottery sherds and lithic material from the three excavated sites, some very interesting results concerning trade or raw material collection patterns have been obtained. A study of the pottery found on Malo, conducted by W. R. Dickinson of Stanford University, indicates that some of its tempering material contains mineral constitu-

ents that are not found in the New Hebrides and may have originated as far away as New Caledonia or the New Guinea region. Because Malo is a completely coral-covered island there are no natural stone outcrops. The recovery of literally thousands of cooking stones, chert flakes, and small numbers of obsidian tools substantiates the use of resources on nearby Santo and Malekula or the more distant Aoba and Pentecost islands, all of which are volcanic. Further, obsidian sources in the New Hebrides are unknown, the closest sources being located in the Banks Islands nearby.

Farther north in the Santa Cruz Islands, Wal Ambrose and Roger Green have identified obsidian trade associated with Lapita cultural material extending over distances greater than 2,000 kilometers from its possible source in the Talasea region of New Britain.

The understanding of Lapita culture from a Melanesian perspective has recently made great strides, but many fundamental questions remain unanswered. Where did the Lapita culture originate? Why did it disperse throughout the Melanesian and Polynesian islands? What cultural or environmental factors caused its apparent disappearance around 200 B.C.? What were the racial and linguistic associations of the Lapita people? To answer these questions, and many more, continued excavation in Melanesia must be undertaken.

Early in the year Ward Goodenough had arranged for another student to work with me during the summer months (winter in the New Hebrides) under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation Summer Training Program administered by the Museum. On May 6th Elizabeth Dickie arrived on Malo and the village set about erecting another small house in my compound for her. Betsy's arrival had several unexpected side effects. I thought that two women "living" with me might cause gossip in such a strongly Presbyterian village, but instead my status, among the men at least, was raised from young man to Elder. Before the "official" monogamy laws, New Hebridean big men sometimes had as many as ten or eleven wives, all living in separate houses inside one compound. Wealth and status were counted in pigs and wives. As far as the village was concerned, I had gone through the proper procedures for obtaining another wife by building a separate house. I had only two wives, far short of ten, but it was one more than anyone else had. One day one of the old men asked me how much I had to pay for Betsy and I very gallantly said "five pigs." He was very impressed. To keep harmony in the home I stated that I had paid eight pigs for Karen.

Betsy had come to Malo to study the archaeology of the island, but inevitably in the process she acquired considerable knowl-

edge of Pidgin as spoken there—knowledge which she has included in her article on Bislama.

Our year was nearing an end and we wondered what it would be like living in Philadelphia again. The short-wave radio broadcasts from Voice of America were full of news of something called Watergate, meat boycotts, inflation, and unemployment. Finally the day arrived; we took our last ride in the red canoe and lingered in our kitchen, unwilling to face the final good-bye's to our neighbors and friends.

We arrived back in Los Angeles exactly one year from the day we had left. As we stepped off the Jumbo 747 I thought about our ideas of the field the year before. We had been right about only one thing; it was an experience that we would remember for the rest of our lives.



1
Vira, Dinah, Donald,
David, and Juliet making
thatch for Betsy's house.

2
Vira excavating at a
Lapita site at Naone, Malo

3
David and Papa Vira
saying their good-bye's.



3



SMALL NAMBAS OF SOUTH MALEKULA: MBOTGOTE

JDH



In the remote tropical rain forest of southern Malekula live an isolated mountain people who call themselves Mbotgote. Although Europeans have known about the existence of these people for more than a century (calling them "Small Namba"), their geographic inaccessibility and small population have allowed them to continue a traditional life little changed, until recently, by the vagaries of European intrusion along the Malekula shore. The 140 Mbotgote are dispersed over an area of 200 square kilometers in three small villages and six tiny hamlets. Despite their small number they have maintained a strong sense of their own identity as a distinct people.

