Chapter 2
Impressions and reflections

Gunnar Landtman was particularly concerned with his personal correspondence while in Papua and made many references to the delays in receiving and sending mail from the isolated outposts along the Kiwai coast. The Landtman collection in the Museum of Cultures in Helsinki contains three folders of correspondence filed by Landtman himself. One folder (VKKA Landtman 1910–21) contains all the letters and postcards in English received from missionaries and trader contacts in the Torres Strait. Two other folders contain the correspondence in Swedish that Landtman sent to his father, his sisters Irene and Louisa and his aunt.

Landtman’s family correspondence reflects his conservative Swedish heritage. His father Ivar Alfred was on the board of the Bank of Finland. The family was urban middle-class and Swedish speaking who lived in Malmi outside Helsinki and maintained a country villa at Sipoo (Sibbo) east of the city. Landtman was educated at a Swedish-speaking boys’ school and studied the classical program of that time: Mathematics, Languages (Swedish, Finnish, German, Latin, Russian and possibly French), History, Natural History, Religion, Psychology, Literature, Art, Music and Gymnastics. He then studied Sociology and Practical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki. For his PhD on the Origin of Priesthood he accessed some material found at the British Museum and completed his doctorate in 1905. Before his Papuan adventure Landtman worked as a teacher at a private school for girls (Svenska Privata Läroverk för Flickor) in Helsinki. During this time Landtman was competing for a tenured position at the University of Helsinki with Rafael Karsten, his colleague and rival, and while he was in Papua he corresponded with his aunt who had financially supported his excursion and with his sister Irene, who was particularly important for she reported on his progress for appointment in the sociology department. Landtman’s social and cultural background was very different from that of his hosts, white or black.

The Torres Strait: the stepping stone into Papua

Badu, one of the largest islands in the western group was the centre of Papuan Industries Ltd, the mission and trading enterprise established by the Rev. F. W. Walker. Walker, described as ‘calm, earnest and plodding’ (Wetherell 1996: 8) had been a LMS missionary in Papua where, with Charles Abel, he helped
found the Kwato Mission in 1891. At Kwato students were taught elementary subjects and technical education along with Bible studies. The boys learnt manual skills like carpentry and the girls, sewing and lace making. The Kwato industrial mission model formed the basis for the Papuan Industries enterprise. This combination of commerce and Christianity was an attempt to develop local education and trade skills, within a solid Protestant ethos, that would enable both Torres Strait Islanders and Papuans to acquire European skills (Austin 1972; Haddon 1935, 1: 17–18). Or, as Walker wrote, it was formed from a ‘need for properly organized Industrial Missions to add “Works” to “Faith” and to teach the savages how to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks’ (Walker quoted in Fife 2001: 261).

Figure 3. Badu Industries store and house on Badu Island, Torres Strait (VKK 248: 565)

The combination of commercialism and conversion was not fully supported by the LMS hierarchy largely because they were concerned that it would alienate potential supporters especially those from the business community. Walker was not popular as he had commissioned the construction of a mission yacht, the ‘Olive Branch’, whose extravagant cost at £1800 lost him his position with the LMS (Austin 1972: 44; Wetherell 1996: 48). Walker was forced to resign in 1896 by the same Rev. Thompson who gave Landtman his letter of recommendation to Butcher and Baxter-Riley (Wetherell 1996: 98). Walker then engaged in
island trading and evangelising with his brother Charlie although he re-joined the mission in 1901. In 1904 Papuan Industries Ltd, with its motto ‘Faith and Works’, was incorporated in Queensland. Walker’s idea was that a Christian trading company could engage in commercial activities, like pearling, bêche-de-mer fishing and plantation development, while providing technical assistance to local people in order to protect indigenous rights to land by creating independent ‘native enterprise and the creation of innumerable small peasant proprietors all along the coast’ (Walker quoted in Ganter 1994: 69 and Austin 1972: 47).

Landtman’s first contacts in the Torres Strait were with the members of the Papuan Industries and their associates along the southwestern coast of Papua. Landtman was wise to take their advice and assistance for later he wrote in *Nya Guinea färden*, his book of reminiscences of his travel to Papua, that:

> Mr. and Mrs. Walker had recently returned from a trip to Sydney and I now had the chance to follow them to Badu Island in Torres Strait where the headquarters of the company were situated. Actually, the company boat, the “Goodwill” lay by the same pier as the Dutch steam boat I had arrived with.

