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History as Resource: Moral Reckonings with Place and With the Wartime Past in Oro Province, Papua New Guinea¹

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Abstract: Located in Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, Higaturu Station is a place marked by multiple intersections of violence. Originally established as an Australian colonial headquarters, in 1943 it was the site of execution of 21 local Orokaiva men convicted—by the Australian administration—of treason during the Second World War. Eight years after the executions, the nearby Mount Lamington volcano erupted, killing thousands and devastating Higaturu. Today the place remains uninhabited but laden with memory and meaning, a site of ambivalent moral reckonings both with the colonial past and with the postcolonial present. These moral reckonings in turn intersect with peoples' experiences of, and hopes for, 'development'. In Oro Province, history is becoming a resource—not unlike gold, or the oil palm plantations that extend across the landscape—which might attract outsiders, and with them forms of wealth and possibilities for realising the good life. Accordingly, Higaturu landowners work to attract outsiders to the site of the eruption and the hangings. At the same time, however, they worry that the outsiders they attract—including anthropologists—will exploit and profit from their history in the ways that so many outsiders have

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profited from the Province's other resources. Commercial considerations inform these hopes and worries, but the mobilisation of history-as-resource also speaks to other concerns, including about the relationships of insiders and outsiders across time, and the proper attributions of guilt, responsibility and entitlement within colonial and postcolonial landscapes of remembrance.

Keywords: Second World War; History; Resource; Dark Tourism; Colonialism

Introduction

Located on the slopes of volcanic Mount Lamington in Papua New Guinea's Oro Province, the old Higaturu Station is a place marked by violence, memory, and fraught potentiality. It is less than an hour's drive from the Provincial capital, Popondetta, on the way to Kokoda, which (depending on which way you are walking) is either the beginning or the end of the Kokoda Track. That 96 kilometre track over the Owen Stanley ranges is the focal point of a burgeoning but unevenly spread war tourism industry in the Province, an industry that Higaturu is geographically proximate to but nonetheless marginal from. Higaturu was not always a marginal place, however. Until 1951 it was the government headquarters of the Northern District of the Territory of Papua, complete with offices, a hospital, a school, accommodation for Australian colonial administrators, a church, and so on. In 1943, in the context of the Second World War, it was the site of execution of 21 local Orokaiva men. The men were convicted of treason after a group of 8 to 10 people, including Australian missionaries and an American serviceman, were betrayed and handed over to Japanese forces. Those betrayed met violent deaths at the hands of the Japanese soldiers. Then, in 1951, another act of violence engulfed Higaturu. Mount Lamington—*Sumbiripa*, to give it its local name—erupted. The eruption was unpredicted and devastating, killing over 3,000 people and injuring many more. The landscape it left behind, documented by the Australian photographer Albert Speer², was a macabre mess of twisted metal, trees and bodies. In the aftermath, the colonial headquarters were rebuilt at Popondetta. Survivors of villages destroyed by the volcano moved to new homes, further away from the mountain's peak. Higaturu Station was left uninhabited.

In July 2015, four Papua New Guinean colleagues and I set out for Higaturu. Our planned trip followed several days' consultations with a range of community representatives associated with the site, including village leaders and landowners now resident in the village of Hohorita, (formed by survivors in the wake of the 1951 disaster), and the grandson of Embogi, the leader of the Orokaiva men executed in 1943. Those consultations themselves followed from archival and field research done over the previous year by myself and other Australian and Papua New Guinean researchers as part of an oral history project recording interviews about local experiences of the Second World War. Following the most recent consultations, facilitated by local Papua New Guinean historian Maclaren Hiari—who is both one of my colleagues and a key actor himself in the resurgent interest in history within the

² An album containing 62 of Speer's images is available online at the National Library of Australia collection, PIC Album 1085 A #PIC/9275/1-62

Province—we had been invited to travel to Higaturu, to see the site itself where the events had taken place. The invitation followed on the back of other efforts made by the community to attract visitors to Higaturu, including plans for a memorial and a small museum. As we passed through Hohorita village, however, on the way up the mountain, the vehicle we were travelling in was stopped. A small crowd gathered and a debate erupted between the representatives of different groups claiming ownership of the Higaturu site. In ways that echoed strongly the tensions and conflicts that emerge around resource extractive processes in Papua New Guinea (PNG), accusations flew around about who were and who were not the ‘real landowners’, about what money might be made from our access to the site, and about where it might go. My colleagues and I had brought with us a spiral bound, A4 sized document containing copies of archival photos and documents relating to the Higaturu colonial station, the wartime executions and the 1951 eruption—the products of archival research carried out as part of the oral history project—which we had intended to give to the community in a spirit of dialogue and return. Instead, the document was now pointed to by some of the gathered men as proof that we—more specifically, *I*—were writing a book about Higaturu that was going to use the stories of the people and place for our—more specifically, *my*—own profit. Faced with disagreement about our visit to the site, my colleagues and I turned our vehicle around and returned to Popondetta.