1 Tropical Rain Forest on Malekula Island above three thousand feet.

2 Slit gong used for dancing by Small Nambas.

3 Typical Mbotgote house.



The villages—Lendembwe, Yabgatas, and Kamaluwevr—have each a ceremonial center consisting of a *Nakamal*, or men's house, a dancing area with large upright slit-gongs, and residence dwellings segregated by sex. Houses for both males and females are similarly constructed and consist of a steep-sided thatch roof sewn onto an oval pole framework. Side walls are about one meter high and are cut from lengths of fern palm trunks or woven bamboo. The interior floor areas of the houses are filled with dirt which becomes very compacted and uneven with use. Part of the residence is walled off for pigs and is usually open to the fenced compound surrounding the houses. At night pigs are brought inside—the Mbotgote say that having the pigs sleep with people ensures that the pigs will always think of man and depend on him and not want to run away. Many items dangle from the rafters: bark belts, bundles of arrows, bows, saucepans, spoons, jaws of fruit bats or "flying foxes," and neatly wrapped packages of chicken feathers and other valuables. The people sleep on large green leaves on the house floors without any covering. The elevation is well over 800 meters, and temperatures fall fairly low at night. The houses are enclosed in a highly fenced compound with no openings or gates to which access is gained by a single notched log placed over the fence at an angle of about 45 degrees. At night, these logs are removed, making the compound a veritable fortress against surprise visitors. Unlike those in the coastal villages, compounds are not swept daily and have a rather cluttered look—cooking leaves, sleeping mats, burned wood and other residues of daily living are scattered round the area. Tracks to and between house compounds and *Nakamals* are well tended. The bush is cut back about three meters on either side of the track whenever possible. Hibiscus, croton, and other decorative or flowering trees and shrubs are planted along the trails, giving a very pleasing appearance.