> The “Goodwill” was a combined sailing boat and a steam boat, and half a freight ship, half a pleasure boat. I only needed to transfer my belongings over to her (Landtman 1913b: 27. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

While economic and social programs were being formulated, political changes were coming to the region. In 1911 the Aboriginal Protector on Thursday Island, W. Lee-Bryce, instructed white teachers on the islands to replace the Pacific Islander missionary teachers and permitted the teachers to supervise the island councils and courts (Mullins 1997: 9).

The 1897 Aboriginal Protection Act was widened to include Torres Strait Islanders and part of this effective government control of Islander employment came to be known as the ‘company boat’ system (Schug 1997). By 1912, Papuan Industries had 10 pearling and bêche-de-mer boats working in the Torres Strait and the government controlled the 10 boats that were in reality owned by Islander clans. By comparison, there were approximately 260 ‘wages’ boats owned by pearl-shellers operating in the Torres Strait at that time (Ganter 1994: 67). The protector of Aborigines in effect had control over both fleets when Papuan Industries were forced to sell their pearl-shell through the government offices. Money earned by Islanders was held partly in trust and partly deposited with Papuan Industries. Workers and their families had to ‘buy’ goods from the stores: this was then credited against their account in the passbook system. This paternalistic control was greatly resented by Islanders.
The white teachers watched how the island pearling boat crews worked. An adverse report from them could result in boats being taken away from one community and given to another. The local protector relied on the advice of the expatriate teachers and controlled the labourers’ savings bank passbooks. In 1912 the main inhabited islands of the Torres Strait were declared native reserves: access to the reserves was strictly controlled and local people were restricted in their movements off the islands. Papuan workers recruited from the Kiwai villages were also subjected to the permit system and the labour recruiting was closely monitored and supervised by government officials on Daru. Papuan Industries was even able to issue its own bank notes that local people could use only in the company tradestores.

It was on Badu that Landtman had his first meeting with the daily life of Torres Strait Islanders. The kindness and graciousness of the people seemed to surprise him at first. His impressions were expressed in a language typical for that period though considered racist today:

When some men from the “Goodwill” came to take us to the ship I felt I shook hands with the very first genuine inhabitants of Torres Strait. They all spoke in a broken so-called Pidgin English. They were well fed strong men with woolly hair and very dark skin. Their faces expressed the most sincere goodwill at the meeting.

The “Goodwill” took a rather high speed with the help of both sail and steam, and we were further assisted by the tide. It is particularly difficult to navigate in the Torres Strait because of coral reefs and sand bank with which a large part of the Strait is filled … It would have been out of question to sail against tidewater.

On the Badu station we were met by a large group of native women and children. They had come from a nearby village to greet Mrs. Walker. They had a variety of faces, shining with delight. One by one the women came to shake hands, clucking their tongue with pleasure. Their clothes looked grotesque as well, sack like cotton garments in bright colors, hanging down from shoulders to the ankles [mu-mu or Mother Hubbards: a long cotton dress with sleeves instituted by the missionaries in the name of modesty. Now adapted into various forms as part of national dress in the Pacific]. It was a pity that missionaries and contact with Europeans had brought along such a change in dress. When the women came they carried the small naked children on the back, and when the mothers arrived they pushed a hip out so the children could sit like on horseback.
Filled with curiosity I took the first opportunity to go to the village of the natives for a meeting and to get acquainted. About 300 blacks lived there in huts mainly lifted on poles and with the roof and walls made of palm leaves. I walked to the village quite slowly in order to be able to look around without stopping. The buildings looked most primitive with a mat for a door and the majority of them without window openings, there were no chimneys either. I tried to speak to some of the men and was glad to notice that they seemed to have nothing against a discussion, on the contrary. Everyone gave a benevolent grin showing a considerable row of teeth and offered a hand with the similar delighted clucking as the women. We could understand each other somehow although it was necessary to get accustomed to the Pidgin-English of the blacks. It was impossible to understand the old ones. The voices of the children were the same shrieks and cries as in Europe (Landtman 1913b: 28 and 29. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola). [Note: Landtman used the terms svarta, the blacks, and svartingar, the blackies, as well as a more general term, infödd (sing) infödda (pl) and inföding (sing), infödingar (pl), the natives, in his books. At the time these terms were in common use.]