In this article, I take our turn-back from Hohorita as a starting point to think about the kinds of moral reckonings that circulate throughout Oro Province as *history* is mobilised as a resource in the pursuit of development. Not unlike gold or oil palm, history—and particularly wartime history—increasingly presents itself to local people as a resource that might attract outsiders, and with them forms of wealth and possibilities for realising the good life. Accordingly, many individuals and communities, including at Higaturu, work to mobilise history towards these ends. At the same time, however, many also worry that the outsiders they attract—war tourists but also others, including, as the vignette above illustrates, anthropologists—will exploit and profit from their history in the ways that so many outsiders have profited from the Province’s other resources. Oro Province people are thus called upon to negotiate complexes of both risk and promise associated with this new resource. Doing so entails moral reckonings both with a violent, colonial past, and with its contemporary reverberations. Relationships with *place*, I argue, become a key locus of these reckonings. If ‘culture’, as Arturo Escobar (2001, 139) has put it—and ‘wisdom’, as Keith Basso (1996) put it before him—‘sits in places’, so too does history. Indeed, as Basso shows in his skilful ethnography of Apache life, the ‘country of the past’ is a landscape of connections and instructions, and ‘place-making is a universal tool of the historical imagination’ (1996, 4-5). The features of landscape, naming practices and stories rooted in place, Basso argues, hold and communicate moral meaning for the Apache, connecting past, present and future as they conjure acts of both remembrance (of the past) and imagination (of the future). At the same time, however, differing levels of scale and differing forms of relationship to place entail differing forms and practices of remembering; at Higaturu, the efforts of local Orokaiva to mobilise history-as-resource evoke local histories and local moral ecologies that sit in uneasy relation to nation and global narratives of the past.

In unpacking the intersections of place, morality, history and colonialism in Oro Province, I move first to introduce the emergence of the war tourism industry there, positioning this in relation to a wider literature on Pacific war heritage and memory, as well as an associated literature on ‘dark tourism’, and ‘landscapes of memory’. Jacqueline Leckie (2015), Lamont Lindstrom (2015), Keith Camacho (2011), Geoffrey White (2015), and Suzanne Falgout, Lin Poyer and Laurence Carucci (2008) are amongst those who have explored Pacific people’s recent engagements with their wartime pasts. In drawing attention to the imbrication of war heritage and tourism in the Pacific, these authors have noted the commercial motivations behind many of these engagements, but also pointed to the presence of multiple and often competing histories and practices of remembrance. This paper seeks to contribute to this literature through its particular empirical focus on PNG’s Oro Province, and through its foregrounding both of place, and of the moral dimensions of Orokaiva reckonings with the past.

War Memories, Heritage and ‘Dark Tourism’ in the Pacific

War tourism has emerged in recent years as a significant industry in Oro Province as well as in some other parts of PNG. Without doubt, the epicentre of this industry is the 96 kilometre long Kokoda Track that runs between Kokoda Station and Owers Corner in neighbouring Central Province, across the rugged Owen Stanley Range. Although the mountain path existed and was in use by Papuan people long before the Second World War, the Track is today most widely associated with the military battle fought between Allied (primarily Australian) and Japanese troops in July–November 1942 as the latter attempted to reach and take the city of Port Moresby (Hawthorne 2003). The growth in significance of Kokoda for Australian national narratives, which intensified particularly after a visit by then Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, to the Kokoda Memorial in 1992, is one factor in the rapid increase in the number of tourists visiting Kokoda (Brawley and Dixon 2009, Hawkins 2013). Most tourists come to walk the 96 kilometre track themselves, with an average of 3,827 each year since 2005 recreating the arduous wartime crossing.³ Other sites across the Province also attract war tourists but in much smaller numbers, including the ‘beachhead battle’ sites of Buna, Gona, and Sanananda.

In addition to the particular interest of Australians in Kokoda and the Pacific War, the growth in war tourism in PNG also reflects a global growth in so-called ‘dark tourism’ to sites of death and catastrophe (Sharpley and Stone 2009; Lennon and Foley 2000). Contemporary war heritage literature has highlighted the significance of war landscapes and ‘memory (land)scapes’ (Jansen-Verbeke and George 2013, 275) as cultural resources in this emerging war tourism economy. Such landscapes are sites for engagement with tangible war heritage but also—and increasingly, as the passage of time removes physical traces of past conflicts from the landscape—the intangible heritage of stories and war memories. Jansen-Verbeke and George (2013, 275) write that these memoryscapes ‘keep memories alive’, and in the Pacific this certainly resonates with the ontological significance of land as a repository of history and identity (Murray 2006). Landscape is not, however, a neutral container for

³ <http://www.kokodatrackauthority.org/>

memory, but rather constituted through the particular modes of ‘dwelling’ (Ingold 2000) of those who live in and move through them. Thus, ‘landscapes of memory’ do not simply keep memories alive but rather give embodied form to particular kinds and practices of memory. Landscapes are also subject to contested engagements, and these too have implications for the kinds of memory work that take place within them, for the kinds of work that landscapes themselves do in the formation of identity (Mitchell 2002), and for the power relations that inflect people’s engagements with each other, with place, and with the past.

