

Chapter 13: Laik Bilong Man¹

In October 1963 Konangil and his wife were talking together. She was a girl the late Raggiana had procured for him from his own brothers-in-law in Dingekup clan. Raggiana's Dingekup wife was lamenting that none of her clanswomen was with her among the Penkup. 'Plenty of Konumbuga girls have come to Kondambi' she complained, 'but I am the only Dingekup woman here'. Konangil agreed that the Dingekup should be encouraged to send more wives to the Kugika Penkup.

'But you know what happens these days' he said. 'A man betrothes a girl and when the time comes for marriage the girl says "No, I want to marry someone else", and the *kiaps* and the councillors tell her "All right, what a girl wants is the rule of marriage now." It would be better for you to ask the Dingekup girls to come to Kondambi to visit you. We could hold courting ceremonies for them, and they can find Penkup men they themselves want to marry.'

Several Dingekup girls arrived, and a courting ceremony was held for them. Some of the young men of Penkup subclan, urged on by Konangil, had been hoping that they might acquire wives from among these girls, but the only girl who stayed after the others went home a week later was Gibbis. She had not chosen a Penkup boy, nor even a Kugika boy of one of the other subclans, but she wanted to marry a Konumbuga youth, Hardwood. Hardwood's family had long settled with the Kugika Penkup, for his mother was Bluebell, a woman of that group, and his father was Strong House In-Law, the man who had betrothed her for another Konumbuga man and stolen her from him so long ago. He was accustomed to attending the courting ceremonies the Penkup arranged.

Hardwood was an alert and ambitious lad with an engaging disposition. I had employed him in various ways: he helped me efficiently and enthusiastically in some enquiries I was making, and he proved himself an excellent carpenter. When the recruiting officer for the Pacific Islands Regiment visited the area, Hardwood tried to enlist, for he realized that the Army offered its trainees a good education, but he had not gone far enough in his schooling to be accepted as a recruit. I was aware that he gambled his wages at Lucky, and for some months he seemed unable to lose at the game, but a sudden run of bad luck led him to steal from me so I dismissed him, explaining that I could not employ anyone I could not trust. Hardwood took his dismissal philosophically and we remained friendly.

¹ This chapter has been put together by the editor from fragments which Reay clearly intended to go into the Chapter Laik Bilong Man. Three major fragments comprise the chapter, and related writing from Reay's notes is included as Appendices.

Gibbis told her age-mates to inform her parents that she was staying at Kondambi and wanted to marry Hardwood. She moved from the house of Konangil's wife to that of Hardwood's mother, and the young people walked about together holding hands and whispering to each other. The Dingekup agreed to give Gibbis to Hardwood on receipt of £2/10/- and a few valuables, provided he agreed to give them a large payment later. When he had given this initial payment, he took to sleeping with Gibbis in the living room of his mother's house instead of in his father's house. He was hoping that I would employ him again and that his luck at gambling would change so that he could quickly amass enough money to satisfy Gibbis's relatives. When she had been living with him for three months, messengers came from the Dingekup reminding him that he should be gathering together his marriage payment and bringing it to them.

Gibbis was a plump, attractive young woman with the pale tawny skin the Minj people admire. Her attentions had flattered Hardwood, who had had some success in the courting ceremonies and was a popular choice with girls who liked to carry leg with different youths in succession but he had had little experience with women. This was the first girl who had marked him as her own by announcing publicly that she wished to marry him. Despite Gibbis's attractions, which were obvious to all, my impression was that he was no more firmly attached to her than he would have been to any girl who had chosen him. Gibbis herself, however, was genuinely fond of Hardwood.

Hardwood killed a pig and sold cooked portions of it for money. He did this, he said, to raise money for his marriage payment. When it yielded him nearly ten pounds, he decided that he could multiply this sum by gambling. He deserted Gibbis for the Lucky schools, and there fell in with other lads of his own age (he was now about eighteen) who were thinking a lot of girls and courting ceremonies. At this time several Penkup and Koimamkup men had built new 'women's houses' for their wives' pigs, and Hardwood slipped easily into the habit of going to the opening ceremonies at night and carrying leg with girls who had his name called. They called his name unfailingly, for everyone knew that this was the youth on whose account a Dingekup girl had stayed at Kondambi instead of returning home.

Gibbis herself wanted to be with Hardwood, and she spent the evenings sitting in Strong House In-Law's 'men's house' waiting for her bridegroom to arrive home from the gambling school or the courting ceremony. She found herself thrown more and more into the company of Bluebell, Hardwood's mother. Gibbis was an intelligent girl, and when she first stayed in Bluebell's house she tried to ingratiate herself with the older woman. But Bluebell was plainly irritated by her presence.

Bluebell was a woman of strong character. Settled among her own relatives instead of with her relatives by marriage, she had a compliant husband. Her sons, Go Insect and Hardwood, had always defended her in her battles with other women. Go Insect had tactfully built houses for his wives some distance from his mother's house, but Hardwood had not yet built a house for Gibbis. I knew Bluebell as a vocal and obstinate woman who dominated her family. Gibbis was not the kind of girl who could stay subservient to an older woman, and Bluebell was disinclined to tolerate a young woman who would not bend to her will, particularly when this young woman was responsible for diverting her beloved younger son's affection from herself. Inevitably there were arguments.

Bluebell accused Gibbis of being lazy and failing to help her with the pigs and gardens, hanging around the men's house instead of settling down to the life of a married woman. Gibbis was a paltry kind of woman, she said, a real rubbish woman. Several times she suggested to Gibbis that she should go back to her father. Indeed the girl did go back to the Dingekup four or five times, but each time she came back.

I asked Hardwood why he did not follow Go Insect's example and build a house for Gibbis far from Bluebell's home, but the suggestion did not please him.

'I like being near my mother' he replied 'and I like to think of her having Gibbis to help her. I know they quarrel, but Gibbis will learn to live contentedly with Bluebell.'

Noticing the quarrels between the two women becoming more intense, and noticing also Gibbis's unhappiness, I asked Gibbis whether she had ever suggested to Hardwood that he should build a separate house for her.

'No' she replied sadly. 'It would be better if he did build a house for me where I need not see Bluebell all the time, but if I suggest it to him he will think I am criticizing his mother.'