Papuan Industries had established two trading and plantation centres on the Papuan mainland, one at Dirimu [Dirimo] near Mawatta, and the other at Madiri at the top of the Fly estuary. The resident managers, G. H. Murray at Dirimu and J. B. Freshwater at Madiri, began clearing the bush and planting coconuts and rubber in a potential commercial operation (Austin 1972: 52). Both these ventures would have only a limited life. However, they were both places that Landtman could use in his intensive fieldwork in the region.

Landtman’s work with the Kiwai clearly interested the LMS missionaries and he appears to have been a popular and personable guest for Walker wrote to him to say that he had a place at Badu whenever he need it (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Walker 19 July 1910). Landtman would indeed need to revisit Badu and convalesce following an attack of malaria. Badu Island, in the western Torres Strait, is part of the high dry outcrops of the Oriomo Plateau. For Landtman, no doubt expecting a tropical rainforest surrounded by coral reefs, the image of the high dry island was at first confusing:

The vegetation on the dry and sandy Badu was actually quite poor, but I thought it wonderful. In vain I was looking for plants that I might recognize. Never before had I felt so completely ignorant of nature. In places the grass was man high and inside the forest there were very dense thickets. I was absolutely unfamiliar with this kind of surrounding and moved hesitantly amidst the tangle with the feeling that I might be met by some supernatural being any time. Knowing that there were
lots of snakes, it was nerve wracking to hear the rustling of the grass every so often, although the noise was mostly made by lizards [goannas] hurrying away, some of them of considerable dimensions. Everywhere there were gray ants’ [termite] nests made of clay … some of them a metre high. The forest trees were decorated with flowers, particularly orchids … Blotchy and dripping of sweat I returned from each climb between the hills and from the bush where I had to cut my way with a big knife [machete/bush knife] (Landtman 1913b: 30. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

A small private commercial plantation had also been established on Mibu Island in the Fly estuary by J. Cowling who was to be one of Landtman’s hosts. Mibu, a low sandy island off the Dudi coast, was land owned by the Sumai village on Kiwai Island. However, the plantation economy, so much a part of southeastern, central and northern Papua, was not successful in the Western District and commercial developments have never prospered. Mibu Plantation lasted longer than the others but it too failed to thrive. Daru remained the only centre of commerce in the vast lower Fly region.

The LMS mission at Saguane was a centre of mission activity on the heavily populated southeastern end of Kiwai Island that provided opportunities for Landtman in his travels. A small mission remained there after Chalmers moved south to Daru. Butcher and Baxter-Riley also gave Landtman letters of introduction in Kiwai for him to use in his travels between mission stations (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Baxter-Riley 1 July 1910). Landtman would have found personal relationships between missionaries confusing for while Baxter-Riley on Daru was a supporter of F. W. Walker and the Papuan Industries model, Ben Butcher was a long-time critic who accused Walker of deceiving his supporters about the PI prospects (Austin 1972: 57). In his private letters home Landtman was to express similar doubts about the viability and operations of the commercial mission.

While on Badu, and later on other mission stations, Landtman was obliged to attend Sunday services. The style of service, the length of time spent at church on Sunday and the form of hymn singing were all noted in his travelogue:

On Badu and other mission stations all Sundays were spent almost completely at religious exercise with bible class and the singing of psalms. This all happened between the actual services, three altogether. The morning and evening prayers — also on weekdays — were conducted on the knees. This was expected of everyone present. The services were held in a church in the village and Mr. Walker was giving a sermon in Pidgin-English. The London Missionary Society, the only mission society active in Torres Strait and the western district of British New
Guinea, and the Papuan Industries function in the spirit of the English Free Church, that is the so-called Congregationalist Church. We white ones sat during the services on a platform in front of the congregation. ... Inside the church one was hit with the sight of the unattractive bright dresses of the women and the European trousers of the men! I had never heard the likes of the bizarre loud singing performed by the natives modifying European psalm melodies in their original way. ... Holy Communion was executed once a month on all stations, using ordinary bread (once I was there when the bread was replaced with potato), and cocoa milk [coconut milk], and every white was expected to take part in the communion (Landtman 1913b: 30 and 31. Translated form the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Again, the stay on Badu provided other opportunities to learn local customs. Landtman spent some time out on the work boats with the local Torres Strait Islanders and was especially interested in marine hunting of dugong (Dugong dugon) and sea turtles (especially Chelonia mydas: the green sea turtle). The techniques described by Landtman have not changed to this day:

One morning I went along to hunt sea turtles together with five natives of Badu. Canoes, the vessels of old time, have been abandoned in this part of Torres Strait and the natives go about in sailing boats with one or two masts. These boats they rent from the whites. The Company [Papuan Industries] is pleased to hire out boats as it is well paid and the natives then leave the fish, turtles, mother of pearl shells and pearls for the Company to sell. Our boat, the “Argan”, was the kind of boat described above, it was as big as a smaller archipelago yacht back home, strongly built, completely decked and covered with copper. It was steered with two ropes attached to the sides of the boat and running through a block to the rudder. Almost all sailing vessels were of this kind, they were also used by missionaries and other whites. How many days did I later spend on these “luggers” and “cutters” during slow sailing trips?

As soon as I had come onboard a dinghy was lifted on the deck and the “Argan” that had been sailing back and forth while waiting, set sail towards the sound between the islands of Badu and Moa. I noticed two or three huge harpoon shafts on the deck, about three fathoms [about three metres] long and made of very heavy wood [wap or wapo]. They were very beautifully carved and painted. The shafts are thick and heavy at the end where the harpoon head is attached while the thin end is usually decorated with a tuft of [cassowary] feathers. The harpoon head is of iron, and with barbs, it is stuck in a hole in the end of the shaft, it is surprisingly short, not longer than two or three inches. A long and rough rope is attached to the harpoon head, it lies folded in a
circle on the deck so as to run out easily. The same harpoon was used to hunt turtles as well as “dugongs” or sea cows, immense grass-eating sea mammals with a fish-like tail like that of the porpoise (Landtman 1913b: 32: Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Landtman later collected a fine example of a hunting harpoon that he gave to the National Museum of Finland. However, to send it home he had to cut off the head and the end of the shaft. It now rests in three pieces in the museum storerooms. On that day sailing with the Islanders Landtman was more interested in the technique of hunting than in collecting artefacts:

The wind was strong and we made good speed. The sea did not particularly matter as we were protected by some low reefs. As soon as we had reached open water the harpoon was put in order and the man who was to throw it also took his place in front of the boat. He was naked with only a cloth around the hips [lava-lava]. After sailing a few minutes we saw a dugong lifting his head. Even though it was too far to throw the harpoon, it was considered a good sign. We sailed on without changing direction because after a dugong or a turtle has dived again, it is useless to try to follow. Out on the open water a man climbed up to the top of the mast to have a look and also the other men, except the one steering, stood looking around with interest. The harpooner went out to stand on the bowsprit checking the sharp harpoon head which was sitting in the end of the shaft; he also made sure that the line would be able to roll out. The man held the shaft in his hand and kept a sharp eye on the water in front of the boat. At times when the weapon felt too heavy and there was no immediate use for it he laid it down for a moment.

A few times we saw swimming turtles. They looked like a collection of sea grass so that it would have been easy to mistake them for it. They were shining gold just below the surface and if you looked carefully you could see the neck and the head stick out of the water. Before we were close enough, they nevertheless dived and disappeared. The only possibility to get at them was to come straight close without alarming them or if the harpooner standing in the bow happened to see one underwater. The men communicated with each other only by whispers and signs, now and then one could see them make a gesture one way or another where an animal had shown himself and disappeared. Sometimes the helmsman had to change course according to their signs. A couple of times the harpooner seemed to aim his weapon towards something we could not see but the distance was obviously too long since nothing happened and the harpoon shaft was again lowered.
When we came to the other end of a long reef the sail was dropped and we sailed with the bare rig along the shallow coral structures shining through the water. This place was well liked by sea animals finding food in the abundant seagrass. We saw a couple of brown creatures disappear in the water, the men gesticulated heatedly to each other and from time to time we expected the harpooner to throw his weapon. Unfortunately we did not get near enough to any of our prey and we started to tack back.

Then, suddenly, we saw the harpooner aim his weapon at something in the water, crouch and throw himself with the harpoon in the water, adding to the strength of the thrust with his own weight. In the same instant the line started to run out. The man had disappeared underwater but dived up at once, grabbed the loose harpoon shaft and swam to the boat where he and the shaft were helped onboard. The dinghy was dropped into the water and the line, now straight, was unfastened from the “Argan” while the harpooner and another man quickly took to the little boat, the harpooner taking charge of the line and the other man at the oars. We others were tacking in the vicinity.