It has been widely observed that Pacific people have been largely disengaged from the practices of memorialisation associated with war heritage and history in the region (Carr and Reeves 2015; Falgout, Poyer and Carucci 2008; Leckie 2015; Lindstrom 2015; White 2015). Memorials have overwhelmingly been erected by foreign military powers, and the war has been largely viewed as a war fought between foreigners. As Lamont Lindstrom puts it, in the context of Vanuatu: ‘WWII blew into the colonial Pacific from elsewhere ... this was someone else’s fight.’ (Lindstrom 2015 p.160)

Likewise, in Oro Province the official war memorials in Popondetta town (located next to the memorial for the Mt Lamington dead) and at Kokoda station, are the products of Australian and Japanese government efforts, and the histories they tell reflect this. References to Papuans or New Guineans within these (Papua and New Guinea were two separately administered territories at the time of the War), lack names and local specificity, but rather invoke generalised narratives and images of loyalty and friendship. These find expression, particularly, in the reductive trope of the ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel’—Papuan and New Guinean men who worked carrying injured Australians to safety. Reproductions of the now iconic image of a tall ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel’ (later identified as Orokaiva man Rafael Oimbari) leading a wounded Australian soldier away from battle, proliferate in these memoryscapes, which are, for the most part, created for and resonant with the sensibilities of war tourists visiting the Province.

In recent years, however, some Pacific people have begun to engage with practices of memorialisation and with the material heritage of war relics and ‘debris’ (Carr and Reeves 2015, 4). There is a seemingly broad consensus that economic interests drive, or at least significantly inform, these engagements. Thus, Jacqueline Leckie (2015, 21) points to the ways in which contemporary war memorialisation and restoration projects in Fiji are bound up with ‘the allure of the tourist dollar’. Carr and Reeves (2015, 4) argue that the only value of relics for many Pacific Islanders ‘is in their potential to be translated into tourist dollars, to be either sold back to or displayed for tourists’. In Vanuatu, Lamont Lindstrom (2015) similarly points to the emergence of tourist entrepreneurs and local homegrown museums showcasing objects that receive little attention outside their value to tourists. However, this literature also serves to locate these engagements with memorialisation and war relics within wider contexts of remembrance and encounter, and in doing so draws attention to meanings that extend beyond the commercial. Lindstrom, for example, references the oral history work that he and James Gwero completed in the late 1970s, documenting war memories of ni-Vanuatu (Lindstrom and Gwero 1998; see also White, Gegeo, Akin and Watson-Gegeo 1988;

White and Lindstrom 1989), in order to draw attention to the multiple and complex motivations underpinning Pacific people's engagements with the wartime past:

Islanders recalled their own war experiences to stake a variety of claims. These ranged from assertions of enduring (although typically inactive) relationships with military personnel, to proud recollections of personal agency and bravery, to invidious comparison of Allied generosity with Anglo-French colonial meanness, to complaints about wartime loss and suffering and more. (Lindstrom 2015, 163)

As those with living memories of the war die, however, Lindstrom argues that the salvaging of relics and their display in local museums becomes important as a means of engaging the past: 'recollected war relics and touristic appreciation of these (including the museum entrance fees they are willing to pay) bring memory back into play. Salvaged relics salvage history' (Lindstrom 2015, 171).

Jacqueline Leckie (2015) and the contributors to Bennett and Wanhalla (2016) also yield more complex appreciations of Pacific Islanders' engagements with their wartime pasts in their explorations of the intimate encounters between Pacific women and American soldiers, and the children born of these relationships. In Fiji, Leckie (2015, 19) draws attention to 'intimate memories that are secret but rarely forgotten'. In doing so, she highlights the tensions between national war memories and intimate, personal ones, as well as different sites and forms of remembrance. If Pacific Islanders have engaged little with war memorials and relics until recently, she shows, war memories have nevertheless been sustained and given meaning through human connections and bodily experience. These are particularly Pacific modes of remembrance, Leckie suggests. Invoking the Pacific scholar Epeli Hau'ofa's powerful assertion, 'we are our history', she draws attention to memory located and accessed through 'lived experience', rather than in particular times (commemorations) and places (memorials) (2015, 23; see also Falgout et al. 2008).

In Solomon Islands, tensions also emerge between indigenous histories and military narratives in the remembrance of the Battle of Guadalcanal. Geoffrey White (2015, 196) describes the incommensurability of different histories, 'constructed in different registers for different purposes'. The overwriting of local histories by national ones is, he argues, reflective of colonial histories that 'do not articulate well with the military narratives of victory in the Pacific that inform commemorative events and tourism practices' (2015, 196-197). White focuses particularly on tensions that coalesced around a national memorial building project commemorating the Battle of Guadalcanal. Not unlike the pervasive trope of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' in PNG, the Guadalcanal memorial positioned Solomon Islanders in the role of 'loyal natives' (2015, 196) who served as scouts to Allied soldier 'coastwatchers'. In doing so, he argues, the memorial project offered a reductive representation that obscured other, more complex relationships between Solomon Islanders and Allied forces.