One day Bluebell directed an intolerable insult at her daughter-in-law.

'You're a rubbish woman' she said as usual, but continued 'you're supposed to be married to my son, but it would be better if you went back to your father and let him marry you himself.'

Gibbis was deeply shocked at Bluebell's words. They were much worse than anything else Bluebell had said to her. She went home to her father and shocked him also by telling him how the older woman had insulted her. She told him she could not go back to Hardwood this time, for plainly his mother had sent her home for good. Her father and his clansmen discussed the matter and decided to sue the Konumbuga for compensation and also for termination of the marriage.

Five months had gone by between the time Gibbis came to visit Konangil's wife in company with her age-mates and the morning the prominent Konumberga councillors held a court to grant her a divorce. A few people gathered on the lawn beside the Sub-district Office at Minj. Three councillors heard the case. Casuarina, the president of the Council, was present and watched the proceedings but only made occasional comments. Of the other two, I was glad to see that Councillor T-, dominated the court, for he had a reputation for being just and impartial, whereas Councillor B-, who had little to say on this occasion, had recently heard a case in which he had awarded himself generous compensation for a trumped-up wrong. This morning, however, T- was inclined to hurry through the case without hearing both sides. He had already heard the girl's story second-hand from her father, and he assured me that Hardwood's version (which, he said, was the one I would have heard) was a pack of lies. Hardwood and his mother had not yet arrived. T- suggested to the people who had already gathered that as the outcome of the case was clear and the Dingekup had a long way to go home he and Casuarina should settle the business immediately, without waiting for Hardwood and other witnesses to arrive. The Dingekup, he pointed out, lived just outside the Minj Council area and had their local disputes heard by the Court of Native Affairs at Kerowagi. It was important for the reputation of the Minj Council, he said, that the Dingekup should be awarded a large payment for compensation in the form of plenty of money, pigs, and goldlip shells. Casuarina said he understood that T- was satisfied that the Dingekup had a good case, but he said further that neither he nor T- had heard the other side and that it would be fair to do so. He would listen to what had happened from the very beginning, he said.

An interpreter and a policeman suggested that the court should be held at Councillor B-'s house, out of sight of the Sub-district Office, and Councillor T- and the Dingekup plaintiffs went there immediately, soon to be joined by the other principal witnesses. Casuarina and B- stayed behind to resolve a minor court before following.

This minor court seemed a trivial business to occupy the time of two important councillors. A big courting ceremony had been held to open a new 'women's house' the night before, and twenty-one men had attended. One man stripped off his old and dilapidated sweater before sleeping, and when he awoke it had disappeared. He could not discover which of the other twenty men had stolen the garment, so he tried to get compensation for the theft. He called on all the men who had been at the ceremony and asked them to give him three shillings each towards the cost of a new sweater. Some gave him the money readily, but others refused to do so without an explicit ruling from the councillors' court.

'If they all paid him' whispered Original, who was listening with me, 'he would get three pounds. I have seen that 'cold-singlet' of his; it is the kind you can buy at the trade store for fifteen shillings. Even after paying his two pounds for tax and getting another 'cold-singlet' he would have enough to play Lucky.'

Councillor B- confessed that he did not know what to decide about the case. Casuarina, however, suggested that each man who had attended the courting ceremony should contribute one shilling towards the cost of the sweater, since the complainant would be able to buy himself a serviceable garment to replace it for fifteen shillings and have a few extra shillings to compensate him for the trouble the theft had caused him. The plaintiff was clearly displeased at this verdict, and I thought Original's interpretation of the case was probably right.

Meantime, the principals in the dispute about Hardwood's marriage had been assembling on a lawn, partly shaded by bamboos beside the road outside B-'s house. Hardwood and Bluebell had arrived, and Go Insect and Gibbis's sister came with Original and myself.

Gibbis gave her version of events in a strong, independent voice. Then Bluebell told her story. Her compliant husband punctuated her speech with approving comments, confirming her statement that Gibbis had spent most of her time in the men's house and elaborating on the laziness Bluebell had discerned in the new wife. Bluebell's story was not as comprehensive as the younger woman's, for whenever she came to events which were hard to explain to her own credit she would say 'Let us deal with this particular matter briefly, for there is much more to talk about.' At last she finished, and Gibbis spoke again. She had gone back to her parents five times, she said, after quarrels with Bluebell and had always returned of her own volition because she was fond of Hardwood and wanted to marry him. The sixth time, after Bluebell's dreadful words to her, Luluai Big Namesake and Original and Konangil had brought her back. They did not have to 'pull' her, she explained, as she herself wanted to go with him: her only objection to being with Hardwood was the trouble his mother was causing her. On this occasion her father's brother had told her that she must not let Bluebell abuse her further; if the old woman continued to insult her, he advised, she should go back to her parents for good.

Gibbis was plainly regretful that everything she said made the dissolution of her marriage to Hardwood more certain, but she spoke frankly as ever and as a Dingekup girl she had to watch the interests of her fathers and brothers. At one stage tears trembled on her lashes. Hardwood was not similarly affected. He had liked Gibbis, but as soon as she announced publicly that under the circumstances as she had described them she had no alternative to going back to her parents he decided that his marriage was over and began immediately to calculate how little extra pay he could get away with giving.

Councillor T- came to a decision, gave his verdict, and left. He said that the marriage had not broken up through Hardwood's own fault but through that of his mother. He therefore charged her with giving some pigs and perhaps some money as well, whatever they settled on between themselves, as compensation for her obscene insult to Gibbis. He also charged her with the duty of finding another wife for Hardwood. The judgment sounded simple. T- had transferred responsibility from Hardwood to Bluebell, but there was no way of making this distinction in practice, for the pigs and pay she had to give the Dingekup were the property of Hardwood and his father, not her own. Already Konumbuga and Kugika were disputing over whether Bluebell's husband and son should be responsible for her debt or whether the burden should be borne by her brothers and their families. Casuarina and B- tried to sort out the issues to be decided. The disputing became heated: at one point, Bluebell swung her net bag on to her head and strode off angrily down the road; at another, Gibbis's father took out his hatchet and buried it into the ground. This action was a means of 'pulling' money or valuables: a man would only do it when he was so offended that only a substantial payment could placate him. What had offended him was Bluebell's insulting suggestion that he should undertake an incestuous marriage with his daughter. Casuarina waited patiently until tempers were spent, and soon the litigants were talking reasonably to each other. He echoed T-s judgment that Bluebell should give some compensation of some kind to Gibbis's clansmen and that Gibbis herself should go home to them with her marriage dissolved. The little councillor of Kugika clan undertook to determine the amount of the compensation. Gibbis was asked again whether she wanted to go home to her parents or stay with her husband. The question did not allow her to indicate her choice to stay with Hardwood so long as his mother stopped victimizing her, so she repeated 'I shall go east', back to the Dingekup.

