

AN OUTPOST IN PAPUA: ANGLICAN MISSIONARIES AND MELANESIAN TEACHERS AMONG THE MAISIN, 1902-1934¹

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Early in the memoirs from which I have taken the title for this chapter, the Reverend Arthur Kent Chignell describes his ecstatic reaction to his first sighting of Uiaku village in 1907, "for the first time in New Guinea I saw what I had hoped and expected to see—large villages and crowds of natives, dressed beautifully in native fashion, and with nothing of the semi-civilised shabbiness that had offended me in Samarai."² Seventy-five years later, approaching Uiaku from the ocean, I was also captivated by the simple thatched houses lining the beach, shaded by palms and surrounded by flowering bushes and crotons and, in the background, the rain forest sweeping up to the mountain wall of the Owen Stanley Range about 20 kilometers inland. Like Chignell, however, I made my first landing not in the village proper but at the "mission station," which would be my home for the next two years. Although he mentions the station only in passing,

¹ The archival research on which this chapter is largely based was carried out in the Michael Somare Library of the University of Papua New Guinea, Newton Theological College in Popondetta and the National Archives of Papua New Guinea in 1981-83. I thank the friendly and knowledgeable staffs of these institutions for their immense help and acknowledge with gratitude the permission I received from the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea to consult its rich archives. My historical and ethnographic work with the Maisin has been supported over the years by several agencies, in particular the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. I am grateful to Anna-Karina Hermkens, who is currently conducting research in the eastern Maisin villages, for information on the local descendants of the Melanesian teachers. My thanks to Peggy Brock for involving me in her stimulating and important investigation of indigenous Christianity and for her helpful suggestions for this chapter. I am especially mindful of my debt and responsibility to the Maisin people, whose fascinating story has long engaged me. I dedicate this essay to the memory of my late Maisin "father" and "mother"—both pillars of the Uiaku church—Frank Davis Dodi and Rhoda Binami.

² A. K. Chignell, *An Outpost in Papua* (London: Murray, 1911), 16. Samarai, off the eastern extremity of New Guinea, was then the second largest European settlement in Papua.

Chignell could not have missed the striking contrast it presented to the village with its large open field, barn-like church and classroom, staff residences and perimeter fence, a contrast that remains to this day.

After a short rest, Chignell traveled a further ten kilometers along the coast to the district mission station of Wanigela, the “outpost” of his book. The Uiaku station was an outpost of Wanigela, the first of a dozen or so smaller “out-stations” located in villages scattered across the large mission district of Collingwood Bay. This chapter concerns the early years of the Uiaku station, from the building of the station to the point at which the majority of the local population had accepted baptism. My aim is not to analyze Anglican motivations or practices, although these in their local guise form a key part of my narrative. My chief interest is in exploring the station as a space within which native people encountered, resisted, submitted to and appropriated the institutional, practical and ideological forms of mission Christianity that were presented to them. This chapter forms part of a long-term investigation into the evolution of a form of “vernacular Christianity” amongst the Maisin people of southern Collingwood Bay from the earliest encounters with Europeans in 1890 to the present. A close look at the workings of the early station reveals a great deal about the nature of Christianity presented to the Maisin and their response to it. But the Maisin are not the only or even main indigenous group I am concerned with here. My main focus is on the Melanesian and to a lesser extent Papuan converts who resided and worked on the Uiaku station: the non-Maisin natives who served as school teachers, preachers and exemplars of the new Christian way of life to the local population.

European observers and participants alike have long acknowledged the key role played by indigenous missionaries in the expansion of Christianity across the Pacific islands and, indeed, in most mission fields.³ Islanders from Polynesia and eastern Melanesia were the very first missionaries to live permanently amongst Papua New Guineans, beginning along the south coast in 1871. With the partial exception of some Roman Catholic orders, they made up the largest part of the

³ For the Pacific in general, see D. Munroe and A. Thornley, eds, *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific* (Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College and the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1996). For Papua, see D. Wetherell, “Teachers All: Samoan, Fijian, and Queensland Melanesian Missionaries in Papua, 1884-1914,” *Journal of Religious History* 26 (2002): 78-96.

staffs of the missions working in the area before and during the colonial period. Their commitment was at considerable personal cost through loss of life to malaria and other diseases, attacks by local peoples and sheer loneliness. Indigenous missionaries, mostly working in or close to local villages, undertook the bulk of the routine work of teaching and preaching. Most Papua New Guineans first heard the stories of the Bible in or near their own villages, sitting at the feet of missionaries who looked very much like themselves.

Almost everything we know about indigenous missionaries, including the crucial matter of their understanding of Christian doctrine, comes from the writings of the outsider missionaries who supervised their work. Unfortunately for the historian, these missionaries made only periodic visits to out-stations like Uiaku and, when they mentioned the local staff at all, it was usually to praise or criticize the diligence with which they were carrying out mission policy. The gulf between the clergy and indigenous staffs was made even greater by barriers of language and culture and compounded further by European assumptions of racial superiority. Given the paucity of evidence, historical accounts of indigenous missionaries in Papua New Guinea have tended to take two forms: broad surveys piecing together a general picture of the position and impact of native missionaries; and narratives of the experience of individuals who, either because they themselves wrote an autobiographical account, or were celebrated by mission propagandists, stand out in the record.⁴ These accounts are invaluable, but taken on their own they tend to create two opposed and somewhat exaggerated views of indigenous activities. The surveys tend to overemphasize the independence of islander evangelists in reinterpreting Christianity in terms of their own cultural backgrounds, and their effectiveness as agents of change because of their intimate association with local peoples. The biographical accounts, on the other hand, tend to present islander agents as pious models of Christianity, whose "simple" faith in the Gospels (and by extension in the authority of the mission) allows them to face the most severe threats and opposition from locals.

The evidence from Uiaku, while scant in some regards, is sufficient to attempt a different sort of analysis by viewing indigenous missionaries

⁴ For examples of both types of analysis, see the contributions to Munro and Thornley, *Covenant Makers* as well as R. Crocombe and M. Crocombe, *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1982).

in the context of their place of work. The Melanesians and Papuans who staffed the Uiaku station were neither free agents disseminating their own version of Christianity nor devoted servants slavishly replicating the basic routines and teachings of their missionary masters. They were middlemen whose survival depended equally upon satisfying the demands of the missionaries who paid their salaries and the local peoples who possessed the power to make their lives intolerable. Or, to put this another way, they formed one point of a triangular arrangement with clergy and local villagers within which was generated the localized expression of the Christian religion.