In examining Orokaiva efforts to mobilise their war history in pursuit of tourism opportunities, I am likewise attentive to tensions between scales and cultures of remembrance. My focus here, however, is not on the tension between a national monument building project and local, indigenous forms of memory, but on an instance in which efforts at memorialisation and commemoration are being locally driven. Here, tensions emerge *within* the local as well as between the local and the national (and indeed, between the local and the imagined global audience and narratives to which these local efforts are directed).

Place, Memory & Resource

If it is the case that Pacific Islanders have often not shared foreign concerns with the preservation and reconstitution of wartime sites (Leckie 2015), or Western approaches to memorials as spatial repositories of history, place is nevertheless important to Pacific engagements with the past. Orokaiva efforts to mobilise the histories that coalesce at the site of the Higaturu station point to the deep importance of place in their reckonings with the past (as well as in their hopes for the future). What emerge here are rather very different forms of relationship to place, in which the ‘lived experience’ of memory (Leckie 2015, 23) is also inextricably bound up with lived connection to land and place. Indeed, what binds the histories of the Higaturu hangings and the Mt Lamington eruption is the singularity of place within which local Orokaiva experienced them. It is this history—the history of a place—that they now hope to mobilise as a resource.

The anthropological literature on resources proves useful for thinking about the ways in which history is being deployed in pursuit of development, including the ways in which economic interest is never simply economic, and including the ambivalent entwining of hope and reticence. Richardson and Weszkalnys (2014), for instance, urge a theoretical and comparative engagement with resources that goes beyond consideration of these as commodities. The making of resources, they argue, is both a material and social process, echoing Zimmerman’s (1933, 3) insistence many decades ago that resources are never simply given in the environment, but are constantly in the making; that is, ‘they become’. Indeed, as Judith Bennett (2009) has shown in her environmental history of the Pacific War, the War was itself a critical moment in the commodification of Pacific environments and the generation of ideas of ‘development’. Pacific peoples and their lands became resources in the war effort; at the same time, Bennett shows, the military forces stationed on Pacific lands intensified Pacific people’s exposure to, use of, and in some cases reliance on, new goods including canned foods, equipment, new forms of clothing, weapons, and money.

Within the broader anthropological literature on resources, theorisations of the ‘economy of appearances’ (Tsing 2000), and the ‘economy of expectations’ (Weszkalnys 2011, 352), highlight the imaginative processes involved in resource speculation and extraction, including hopes for jobs, development and wealth, as well as fears of violence, conflict, and moral decay. Useful, too, is the recognition of Taussig (1980) and others (Strang 2004, Ferry 2005, Stead 2017a) of the different value systems that can be brought into contact through resource extractive projects, including ways that local people can hold simultaneous but divergent assessments of value, of which commercial value may only be one. In Oro, this literature

directs us to think both about the histories that Orokaiva reckon with, and the futures they pursue in doing so. It directs us, too, to attend to the multiplicity of meanings and intent that coalesce in their deployment of history-as-resource.

Moral Reckonings with the Past at Higaturu

The 21 men whose executions are recorded in the colonial archive died in two groups. The first five were hanged on the 5 July 1943 from the branch of a breadfruit tree—such was the rush to execute them—in front of an assembled crowd including villagers, village leaders, and members of the ANGAU colonial administration. This group included a man called Embogi, who was alleged to have led the betrayal of the Australians and American serviceman. The remaining 16 were hanged later, in September 1943, from a gallows constructed for the purpose. The executions of the 21 followed the arrests and trials of many scores of men. Others who escaped the noose were sentenced to lashings—also carried out at the colonial headquarters—and periods of up to five years imprisonment. All of those convicted were Orokaiva, who make up a large part of what is today the population of Oro Province (also, and formally, known as Northern Province). The charges they faced stemmed from handing over 8 to 10 people in August 1942 to occupying Japanese forces. These people—who included Australian mission workers, an American serviceman, and also a Papuan mission worker, Lucian Tapiedi—subsequently met vicious deaths at the hands of the Japanese, bayoneted and beheaded on beaches. The deaths caused outrage amongst the colonial administration, particularly because two of the murdered Australians, Mavis Hayman and May Parkinson, were white women working as both missionaries and teachers.

The ‘Higaturu hangings’, and the events that preceded them, are acutely dissonant from the narratives of loyalty and brotherhood through which the story of the Papua New Guinean and Australian wartime experience is told (Stead 2017b). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the concealment of the physical place Higaturu is echoed by the concealment of its histories in the post-War period. In Australia, the history of the Higaturu hangings is almost entirely unknown, with some evidence of purposeful concealment. Limited archival documentation makes clear that news of the executions did not reach the Australian Federal Minister for External Territories until April 1945, and many of the records were retrospectively produced. A few relatively brief scholarly mentions (Bashkow 2006, Nelson 1978, Newton 1996; see also Stead 2017b), comments on the Parliamentary Hansard by former Member for Parliament Barry Jones, and limited archival and oral history records amount to the bulk of knowledge of the events outside of Oro. The hangings, and other instances of corporal punishment of Papuans and New Guineans, are also largely absent from the Papua New Guinean war record. *Locally*, though, the events are remembered in Oro Province. Uneven and partial, these memories coalesce in the bodies of those connected to them by lived experience and kinship, and converge in the places in which history and people reside.