Returning to Kondambi, the Kugika Penkup gathered near Big Namesake's house, together with the Koimamkup councillor and the Dingekup. Hardwood and his father and brother were the only Konumbuga present. The boy had already prepared a substantial part of the final marriage payment, including £33 in cash, 18 goldlip shells, and 5 bailer shells, and the Penkup enumerated each item and checked on who had contributed it. They decided to award the Dingekup £3, and one shell of each kind, but soon revised this to include two shells of each kind. They spread the entire amount of cash and goods on banana leaves on the ground where Gibbis and the Dingekup could see it. Gibbis eyed it regretfully and tears trembled again on her lashes, but when Big Namesake asked her whether she would stay or go back she had to repeat what she had said in the hearing of the big councillors. Her father was looking at the partial marriage payment admiringly. I could not help thinking that if the Dingekup had to pay tax like the people closer to Minj his eyes would have been hungry and he might have persuaded his daughter to remain so that he could collect the entire payment with the promise of more to follow.

Bluebell gave a short and gracious speech. She told Gibbis's father that if his daughter were staying with Hardwood he would be receiving the entire payment that was laid upon the ground, but now he was receiving £3 and a few shells because she herself had been cross with his daughter and had spoken ill of him. This was her apology in the true Minj manner: she admitted being in the wrong, and proceeded to pay for it.

Bluebell was notorious as a trouble-maker among the Kugika and the Konumbuga who lived with them. Soon after the dissolution of Hardwood's marriage she met her match in one of Go Insect's wives, who turned upon her and accused her husband and his mother of incest, but this did not change her.

Hardwood watched Gibbis swing her net bag on to her head and disappear along the track.

'It is a pity she has to go' he said, 'but she is only a woman, and I shall get another wife in time. I'm too young to settle down with a wife, anyway.'

The Penkup told me that Gibbis would stay with the Dingekup for awhile, attending courting ceremonies as before, just as if she had never been married. Later her father would give her to another man. Hardwood's next wife would not be a Dingekup girl.²

The Marriage of Buda and Gibbis³ (19/3/64⁴)

Five months ago some girls of Dingekup clan (in the east) visited Kondambi at the invitation of a clan sister who is married to Konangil. They stayed in her house for a few days and Penkup subclan of Kugika clan turned on a *kanant* courting ceremony for them. Some of the young men of Penkup subclan thought they might acquire wives from among these Dingekup girls, but the only Dingekup girl who stayed after the others went home was Gibbis, a plump and attractive young woman with the fashionable pale skin who fell in love with a Konumbuga boy, not even a Kugika boy, let alone a Kugika Penkup boy. Gibbis is clearly an intelligent young woman. She is also outspoken when need be. As well, she has an affectionate disposition. She met the man of her choice at the courting ceremony the Kugika Penkup had arranged; he is one of a group of Konumbuga who live close to Kondambi among the Kugika Penkup, and this explains how he happened to attend the courting ceremony.

2 See Appendix C, a letter by Reay describing some of the events depicted in the preceding.

3 This is a version of Chapter 13, presumably somewhat earlier than the other and with some references to persons and to Marie Reay herself not contained in the other version.

4 The dates on this and the following section evidently represent an editing process in March 1964.

The Konumbuga boy is Buda. He is an alert lad with a winning nature. I employed him for awhile in various capacities. He helped me substantially with some enquiries I was making, and he proved himself an excellent carpenter. At one stage he tried to enlist with the Army, but he was knocked back because his education (begun rather late) was insufficient. He went as far as Standard 4 (which I would judge to be comparable to the first year of primary school in New South Wales) and was then dismissed from school because of his age. I had to dismiss him from my service when his luck at Lucky (*kanaka poker*) turned and he himself became somewhat light-fingered. He was very good natured about it, however, and we remain friendly.

Buda was very coy when Gibbis decided that she wanted to marry him. She was his very first wife, and she lived with him near Kondambi in his mother's house. It is really only about three months since she definitely came to live with him as his wife with the consent of her parents and other relatives. There was some negotiation about marriage payments, but everything was settled amicably. The Dingekup agreed to give Gibbis to Buda on receipt of £2/10/- and a few valuables and wait for him to prepare a larger payment later. At the very beginning they went about holding hands like a very uninhibited honeymoon couple, but soon Buda began to seek means of finding the payment to seal his conquest. He killed a pig and sold cooked portions of it for money. He deserted Gibbis for the Lucky schools, and there fell in with other lads of his own age who were thinking a lot of courting ceremonies (Kanant and Garu-Wiro). At this time quite a few new houses were built and Buda slipped into the habit of going along to a Garu-Wiro ceremony at night, when he carried leg with all the girls. Gibbis was thrown into the company of Buda's mother, Omngar, and forced to sleep a lot in Omngar's house. Gibbis herself wanted to be with Buda, and spent a lot of time sitting around in the men's house where Buda and his father, Kendji Winggar, sleep—just waiting for her new husband to come home. Early in the marriage Gibbis tried to get Omngar to warm to her but Omngar was irritated by the presence of a young woman she did not know so well. Also Omngar is a very 'strong' (vocal and obstinate) woman who has a compliant husband and a couple of sons who have always defended her in her battles with other women, and she had additional cause for resenting the interference of a strong-willed girl. Omngar must have realized, from Gibbis's manner, that soon the younger woman would be the dominant figure in the household. There were a few rows between the two women. Omngar would accuse Gibbis of being lazy and not helping as she should with the pigs and gardens and hanging around the men's house instead of settling down to the life of a married woman. Several times Omngar called Gibbis a 'rubbish *meri*' a moderate insult. Several times, too, she made it plain to Gibbis that she ought to go home to her father. Indeed Gibbis did go back to the Dingekup four or five times, but each time she came back. By this time it was obvious (at least to an impartial observer) that Gibbis's

feeling for Buda was not simply the fly-by-night infatuation that young girls get and soon slough off in favour of a new attachment. Gibbis, who has more character than most girls of her age, was deeply in love with Buda. Buda liked Gibbis, recognized her attractions and was flattered by her devotion to him, but he is still too deeply attached to his mother to develop a mature regard for a sweetheart or a wife.