This chapter, then, explores the mission station at Uiaku as a space within which outsider missionaries, indigenous "teachers"⁵ and Maisin villagers met and negotiated a relationship which in time allowed the Maisin to accept the presence of the mission and to absorb its teachings and practices within the larger community. I proceed by examining the roles played on the station by each set of actors in turn. In this reconstruction I must depend most heavily upon the inadequate records left by only one set of the participants. Although we will never know the words of the sermons taught by the teachers or what went through a congregant's mind as she first heard stories about the Christian god, the working assumption that teachers and Maisin were active participants along with the missionaries in the crucible of the mission station enables one to read between the lines of the records to detect the active presence of local Christians teaching the Word and the Maisin first hearing and responding to it.⁶ It has been possible to supplement the archival evidence with recollections by elderly Maisin I recorded in the early 1980s and, as importantly, my anthropological study of contemporary Maisin religion. In 1907, the station Chignell saw at Uiaku was a colonial intrusion into an indigenous society. Seventy-five years later, the station formed a central part of Maisin society, distinct from the hamlets that surrounded it but far from foreign or intrusive. It was the most visible manifestation of a localized Christianity which had appropriated introduced forms

⁵ For the sake of economy, from this point on I follow the old convention of referring to the European staff as "missionaries" and the non-Europeans as "teachers." The "teachers" were, of course, themselves missionaries in the truest sense of being evangelists—indeed, more so than many Europeans.

⁶ Compare with B. Douglas, "Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives: Finding Aneityumese Women," *Oceania* 70 (1999):111-129

like the church and school and invested them with local meaning. In the concluding section of my essay, I turn to the question of how the Maisin refashioned a colonial mission station into an expression of indigenous Christian identity.

*The Missionaries*⁷

Imagine what it must be for perhaps one white man with one or two (at the most) South Sea Islanders as his only companions and helpers, in a district containing 1,500 wild and untaught Papuans, and cut off by 70 miles of ocean (and a far longer savage coastline) from his nearest neighbours at the next Mission "station"!⁸

Almost seventeen years before Chignell's arrival, the Reverend Albert Maclaren also felt an enormous thrill upon landing at Uiaku. Maclaren had come to Papua in June 1890 at the invitation of the Administrator of the new colony, William MacGregor, along with George Brown, the Secretary of the Australian Wesleyan Missionary Society.⁹ Since 1871, the London Missionary Society had been planting stations along the south coast of the Territory. More recently, Roman Catholic missionaries had begun to work inland from a base at Yule Islands on the central coast. Brown agreed to commence a mission in the Papuan islands at the eastern end of New Guinea; Maclaren committed the Anglicans to the long and still only partially explored northern coastline, up to the German border. Following their satisfactory meeting at Port Moresby, MacGregor took Brown and Maclaren on a tour of their new possessions. At the end of July, the *Merrie England* cruised past the tip of Cape Vogel into Collingwood Bay, the southern end of which had never been visited by Europeans.¹⁰ Villagers on the

⁷ For a detailed history of the early contact period in Collingwood Bay, see J. Barker, "Optimistic Pragmatists: Anglican Missionaries among the Maisin of Collingwood Bay, Oro Province," *Journal of Pacific History* 22 (1987): 66-81.

⁸ *Missionary Notes* 80 (Sydney: Church of England, Australian Board of Missions, 1901), 80.

⁹ In 1884, Germany and Britain divided the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and surrounding islands into two protectorates. Four years later British New Guinea was formally annexed as a colony and MacGregor brought from Fiji to serve as the first Administrator. In 1906 Australia assumed control over the Territory which was then renamed Papua.

¹⁰ The Bay itself was named and mapped from the north in 1874. J. Moresby, *Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea and the D'entrecasteaux Islands* (London: Murray, 1876).

Cape warned them about the fierce "Maisina" warriors who had long terrorized the area. The initial meetings, however, were friendly if cautious. Maclaren wrote breathlessly in his journal of how, "All along I tried to explain, by putting head to head, and sitting down and pointing out to sea, that I was coming to live with them, and they all seemed pleased. In one village they kissed my hand, and at another I had my nose pulled twenty times."¹¹ He was determined to establish a missionary presence, lured as much by the fierce reputation of the people as by the large population.¹²

Unfortunately for Maclaren, the Australian church regarded the new enterprise with indifference, making it enormously difficult to raise funds or secure volunteers.¹³ The handful of missionaries who arrived to build the first station at Dogura, 120 kilometers east of the Maisin, lived in primitive conditions, their energy sapped by malnutrition and fever. Maclaren died within the first four months. In 1897, in response to MacGregor's impatient threat to turn the coast over to another mission, the Australian bishops made New Guinea a diocese within the Province of Queensland and elected Montague John Stone-Wigg as its first bishop. Also suffering from poor health, Stone-Wigg proved a far more able fund-raiser, recruiter and organizer than the otherworldly Maclaren. His top priority was to cement the Anglican claim to the northern coast by placing stations in Collingwood Bay and on the Mambare River, near the German border, and then gradually filling the area between.

The Collingwood Bay mission was poorly planned. MacGregor had recommended the Maisin village of Sinapa as a base because of its good anchorage; but the area purchased for the station turned out to be a swamp. Stone-Wigg declared the site unsuitable and

¹¹ F.M. Synge, *Albert Maclaren, Pioneer Missionary in New Guinea* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1908), 99.

¹² Uiaku then as now was made up of two neighboring settlements straddling the Uiaku River, Uiaku proper and Ganjiga. The first reliable census, conducted in 1915, put the population at 595, easily the highest on the coast, yet lower than it would have been prior to 1890 when introduced diseases ravaged the population. See J. Barker, "Western Medicine and the Continuity of Belief: The Maisin of Collingwood Bay, Oro Province," in *A Continuing Trial of Treatment: Medical Pluralism in Papua New Guinea*, eds Stephen Frankel and Gilbert Lewis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 69-93.

¹³ My source for this and other general information on the Anglican mission is D. Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea, 1891-1942* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977).

relocated the mission district headquarters to Wanigela, just north of the Maisin's territory. Its first resident priest, Wilfred Abbot, had a short but dramatic tenure at Wanigela where he and an able New Hebridean teacher bullied the population into submission.¹⁴ He was dismissed late in 1900 after striking a teacher and running up a large bill for "medicinal" liquor. The Maisin became increasingly belligerent towards outsiders around this time, attacking some traders and threatening a prospecting party. Six months after setting up a government station at Tufi on the northern tip of the Bay, the Resident Magistrate let loose his police on Uiaku and Sinapa, destroying canoes, killing three men and wounding an unknown number of others. The Maisin leaders traveled to Tufi to make peace and agreed to the appointment of village constables and the end of raiding.¹⁵ Six months later, they agreed to allow the missionaries to settle at Uiaku.