Those people working locally to bring attention to the events of 1942 and 1943 describe their efforts in terms of revealing and uncovering. Maclaren Hiari, my colleague and a local historian who has singlehandedly researched and documented hundreds of oral histories related to the Province, said of the process: ‘yes, I believe I’m stirring old memories but you

know we've got to get it out'. Edgar Kovenikari, the local Ward Councillor for the area that includes Higaturu, and whose own father witnessed the hangings, spoke of stories that have been 'covered', and have yet to be 'unfolded'. The unfolding of stories and places is widely understood as a process occurring in, and in response to, a complex of colonial power relations. It is, as many put it, about 'justice'. The contours of that 'justice', though, and attributions of guilt and responsibility, are uncertain.

Some contemporary Oro Province people spoke of being told of the hangings as a child as a kind of cautionary tale. Edgar Kovenikari, the Ward Councillor, said:

'My father witnessed that event and he has passed on that event by telling me what had happened. And he told me, when I was a child he told me not to do those bad things, that if I do those things the same thing would happen to me.'

Bishop Conway Ihove, Anglican archbishop for the local Diocese, said similarly: 'some of our parents, they used the story to help us grow up with a good attitude...not to hurt someone or not to do silly things because we might all end up like that.'

Many narratives made mention of the apparent conversions to Christianity and the confessions of those who mounted the gallows. So, for instance, Redmond Manuda, a medical orderly who was charged with taking down the bodies of the hanged men, told a story to his daughter Mavis—now one of my colleagues in this research—that was carefully documented and presented by her to the historians leading the oral history project. Manuda told his daughter:

'Embogi, who was the last to be hanged, confessed his sins and told the people that the government was right in hanging him. He also told the people he'll now become a Christian and appealed to his people to ask the Anglican mission to move the word of God.'

Grace Bauba, a woman also telling her father's story of witnessing the hangings, said similarly: 'They [the people who were hanged] were very humble, they didn't try to run away and they were not frightened, they just went forward.' The executed men all gave 'emotional' and 'powerful' speeches, Grace's father Bauba Avea told her:

'like for example one would say "ok I've been, I've been accused and I am sentenced to die now, so all you, my families don't be afraid or don't be sorry that I'm going. I know I did it, I did the wrong thing so I must pay the price. Don't take any revenge when I'm gone.'"

Accounts of humble and repentant men stepping forward freely to have the noose fastened around their necks likewise feature in Australian official accounts of the executions, which similarly depict the gathered crowd as understanding subjects in agreement with the actions of the ANGAU administrators (see also Stead 2017b). Not dissimilarly, when my colleague and I wrote a short online discussion piece about the Higaturu hangings, that was subsequently reprinted on a popular PNG blog (Close-Barry and Stead 2015), former *kiaps* (patrol officers who were the frontline of the Australian colonial presence in PNG) were quick to jump into the comments section to reassure us that the executions fit cleanly within a local Orokaiva cultural tradition of ‘an eye for an eye’.

Papua New Guinean narratives, though, including those that speak of the humility of the condemned, are not in fact so one-dimensional. Asked why she thought the men described in her father’s stories were so humble, Grace Bauba replied: ‘Well because they know, they know the Australians had the power ... so you know when it comes to that you can’t do much can you?’ And Redmond Manuda also wept when he told the story of the hangings to his daughter Mavis, and as he recounted, too, the bloody wounds he would regularly treat at the Higaturu hospital, on the buttocks of Papuan carriers whipped for not carrying out orders or not working quickly enough. Other informants spoke of the men, women and children made to witness the deaths, and of the ripples both of grief and anger that extended from their parents’ time to their own. Still others described their fears of speaking about the executions, even many years after, in case they, too, would be hung or otherwise come under suspicion. In this light, the cautionary tales told by parents to their children begin to look as much like cautionary tales about colonial agents as about their own moral rights and wrongs.

Some accounts, indeed, praise the actions of Embogi and his followers in anti-colonial terms, or else invoke the traditions of warriorhood and aggression for which Orokaiva have been widely renowned (Williams 1930) as the basis for an alternate moral assessment. Philip, the grandson of Embogi, described his grandfather as ‘the great man of that place Higaturu’, a ‘king’. Another Orokaiva man, Wellington Jojoba, also a historian and a former university teacher now resident in Port Moresby, told me that his own grandfather was Embogi’s cousin, and that it was he who had arrested Embogi on the orders of the colonial authorities. He recounted a narrative told to him by another man, who witnessed the executions as a child. In this account, the Japanese were ‘liberators’, and the Australians ‘terrible people’. When the Japanese arrived, he said, they appeared to locals as people who could make the powerful Australians run scared. In the man’s tale, recounted by Wellington, Embogi takes on mythic status. It took three attempts to hang him, the man told Wellington. Twice he ‘fell’ from the gallows and then ‘stood up’ after the drop, still alive. Only on the third time did he die, and only then after his older brother went to talk to him, saying ‘you have to accept your fate’. Wellington said himself, in reference to the colonial context of the Orokaivans’ actions: ‘Embogi was right’. ‘This is the story we need to be teaching the students’. Raymond, chief of one of the clans in Hohorita village, near Higaturu, said of the men: ‘they had their own law, they had their own customs but it was the white man’s custom that came in and...that’s why they, maybe in their own ways they did what was right’.