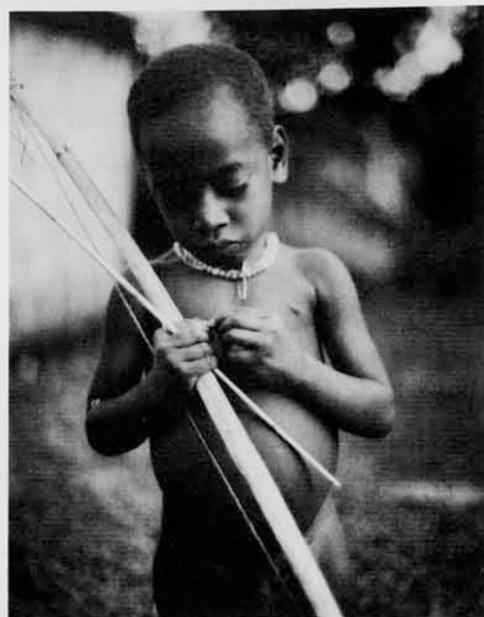
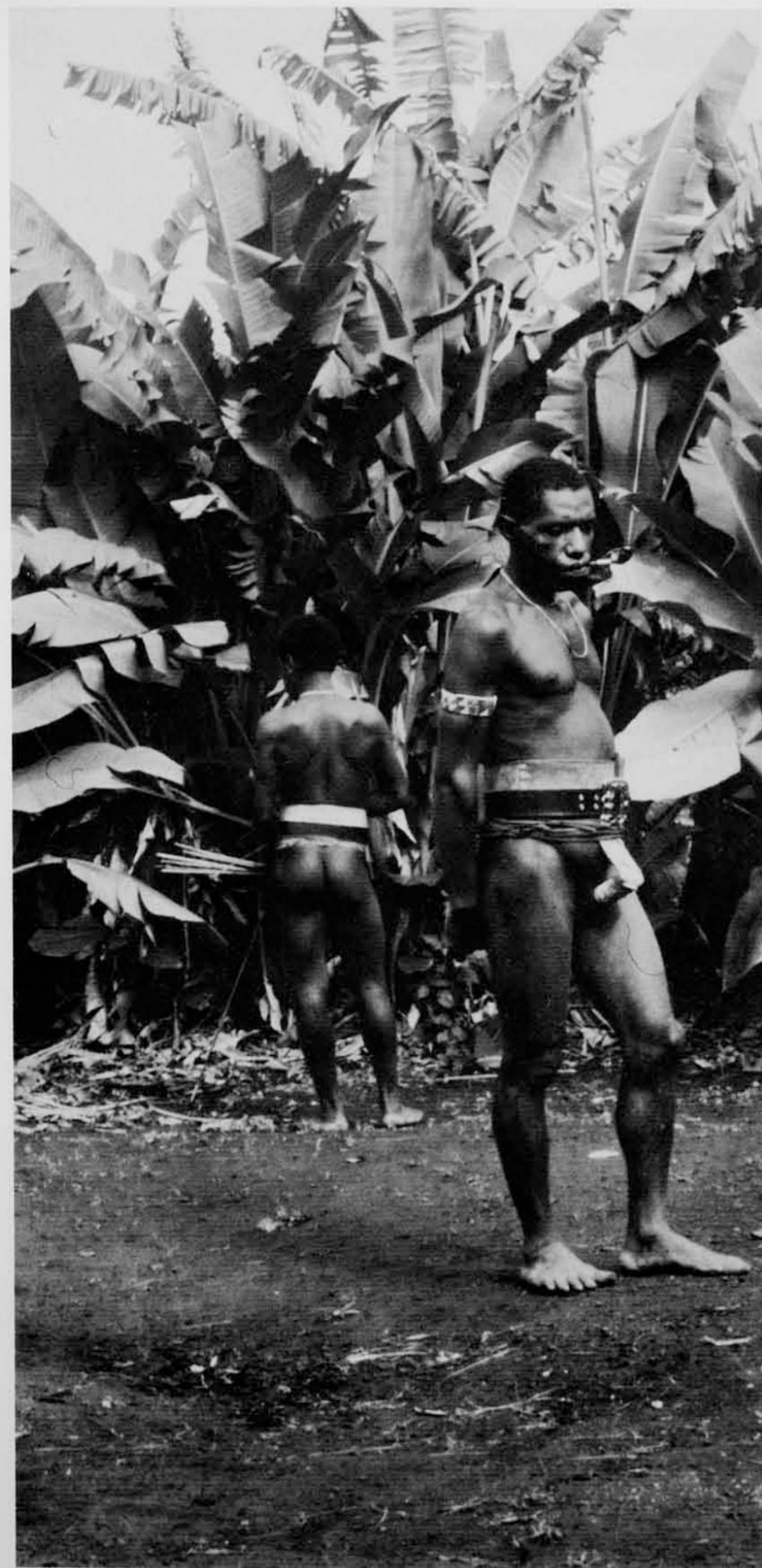
The Mbotgote eke out their existence through a combination of traditional root-crop gardening and hunting and gathering. Their gardens, at very high elevations and often situated on land with a slope of 60 degrees or more, are most often small areas denuded of forest trees and dense undergrowth. Taro is the main food staple grown, although yam, sweet potato, and manioc are also actively cultivated. Stands of sugar cane, croton, and a spinach-like vegetable are often planted along the garden fringe. High fences are built around the plots to protect them from the numerous feral pigs that roam the area. Hunting of wild pigs and cattle with bow and arrow provides a needed source of protein in the Mbotgote diet, though wild pigeon, fish, and freshwater shrimp are the most reliable.



2



3



1
Two Mbotgote men in
traditional attire.

2
Uninitiated Mbotgote
boys.

3
Small Namba mother and
child, showing detail of
bindings used to shape
the head.

Gathering of wild fruits, nuts, and berries provides additional variety to the standard meal of boiled or roasted taro. Food is cooked in the earth oven, a slight depression in the ground lined with heated stones, or is roasted directly on the fire. In most of the houses two fires are maintained, one for roasting and to provide heat during the chilly mountain nights, the other for cooking laplap, a pulverized taro concoction wrapped in a package of leaves left to steam in the oven for about an hour. Metal saucepans, bartered or purchased on the coast, are used to boil taro, yam, and sweet potato.