We saw the harpooner slowly collect the line although at times he had to loosen it during the fight with the turtle. I was wondering how the short harpoon head would keep in the animal but the men were convinced of their success. When most of the line had been rolled back in the boat the harpooner suddenly threw himself in the water again and disappeared for a long while. The companions of the man drew in the rope which had been tied around the arm of the diver, finally the man appeared together with the turtle fighting fiercely, the turtle was wildly throwing his free limbs, the four fins, head and tail. The diver had grabbed the animal from the neck with one hand and from the opposite side of the shell with the other. He could not move in this position but was hauled in by his companions. He was only able to hold on to the shell of the turtle. The animal, too, despite being in his own element, seemed completely helpless in the grip of the hunter. We could see the harpoon head sitting deep in the back of the animal (Landtman 1913b: 32–35. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

This is one of the most accurate and sympathetic descriptions of a dugong and turtle hunt that one can find in the early ethnographic literature from the Torres Strait. Slowly Gunnar Landtman was starting to find his way into the life of the peoples of the Torres Strait and Kiwai coast.
The mission networks along the Kiwai coast

In the meantime, Ben Butcher had been brief in his letter of introduction issued to Landtman. In his undated note written from Damera Point on Wabuda Island in the Fly estuary he instructed his pastors and the villagers to see to the needs of Dr Landtman: *nou awo wade dubu* [He is a good and important man]. The pastors were requested to make the people available for him so that he could write of their customs. Butcher wrote that they were to give him all their assistance for *nou moro namira* [He is my friend]. Baxter-Riley was more fluent in coastal Kiwai, or at least an abbreviated mission version, and wrote on 1 July 1901 from Daru to the Samoan *Faifeau didiri* [Dear Pastors] that Landtman was a man of importance from London [*Londidini*] and a friend of Rev. Thompson [*Misi Tomasoni*]. Baxter-Riley wrote that Landtman was a great teacher and all the village people were to be available for his work. Landtman was to be allowed to rest in their mission houses and they, the mission staff, were to see to his needs and cares. If he became ill they were ordered to look after him [*Nou temeteme nigo aepuai wade*]. His name is Dr Landtman [*Dr Lanedetemani*]. The mission staff was instructed to cook for Landtman but just in case the burden would be too great Baxter-Riley informed the pastors that he had his own food [*Nou irisinimabu naito [nanito] wagati [owagati]*]. Landtman was always careful with his food especially the dozens and dozens of canned foods ordered from Morton’s Foods through the Army and Navy Stores in London (Landtman 1913b: 44).

The small mission launch that had to supply the outposts and plantations was sometimes able to take travellers and became a convenient means of transportation for Landtman. However he had to wait for the availability of the boat which, from the correspondence, had persistent engine trouble (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Butcher 29 August 1910). Certainly, Landtman made a long visit to Kiwai Island between June and December 1910 but he had to land at Ipisia and walk to Samare due to the strong southeasterly winds that made sea travel impossible (Landtman 1927: 9 and VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Walker 8 September 1910).

In the beginning of May Mr. Walker and Mr. Freshwater, another member of the Papuan Industries staff, left for a three weeks trip on the “Goodwill”. They would be going to certain areas in New Guinea where the Company had bought land for plantations, and I went along. During the trip I had a good opportunity to cast an overview of a good part of the area I had chosen for my study. We visited Thursday Island before leaving and I remember that just as we were getting into a boat to be rowed to the “Goodwill” a messenger came with a telegram informing me that I had received one of the big Rosenberg grants. This news made
the trip all the more pleasing and interesting as I now could plan my work with a much better [financial] security than before (Landtman 1913b: 36. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

The research funds from the foundation were an important link between Landtman and the developing National Museum of Finland. Dr Herman Fritiof Antell (1847–93), himself a wealthy collector, stipulated that the interest from one million gold marks bequeathed to the Finnish people should be used for acquisitions for a National Museum: it also provided assistance to several important explorers at that time among them Gunnar Landtman. Antell was the illegitimate son of Petter Herman Rosenberg, a wealthy currency speculator of Vaasa, who in turn was the illegitimate son of Colonel P. H. Rosén von Rosenstein of Upsala (Talvio 1993: 12–15). Landtman’s catalogue of artefacts was subsequently published with assistance from the Antell Commission.