In my opinion the marriage could have been saved from dissolution at any phase if Buda had been man enough to build a new house some distance from where Omngar lives. He himself was too much of a mother's boy to think of this, and Gibbis herself did not like to suggest it to him in case he should take this as a criticism of his mother. One day Omngar went too far. 'You're a rubbish *meri*' she said as usual, but continued 'you're supposed to be married to my son, but it would be better if you went back to your father and let him marry you himself'. Gibbis, a child of her culture, was deeply shocked at this mention of incest in connection with her father and herself—an unspeakable kind of incest that never occurs because it is too horrible to think about. This was infinitely worse than the moderate insults Omngar had been hurling at her ever since she arrived. She went home to Daddy and told him about it and shocked him too. Gibbis said she could not go back this time; she had been sent home for good. Thereupon her father and brothers decided to sue the Konumbuga (in the Konumbuga-dominated Councillors' Court) for compensation and for termination of the marriage. The case was timed for today.

This morning, when I went to Minj, I saw a crowd gathered on the lawn outside the Sub-district Office. With the whole of the Wahgi Valley and all its side valleys to hold their courts in, the Kuma choose to hold them right under the windows of the Assistant District Officer. My main purpose in going to Minj this morning was to go down to Jimbin's house and see the six model houses he had built for use in the projective test. But I could not broadcast this, as I wish the models to be a surprise to the people who see them in the test, and I had other legitimate business in Minj. We called for my mail, which included a bundle of newspaper clippings from you with John Ellard's comments on the useful nature of neuroses and your own hurtful marginal notes. We called for the two torches I had left behind in the schoolhouse when the first count of the election results finished at 1.30 this morning. Then we went to the Sub-district Office so that I could give moral support to Mek (Tagba's son) while he got his signature checked so that henceforth he can operate his savings bank account here instead of merely at Kainantu, where he worked with the Swiss Mission for awhile and to Kombuk, who charged me with the sacred duty of helping him to open a savings bank account and deposit the £14 I have been hanging on to for him for weeks. Kombuk added £1 to his savings this morning, and now I have the sacred duty of caring for his passbook (as well as Mek's) with £15 in it. I am hoping to get a few more of my brothers and friends to open savings accounts, as this seems to me the only sure way of reducing their participation in Lucky.

Gibbis's father and father's brother and some other Dingekup people were sitting on the lawn, with Councillor Tumun dominating proceedings and my friend Nop looking on and making occasional comments. Tumun has the reputation of being an excellent judge of court cases and being very fair and just, but this is in comparison with the run of the councillors. (Mbagl, for instance, heard the case the other day in which he himself was complainant, and brought in a verdict in favour of himself!) Tumun had heard the girl Gibbis's story, mostly second-hand from her father, and he assured me that Buda's version, which I had heard, was a pack of lies. The Dingekup, he pointed out, are not in the Minj Council area and in fact their local disputes go to the Court of Native Affairs at Kerowagi, not Minj. It was important, he pointed out, for the sake of the Sub-district, that we show the Dingekup that we are fair-minded and award them a large payment for compensation in the form of plenty of money, pigs, goldlip shells, and so forth. I pointed out to him that he should not prejudge the case until he had heard both sides of the story and certainly not before Buda and Omngar had even arrived. He agreed to wait to hear what they had to say before making a definite judgment. Buda and Omngar were a long time coming, and at my suggestion Tumun sent a man to yodel from the airstrip a command to them to hurry up and come. (Tumun had already suggested that as the case was cut and dried and the Dingekup had a long way to go home he and Nop should settle the business immediately, even in the absence of Buda and witnesses.)

Nop is my friend Nopnop, the president of the Minj Council and one of the candidates in the election. I think Kaibelt (who polled the most first votes) is going to win the election on preferences; but David Bettison told me in Moresby the other day that the Administration would almost certainly send the unsuccessful native candidates on a kind of educational tour of Australia (Sydney and Canberra) and if this happens we MUST have Nop to stay. You will like him enormously. He is so typically Kuma.

(On this subject, by the way, a sobering thought is that my 'father', Luluai Wamdi, is quite determined that I take one of his children south with me for a few years and send him back. We have the choice of Mek, aged 12, and Tai, aged 7. Mek is a sweetie, but at 12 he has never attended school and perhaps a 7-year-old would be a better bet from the point of view of crash literacy and general education? NO, I am not thinking of taking one of them to live with us for the whole period of 3-4 years, but I AM thinking of putting one in a school somewhere or placing him with someone interested and having him occasionally with us for holidays. I haven't learned yet either the official attitude about this kind of thing or the cost of an airfare for a child, which I would have to pay if the scheme proved feasible. Both kids are adorable. I don't see how you could fail to love them both. Wamdi's idea is one I go along with wholeheartedly, which is why I would indeed like to help him in this. He recognizes that the up

and coming Kuma need literacy and education, but two things prevent him from encouraging his clansmen's children to go to school. He sees that the Education Department's accent on youth takes the child away from the 'village' culture during the formative years and produces a near-adult who has a veneer of white men's education and no understanding of the education traditional to his own culture. Secondly, he has the nous to see that the cluey people like the District Commissioner and his daughter the anthropologist didn't pick up their clues in a local kanaka school: Australia is the place to get education in the white man's way, but if one of his own sons is to go there it must be somehow under the tutelage of the daughter-anthropologist who is one of the rare people who understand that the lad must also acquire education in his paternal culture for him to turn out to be a complete person and not just an imitation white. Thanks for the clipping of P. Croft in the Canberra Day Play: she is a person who has always wanted to adopt a child and has been thwarted by the legal restrictions on spinsters adopting children. I wonder whether she might be induced to provide a home for one of these lads? No one would be better suited to giving Mek a crash education programme with a bit of mother love thrown in; if something like that could be arranged I could see him often to talk Pidgin and Yuwi and see that he retains knowledge of his parental culture and continued to acquire more. Little Tai might be more of a problem; if Wamdi could be induced to part with them both at once—and they are his only sons—they would give each other support when they met if we could arrange for them to meet regularly. Any ideas you have on this subject would be appreciated. When I find out the official position, if the whole thing is legally feasible, I shall put it to Wamdi that I might provide the fares for one and he might dream up the fares for the other. With substantial help from his interested supporters, we might manage this.)