Mbotgote dress is very simple. The men wear only a wide bark belt round the waist with the penis wrapped in a banana-like leaf tucked under the belt. This leaf, or *namba*, is changed as it dries and turns brown, about once a week. Armbands and necklaces constructed of locally made beads and glass "trade" beads are often worn. Women wear only a short grass skirt made from twisted fibre and necklaces of beads. Boys wear no clothing at all until circumcision. Young males are usually circumcised in a group ranging in age from about nine to twelve years. Circumcised boys of the same group consider themselves special friends. After circumcision the *namba* is immediately put on to help heal the wound and to protect the exposed *glans penis* from the view of women. Young girls don the grass skirt at the age of seven or eight. The septum and ear lobes of both males and females are split at an early age and often sport brightly colored pieces of plastic, bone, bamboo, safety pins and European-made cigarettes. Artificial elongation of the head, a mark of extreme beauty among the Mbotgote, is accomplished by heavy cloth and mat bindings placed on a child's head ten days after birth and kept in place for five months.

Marriage occurs at a relatively late age for Mbotgote men. A bachelor must have many gardens under cultivation; he must build a house compound and attain several ranks in the *Nimangi* society. Brideprice is very high, necessitating years of wealth accumulation through the production of tusked pigs. Women are married about age fifteen, and are in short supply. Plural marriage and the fact that there are more men than women require many men to seek wives among the numerous coastal villages. Coastal women, most of whom are Christians, are usually unwilling to move into the high mountains; the result is a slow Mbotgote migration to the lower elevations.

As in all areas of the New Hebrides, the pig is the focal point of ritual life. Mbotgote men are hierarchically ranked according to their achieved status in the *Nimangi* society. To gain prestige and importance, to rise higher and higher in rank, certain prescribed

rituals must be followed. The rigors of achieving rank are so great that few men ever reach the highest grade. Village leadership is vested in a few older men who have attained high status through *Nimangi*, and they in turn act as a "council" in area-wide decisions.

Of primary importance in grade-taking is the accumulation of sufficient numbers of pigs with artificially curved tusks. The tusks of domesticated male pigs are encouraged to grow through the removal of the upper canine teeth. Within seven years the lower tusk will have grown to such an extent that it has circled around and reentered the lower jaw, breaking the pig's lower lip in its course. Pigs are valued, not according to physical size, but according to the length and curvature of the tusks. Various numbers of these tusker pigs are required for the several grades of *Nimangi*. If a pig dies, as they often do from severe infection caused by the reentry of the tusk into the jaw, before it can be ritually sacrificed, it loses its value. Several pigs were observed with tusks of two complete revolutions which more than doubled their value to their owners.

Pigs are also used to pay debts incurred for supposed poisonings, for purchasing wives and for sacrifice at funerary rituals. Through an established system of trade and borrowing, a sufficient number of pigs may be amassed by a skillful entrepreneur. To borrow, a man



must first gain the respect of several men of a higher grade who have pigs and are willing to lend them. This is usually accomplished through a servile relationship, the younger man constantly fulfilling the whims of the senior.

The *Nakamal* and surrounding dancing ground is the center of *Nimangi* ritual. It is an ovoid hut, somewhat larger than the houses but of similar construction, and has a high wall of croton bushes secluding it from the view of women and the uninitiated. The *Nakamal* acts as the repository for all ritual paraphernalia and as a meetinghouse and workshop for the men. Each rank of the *Nimangi* society has its own delineated area within the *Nakamal* and individual rank insignia in the form of statues, masks, and ritual designs. There are three prerequisites for access to the *Nakamal*: 1) a man must wear the *namba* (be circumcised), 2) have attained a grade in the *Nimangi*, and 3) have never gone to the sea (meaning departed from the society). Mbotgote men say that if the custom was to be violated the person would be executed immediately—even if the person escaped, they say, he or she would die as a result of the powerful knowledge that they had inadvertently obtained. Power to progress in the graded society is believed to come from the spirits of dead ancestors, and great funerary rituals are conducted to insure a benevolent relationship with those of high rank and kinship who have died.