The work of building a mission presence in Uiaku fell to Abbot's replacement. Prior to his arrival in Papua from Australia in 1900, Percy John Money had trained as a draftsman and excelled as an athlete. A layman, he was sent to Wanigela to serve in a temporary capacity until a priest could be found. The district was enormous, encompassing seven language groups scattered in villages along more than 100 kilometers of coastline. Stone-Wigg instructed Money to concentrate on Wanigela and Uiaku. He was to construct new buildings, supervise the teachers, provide instruction for baptismal candidates and begin the work of translating church liturgies, prayers and hymns into the two languages. He was provided with few resources to accomplish these tasks and very little by way of instruction. Battling loneliness and recurrent bouts of malaria and dengue fever, which at times left him near blind, Money's accomplishments over the next six years were little short of miraculous.¹⁶ He exceeded the bishop's requests and

¹⁴ They made school and church attendance compulsory for both children and adults, whipped women for adultery, had villagers rearrange houses into plantation style row patterns and introduced a crude currency. Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 106-109.

¹⁵ C. A. W. Monckton, *Taming New Guinea* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1922), 198-203.

¹⁶ Many years later, a visitor to Wanigela relayed a telling memory of Money's days there, "Here too lived Percy Money, who through weeks of illness kept his gramophone records of comic songs going night and day, until he knew them by heart and his comrade missionaries almost went mad." C. J. King, "Notes on a Trip from Dogura to Mamba and Back," *ABM Review* (15 February 1932), 187.

also managed to find time to write informative accounts of his work and local cultural practices for mission publications, took wonderful photographs and amassed a huge collection of artifacts.¹⁷ While he did not shy from condemning indigenous practices he considered unchristian, Money's letters convey a genuine interest in the local cultures and empathy with the people.

The clan hamlets that made up Uiaku stretched narrowly along more than a kilometer of coast. Money chose a site for the station near the center, with village houses on three sides and a swamp behind. He found the Maisin language difficult to learn.¹⁸ The villagers were reluctant to provide materials or labor, although willing enough to take the tobacco, knives and cloth the missionary offered them. Money chose to be patient, joking with the villagers and participating in the work crews. "No doubt you think this is a strange course to adopt," he wrote to mission supporters, "but it is preferable to bullying or force."¹⁹ Progress was slow but steady. By the end of the year, Money had erected a residence for the teachers, a comfortable two story home for himself, and a workshop, kitchen and storage house. A little distance away he built a classroom with a capacity for 210 pupils and a massive barn-like church which could hold 550.²⁰ Money envisioned building a large dormitory for male boarders and another for girls and a residence for female missionaries. The various buildings would be connected by neat paths lined with flower beds, with the whole enclosed by a fence to keep out pigs and unauthorized villagers. Another three and a half acres behind the mission would provide space for a playground and gardens for the boarders and teachers.²¹

Money's constructions at Uiaku and Wanigela, as revealed in his

¹⁷ Selling artifacts provided one of the few ways for missionaries to supplement their meager salaries, for many years fixed at £5 per quarter plus provisions. Money sold most of his large collection to the Australian Museum in Sydney. J. Barker, "Dangerous Objects: Changing Indigenous Perceptions of Material Culture in a Papua New Guinea Society," *Pacific Science* 55 (2001): 359-375.

¹⁸ Maisin has an unusual grammar that has long fascinated linguists. Money collaborated on the first formal study. W. M. Strong, "The Maisin Language," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (1911): 381-396.

¹⁹ *Missionary Notes* 90 (1902), 41.

²⁰ The size of the station made a deep impression on the Maisin's neighbors. The Kubiri initially refused a teacher because they assumed that they would be required to construct a similarly grand station, despite their small population. H. Newton, *In Far New Guinea* (London: Seeley Service, 1914), 257.

²¹ P. J. Money, Letter from Uiaku, 19 December. *Missionary Notes* 99 (1902), 18.

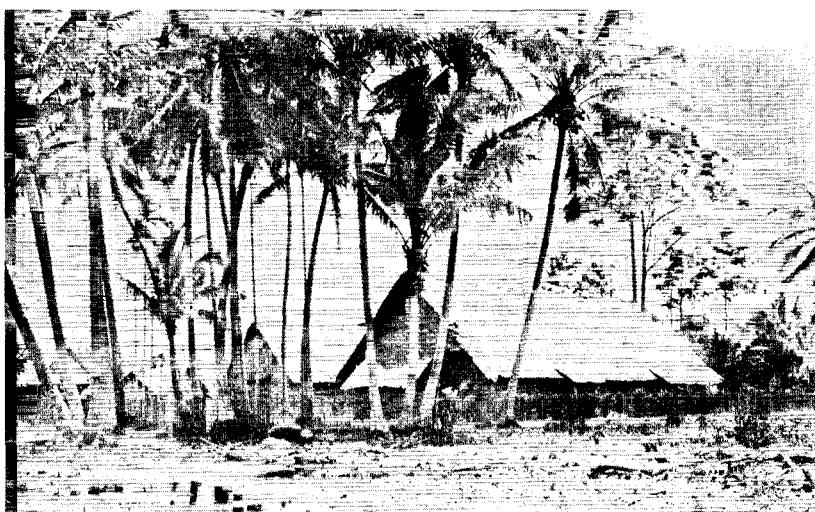
photographs (see page 88), cleverly combined local construction materials and practices with simple European architectural styles. The results looked "native" to European eyes, but the station buildings differed significantly from village houses in function and appearance. In the villages, almost all activities occurred outside. The Maisin built their houses high off the ground, a man's height and often more. A hearth for cooking meals lay below, on a low platform or verandah, or on the ground. A ladder led through the floor to a windowless sleeping chamber. On the station, most activities occurred within buildings, out of sight of the public. The neat alignment of station buildings bore no resemblance to the spatial patterns of the hamlets, where buildings were arranged around oval-shaped plaza of packed earth. The perimeter fence around the station also marked its distinctiveness—the Maisin built fences around gardens to protect them from marauding pigs, but marked the boundaries of clan hamlets with crotoms and fruiting trees. We do not know what the Maisin thought of Money's creation, they must have found the buildings discomforting, not just because of their odd shapes and functions, but the high walls of the classroom and church, constructed with sago thatch, would have made the interior of those buildings dark and hot, especially during the wet season.²²

Money built a residence and classroom for a teacher in Sinapa in 1905 but he did not finish the Uiaku station due to poor health and his duties in Wanigela. He was unable to supervise the teachers at Uiaku closely, leaving them on their own for months at a time. After Chignell arrived in 1907, Money remained assigned to the district but spent much of his time away on furlough and recovering from illness. In 1910, he left the mission for good. Chignell continued to make regular visits to the Maisin stations, until he was replaced by the Reverend J. E. J. Fisher in 1914. Fisher was an energetic authoritarian, who fancied himself the "warden of the coast". He made the moral reform of Wanigela and the preparation of the Maisin for baptism his highest priorities.²³ In 1916, he baptized 164 Maisin, most at a massive ceremony on the river near the station.²⁴ This burst of activity

²² In the 1920s and 1930s, the Maisin adopted Western-styled houses under pressure from the government which considered the old houses unhygienic. Walls are now made of vertical lines of sago rib, which allow more air and light.

²³ J. E. J. Fisher, "The Warden of the Coast," *ABM Review* (Sydney: Church of England, Australian Board of Missions), (1 November 1915), 167-69.

