

THE LIME POTS OF UIAKU

By Canon James Benson.

I WAS shaving at the end of the Mission House in 1920: at Wangila, some time in 1920: and Father J. E. J. Fisher, priest-in-charge, was reading the log of my first missionary journey in the district. Bishop Sharpe's idea was that I should take charge of Wangila when Fisher returned to England, in about six months' time.

Fisher looked up from his reading and said "I see you noticed it, too!" "Noticed what?" I said. "The real presence of the devil at Uiaku."

"You thought it might be fever coming on; that depression you talk of, but it belongs to the place. Don't look so surprised! Just as in an old church at home, a place where the holy mysteries have been offered for centuries, and holy men and women have prayed for ages, you can feel the Real Presence of God; so, of course, in a place which has been the centre of a devil cult for who knows how long you would expect to feel the real presence of the devil. But it is not nearly so bad as it was before Stephen broke the lime pots."

And at dinner that night he told me the story. It is a sort of a Garden of Eden story, and it is one of the great epics of New Guinea. Besides Fisher's story, I have had it also from Father Stephen Maior, and Father Gregory Awi.

Father Gregory is still alive, assistant priest at Gona with John Wardman. Stephen died under an anaesthetic during an operation for a hernia complication in 1936, during the present Bishop of New Guinea's primary visitation of the diocese, and his death had nothing to do with Gona or Borega. Indeed Governor himself had been dead long before.

It is important to emphasise this, as shall appear. Also for the full veracity of the tale, it is important that you should know Sister Ima Townson acted as interpreter for me in 1923 at Gona, when Stephen told me his story, and that Archdeacon Romney Gill did the same a few years ago, when I had a full version of it from Father Gregory; also at Gona, and John Wardman was listening in.

This was necessary as neither Stephen nor Gregory had sufficient English; and I had no Wedauan, while, of course, Father Gill and Ima Townson were Wardman scholars.

Before going on with the story it is interesting to note the apparent discrepancies in these three accounts. It is in line with all reportage: versions never fully agree, there is always a "synoptic problem." Fisher said Stephen broke the lime pots. Both Stephen and Gregory say that all four boys took a hand in it.

FISHER gives the chief sorcerer's name as Borega; Gregory remembers him as Ooveru. But that presents no difficulty, because every New Guinea man and woman has at least two names.

Then, too, Fisher's account has nothing about swelling arms and the death of Bernard. He did not live in the village, as did Stephen and Gregory—both are emphatic about the swelling. On the other hand, Gregory is not so sure as Fisher about the origin of the cult; and is unaware of its connection with Belgians, the snake cult.

So we will continue the story as I first heard it from Fisher in 1920, and we will call the chief sorcerer Borega, and we will begin at the beginning.

Some time ago—perhaps it was a very long time ago, who can tell?—an ancestress of Borega of Uiaku, returning from the water hole with full water pot on her head and nine gourds, also full, hanging by a string as is the fashion, found a wounded snake on the path and in the sun.

The snake being her totem,

The next story in this series, "The Lime Pots of Uiaku," was written by Canon Benson on board the S.S. "Arcadia" in the Mediterranean on his way to England last month. The second part of this story will appear next week.

she could understand it when it asked for help. "Please," said the snake, "Move me into the shade and give me water to drink, that I may grow well again. An enemy man has injured me with a stick." So the woman moved the snake into a shady place and made it comfortable, and in return the snake said she would be given a great secret.

That night in a dream the snake spirit appeared, and most convincingly told the woman to take the bark and leaves of certain trees, burn them and mix the ashes with the lime in the gourds, or "pots," which is used when chewing betel nut.

Betel nut (Areca nut) is the universal narcotic of the Pacific and it is always chewed with lime; a hardwood, flat spoon or spatula, often with a beautifully carved handle, being used to lift the lime to the mouth. Variety of flavour and effect can be produced with the leaves and roots of various peppers and ginger. Lime, of course, is easily made by burning shells.