It is at this point of uncertain moral reckoning that the histories of the Higaturu hangings and the Mount Lamington eruption converge. Several historians and anthropologists, including Papua New Guinean historian John Waiko (personal communication 2015), himself a Binandere man from Oro Province have argued that the eruption was locally understood as a monumental act of retaliatory violence for past misdoings, including those eight years prior. The details vary, however. Eric Schwimmer, writing about the immediate aftermath of the eruption, noted that all of his informants in the villages of Hohorita and Sivepe ‘interpreted the eruption as the work of Sumbiripa, the Lord of the Dead, who lived in the Mountain’ (Schwimmer 1969, 5). Cyril Belshaw (1951) noted his informants as attributing the eruption to punishment by the Christian God for misdoings including the betrayal of the missionaries to the Japanese—the ‘treason’ for which the Orokaiva men were hanged—and resisting of Mission and Government plans for development. Felix Keesing (1952) noted similar explanations given to Mission staff with whom he subsequently spoke. More recently, R. Wally Johnson (2013) raises yet another explanation circulating in addition to these: that God’s wrath was directed not at the Orokaiva but at the Europeans involved in the Higaturu hangings. Of the 35 Europeans killed in the eruption, he notes, one was W.R. Humphries, the Director of Native Labour in the Administration who, during his war service, had been involved in arranging the 1943 executions.

In the contemporary remembering of the Mount Lamington eruption, too, grief and anger converge in a similarly ambivalent frame of colonial encounter and postcolonial legacy. People speak bitterly of the failure of the colonial administration to evacuate people ahead of the eruption. Bishop Ihove, for whom the eruption was a wiping out of past sin, pointed to this failure. ‘Human ignorance’, he said, the ignorance of the white colonial authorities, ‘made people die’. At the same time, however, villagers around Higaturu also appeal to a shared experience connecting themselves with the descendants of those Europeans who also died in the eruption, and pursue opportunities that they hope might lead to enduring relationships with them. This moral ambivalence speaks both to the particularities of the histories that converge at Higaturu, and broader patterns and cultures of relationality amongst Orokaiva. As Ira Bashkow (2006) has shown, the centrality of exchange within Orokaiva sociality means that relationships with white people—locally, ‘whitemen’—are approached as exchange relationships. These are never fixed, but fundamentally ‘changeable and perspectival’ (p.54), subject to shifting and context-dependent valuations. Godfrey, a landowner of the Higaturu site, says of the past events that converge there, ‘It’s a history we can’t forget’. How to remember it, though? With whom? And to what ends?

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Godfrey’s suggestion is for a memorial to be erected to Embogi and the executed Orokaiva men, at the site of the 1943 executions. ‘It maybe should become an event or something together with the Mount Lamington eruption. That’s how, that’s how it should be remembered’, he says. The call for a memorial at Higaturu is, as much of the literature on Pacific war tourism suggests, bound up with hopes for development. I asked Edgar Kovenikari, the local Ward Councillor who spoke of the ‘unfolding’ of stories, why it was

important for the story of the Higaturu hangings to be unfolded. He replied: ‘I think it’s important for my own people to know, and there are some things that should take place back in my village that are being needed.’ The things Edgar has in mind are things like at the Kokoda Track, things that would bring people and money to the place. He says, ‘people coming in, look at the site, like at the Kokoda Track—these things should happen in my Ward.’ Indeed, efforts *have* been made to attract outsiders to the site of the wartime executions and the 1951 eruption. Two episodes, in particular, serve to preface the aborted visit of myself and my colleagues, described above.

Several years prior to our visit, some people in the Hohorita community established a committee with the intention of attracting tourists to the site of the old Higaturu station. The committee erected a sign on the side of the main road connecting Popondetta and Kokoda, advertising their presence, and made contacts with an architect based in Port Moresby to discuss plans to build a memorial to the victims of the Mount Lamington eruption. Central to this project was the involvement of several Australians whose relative was one of the 35 Europeans to die in the disaster. Several meetings took place, including visits by the Australian family to commemoration events held on the 2009 and 2011 anniversaries of the eruption. The Port Moresby-based architect provided equipment to the community—a printer, fax machine, computer—that was to be used for communication as he drew up plans for the memorial, and one of the men involved in the committee began preparations for a local museum that would tell the story of the place and the events that had taken place there. To date, though, none of these plans have been realised. The equipment provided by the architect was claimed by individuals from the family and clan groups involved in the project, who have in turn been accused by other sections of the community of ‘taking over’ what was meant to be a collective effort. The museum, and an associated guesthouse that was to be constructed, remain incomplete. The sign erected on the roadside, meanwhile, still stands, but is obscured by vegetation, and while tourists do travel down the road, ferried on buses that take them between Popondetta town and Kokoda Station, they do not stop at Higaturu.