²⁴ Described in G. Robson, "Three Great Days at Wanigela," *ABM Review* (1 August 1916), 107-108.



Uiaku Station, c. 1905. From left to right teachers' residence, missionary's house, school, church. *Reproduced from A.K. Chignell, An Outpost in Papua (London: Murray, 1911).*

was crowned with the appointment of a missionary to the Maisin in 1917. But the young A. P. Jennings was not temperamentally suited for his isolated post and fled Uiaku in 1920 after suffering a nervous breakdown.

Missionaries now considered Uiaku the most difficult posting in the diocese. It was, "A land of mosquitoes, of swamp and water," uncomfortable and unhealthy. The large concentrated population cried for missionary attention, but the people were "extremists in every way." The missionaries had held out hope that the "virility" and stubbornness of the people could be harnessed "directed to work for the Glory of God."²⁵ After the departure of Fisher and Jennings, the bishop wondered whether the Christians there had "been really converted." There was one bright spot, however, "The School work is good."²⁶ That last observation is significant. While missionaries had come and gone, teachers had continuously resided and worked in the community. The Maisin negotiated their relationship with the

²⁵ *Occasional Papers of the New Guinea Mission* 77 (London: New Guinea Mission Association, 1925), 8-9.

²⁶ "Annual Report of the New Guinea Mission, 1923-4," *ABM Review* (12 May 1924), 31.



Thomas Kasiko, a pupil teacher, at work with a young class in Wanigela, c. 1910.
Reproduced from A.K. Chignell, An Outpost in Papua (London: Murray, 1911).

mission and gleaned their earliest understandings of Christianity from the teachers rather than the clergy.

The Teachers

[The teachers] came with very little special preparation, but with a sense of duty and loyalty, a real love for God, and a desire to give these people the comfort and peace they themselves had found. They had all the instincts and sympathies which enabled them to enter into the life and thought of this race, to a far greater extent than white people can ever hope to do.²⁷

Money brought two teachers to Uiaku in 1903: Timothy Gori and Willie Pettawa, who were assisted by Clement Qaitavora, a Papuan convert from Taupota near Dogura.²⁸ Clement left late the same year after becoming involved in a fracas between Maisin and mem-

²⁷ Newton, *New Guinea*: 255.

²⁸ Teachers are referred to by their Christian names in this chapter, as these were the names they preferred to use and the names by which the Maisin remember them.

bers of his village who were passing through the area.²⁹ Timothy soon followed, complaining that the Maisin language was too hard and asking to return to Nggela, his home in the Solomon Islands.³⁰ Willie, who was originally from the Bank Islands in the (then) New Hebrides, contracted an illness and died in 1907. Samuel Siru, a native of Guadalcanal, occupied the new station at Sinapa from 1905 to 1911. Two Nggela brothers, Ambrose Darra and Benjamin Canae, arrived in 1907. "Bennie" moved to Sinapa in 1911, following Samuel's removal to Wanigela. For the next twenty years, the brothers presented the official face of Christianity to the Maisin. From the mid-1920s, they were assisted and then replaced by better educated Papuan teacher-evangelists.

Who were these men? Between 1863 and 1904, Queensland imported an estimated 64,000 laborers from the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands to work on sugar plantations. Small mission schools had been set up to minister to the workers, preparing them for baptism and providing a rudimentary education. Stone-Wigg vigorously recruited among the Anglican converts. In all, 46 Melanesians joined the mission staff, the largest group of 25 arriving after the forced expulsion of Melanesians from Australia in 1905. By 1910, the Melanesians made up a full 70 percent of the Anglican staff in Papua.³¹ Hopes of personal advancement may have played a part in their decision to volunteer. Wetherell suggests that the teachers' "elaborate dress in missionary photographs—waistcoats, watch chains, striped trousers, and straw hats—speak of a desire for a white man's rank."³² The yearly stipend of £25, paid quarterly, must have been attractive to men earning a typical £8 to £20 in Australia.³³ But their decision to go to a new land with little chance of returning home, suggests strong religious convictions.

We know very little about the individuals who worked with the Maisin. Ambrose and Bennie had picked up some English while in Queensland, but Samuel knew only Pidgin English, which most of the

²⁹ Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 278-279.

³⁰ Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 57. Timothy continued to work for the mission until his death in 1931.

³¹ D. Wetherell, "the Bridegroom Cometh: The Lives and Deaths of Queensland Melanesians in New Guinea, 1893-1956," *Pacific Studies* 12 (1989), 55.

³² Wetherell, "the Bridegroom Cometh", 57.

³³ Wetherell, "the Bridegroom Cometh", 58.

white missionaries refused to learn. The Bank Islands and Nggela were among the early successes of the Melanesian Mission of the Anglican church of New Zealand, with large scale conversion in the 1880s. Samuel was probably baptized in Australia, but the others may well have attended mission schools as children on their home islands.³⁴

It was very common in Protestant missions of the day to employ large numbers of "South Sea Islanders" on their staffs. The London Missionary Society and Methodists in Papua recruited their teachers from long-established seminaries from their older mission fields in Polynesia and Fiji. The Melanesian teachers were very poorly educated compared to the Samoans and Fijians in Protestant areas. The mission added a little to the rudimentary academic skills acquired in Australia. Money writes of assisting newly arrived teachers as they struggled to learn Wedau, the language spoken around Dogura which the mission used in services and the classroom, and Maisin.³⁵ Chignell for a time required teachers to attend weekly meetings at Wanigela to improve teaching techniques and to remedy the "silly nonsense imbibed from well-meaning people in Queensland."³⁶ The district priest was required to visit teachers once a month to serve Communion and assess and help them improve upon their duties. A handful of teachers demonstrated a marked aptitude for self-learning, but none of these worked in Collingwood Bay. With a weak grasp of basic literacy and numbers, infrequent coaching, and usually no books to work with, teachers relied upon rote learning, leading their charges in endless choruses of "A-B-C" and "1-2-3," according to elderly Maisin in the early 1980s. This could degenerate to (or perhaps never rise above) nonsense. Chignell writes of one Wanigela class reciting: "'Four fundle one penny,' 'Ten fardles t'ree penny,' each formula repeated ten or twelve times over, as if to impress some foundation truths on those infant minds."³⁷

Anglican leaders insisted that the low educational standards in village schools were not important as Anglo-Catholics did not place as high a priority on an ability to read the Bible as Evangelical Protestants. Bishop Gerald Sharp, Stone-Wigg's successor, wrote that the teachers

³⁴ This is also suggested in Newton, *New Guinea*, 253.

³⁵ E. Clarke, "Missionary Lingue Franche: Wedau," in *Austronesian Languages*, ed. S. A. Wurm, *Pacific Linguistics, Series C*, No. 39 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1976): 953-966.

³⁶ Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 113.