The circumstances of our life is such that it is just not convenient for us to have anyone else besides us threfella Pippy in the house all the time, though occasional guests are good. But if we had the kids or one of them handy we could see them regularly. But this is a digression, by the way, when I mentioned that it is quite on the cards that Nop may be visiting us for a short time in Canberra.

I mentioned Nop originally because as President of the Minj Council I suppose he OUGHT to be the ultimate model for councillors conducting court cases. In fact this is an aspect of councillorship that does not interest him all that much and he tends to leave a lot to Tumun and Mbagl, who are both Konumbuga like himself. He is reasonable and fair-minded, so long as he does not have to prod too far for the facts. He tends, in fact, to come in on court cases at the last when the other councillors have already made up their minds what is what. This morning heeding something I had said about councillors' tendencies to hear one side of a story only, he listened in to the thing from the beginning.

Another friend of mine, Obo (the only decent interpreter employed by the government and indeed he is really superb in his job: I got a bit exasperated when I found an electoral officer using an inferior interpreter while he detailed Obo to collect the ballot papers and put them himself in the box) and also a policeman Toimba (originally Chimbu, but he has been here a long time) advised the councillors that the case might be heard out of sight down at Mbagl's house—presumably their way of suggesting that the environs of the Sub-district Office were not an appropriate place to hold a court involving many witnesses and also a court that could flare up into substantial differences and angers. Tumun went down immediately to Mbagl's house with some of the key figures of the case, while Nop and Mbagl stayed to hear a very minor court before departing.

This minor court was something that seemed to me laughable as an excuse for taking up the councillors' time. Last night a very big Garu-Wiro ceremony was held for a new house. One participant took off his old and dilapidated sweater before sleeping, and when he awoke it had disappeared. It was established quite early that 21 men had attended the Garu-Wiro ceremony. The complainant had started on his own campaign of recovery of the stolen goods. Since it was impossible to find out who exactly had stolen the sweater he had solicited some of the Garu-Wiro participants to give him 3/- each to enable him to buy a new sweater, but he had struck trouble when some had refused to give him their contributions without an explicit ruling from the councillors' court. I perceived quite early that if he succeeded in his object he would end up with 3 guineas; the price of a new sweater of the kind lost is less than one guinea, and he would still have more than the £2 he will be needing soon to pay his tax. The idea of the tax is almost certainly uppermost in his mind and the very cause of the court case. Mbagl, a bit of a dolt as always, was not sure what verdict he should bring in about this, but I was pleased to observe that Nop suggested that since there were 21 men who MIGHT have stolen the sweater they should each contribute 1/- towards the cost of a new one. The complainant will probably be able to buy himself a serviceable and new-looking sloppy joe for 16/- and still be a few shillings in pocket (if he doesn't gamble the entire guinea away on Lucky), but he was clearly displeased because this arrangement would not give him a free amount for his tax.

The 'tax' is the local government tax fixed by the Minj Council last year, under considerable pressure from the *kiaps*, at £2 per head for adult (17 and over) males. The AMOUNT of the tax is something to be determined by the councillors themselves (theoretically), but in fact the *kiap* looking after council business last year tried for months to raise the tax and at last confessed to me that he had 'managed to push it through'. Previously it had been £1/10/-, which is bad enough as a compulsory levy to pay for something the Councillors themselves have to decide on. The law requires a Council to levy a tax, of an amount to be

determined by itself, to be spent on such matters as it sees fit. This means that a council here has to dream up purposes to which they can put a compulsory levy which it was not their own idea in the first place to impose.

Just now, as intermittently it happens, the people are very conscious of Tax. The Acting District Officer seems to have told the councillors, or some of them, that now that the elections are over they must collect the annual tax. However Barry phrased this, it came to the kanakas (via their councillors) as: on Friday the 20th March the Council meets at Tombil to decide that on Monday the 23rd March the tax collection will begin at Begbe. This means that the tax is to be collected here on Thursday the 26th March, and all the kanakas take this as already decided. The true facts are as follows: when the elections were looming, Philip Bow (the Papuan control officer who was last year in charge of council business and, being a Papuan, took as gospel every dictate of the *kiaps*) asked the councillors in meeting whether they wanted to collect the tax before or after the elections, and they decided to leave it until the elections were over. Well, the elections are over, but it is still the Council's own business to decide just when the tax is to be collected. And the councillors cannot be unaware of the rumblings from the kanakas who STILL think £1/10/- is plenty to throw away on something they do not understand. Pigs are carved up for sale; the game of Lucky has a burst of intensity; and friends and relations are solicited for financial help. Also, court cases that might yield some cash return are increasingly popular. The tax is for nothing in the kanakas' view, and it is appropriate that they should want to raise the money for their taxes by the least possible effort.

I haven't got very far, have I, with all these ramblings, with the story of Buda's marriage to Gibbis? While the minor court case about the sweater and the Garu-Wiro ceremony was going on, the principals were assembling at Mbagl's house, an appropriate place for hearing courts because there is a nice large lawn, well shaded by bamboos, right on the road. Buda and Omngar turned up, and we brought in the car Pundi (Buda's brother, much older), Gibbis's sister, and other essential witnesses.

Gibbis gave her version of things in a strong, independent voice. This behaviour was very different from the typical young girl's talk of 'I have nothing to say', meaning 'I am ashamed to say what I have to say in public but the people who need to know have already heard my story'. Gibbis really went to town on everything that had happened. Then Omngar gave her story, which surprised me a little, knowing Omngar, who always calls me 'daughter'. She spoke confidently but kept interspersing comments like 'Let us deal with this matter briefly; there is plenty more to talk about' (*Yu tingam pasim erim. Yu baim*), whenever something cropped up which she found difficult to explain to her own credit. Her poor little husband, Kendji-Winggar, punctuated her speech with approving and enlarging comments. Councillor Mbagl gave a crazy and

immature judgment. Then Gibbis went on to recount the history of her running away to her father's place. She said that she had gone back five times and had always returned of her own volition. The sixth time (after Omngar's dreadful words to her) Luluai Wamdi and Kombuk and Konangil had brought her back. They had had no difficulty in doing this, since she herself really wanted to come back and had no objections to being near Kondambi with Buda except for the fact that her husband's mother was continually making it hot for her. Gibbis's father's brother told her on this occasion that she must watch out for Omngar wanting to abuse her: if the old woman continued to abuse her she should go home for good, but if not she ought to stay with her husband.