A parallel *Nimangi* society exists for women but fulfills a slightly different function. It is not so elaborate as the male *Nimangi* but insures that, upon death, a more elaborate funerary ceremony will be undertaken and

the dead woman's spirit will be revered more highly.

About twelve years ago a group of Mbotgote left their mountain refuge and established the village of Boutin near the east coast of Malekula. Since that time outside contact with the upper plateau has increased, causing significant changes in traditional life-ways. Today the Mbotgote are moving along the well-known road to cultural absorption. Where once they traded goods to coastal villages for European clay pipes, web belts, stick tobacco and metal cooking pots—maintaining a degree of isolation—many now work on copra plantations for wages to buy kerosene, radios, watches, guitars, and other trappings of 20th century society. The traditional arts are fast disappearing or becoming distorted through increased production for sale to dealers in "primitive" art. With change taking place so rapidly in Mbotgote culture the University Museum is fortunate in possessing the small ethnographic collection of masks and figurines which I collected and which are pictured here.

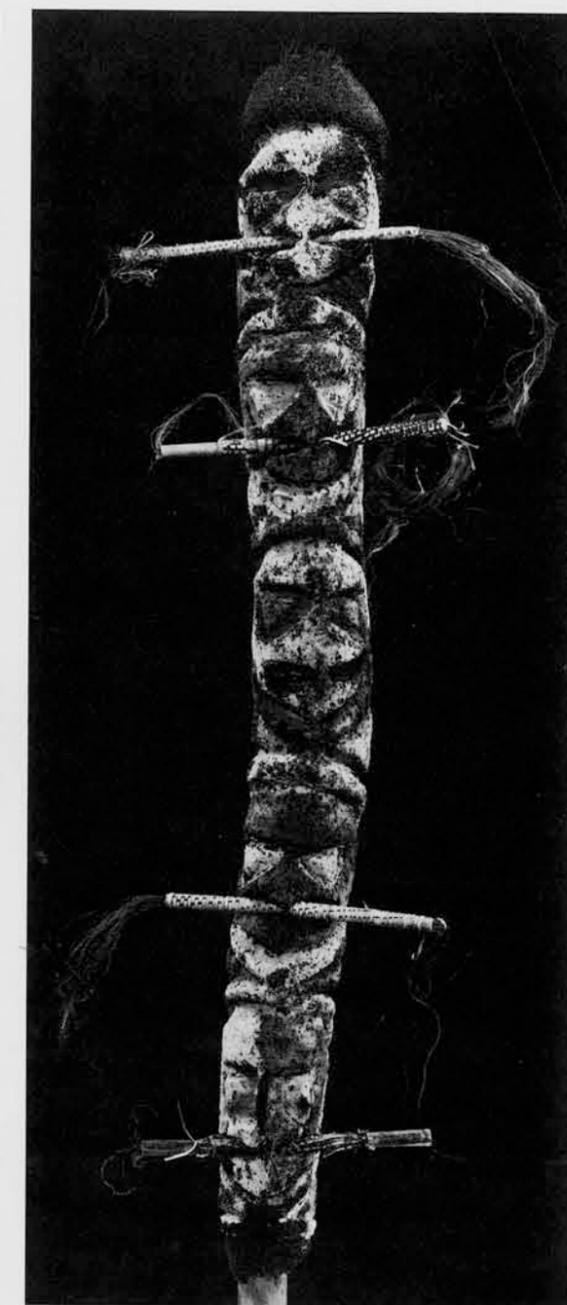
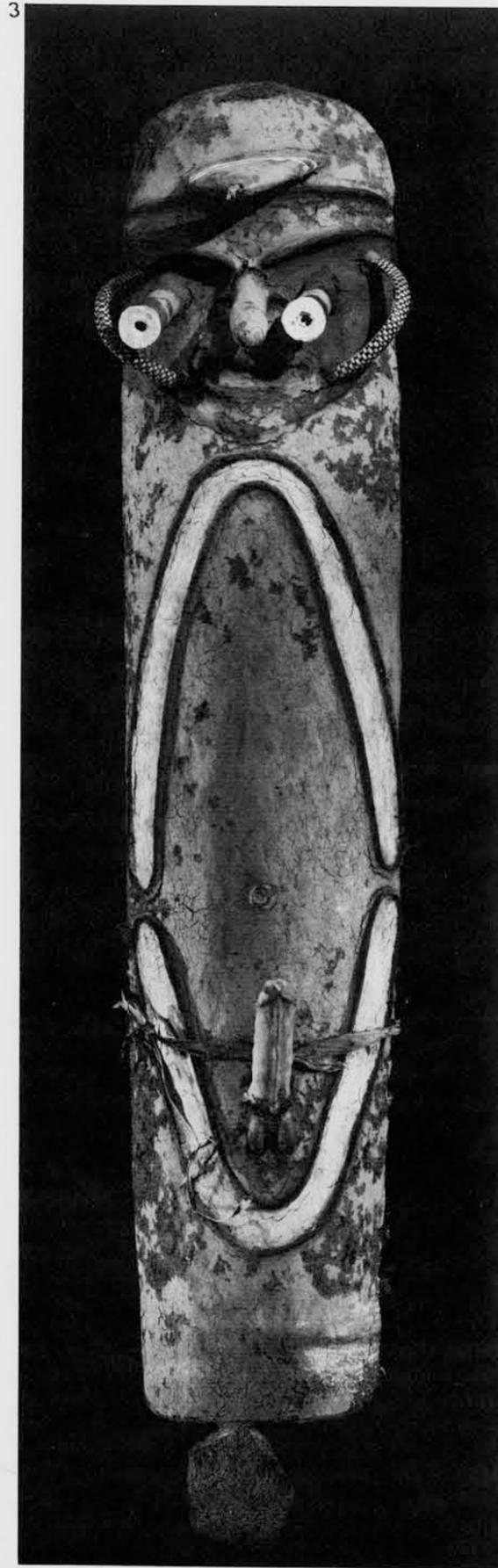
2