³⁷ Chignell, *Outpost*: 57. See also Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 112-114.

were first and foremost missionaries. Their main duty was to provide Sunday services, especially in outlying areas, pray for those in need, set a good example in their daily life and instruct all in the basic beliefs and rituals of the church. Even in the classroom, the teachers advanced the Christian cause far more by leading children in prayers, teaching hymns and relating bible stories than in teaching letters and numbers, which few villagers would ever have cause to use. "Some of our most valuable Mission teachers have been natives," he concluded, "whose capability as school-teachers has been very small."³⁸

It is especially unfortunate, then, that we possess very little information regarding preaching. Chignell suggests that, given a chance, some of the teachers would preach for hours, "without regard to times and seasons" and summarizes a humorously confused sermon.³⁹ Ideally, district missionaries reviewed sermon outlines with their teachers, but it is likely in this as in the classroom, the teachers relied upon their own resources. Elderly Maisin in the 1980s did not recall the sermons they heard in their youth as being particularly long, but then they barely recalled anything about them at all, except that they were much as today—structured around the telling and retelling of a bible story, usually from the New Testament, from which a simple moral lesson was drawn. Papuan congregations heard little of the fire and brimstone or stern Old Testament morality favored by Polynesian pastors in Protestant areas.⁴⁰

Although never acknowledged, the greatest recommendation for the Melanesians in this chronically understaffed and desperately poor mission lay in their availability, relative inexpensiveness and expendability. Although missionaries received the same paltry cash allowance as the teachers, they cost the mission much more in the form of subsidized food and supplies, furloughs and medical evacuations. Some of the white staff spent their lives in Papua, but most left after a few years and had to be replaced. The teachers, in contrast, were required to provide for themselves from their pay and gardens; all but two died at their posts.

Teachers received their stipend from the district missionary and

³⁸ G. Sharp, *Diocese of New Guinea: Its Rules and Methods* (Dogura: Church of England, Diocese of New Guinea, 1917), 7. See also Newton, *New Guinea*, 254-255.

³⁹ Chignell, *Outpost*, 57-59.

⁴⁰ Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 114.

were required to purchase their goods from him as well. Chignell writes in *Outpost* of placing orders for shirts, gramophones and shotgun shells as well as consumables such as rice and tobacco requested by the teachers.⁴¹ The mission boat delivered goods monthly. These were then sold to the teachers with a small mark-up to cover transport. This would seem to be a recipe for resentment, but most of the teachers appear to have accepted the system. The missionary was also responsible for providing the teachers with stick tobacco, by now the common currency, and other goods to be exchanged with villagers for building materials and labor. Missionaries tended to be tight with their supplies, in part because they felt villagers should be willing to maintain station buildings at their own expense but perhaps also because they suspected that the teachers may have kept some of these consumables for themselves. Given the potential for resentment, it is surprising that only Samuel Siru openly complained about the inadequacies of his pay.

The missionaries reserved their most fulsome public praise for their teachers' "native" qualities: their supposed ability to adapt quickly to local lifestyles; pick up vernaculars; win the trust of villagers who looked much like themselves; and, above all else, express church teachings with a simplicity and grace unencumbered by the complexities of "civilized" thought. Samuel in his early years in Sinapa was thought to be the very model of an effective "native" missionary. He seemed to learn Maisin easily and attracted a large number of students.⁴² This was due, Chignell thought, not to Samuel's skills as an educator, which were slight, but to the fact that he was "intensely 'native,' and perhaps does more in his way, and with his slender equipment, than many a less enthusiastic teacher in the midst of the very latest educational paraphernalia."⁴³ Praise of this type, however, easily segued into ridicule and disapproval. A drawn out but not untypical vignette in *Outpost*, describes a Sunday visit to Uiaku where the missionary was driven

⁴¹ Unlike Papuans, mission teachers were allowed shotgun licenses. Their ability to shoot birds and game added hugely to their popularity in the villages.

⁴² Uiaku Logbook, 3 November 1911, Anglican Archives, University of Papua New Guinea, Waigani. (Henceforth AA.) Chignell expressed some doubts about Samuel's facility in Maisin: "He has picked up the language of the Sinapa people quickly, and talks with rapid volubility whenever any of them are about. It is only now and then that some demon of critical disbelief suggests that he may be talking 'pidgin' Sinapese, as unmeaning and dreadful as most of his English." Chignell, *Outpost*, 65.

⁴³ Chignell, *Outpost*, 65.

to distraction not only by a youth's enthusiastic ringing of the station bell for close to an hour, but also by Ambrose's relaxed concern as to when villagers would show up for the service.⁴⁴ In the privacy of the mission logbooks, the missionaries frequently complained about the "lax" standards teachers maintained at their stations.

While senior clergy sometimes wrote of the teachers as "fellow missionaries," the two groups do not appear to have mixed much.⁴⁵ The teachers lived apart in their own houses on the district stations and even more so on out-stations like Sinapa and Uiaku. They met with the missionary for instruction, worship and administrative purposes, but rarely if ever for socializing. The missionaries wrote confidently of the simple faith of their teachers, but one has to wonder just how well they understood the ways these men perceived Christianity or spiritual matters in general. They seem to have made few inquiries and every now and then one comes across indications of worldviews somewhat at odds with conventional Christianity. A priest visiting Wanigela discovered that one of the teachers retained the totemic beliefs of his youth: "if he ate Shark, his flesh would waste away & he would have much sickness."⁴⁶ Chignell learned that Vivien Darra, Ambrose's wife, had received traditional medical treatment for an illness during which several pieces of wood were "extracted" from her leg. He was surprised when the other teachers defended her decision.⁴⁷

The teachers must have suffered greatly from loneliness, compounded by their association with outsider missionaries, their specialized work on the station and the barriers of language and culture. Willie and Samuel appear to have made concerted efforts to involve themselves in Maisin life. In an early letter from Uiaku, Money relates that Willie had at his own initiative demanded to be shown the "charms" that Maisin said were responsible for causing deaths through sorcery. He convinced an unknown number of villagers to surrender them to Money on the station, who burned them and threw the ashes into the swamp.⁴⁸ This was the first of several occasions, up to the present, where Maisin made use of the missionary presence in attempts to purge the villages

⁴⁴ Chignell, *Outpost*, 364-366.

⁴⁵ Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, 116-119.

⁴⁶ Wanigela Logbook, 16 July 1911, AA. John Hunt, the priest, informed the teacher that Europeans "did not eat Shark, because, sometimes it ate men, not because they were afraid of wasting sickness if they did so."

⁴⁷ Wanigela Logbook, 17 May 1912.

⁴⁸ *Missionary Notes* 101 (1903).

of sorcery materials.⁴⁹ He was also praised for showing "great nerve and courage in asserting discipline in the school of big strong lads, and in facing ebullitions of rage and passion amongst the villagers."⁵⁰ Left for long periods on his own, Willie became involved in sexual affairs on at least two occasions. In April 1907, he came to Money in a somewhat hysterical state, tearfully confessing his "sin" after Jesus appeared before him in a dream and told him that he would suffer for it.⁵¹ Willie may have also feared that he was under attack by a sorcerer, for he was clearly quite ill at the time. Money sent him to Dogura where he died a month later.