All the time Gibbis was talking she seemed regretful that her words always exaggerated the distance between herself and Buda, but she could not stop herself from telling the truth about the matter and also, as a good Dingekup girl, she had her fathers' and brothers' interests to watch. At one stage the poor girl had tears trembling on her lashes. Buda is not nearly so sensitive. He liked Gibbis but as soon as she announced publicly that under the circumstances she could only go home he immediately decided to cut his losses and got to calculating how little extra pay he could get away with giving.

Councillor Tumun, the Great Judiciary of the Kuma, came to an interesting decision, gave his verdict, and departed. He decided that the break-up of the marriage was not Buda's fault but the fault of his mother Omngar. He therefore charged her with giving some pigs and perhaps some pay as well, whatever they settled on between themselves, as compensation for her disgusting talk, and he also charged her with the duty of finding another wife for Buda. It was all as simple as that. But, looking at things coldly and logically, it is clear that if Omngar has to provide some pigs and stuff it is pigs and stuff that is not her personal property, strictly speaking, but property of Buda's father or even of Buda himself, since a woman has no rights of ownership in pigs and valuables. So, although the purpose of Tumun's judgment was to transfer responsibility from Buda to Omngar, there was actually no mechanism for doing this (short of giving Omngar a gaol sentence as I would myself have done). After Tumun left, Nop and Mbagl tried to straighten things out between them. Things got heated at one stage; Omngar swung her string bag on to her head and set off down the road, to be called back by the councillors, and Gibbis's father took out his hatchet and angrily buried it into the ground. This action, ironically known by the term for 'play' (*deimagl*), is a means of 'pulling' money or valuables. You only do this when you are so offended that only a substantial payment will placate you. This was in reference to what Omngar had said, suggesting that he undertake an incestuous marriage with his daughter. Nop, however, has a facility for waiting patiently until tempers are exhausted, and soon the litigants were talking reasonably enough. He echoed Tumun's judgment that

Omngar should give some pay of some kind to Gibbis's clansmen and that Gibbis herself should go back home with the marriage dissolved. Little Councillor Mani undertook to determine the nature and amount of the pay back at Kondambi. At one stage Gibbis was asked whether she wanted to go back home or stay with her husband. Unfortunately it was phrased in such a way that she could not indicate her choice to stay with Buda so long as his mother kept out of the way and stopped picking fights with her, so, as the councillors had already heard her say that she was going home she just repeated '*Ag punal*' = I shall go eastward.

Before we got back to Kondambi I found an opportunity to ask Buda what chance there might be of Gibbis coming back to him. He said absolutely none, since she had committed herself to the decision to go back home in front of all the councillors and would not retract that decision. Pity.

Back at Kondambi I had to attend Konangil's feast (*mong'nya mbil*) for his marriage. The feast was at Aiyang's house, Aiyang being Wamdi's youngest wife. Konangil is Wamdi's deceased brother's son and the nearest Konangil has to a true father, and this is why Wamdi held the 'reception' for Konangil's marriage. There were 39 people present, including me and the principals and interested spectators including some who had attended to get some small return for helping with the marriage payments. Aiyang's house is at Kuzibil. Wamdi's other two wives, who are living on the Wahgi flats, quite a distance from Kondambi and Kuzibil, did not attend, although Kaing's two little boys were there.

Because of Buda's group's association with Kugika Penkup, and the fact that Kugika Penkup were gathering together to celebrate Konangil's marriage, the settlement of payments in the Buda-Gibbis divorce was held at Kuzibil. Buda had already prepared a substantial part of the final marriage payment, including £33 in cash and 18 goldlip shells and 5 bailer shells, and first there was a preliminary checking on who had contributed which article or which amount. They decided to award the Dingekup £3, one goldlip shell, and one bailer shell. They spread the entire marriage payment out on the ground on banana leaves and let Gibbis and the Dingekup see it. Gibbis eyed it regretfully and her eyes brimmed with tears again, but when she was asked whether she would stay or go back she had to stand by what she had said in the hearing of all the big councillors. If the Dingekup lived in the region where the Council applies and taxes are due I have no doubt at all that at this stage they would have persuaded Gibbis to remain so that they could collect the entire payment with some more to follow. Omngar graciously told Gibbis's father that he was getting this part payment (which had swelled to £3 plus two goldlip shells plus two bailer shells) because she had been cross with his daughter and spoken ill of him. This is the nearest the Kuma get to apologizing for a mistake; they pay for it.

Among the Konumbuga and the Kugika, Omngar is well known to be a woman who quarrels and insults other women and as a mischief maker on this account. But there was no attempt to discipline her in any way. Gibbis swung her string bar on to her head and disappeared along the track with the Dingekup.

Buda regretted that Gibbis had to go, but said she was only a woman after all and he would get another wife in time. He was a bit young for marriage anyway. Gibbis will stay with the Dingekup for awhile, as if she had never been married at all, and her father will later give her to another man. Buda's next wife will not be a Dingekup girl.

The Marriage of Nere and Walump (26/3/64)

Nere, aged about 18, has two wives, Batri (Ngeniga) and Walump (Konumbuga Taukanim). For at least a month I have heard complaints from the Koimamkup that Nere never visits Walump but devotes all his attentions to Batri. Batri lives with Kabi and his family, and Walump lives with Nere's parents, Kauga and his wife.