1

1 Lower jaw of "circle tusker" pig. One revolution of the tusk requires seven years.
2 Elderly woman preparing food at Yabgatas.

3



3 Nagambau. Statuette used during the circumcision rite, announcing the impending ceremony. It is placed in the dancing area the night before the ceremony takes place. The penis is normally covered while women are present. Height 160 cm. Malekula, New Hebrides.

4 Mule une. Effigy used during the *Nimangi* ceremony, representing the individual who is advancing in grade. Height 200 cm. Malekula.



1

2

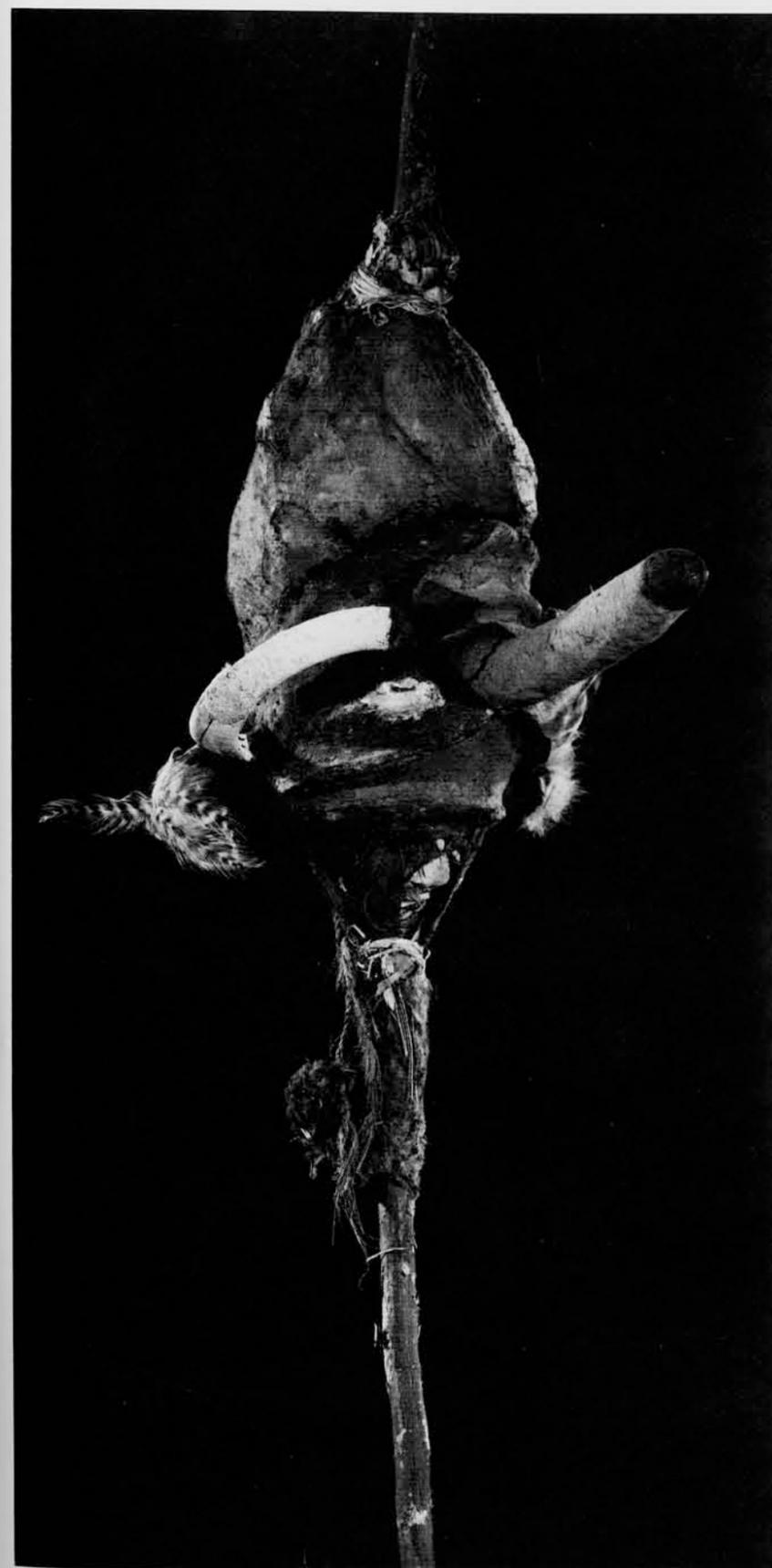


3

1,2
Natamas?mara. Clay puppet made for a young man at his circumcision. The initiate pays with a pig for the right to make the puppet. Each puppet is decorated in a personal style by the maker. Height 105 cm.