THESE magic ashes, added to the lime, would give a wonderful potency to the Lime Pots, and the man who had them would become the most powerful sorcerer in New Guinea.

So it became a family and tribal affair, and the Lime Pots of Uiaku became the terror of North-East Papua from Boianai in the far south to Erora away in the north, 200 miles of coastline, and well into the mountains.

I don't think Fisher in 1920 was conscious of its far-fung power. He never seemed to regard it as of more than local importance. But to get on with his story.

I had been here nearly two years, so what I am about to tell you happened four years ago. I returned from the trip you have just done, and like you I was feeling depressed, only more so. Ambrose, the Melanesian teacher at Uiaku, had told me of some fearful thing there; something about some lime pots, but what could one do? You can't just go barging in on a matter of that sort, something you are supposed to know nothing about.

Stephen Maior had been a Christian for only two years, and he was teaching in the

school here. Seeing my despondency he came to me and said: "Father, I think you are because of Uiaku. God cannot enter the hearts of those people, and it is because of the lime pots. I think, Father, the work of God will not grow at Uiaku until we go and break those lime pots."

"But, Stephen," I said, "Do you mean that you would dare to go and break those lime pots?" "Yes, Father," he said so simply, "It is God's work, and if God is with us what does it matter who is against us? A challenge, truly, to me, a priest and a white man."

There was work to do at Sinapa, beyond Uiaku, so we decided in a few days we would go. All the teachers wanted to go, but I decided to keep the party as small as possible, and I took with me Stephen, Bernard and John; young Gregory, the cook boy, also came.

A few days later, by whale boat, we arrived at Uiaku, to be met by a troubled Ambrose, who said fearful things were happening and the people were greatly afraid.

I called for Borega to come down from his house. Slowly the wickedly leering old man came down the ladder, ancient moth-eaten old headpiece of horn bills and birds of paradise feathers lolling rakishly to one side, some smears of vermilion staining the stale rancid mixture of costings and supercoatings of pot black and old coconut oil, with which his face and body were smeared.

THERE was a canoway bone through the septum of his nose, of course, and the whole ensemble stank to high heaven. Small is a misnomer in sorcery.

I told Borega I knew all about his lime pots, and that he was to tell all the men that had such pots to bring them in. I was going to Sinapa, but would be back next day, then I would expect all the lime pots to be here, and I would tell them what to do.

So we went on the further three hours' pull to Sinapa. I did my inspection of the school and saw to other things. Also I discovered two of the lime pot sorcerers there, and persuaded them to give up their pots.

Next morning, after Mass, we set off back to Uiaku, the two sorcery lime pots with us. About half-way across I leaned over the side of the white boat and filled the two gourds with water and left them to sink.

Not they, they just set off, bob bobbing in the current definitely back to Sinapa. This would never do! What a boost for the Lime Pot Purri Purri! So we had to bout ship, chase the things, collar them and smash them against the side of the white boat. That decided me the pots must be broken.

AT UIAKU old Borega was there with his evil leer and his high snell, but he had done nothing, neither would he bring his own lime pots from his house.

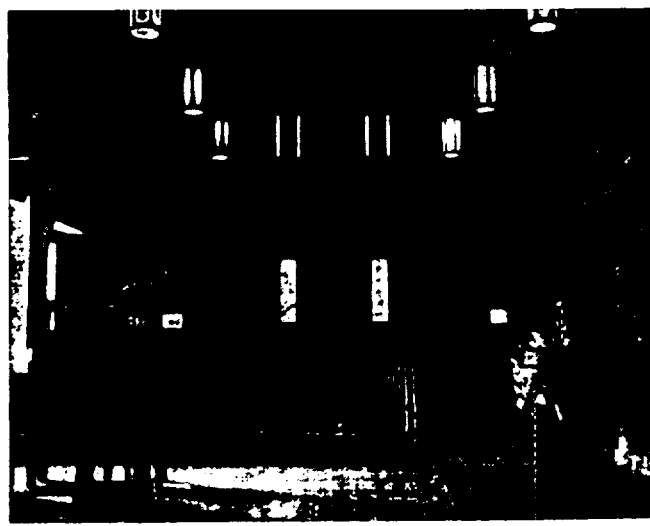
I had the names of all the other men, and I called them all together. Naming a man, as you know in New Guinea, is to command him, and so they came, and for the rest of that day and evening we talked of the evil of sorcery.