A second episode also involves relatives of Europeans killed in the eruption of Mount Lamington. Pamela Virtue (née Cowley) was ten years old when the volcano erupted, killing her older brother and her father, Cecil Cowley, the District Commissioner in charge of the Higaturu Government Station. In 2013, and again in 2014 she returned to the place where they died, and where she had lived as a child, documenting her experience and her mother’s memories in a self-published book, *The Volcano’s Wife* (Cowley and Virtue 2015). My colleague, Margaret Embahe, who has kinship connections to Hohorita and who was at the time a radio journalist for local broadcaster NBC, was one of the local people who accompanied Pamela, her husband, and her young child up to the now overgrown site in 2014. She describes how the Hohorita community prepared the site for her in advance of her visit, clearing the old path to the station, and arranging pieces of debris left behind after the eruption: pieces of fibro, for instance, were propped up on tree stumps. The villagers also fashioned two ‘graves’—mounds of earth with flowers arranged around them—which they presented to Pamela as the graves of her father and brother (in fact, the bodies of the two are most likely among the thousands buried in haste, to prevent disease, at what is now the site of the Mount Lamington Memorial Park in Popondetta town). Both Pamela’s own narrative, and

Margaret's narrative of her experience accompanying her, describe the Australian woman's emotional encounter with the place, including the remains of her childhood home, and the discovery of her mother's sewing machine, partly buried in the upturned earth. Margaret's narrative of the visit also details how, after being taken to the old station, Pamela sat with the community, who presented her with a 'petition' they had prepared. The document, written out by a local teacher, described how the community held Pamela's father responsible for the 3,000 deaths, repeating the assertion that the colonial authorities had failed to evacuate the area in sufficient time. The petition included a request for Pamela to pay for the erection of a memorial at the site, and also explained that the community wished to rename Hohorita Primary School in honour of her family, 'Cowley Primary School'. In Margaret's telling, Pamela refused both requests, telling the community that she 'was not a business woman' and did not have the money to afford a memorial. That was for the Papua New Guinean government to do, she said. She also rejected the attributions of blame to her father. He had tried to get people to leave, she told them, but 'they were busy with weddings, ceremonies', and did not heed his advice.

Both of these episodes reflect local attempts to mobilise history-as-resource, in the stalled efforts of the memorial committee, as well as in the petition of Cecil Cowley's daughter for money to fund such a memorial. Both, too, reflect conscious attempts to craft kinds of memoryscape that it is expected will attract outsiders to the place. This finds its most vivid expression, perhaps, in the arrangements of debris and the crafting of fictive graves at the site of the old colonial station, but it can be seen, too, in the plans for the memorial, museum and guesthouse, and the erection of a roadside sign. The formation of the memorial committee itself echoes in key ways the formation of incorporated land groups and landowner companies, which are created across Papua New Guinea as entities capable of entering in to agreements with, and receiving compensation from, companies involved in resource extractive projects—mining, oil palm, logging. These entities function to codify customary forms of connection to land in ways that make them commensurable with the requirements of states and capital partners (Stead 2017a), with communities fashioning themselves to try and meet the expectations of the outside actors they hope will bring development and financial benefit. This includes the fashioning of committees and incorporated groups, which become a kind of fetishised form.

The creation of the memorial committee is echoed in the formation of other kinds of formalised organisation across Oro Province, as people seek to render themselves in a form that will facilitate the inclusions of themselves, and their history, in the circuits of war tourism and recognition that extend unevenly across the landscape. In Hanau village for example, the family of Raphael Oimbari—the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel' immortalised in the iconic photograph leading an injured Australian soldier away from the Battle of Buna—have formed the Raphael Oimbari Foundation. Oimbari's grandchildren—who constitute the Board of the Foundation—describe the Foundation's purpose, in vague terms, as being to promote their grandfather's memory, to 'open up' to outsiders, and to challenge the use of Oimbari's image by others (for example in marketing) in ways that they believe bring profit. The Foundation has compiled written documentation, including an oral history account written by the historian Maclaren Hiari, and details of the names, dates and educational

achievements of Oimbari's descendants. Back in Hohorita, meanwhile, other committees have also been formed. Sangara Arise takes its name from the nearby Sangara mission and plantation, and is planning a major commemoration event to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Mount Lamington eruption in 2021. Another entity, the Mount Lamington Memorial Foundation, is also being touted, with some competition between it and Sangara Arise. Announcing his plans for the Mount Lamington Memorial Foundation to a group of local men, Maclaren Hiari held up in his hand a document, a 'constitution'. He did not detail the contents of the document, which in many ways were secondary in importance to its form. Wielding it as an object, he declared to the people gathered around him: 'no government or international organization will work with you without you being properly registered'.