Landtman’s tour of inspection first took him to Mawatta at the mouth of the Binaturi and then to Dirimu where Papuan Industries had established a plantation. Both would be important places for Landtman’s research:

I was having the most curious feeling of expectation when I headed towards the village of Mawatá [Mawatta] a few days later, taken there in a boat by a few men from the Goodwill. Mawatá is situated on the main land of New Guinea in the mouth of the Binaturi river. It later became my best working area in New Guinea. The ship lay in anchor a few kilometers behind us on the shallow coast. Mr. Walker and Mr. Freshwater had stayed onboard. The landscape opening in front of me lay flat such as were the areas in all of this part of New Guinea. The outline of the forest formed an endless even line without the smallest hill. The coast was solely made of swamp and mangrove trees.

When we went ashore the natives collected around us helping us willingly to draw the boat on dry land. The grown men generally understood Pidgin English. I was stared at with great curiosity and the smallest of the children did as is usual: they looked shrieking and crying for shelter from their mothers. The natives made a friendly impression on me and I immediately found the village very promising for future studies. How strange and curious were the people and their houses then which later became so common..

The “Goodwill” sailed over the shallow bank during the tide in the evening [the entrance to the Binaturi is only accessible at high tide] and dropped anchor a bit up the river. At that time the water reached as high as the bushes on the beach. We got up early the next morning in order to take a rowboat to the village of Dirimo about 20 km from
the river mouth. It was just before sunrise, only the slightest stream of light was seen in the east. The river lay calm and black. One could hear the murmur of the sea at the river mouth and imagine how the waves rushed in one after the other in the dark. Soon a cheerful melody like a morning tattoo sounded on one side of the river, six tones staccato as clear as if they had been played by a flute. The same signal was heard immediately from the other strand [river bank] and an alternating music started crossing over the river, now quite near, and then repeated as an echo from far in the forest. The invisible morning watch of the forest was a modest swamp bird [most probably the Pied or Torresian pigeon, *Ducula bicolor*, found throughout the lowland swamps and on the Torres Strait islands. The black and white feathers were prized in the making of dari headdresses and it makes a distinctive cry, especially in groups]. No matter how exciting its wake up sounded in this daybreak, the happy sound made me anxious each grey morning I heard it later because when you hear this sound [you know] there is the terrifying mangrove swamp [near], the dark side of the paradise of New Guinea.

[Later] We visited Mibu island in the delta of the great Fly River. One white man [J. Cowling] was living there alone with a few natives, growing cocoa-nuts [coconuts for copra]. In order to come to his place we had to row about one kilometer up a saltwater creek lined with nipa palms … It was ebb time and terribly muddy. The palms stretched over the water and it was quite dark beneath the leaves. At the landing we had to be dragged through the mud in a small dinghy towards the only solid ground there was. Never before had I seen a white man live in such an isolated place.

We took the “Goodwill” a half day’s distance up the Fly to Madiri on the right bank of the [mouth of the] river. Papuan Industries possessed land there just like in Dirimo. I observed the landscape around this majestic river from the deck of the ship. Also here the land was completely flat. We passed some of these unbelievably long houses built on poles. A whole tribe or clan lives in one. The natives gathered on the strand to look at us and through my binoculars, and to my pleasure, I saw completely naked people among them. At any rate, rather original subjects for study. Canoes came to meet us and the oarsmen looked at us from a respectful distance resting their paddles. … One day a big canoe arrived from a village up the river full with men in arms and ornaments, it was the wildest company we had met so far on the “Goodwill”. With the help of a translator we were able to carry on a good conversation mostly concerning the objects they brought along and we wanted to see. As usual, they found it very funny when we handled their things
and tried to figure out how they were used. ... A lively barter was soon going on and natives kept coming from all directions to the “Goodwill” bringing artifacts. Once a man came with a finely worked stone axe and as he was well paid, I found myself soon the owner of five others (Landtman 1913b: 37–42. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

**Refining the research area**

However, Landtman also began to realise that the research area first envisaged was too large and that the scope of his research needed to be refined:

I began to understand with rising eagerness what enormous research material there was available in these villages and it was almost painful to realize that the time available was not going to be long enough to see and do practically anything else.