Then I told them that in the morning each man was to bring his sorcery lime pots—we were not concerned with lime pots of ordinary use—we would put all the lime pots together, and then I would break them. If there was any power in the pots, then it might kill me; but I knew full well, I told them, that there is no power in them at all. They are just beautiful old pots and nothing more.

Here old Borega leaned forward, the long index finger of the left hand pointing at me, as that of the right ran up alongside the great hooked nose to emphasise the leer; and, as he thought, to add meaning to his remark "You! oh you; that is easy for you. You are a white man, and you know that New Guinea Purri Purri has no power over you. It is easy for you to be brave."

"Yes," said young Stephen, from his place in the sitting circle around the fire. "Yes, but Borega, I am a New Guinea man, and I will break your lime pots."

"You," spluttered the now frenzied Borega. "You! you miserable whippersnapper you! Who are you, to talk such talk. I could blister you and wither you, you! you! son of an Uiritchi! Who are you to talk to Borega of Uiaku, etc., etc.," as breathless, or perhaps lacking words for his feelings, he spluttered into silence.



This photograph of the Nave and Sanctuary of St. Paul's Church, Melbourne and Canfield, Diocese of Melbourne, was taken by Mr. J. S. Simmons, a surveyor, on Easter Day. The Nave and Sanctuary is the completed portion of the church; the Sanctuary and Chancel still being portions of the old wooden building. Just prior to the Jubilee celebrations last year parishioners decided to complete the church, so probably the Easter celebrations were held in the old Sanctuary and Chancel for the last time this year.

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PAPUANS BECOME CHRISTIANS

THE LIME POTS OF UIAKU

By Canon James Benson

This is the third and concluding part of "The Lime Pots of Uiauku," a story of the triumph of Christianity over sorcery.

THEN CAME the time when the people together from all the villages, from the Malain of Uiauku and Marua, to the Winiaft of Cape Nelson, including, of course, the Wanigela people, the Ubir, Oberesan, Rainu, Onjob and the Koya Koya, from the villages behind. All were there.

So the bishop called all the people together, from all the villages, from the Malain of Uiauku and Marua, to the Winiaft of Cape Nelson, including, of course, the Wanigela people, the Ubir, Oberesan, Rainu, Onjob and the Koya Koya, from the villages behind. All were there.

It was the greatest gathering of peoples ever held at Wanigela, and our bishop's heart was full of sorrow, as he heard of the fears of all the peoples. One after another the speakers said that, until all the sorcery lime pots were broken, there could be no happiness in the villages; there could be nothing but fear.

The bishop said, "Love can drive out fear. God is Love and perfect Love casteth out fear. If you wish to shew your choice, then do it by destroying the things of which you are fearful; break your sorcery lime pots."

The Uiauku men, as chief sorcerers, said the words of the bishop were good words; and they would search out all their remaining lime pots when they returned to their village, and they would smash them; so there would be happiness again.

Then a wonderful thing happened. There were several Wanigela men who had used their lime pots for sorcery, and the leading man of these leapt to his feet with a great shout and, rushing round the cleared space with his lime pot held aloft, he stopped suddenly as he came before the bishop, saying, "See, I break it," and dashed it in pieces to the ground.