None of the teachers asserted themselves more vigorously into Maisin society than Samuel at his little base in Sinapa. Chignell reports an incident in which Samuel proclaimed to frightened villagers that a tragic case in which three men died from fish poisoning came as retribution for avoiding church services.⁵² The missionaries complained about lax conditions at the station, but these had probably more to do with Samuel's involvement with his Maisin neighbors than any bullying. He appears to have spent a good deal of his time draining the swamp near his house and planting coconuts and large gardens. Some of the food went to the Uiaku station, but his hard work probably also produced goods which entered the local exchange networks. In 1909, he successfully negotiated with elders of the Virani clan for a bride. The mission insisted that Manua first spend time at Dogura "to learn some of the arts and graces that make for domestic comfort"⁵³ and to prepare for baptism. Newton wrote a vivid description of her appearance on the day of her departure: her face had recently been tattooed and she was richly adorned in a manner befitting an important alliance (see photograph on page 98).⁵⁴ After nearly two years in Dogura, accompanied by a male cousin, she became the second Maisin

⁴⁹ J. Barker, "Encounters with Evil: The Historical Construction of Sorcery in Maisin Society, Papua New Guinea," *Oceania* 61 (1990): 139-155. It is possible that Willie had seen or heard of similar purges as they were common in the early stages of conversion in parts of the Solomons. It is also very clear that the Maisin needed little encouragement.

⁵⁰ *Missionary Notes* 147 (1907), 48.

⁵¹ Money to Stone-Wigg, 5 April 1907, AA.

⁵² Chignell, *Outpost*, 67-68.

⁵³ Chignell, *Outpost*, 66.

⁵⁴ Newton, *New Guinea*, 266.

to receive baptism, returning as "Sara."⁵⁵ The missionaries were at first pleased by the effect they thought Sara was having on Samuel's work in Sinapa, but in 1911 decided to remove him to Wanigela where he could be more closely supervised. Samuel left the mission after being demoted to a workman by the Bishop following complaints about his work and accusations of stealing from the mission stores. He briefly worked at a trade store at Tufi before being sacked for "laziness" and returning to Sinapa in late 1913, where he died a year or two later.

Samuel and Sara had two children: Simon, who died a few months after his birth in 1912, and Mary, born in 1913. In 1916, the mission persuaded Sara to leave the man she was then living with and move to Wanigela with her baby. Sara's brother later brought her home, where she remarried, leaving Mary behind in the missionaries' care. Descendents of Sara and Mary today live in Konyasi village and Uiaku. While details are missing, it is likely that the mission assisted Ambrose in finding his bride, who came from the distant Orokavia area to the west. Tragically, Ambrose and Vivien's first three children died in infancy. Ambrose himself was often sick. Towards the end of his life, his throat was so scarred from infections that he could scarcely speak. He died in Uiaku in 1927. Praising the teacher for his gentle ways and faithfulness, Newton's obituary tells of how Ambrose on his last day of life "managed to get out to the verandah of his house to have a last look round the station, and at the church which he had built mostly with his own hands."⁵⁶ Vivien returned to her own people with the couple's surviving daughter, only to perish with thousands of others in the volcanic eruption of Mt. Lamington in 1951. Bennie never married, remaining at Sinapa until his death in 1934.

In the early 1980s, only a handful of Maisin remembered Ambrose and Bennie. I heard that the two brothers wore pants, shirts and hats and had darker skins than the villagers. Bennie was more integrated into the local society. His verandah was often full of visitors. He delighted the people by joining in the annual grass-burning, shooting lots of wallabies and wild pigs with his shotgun. In 1919, Bennie was in trouble with the Resident Magistrate for hiding men in his house

⁵⁵ James Bogege of Yuayu, who had attended classes in nearby Wanigela, was the first in 1908.

⁵⁶ H. Newton, "Ambrose Darra: Melanesian Teacher, New Guinea Mission," *ABM Review* (12 August 1927), 107.

needed for patrols.⁵⁷ There are fewer memories of Ambrose. Adelbert Sevaru told me that he often visited Ambrose to hear bible stories. He remembered fondly how the teacher encouraged him to hunt deep in the forest, without fear of spirits. Once when he was working on a plantation, Adelbert became sick and went blind. Ambrose, now deceased, appeared in a dream to show him the medicine that could cure his blindness. Maisin often have such dreams, but this is the only case I heard in which the specter was not a close relative or a biblical figure. Adelbert told me that Ambrose was the biggest influence on his life, after his mother.

By the mid-1920s, the era of the Melanesian teachers was coming to an end in Collingwood Bay and elsewhere. Many of them died from disease or loneliness, and survivors, like Ambrose and Bennie, were being replaced by the Papuan converts, themselves initially taught by the Melanesians. The Papuans had several advantages. They had grown up with mission routines and were more comfortable with enforcing them; the villagers themselves were more accustomed to the routines of the mission; the teachers were better trained, having received instruction directly from missionaries at district stations and Dogura. Importantly, it was easier for teachers to move when in difficult local situation. A Papuan could request another posting or quit and return to his home village. Nevertheless, the teachers remained professional strangers. The fences remained around the mission stations; the teachers continued to assert forms of authority with no counterparts in village life. The oral and documentary records reveal instances of tension between villagers and Papuan teachers: arguments over the placement of gardens; concerning discipline of children; and sexual affairs. These occasional conflicts reflect the increasingly ambiguous status of the teachers. They were not as foreign as Melanesians. The station had become familiar as most Maisin by then had spent time there as students and as worshippers.

⁵⁷ Resident Magistrate North-eastern Division, Patrol Reports, 9-25 October 1919, G91-NAO, National Archives, Waigani. This event occurred during a period when the Maisin were actively resisting both the government and Jennings at Uiaku. Barker, "Optimistic Pragmatists," 79-80.



Uiaku school girls, c. 1910. Money probably took this photograph outside the school—note the water tank on the left. The more richly decorated girl on the far left had just been tattooed, as indicated by her solid (red) coloured tapa cloth (wamatuvu), but the high hairlines suggest that all of the girls had passed through the puberty ceremony recently. Their tapas display designs belonging to their father's clan.

Reproduced from A.K. Chignell, *An Outpost in Papua* (London: Murray, 1911).

Scholars and Boarders

[They] are well-washed and merry-hearted Mission boarders, and as unnaturally clean in their habits and regular in their lives as it is possible for small brown savages to be. Some day, they will go back to their wallowing, but it is good for them to have been trim and well-disciplined even for a part of their lives. The parents of such boys do not seem to mind.⁵⁸

In a popular work describing the people on the northern Papuan coast and the Anglican missions among them, Henry Newton, later the third bishop, confesses that, "It is doubtful whether the Anglican Mission to New Guinea has had any definite theory as to how mission work should be carried on, any thought-out principles."⁵⁹ Newton's statement was misleading, referring more to the social impact of the

⁵⁸ Chignell, *Outpost*, 108.