Subsequently, he settled on Ipisia village on Kiwai Island as the first location for his field work and returned there on the ‘Pearl’, Ben Butcher’s mission boat:

From Dáru we took course towards the village of Ipisia situated on the northeast coast of Kiwai Island in the delta of the Fly River. This was the place I had chosen for my first headquarters. We arrived on June 30 [1910] and were met by the Samoan missionary Tovía stationed in the village. The mission house, built from the same material as those of the natives [mangrove timber posts and frame, nipa palm wall and roof] had been taken down in order to be rebuilt. It was not finished yet but a small hut nearby was given to me for the time being. A grown boy whose name turned out to be Ápau [Daniel] was hired as my servant. He was given [by Landtman] a mosquito net, a blanket, soap, towel, a knitted blouse, a loin cloth [lap-lap in Papua] and a knife and he was beside himself with these presents. In the beginning we were not able to talk with each other and I almost might have taught him Swedish just as well as English but he spoke an intelligible Pidgin-English much sooner than I learned to speak Kiwai.

I stayed in Ipisia for almost six months. When Butcher sailed away I was left on my own with my task. I felt again as I had felt a couple of times before, when leaving England and when arriving on Thursday Island, that I was facing an important decision. It was time to find out what the conditions for my work were and for me to show what I could achieve. There was no one else I could put the blame on, not even the blacks, if I
failed. I would stay here until I had finished my work, only then I would leave the post. No later, but no sooner either (Landtman 1913: 45–46. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

**Searching for excitement: the journey to the Aramia wetlands**

It appears that curiosity got the better of him for while Ipisia seemed a perfect starting point Landtman also joined with Ben Butcher on an exploration of the Aramia wetlands north of the Fly River. In his first letter home to his family in Finland, dated 25 October 1910, Landtman described, only briefly, the trip that he knew was to an area of marginal significance and so he wrote mostly of its geographical interest. He did say that he was hoping to see some tribal fighting, or be near to some, and that it looked ‘promising at one occasion only’. He felt that it was a good test of planning abilities and was pleased that the amount of food and trade tobacco had been carefully calculated. However, the visit to the Gogodala area north of the Fly estuary was a near disaster when the canoes were swamped by a tidal bore that came up the Bamu River (Butcher 1963). The expedition had started well but it was to be a near disaster and Landtman only later wrote:

One day in October [1910] Mr. Butcher arrived in Ipisia on his boat the “Pearl” to fetch me for a planned excursion together to the inland. It was our intention to try to go from Gaima on the western bank of the Fly River to the Bamu River on the east and beyond; a stretch a white man had never gone — to the best of our knowledge. Gaima is the only mission station on the left side of the Fly and its inhabitants belong to a completely different tribe than those of Kiwai [the Gogodala], and are much more original. After a day’s visit in Gaima we sailed over the Fly to Madiri on the opposite bank. A new member on the Papuan Industries staff, Mr. Murray, a very sympathetic Scotsman, had been stationed there just recently and we found that he had been sick with malaria for a few days already. We tried to take care of him and luckily his fever went down the following day (Landtman 1913b: 130. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

During the trip to the Aramia wetlands, Landtman encountered the dangers of travel overland across open grasslands, through the numerous swamps and along muddy rivers. It probably helped to confirm his ideas that he needed to restrict his work to the southwestern coast, closer to the Torres Strait and to Daru:
One swamp followed the other and later during the day we arrived to a wide swamp land or preferably a grassy lake that took us well over an hour and a half to cross. The water reached to over our knees all the time. Now and then we sank with a splash up to our stomachs and had to remove all things from trouser pockets to keep the possessions dry. The sun was scorching hot right above us, the water felt cooked and we kept panting and grunting; the wandering was going to be difficult. The humid air was steaming like in a hothouse; it was full of swamp smells and heat. The mud was stinking and our brown khakis turned gray.

Finally we approached the village called Nída or Kúbu, where we were to spend the night. The village consisted of a huge long house in which all of the inhabitants of the village lived. We took the last steps feeling utterly tired and Butcher said he had been about to “fall down”. That was the case with me, too. We were hardly curious of how we would be met in the village and I thought to myself that if we had been suddenly attacked and there had been scuffle we would not have been able to put up much resistance in the condition we were in. But some words of explanation by our interpreter were enough; the men gathered around us, took our things and brought us in the house. The long house was raised on poles just the way buildings generally are in this country. We went up a broad ladder to a widening on one of the short sides of the house, on the same level with the floor. The small rounded entrance situated at a short distance allowed just one man in at a time; this obviously served some defensive purpose.