ONE AFTER another the Wanigela men followed his example, and eyes began to turn to Nonis, the village constable of Wanigela, who sat on the grass near to Father Fisher, who also sat on the grass alongside the bishop, so that he might interpret for him.

Now, Nonis was nursing a very fine lime pot; and the bishop looked across to Nonis and shook his head. I think the bishop was thinking in his mind, "What sort of a policeman is this? That lime pot is much too grand for ordinary daily use. But can a policeman be a sorcerer?" We people of Wanigela, also, did not feel happy about our policeman, Nonis.

Then Father Fisher did the very best thing, and he did it in the way we New Guinea people can understand. He called out, "Are there any more sorcery lime pots?" There was no reply. Nonis sat nursing his lime pot, and with his eyes cast down to the ground. Father Fisher looked across at him as the silence continued, and all eyes were now on those two.

Then Father Fisher leaned across and said, "Please, Nonis, lend me your lime pot." Looking up, very sulkily, Nonis replied, "Yes, Bada, but please do not break it." "I shall not break it," said the priest, "lend it to me. I want to talk about it."

Then holding up the lime pot, Father Fisher said, "This is a lovely lime pot. But we all know Nonis, and we know there are times when he makes a wrong use of this lime pot. Now, what Nonis claims for this lime pot is not the truth, for only

One can do what he claims is his power through this pot. And that One is the God in Whom Christians believe. If Nonis is able to affect you at all, it is because of the fear that is in your heart. You do not believe in God, if you fear the lime pot of Nonis.

Then leaning across again to Nonis he returned the lime pot, saying in a loud voice, so that all could hear: "Here you are Nonis, take back your silly old pot, and if ever again you try to make use of it for sorcery, you will find that everyone will laugh at you."

In a moment Nonis was on his feet, furious because he was caught, as it were, in a left stick. Speaking rapidly in Onjob, his own language, he lashed the assembly right and left, one after another—Malain, Ubir, Oberesan, Koya Koya—all of them; and every man, jack of them, went this, that, and the other sort of fools, and weak-kneed blatherskites, etc., etc.

AS FOR Father Fisher and the Church, coming in and interfering with an ancient and honourable occupation, well, he had no words sufficient to say what he thought about them.

"Here am I," he said, "if I am a sorcerer, I am a good sorcerer. I try always to use it well. This is a good lime pot. It has served me well. But after all that you have said and done this day—his voice rising to a scream—"what can I do with my lovely lime pot? What can I do, now!" And, holding it high, and looking fondly at it, he seemed to push it higher, and higher, as he stood now right in front of the bishop.

People held their breath in suspense, as he shrieked: "It is useless," and dashed it to the ground, at the bishop's feet amid the ruins of all the others, and he himself collapsed with it, under the intense strain.

But the tension was broken, and the whole assembly heaved a huge sigh of relief. The bishop and Father Fisher helped Nonis to his feet.

In a few moments that great crowd was on its knees, and the bishop praying in its midst. He stood and blessed us, and we arose and went quietly into the church, so many as could get in for Evensong.

The menace of the lime pots in Collingwood Bay was destroyed, and a great step forward made in the work of evangelisation.

At Uiauku the great church—cathedral-like in its proportions—stands on the very edge of the bay. In 1920, Stephen Mairot broke the lime pots.

LOUIS DEO

(Finally old Boreka died in Grace just before Fisher left for England. He had a very big sorcery on his leg and Fisher bandaged it. Boreka claimed that it miraculously healed, and that Jesus appeared to him in a vision, telling him he must be a Christian. During the influenza epidemic he died.)

BISHOP G. E. CHAMBERS

Our Paris correspondent for the past 120 years, the Right Reverend G. E. Chambers has resigned his post as Chaplain to the British Embassy in Paris.

It is not true, as reported in an Australian Church magazine, that Bishop Chambers is en route home to Australia by sea.

He is enjoying a short holiday in England, and will spend the next five months preaching and lecturing from the Colonial and Continental Church Society.

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