⁵⁹ Newton, *New Guinea*, 250.

mission than its operations. The ecclesiastical organization of a diocese mission provided the Anglicans with a very clear chain of command—the bishop possessed near autocratic authority over the layers of priests, deacons, lay-evangelists, teachers and laity. The Anglicans never suffered from the drawn out fights between district missionaries that complicated the work of the London Missionary Society on the south coast. The bishops allowed district missionaries a great deal of flexibility in the pace and scope of evangelization in the villages. But even here, there were definite expectations of how the work should proceed, many of which were codified by Bishop Sharp in 1917.⁶⁰

Some religious services took place outside the stations. Every Sunday in Wanigela and for a time in Uiaku, the teachers trudged to nearby villages to conduct a simple service, known as *taparoro* in Wedauan, which consisted of a psalm, a reading, a hymn and the Lord's Prayer.⁶¹ On Sundays, teachers added a sermon. Anyone could attend *taparoro*, but those who expressed an interest in baptism (known as "Hearers") were required to attend classes in religious instruction. After a probationary period, Hearers entered the Catechumentate and for a period of two years or more attended weekly classes on the station at which they learned by heart the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and such portions of the catechism as were available in the vernacular or Wedau, usually at the feet of the teachers. A week or more prior to baptism, the catechumen attended a daily class of instruction from the district missionary who made the final assessment as to their preparation. The newly baptized then entered a second probationary period lasting a few weeks to several months, depending on the traveling schedule of the bishop. Following two weeks of intensive daily preparation by the priest, the confirmation class was anointed with oil and blessed by the bishop. They were now full members of the church and enjoyed the privilege of sharing Communion.

An ability to read the gospels was not required for baptism, although some adults did learn, such as Daniel Taru from Yuayu, the third Maisin to receive baptism, who was about 40 years old in 1910.⁶² But the mission found most of its recruits among the children and adolescents

⁶⁰ Sharp, *Rules and Methods*.

⁶¹ The Lord's Prayer was recited only by the leader and Christians. Non-Christians remained silent until the phrase, "Lead us not into temptation," to which they responded "Deliver us from evil." Sharp, *Rules and Methods*, 12.

⁶² Chignell, *Outpost*, 356-357.

attending the station school. Money reported in 1907 that the Uiaku school had 73 girls and 100 boys in attendance, an impressive figure at a time when the total population numbered between 600 and 700.⁶³ Attendance fluctuated greatly, depending on interest and the parents' need for the children's assistance in the gardens. Most years, the teachers reported a roll of around 70 students in Uiaku and 40 in Sinapa, although the numbers soared in Uiaku during Jennings' tenure. The missionaries treated the figures with suspicion, probably with good reason. Still, the willingness of many Maisin parents to give up the labor of their children for five days a week for the best part of a year is quite remarkable. One can only speculate about their motivations. There was some element of coercion. The colonial administration made attendance in mission schools mandatory wherever they were available but the village constable in Uiaku appears to have been rarely employed to gather truant children. One imagines that the students came initially out of curiosity or were sent by their elders in hopes of currying favor with the mission or its god. In the early years, the classes were all made up of adolescents, the period of the life cycle at which Maisin enjoyed the greatest personal freedom. But the classes became progressively younger, with most students starting around ten years of age from about 1910.

Students attended school anywhere from one to three years. Classes ran, officially at least, from around nine o' clock in the morning until noon. The teachers had little equipment to work with—usually a blackboard and some slates—and the children appear to have sat on logs rather than at desks. Instruction was mostly in the Wedau language and comprised, as we have seen, the rote recitation of lessons. With the assistance of pupil teachers, recruited from the brightest graduates who were paid a small fee, the teachers divided the students into separate classes. Religious instruction formed a key component. The teachers began each day with prayers, a hymn and the recitation of the Ten Commandments. Biblical stories and the singing of hymns punctuated the day, depending on the whims of the teacher and interests of the students.⁶⁴ Even with such slender resources—both

⁶³ *Missionary Notes* 148 (1907): 54.

⁶⁴ Gertrude Robson, a lay missionary based at Wanigela, wrote an idyllic description of a school day in Uiaku. Her fellow missionaries, however, tended to be more critical. G. Robson, "When the Conch Shell Blows," *Occasional Papers of the New Guinea Mission* 56 (1917), 19-20.

material and intellectual—visitors reported that the students did learn to read and write in Wedau and some basic maths. Of course, the main thing they gained was a familiarity with the forms of Christian worship and belief. Although candidates for baptism still attended a separate *giu* class, the classroom prepared young people for eventual membership in the church. Indeed, that was its main purpose as far as the missionaries were concerned.

At various times between 1903 and 1920, the Uiaku station also housed anywhere from five to 27 male boarders who lived either with the teacher or in their own dormitory. Boarders made a commitment to live on the station and abide by its rules. They cooked and shared their meals there, making use of food provided by the mission, although usually purchased locally. A boarder received a more intense experience of mission life than day schoolers. They attended morning and evening services as well as the school and were subjected to a much higher level of discipline as well as Christian instruction. Some of the boarders became very close to the mission staff. Jennings wrote, “without them I should be lonely indeed. Some of them spend the evening in a large room of my house looking at pictures and playing draughts, ludo, snakes and ladders, and that is almost the happiest time of the day for me.”⁶⁵ The first large cohort of Maisin to receive baptism was made up mostly of adolescents who had lived for some years on the Uiaku station. Boarders also tended to be advanced as pupil teachers locally and given opportunities for further education at Wanigela and Dogura. The first three Maisin to be licensed as teacher-evangelists after attending St. Aiden’s College at Dogura all lived as boarders with Jennings. After Jennings’ departure, the more promising graduates of the Maisin schools continued their education as boarders at Wanigela.