Koimamkup used to consist of four sub-subclans: Bomungdam, Kissukanim, Tunambauoldam, and Entskizinga. But Entskizinga sub-subclan died out, with only two remaining. One, Konangil's father, joined Penkup Baimankananim for some reason I do not know, and Konangil is thoroughly identified with this group. Youths of Penkup Baimankananim accounted for him in their genealogies in 1954. The other man, Ogunbenga, stayed with Koimamkup subclan and became known as a member of Tunambauoldam sub-subclan. Ogunbenga is well known to be a *yi rom* ('man no-good') or, more usually, a *yi komugl* ('long-long man'). He has not married, though he is old enough to have several wives. He is a short, scrubby-looking, unattractive man of the type known as *yi rom*. He is also somewhat deaf. One has to raise one's voice and stand close to him to ensure that he hears. He appears to be of normal intelligence and without any mental disorder, so far as I can judge. People tell me, however, that sometimes his conversation is normal and sometimes it is peculiar. He has pigs and gardens of his own, and his work seems to be adequate.

There was a good deal of discussion in 1954 within Koimamkup subclan as to whether the division into sub-subclans should continue or whether they should join together simply under the one name 'Koimamkup', now that their numbers had shrunk. Kubun (Koimamkup Kissukanim) expressed himself strongly, saying that they were all Koimamkup plain and simple; he was very annoyed with the Komungdam people for deciding to celebrate the Pig Ceremony on a separate ceremonial ground at Bomung. He thought they should share a single longhouse at Kondambi. Kauga (also Koimamkup Kissukanim) disagreed strongly.

He said that his ancestors had been Kissukanim and he also was Kissukanim. To demonstrate his conviction on this point, Kauga built his houses at Bomung. Kauga is a short-tempered man, much given to drama and tears. He announced that members of Kissukanim who decided to celebrate the Pig Ceremonial at Kondambi would henceforth be Tunambauoldam, not Kissukanim. More Kissukanim celebrated the Pig Ceremonial with Kubun at Kondambi than with Kauga at Bomung. As a result, the Kissukanim people as a whole began to be known as Tunambauoldam. Now they consider themselves the one group. The only real distinction seems to be that in reckoning relationships a person who is, say, cross-cousin to someone in the original Tunambauoldam group is known as 'real cross-cousin' of people in this group and 'distant cross-cousin' of people who used to be Kissukanim. In fact there are more ex-Kissukanim men (13) than original Tunambauoldam (10), but no one has suggested that they should all be known as Kissukanim.

Kauga and Nere are ex-Kissukanim, and Kabi is original Tunambauoldam. Walump is 'real cross-cousin' to the ex-Kissukanim, and Batri's father is 'real cross-cousin' to the original Tunambauoldam.

Although the marriage of 'real cross-cousins' is frowned upon (and used to be absolutely forbidden before the law of '*laik bilong meri*' assumed importance) a really ideal and preferred marriage is between the children of 'real cross-cousins'. Both of Nere's marriages are excellent from this point of view. His father is ex-Kissukanim and 'real cross-cousin' of Walump. He himself is becoming increasingly identified with the original Tunambauoldam. Kauga has five sons, with only enough land to divide between three. Kabi has no sons but has two daughters who need to visit and be given food. Kabi has suggested to Nere that he should take the place of the son he never had and inherit his land in return for providing Mbogl and Kunt with pandanus fruit and other food they need.

Walump was originally betrothed to another Koimamkup youth, Tunga's son Fundi (ex-Kissukanim). But she and Nere became lovers and in November 1963 she told Nere she wanted to marry him. She came to live with Kauga and his wife, Nere's mother. They welcomed her warmly, and Kauga was very glad indeed to have his 'real cross-cousin' with him. It is customary for a man and his wives to live with his parents if they are living. For the first month Nere divided his attentions between Batri and Walump, both of whom were living with his parents. Then a dispute arose between Kauga and Nere. There had already been disputes of a minor kind between Kauga and Nere. Now Kauga alleged that Nere was favouring Batri in the allocation of gardens between the two wives. This was a misunderstanding, as Nere had sent for both his wives when he wanted to allocate the gardens and although Batri had come Walump had been away doing some work Kauga had given her to do. Nere became angry and told his father that he was always cross with Batri for no reason so he was going to take Batri to

live with Kabi and if Kauga wanted to give Walump to his older son Kolyam or to any other man he was welcome to do so. Nere regretted this angry talk later, and he compensated both Kaugan and Walump for the words he had spoken. So far as he was concerned, they might just as well never have been uttered. Nevertheless he refrained from visiting Walump from this time forward because he would have to encounter his father and he did not want any more arguments.

Nere came to work for me, and during the elections he came with me to obtain extra information I was unable to get. A week ago Nere heard someone say that when I went to Canberra I was intending to take Nere and Batri. Yesterday Non went with Walump to Councillor Mani and told him that Walump was going home to her parents and Nere would have to give her about five pigs and some money and shells to take with her. Nere has already given the marriage payment for Batri, but has not given it for Walump yet. This morning Mani sent a lad with a message for Nere to come to his house immediately to attend a court. Nere told me he had to go. I said that Mani should have notified me that Nere was required to attend court at a certain time on a certain day, since Nere was working for me, instead of assuming that Nere could leave his work without any notice at all. I told Nere he could attend the court at '*belo bek*' (1 pm), and he sent the boy Lukas to tell Mani this. Mani himself came down to Kondambi at 12 noon and insisted on hearing the court immediately. He was very angry with Nere, as he admitted, for what he interpreted as an insult to his 'cross-cousin'. I told Mani that he was not qualified to judge the case if he himself was angry on behalf of the complainant. I said a councillor or a committee man of some other group should hear the case, or else he should take it to the Court of Native Affairs. Mani agreed verbally, but began to hold the court inside my house.