The formation of competing entities, and the cycles of dissolving and re-forming entities also mirror patterns common to other resource extractive projects across PNG, including the creation of competing landowner groups, and the splitting of clan groups into various sub-clans as the contours of local power relations shift (Stead 2017a), and as sections of communities tussle over real, or anticipated, benefits. In Hohorita, these play out in the claiming by particular sections of the community of the equipment given by the architect, but also in competing claims of ownership that are made over the land where the old Higaturu station sits, which culminated most dramatically in the turning away of our vehicle. These two episodes reflect commercial motivations in the deployment of history-as-resource, however they also exceed these. Demarcations of insiders and outsiders mark those who are in, and out of place (see also Heyman and Symons 2012, Rapport 1997), and thus also designate those who can, and cannot, rightly claim authority over place and the things and histories it holds. Thus, to leverage history as a resource is also to assert particular relationships to place, both for oneself and for others.

In the establishment of the memorial committee and the visit of Pamela Virtue and her family, Hohorita villagers have sought to draw outsiders into relationships that sit somewhere between war tourism, kinship, and postcolonial relation. The uncertain moral terms in which these relationships are envisaged echo the uncertain terms in which people reckon with Higaturu's past. The remembrance of the Higaturu hangings and the volcanic eruption prompts sadness, even anger, at colonial injustice and inequality, but both events also bind Papuans and Australians together, and it is at the place Higaturu that those complex bindings find expression. Thus, Pamela was welcomed and taken to the site, because, as those who welcomed her explained to me, she lost kin there and thus had a claim to access. The fictive interring of her father and brother's remains in the land was both a material acknowledgment of this connection to place, and an attempt to intensify it. This acknowledgment, however, was also entwined with attributions of guilt that draw attention to her father's standing, not as kin and victim, but as an embodiment of a colonial 'arrogance', as Bishop Ihove put it, that failed in its duty of care.

Efforts to draw outsiders into lasting relationships with people and place are resonant with those described by Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington (1991) in their account of Chambri people's engagements with tourists disembarking from cruise ships in PNG's East Sepik Province. As Gewertz and Errington observe, however, the terms through which Papua

New Guineans have sought to engage outsiders, and the terms through which outsiders have actually engaged with Papua New Guineans, have often been at odds. In their ethnography, Chambri villagers were only of interest to tourists insofar as they were ‘different and unequal’, a relic of primitivism in a modern world (Gewertz and Errington 1991, 56). The thousands of tourists who travel to Oro Province to ‘do’ the Kokoda Track, similarly, do so to engage with a contemporary recreation of an imagined wartime past that was, for all the tropes of brotherhood and friendship through which it is imagined, irredeemably colonial and hierarchical. In doing so they approach Orokaiva through a politics of recognition that places them in a fixed, particular relationship, one in many ways antithetical to the values of exchange and openness that mark Orokaiva social worlds (Stead 2017b).

Conclusion

In January 2017 my Papua New Guinean colleagues and I made our way, once again, back up the slopes of Mount Lamington, as invited guests at a commemoration event for the 66th anniversary of the volcanic eruption. The Hohorita villagers who organised the commemoration explained that it was important for the community to be close to the site of the old Higaturu station, the place where the community had been gathered 66 years prior, following a church service, when the volcano unexpectedly erupted. Yet, it was not at Higaturu itself that we and around 150 local people gathered, but rather at a place called Dipoturu, which sits opposite the abandoned station, on the other side of a deep ravine sliced into the mountain by the Ambogo River. The remains of the Higaturu Station itself are grown over with dense bush. From the side of the ravine in Dipoturu, where we and others stood, looking across, the place appears as a dark green patch of jungle, only just distinguishable from the slightly lighter shades of dense green that surround it. The old road that used to carry the vehicles of the Australian colonial officers to and from their headquarters—and that we passed on the way up to Dipoturu—is similarly overgrown. The old station site is used now only as an occasional hunting ground. It is, in many senses, inaccessible: the literal grounding of a conflicted past with which many, insiders and outsiders, still grapple.

Meanwhile, tourists continue to travel up and down the road that leads past Higaturu, on their way to or from Kokoda station. The sign that the Hohorita villagers erected on the roadside is still there, but much like Higaturu itself it is overgrown and obscured by bush. Most, perhaps all, of those tourists who travel along the road would be unaware of Higaturu and its history, or indeed the history of any of the other myriad places across the Province that are not privileged in military narratives, but are nevertheless the centres of the worlds of those who live within them. The emerging tourism industry does, then, revive and regenerate war memories slipping from living grasp, but here in Oro Province it also yields deeply uneven geographies, and complexes of postcolonial power, that call forth and privilege particular kinds of remembrance.

The histories that Orokaiva at Higaturu and Hohorita seek to mobilise as resource do not fit comfortably with the military narratives and moral tales (loyalty, brotherhood, clearly-drawn allies and enemies) that mobilise the burgeoning war tourism industry. These are difficult histories: histories that push against and sometimes rupture the dominant stories that are told

about the war (the stories that bring the tourists). In their convergence within place, at Higaturu, the histories of the Mt Lamington eruption and the wartime executions call attention to the long-running colonial context that preceded and shaped the contours of the war, and that continues to reverberate through the lives and moral reckonings of contemporary Orokaiva.

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