The boarders provided the teachers and resident missionary, when there was one, with something at least as important as companionship—a ready source of labor. In principle, if not always practice, all stations followed similar schedules: After morning devotions at six in the morning, the boarders spent two hours tending to the upkeep of the station before breakfast and school. After dinner at one o’ clock, they returned to work on the station or in the gardens, with some time off for recreation. They were expected to keep their dormitory “scrub-

⁶⁵ *Occasional Papers* 59 (1919), 8.

pulously clean" and to be willing to serve as house-boys and cooks for the mission staff.⁶⁶ Over the years, day students also took on afternoon work. Many elderly Maisin who attended school under Papuan evangelists in the 1920s and 1930s, recalled spending as much time fishing and gardening for the teachers as in the classroom. It is possible that the teachers and missionaries could have survived without their small armies of young workers, but it would have been made their situation very difficult. When the Maisin became impatient with Jennings, they used the expedient of refusing to sell him food for his boarders, most of whom were their own children, rather than confronting him directly. Jennings was forced to let his young companions go.⁶⁷

Discipline dominated station life, measured out in the adherence to schedules of work, worship, study and play; respectful obedience to the requirements of missionaries and teachers; and avoidance of personal "sin." The missionaries assessed teachers in terms of their ability to maintain discipline and often found them wanting, especially in regards to punctuality and authority. All the same, the teachers, with the periodic prodding of missionaries, created on the station a regimen that had no equivalent in Maisin society and which required for its success a high degree of compliance from the young people who sat in the classrooms and lived in the dormitories. And to a large extent, they received it. But at times, they applied more forceful measures. In 1908, Ambrose dismissed three of his eight boarders who "are in the habit of sleeping off the station, of shirking afternoon work, and of absenting themselves from school & taparoro."⁶⁸ At other times, boarders were dismissed for stealing from the mission stores or punished for sleeping with village girls. Students who were late for, or missed school, were subjected to additional labor in the afternoon, usually pulling tall grass around the station for burning, or carrying sand for the floor of the church.⁶⁹ The most severe infractions might be punished with a public belting or caning. However, such evidence that exists suggests that the Melanesian teachers rarely resorted to corporal punishment. Indeed, in the early days it might have been dangerous for them to do so, for there was no equivalent practice in

⁶⁶ Sharp, *Rules and Methods*, 8.

⁶⁷ Barker, "Optimistic Pragmatists," 79.

⁶⁸ Uikau Logbook, 30 April, 1908.

⁶⁹ Chignell, *Outpost*, 107-08. These punishments apparently were first devised by Money. Elderly Maisin remembered them well.

Maisin society. Europeans, however, were less constrained. Jennings gave his houseboy a good caning a few months after his arrival at Uiaku and suspended six Christian girls from Communion services for the sin of "fornication." A few days later, two other boarders admitted to the sin and asked to be punished. Jennings complied and also ordered that the girls involved remove their ornaments and submit to having their heads shaven. One of Jennings' former boarders told me of how he had been caught going around with a girl. Two older boys dragged him to Jennings' house and held him down while the missionary hit him with a cane. He struggled free, jumped the fence and ran to his parents' house. "It was then I gave up school," he added, rather laconically I thought.

The elderly Maisin I interviewed in the 1980s remembered little of the lessons or the services they attended on the station as children. However they vividly recalled parading in formation into class, mending fences, cleaning classrooms, working in the teacher's garden or fishing for him. They described in exquisite detail the punishments they received (from Papuan, however, not Melanesian teachers) for tardiness, slacking on the work details and skipping classes. They did not learn much, however, they said, quite simply, that the teachers were good men and their parents wanted them to go to the school and be baptized. The work was hard, but one man told me "It was good doing these things because later when we married we knew how to do this work well. [The teacher] made us into hard-working people."⁷⁰

The Emergence of Maisin Christianity

The idea that slaving away in a teacher's garden taught students how to work hard on their own is surprising. Yet reflects a common attitude among older Maisin in the early 1980s who likened the relationship between the people and the mission to that which ideally holds between a younger and old brother or a junior and senior clan. The young put their energies to work as warriors and dancers at feasts, but they tended to be impetuous. Their elders "take care of them" by calming down and challenging their energies through a mixture of good advice and threats of sorcery. In return for this gift, the young should listen with "respect" to their elders and give them gifts of food and

⁷⁰ Interview with Michael John Buro, Uiaku, 12 May 1983.

labor. In the same way, the people receive advice and the blessings of God in return for bringing their gifts of food and labor to the teachers and clergy and listening obediently to their lessons, sermons and commands. If the reciprocal circle held, everyone benefited. But too often youth or the people were impatient and elders or the missionaries self-serving and so the relationship became strained.

As I read the mission logs of the 1920s and 1930s, I saw evidence of this kind of attitude at work. Very large numbers of Maisin were baptized at regular intervals reflecting the cycle of school attendance in 1926, 1929, 1933 and 1937. People enthusiastically celebrated the patronal feast day of St. Thomas every December on the Uiaku station with feasting, dancing and long services. They built a massive new church in 1937 entirely at their own expense and, apparently, initiative. No one challenged the mission's rules as they pertained to students and worshippers on the station. Yet in the village, Christians largely ignored the mission's strictures on marriage, participation in death rites and involvement in the healing/fertility cults that swept through the region periodically at this time.⁷¹ People had become accustomed to the presence in their midst of a foreign institution but in a way that made sense to them—if not to the frustrated missionaries. We can only speculate on what villagers hoped or thought they were achieving by this relationship in the early stages. Following the Second World War, however, a number of young leaders made effective use of the people's collective connection to the mission as a means of overcoming clan divisions and launching a cooperative movement meant to improve the material conditions of village life. The greatest achievement of the movement was the construction of the first iron-roofed church in the region—for Maisin a lasting symbol of what they could accomplish by bringing the village and the mission into a reciprocal balance.⁷²

⁷¹ I do not mean to suggest here or in the following paragraph that Christian ideas and practices did not influence individuals or village life in general. This occurred as a kind of parallel mode of conversion, gradually and to a large degree unconsciously. I discuss the two forms of conversion in J. Barker, "We Are 'Ekelesia': Conversion in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea," in *Christian Conversion: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert Hefner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 199–230.

⁷² Barker, "We Are 'Ekelesia'". The other important area in which Maisin have made explicit use of Christian themes is in dealing with sorcery and healing. J. Barker, "Christian Bodies: Dialectics of Sickness and Salvation among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea," *Journal of Religious History* 27 (2003): 272–293.

In 1914, Newton wrote that in time the mission would give way to a church that "is not to be a body distinct from the native life, but rather one that permeates the whole by its influence; not something foreign to, but an integral part of, native life."⁷³ The church did indeed become integral to Maisin society, although not quite the way Newton hoped. In 1981, when I first came to Uiaku to study Maisin Christianity, the station remained almost as distinct from the surrounding villages as it had when Money erected the first buildings—only the fence was gone. Maisin continued to speak of it as the "mission" and the teachers and priest as "missionaries" although the population had long been entirely Christian and the days of evangelization were over. The villagers referred to the activities occurring on the station as belonging to the "mission side" in contrast to "village side" activities organized in reference to the clans and remembered traditions. The separation was far from firm in practice, but real enough in people's minds. But the "mission," spatially and ideologically distinct as it appeared, was not a fossil from the missionary past, let alone a foreign imposition. It had long become an essential part of Maisin experience and society, as completely accepted by Maisin as any "village" traditions. It is likely that Christianity would have taken a very different local form had the mission been more interventionist. While memories of the Melanesian teachers has almost entirely faded away, this study suggests that their mediating presence played a large role in helping Maisin to accept the mission while retaining a strong sense of their autonomy from it.

⁷³ Newton, *New Guinea*, 251.