Mani began by assuming that what Walump had heard about my proposal to take Nere and Batri to Canberra was true. I assured him it was not, and asked Walump who had told her this. She said Non had told her. Non (wife of Wom, Koimamkup Bomungdam) is another Taukanim woman married to Kugika. I asked Non who had told her, and she said Ogunbenga had done so. Nere said that no one should take any notice of what a Komugl man said. He told me further that the version he himself had heard was that I was proposing to take Nere and Batri to *nambis* (the coast), not to Canberra. In Tok Bokis,⁵ a favourite way of saying that someone is going to die through witchcraft is that he is 'going to the coast'. It was possible that Ogunbenga had heard someone hint that Nere and Batri were going to die from witchcraft and had interpreted that as meaning that I was going to take them to Canberra with me. I insisted on hearing what Ogunbenga had to say about who had said what, and he was summoned but was a long time coming. Much later Ogunbenga arrived and was questioned closely

5 Tok Bokis corresponds to 'talk bogus', a common Tok Pisin expression for allusive language which refers to an important matter not freely discussed.

by Mani and Wamdi in concert. Wamdi has two wives from Taukanim himself (Karu-uk and Kaing), so he has a special interest in the marriage of Nere and Walump. Ogunbenga said that Kubun's wife Man had told him this yesterday, when he had met her on the track. I insisted on Man being summoned and after much waiting she eventually arrived. At first Kubun arrived, somewhat put out that Mani had been summoned for a court case which did not concede them directly when she was busy cooking a pig to give to her brothers. Man is from Kambilika, a clan traditionally hostile to the Konumbuga, and it is possible that Man might have a certain interest in getting rid of one of the Konumbuga women. She seemed reluctantly to say who had told her but eventually admitted that she had heard the story from Aine, who had had it from Batri. Neither of these women was available to give her version.

Walump has been a willing worker, on the accounts of Kauga, Nere, Mani, Non, and others. She is offended and clearly hurt by being denied her marital rights when she herself had insisted on marrying Nere, but when I asked her whether she wanted to stay married to Nere or go home to her parents she refused to answer. Since women in such circumstances have no hesitation in saying *Keg punal* ('I want to go') but are never heard to say that they want to stay, I interpret this as meaning that she really wants to stay married to Nere. Nere himself told me privately that he himself could not bring himself to sleep with Walump again after the fact that he had neglected her for nearly three months had been discussed publicly. I told Mani that marriages should not be broken lightly, and suggested that they wait one week before deciding. Mani agreed, and suggested that he hear the court again one week from today. I suggested that he should not hear a further court about the marriage unless either Nere or Walump asked him to dissolve the marriage.

A dispute arose immediately between Gbukets (wife of Kai, original Tunambauoldam) and Kauga about some pigs. Gbukets is Berebuga by birth, but she gave Batri a sow because Batri is 'true cross-cousin' to her husband. Batri was living with Kauga and his wife at the time, and Nere's mother cared for the sow. The sow bore three piglets. Gbukets insists that the pigs, which are still cared for by Nere's mother, should be returned to Batri now that Batri is living with Kabi's family. Kauga insists that as Nere's mother has been looking after the pigs she should keep them. A suggestion of mine that Nere's mother should be given one piglet to compensate her for looking after the sow and its litter was agreed upon as being just, even Kauga admitting that that used to be the law and one piglet would be better than none.

I asked Nere why he had not built women's houses for his two wives instead of letting them sleep in other people's houses. He replied that while a man's father is alive it is customary for him and his wives to share the father's premises. This is true, but when a man's wife is constantly in strife with his father it is

customary for him to build her a house some distance away, and Batri and Kauga had crossed swords many times. Nere pointed out that so far as he personally was concerned he had two fathers, Kauga and Kabi. Since Kabi wished him to inherit his land, he was entitled to have his son's wife living on his premises and helping him. He insisted that Walump could not go to stay on Kabi's land too. Both he and Batri were threatened with witchcraft, as well as Kabi himself, so long as Kauil remained with Kabi, and at least one of his wives ought to be protected.

Kauil is the former wife of Kun (Penkup). She came from Kup. She was always a person who sees ghosts, and she brought the cargo cult to Kondambi and Kuzibil in 1949. She was the only real cult leader in Kugika clan. She is periodically subject to *komugl tai*⁶ in the mushroom season. When Tultul Tai died in 1961 she was one of the witches held responsible. She was banished by the Kugika, and went briefly in marriage to a man of another group on the northern side of the Wahgi, but soon she returned to marry Kabi. Kabi gave her to Yeu (original Tunambauoldam), and both Yeu and Kabi's own wife died. Kabi then married her himself, despite the danger of marrying a known witch who had probably caused the two recent deaths in his own group as well as the death of Tultul Tai. He said he would take the risk, as Kauil was so keen on marrying him and he was now a widower, and if he became ill he would send her away. He grew thin and somewhat sickly and blamed this on to Kauil's witchcraft. Also she directed a lot of obscene abuse at him on many occasions, and once removed her pubic strings in front of his very eyes. He told her to go home to her birth clan but she refused. He reported his wish for a divorce, and the grounds for it, to Mani and Kaa, and Kaa told Kauil to go back to her birth clan. She seemed willing to go when Kaa told her to, and was on her way from Kondambi when Kaman (Koimamkup Bomungdam) grasped her hand and took her to his house.

Kaman's wife Danga is Konumbuga Pipikanim. She is the sister of Kobia. Kabi's mother was Kobia's father's sister. Shortly before the divorce case concerning Kabi and Kauil, Kauil's brother's son was raising a marriage payment and Kauil was soliciting contributions towards it in Kugika clan. Since Danga is Kabi's true cross-cousin, Kauil asked Kaman for a contribution. He gave her some shells. When Kaa commanded Kauil to go home to her brothers for good, Kaman could see his shells vanishing to no good purpose, so he prevented Kauil from leaving with his shells. Kauil gave him back his shells, but did not immediately go back to her birth clan. She stayed at Kaman's house.

Danga resented Kauil staying with Kaman. 'Do you intend to marry Kauil yourself?' she asked her husband. 'Is that why you keep her here?' Kauil overheard what Danga said, and she said she was going back to Kabi.

⁶ Mushroom madness (see Reay, M.O. 1960, 'Mushroom madness in the New Guinea Highlands', *Oceania*, 31(2): 137-139).

Kaman persuaded her not to go back to Kabi, and she remained. Some men were playing cards in Danga's house at night and some of them pulled Kauil outside and raped her, treating her as a *pamuk*. Kauil ran away and went to Kabi's house.

When Kauil returned, all the people sleeping at Kabi's place ran away. Nere, Batri, Kabi's daughter Kunt, and old Obo went to the house of Batri's father, where they are still living, because they did not want Kauil to kill them. Kunt has since gone to live with her sister Bogl in Minj. Kabi refused to sleep in his own house while Kauil was there, so he sleeps in men's houses at Kumbuku and Kondambi. Kauil sleeps alone in Kabi's house and gets her own firewood from the bush.

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