3
Angalautaki. Mask used to cover the carving on a slit gong during a man's death ceremony.

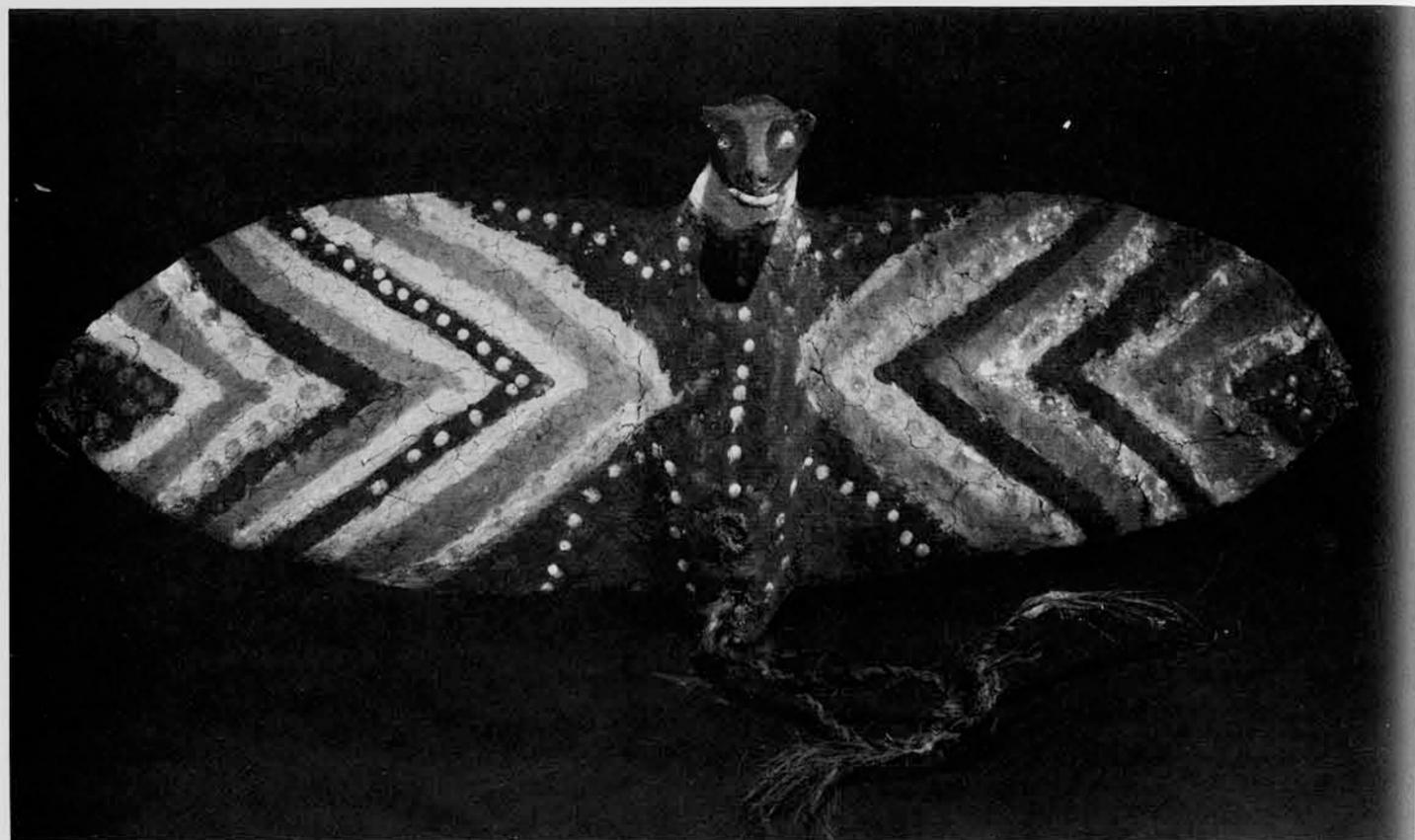
4,5
Umbogi?mohut. Mask made during the circumcision ceremony. Masks are made for each initiate and given him at the conclusion of the ceremony.



4



5



1
Effigy of flying fox or fruit bat, used as decoration of dancing ground during *Nimangi* ceremony. Specific function unknown. Width 42 cm.



2
Metenyela. Adornment placed above the entrance to the *Nakamal* during the circumcision ceremony. Initiates must bow their heads as they pass underneath the *Metenyela* and enter the *Nakamal* for the first time. Height 72 cm.

3
Ai ilingas. Dancing hat used while playing slit gong during *Nimangi* ceremony. Height 74 cm.

4
Female figurine, function unknown. Height 105 cm.

5
Name and function unknown. Probably similar to *Umbogi?mohut*.

2



3

4

5



Name and function unknown. Probably similar to *Umbogi?mohut*.