The interior of the house was almost dark. It differed from the Kiwai houses by having spaces separated by poles on both sides of the long central hall going from one end to the other of the building. The women, who were not allowed to the inner part of the house, lived in the narrow triangle formed sections along the long walls of the house. We immediately paid attention to the variety of household utensils, many of which were quite different from those used by the inhabitants of the mouth of the Fly. They were also generally much more ornate. Most of the men wore no clothing whatsoever, careless as in paradise for their nakedness, and the women had a narrow, insignificant grass cover only.

The journey across the vast Aramia floodplains continued the next day but the travel was punishing:

Our hands and arms down from rolled shirt sleeves were cut by the sharp grass, and our companions had bleeding marks on their bare feet, due to the leeches. At places there were flocks of birds, and the man who was leading had the opportunity to shoot. We slept that night in
the village of Bárimu [now Balimo] in one of the best built houses we had seen in New Guinea; it was about 125 meters long. Many of the inhabitants had never seen a white man before, and their surprise and curiosity was immense.

We had come to the banks of a shallow lake filled with isles and capes and this waterway was said to be connected with the Bámu River and thus our tour could be continued along the lake. We bought a big canoe hollowed out of a tree trunk and decorated much more richly then the canoes on the coast. There was no outrigger. The bow was ornamented with a head half reminiscent of a boar and half of a crocodile. The length of the vessel, the carvings at both ends counted in, was 69 feet. The price consisted of a few pounds of tobacco, a few axes and two smallish packs of cloth. Some of our men went on foot back to Gáima and we engaged a few new men for the oars, a couple of whom did not wear as much as a thread. In order to be of help both Butcher and I grabbed a paddle each and so we were on our way. We were all standing in the canoe [the Bamu Kiwai and the Gogodala people still paddle this way] and paddling simultaneously while one of the men was steering. We first thought that our vessel was terribly heavy but got slowly accustomed to it. This way of traveling was far quicker than the troublesome walking. There were fluffy blue and white water-lilies blossoming on the water. We came from the lake into a small river [the Aramia] where the water was flowing slowly (Landtman 1913b: 132–34. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Even during the difficult travel along the Aramia waterways Landtman could see some of the majesty of the vast wetlands:

We saw an unforgettable sunset during which a glowing dust blanketed the gold and the green of it all. Big blossoming trees spread their fragrance around. The river stretch seemed to be longer than we had thought and we had to hurry in order to be in time for the meeting [with the “Pearl”] in the mouth of the river.

Near disaster occurred as they party on the single canoe approached the junction of the Aramia and the Bamu when the tidal bore hit:

Towards the morning, when the comparatively short high tide was over, we again started to move our paddles. The flood got wider and wider, appearing remarkable and majestic. Now, during the low tide, we saw numerous crocodiles. They floated along the stream and could only be spotted on surface by a sly shadow, or they had crept up in the mud of the shore, and hurried back in the water at our approach.
We had been wondering several times how it would be to meet the dangerous tidal wave [tidal bore] that sweeps in from the mouth of the river during full moon, and changes instantly the direction of the river from going out to going against the natural flow. This “bore” that is said to be quite incalculable is also very frightening. It reached us during the fore noon. The ebb was at its lowest when we heard a strong rush from a distance, approaching us. Our native oarsmen were instantly alarmed. They turned the bow [of the canoe] immediately towards the land shouting and with disorder, lashed the water with their paddles. … We were stopped by the mud and had all to get out to haul the canoe by wading in the soft mass. At the same instant an enormous wave appeared in the bend of the river, the top breaking in froth.

Like a high wall, gray as lead, the mass of water rolled on, flushing both shores of the river at a considerable height. We were half way to solid ground when the wave was quite near, the natives left the canoe and made an escape to the shore at full speed. Butcher, Báidam [the Torres Strait Islander mission pastor and teacher at Gaima] and I stayed on the land side of the canoe in order to keep hold of our vessel if possible. The canoe was sideways against the stream. The masses of water were upon us with a roar, and instead of being able to hold the canoe in its place, the heavy vessel was lifted up on top of us, and we three found ourselves under it, clutching to it reeling. The canoe was flushed far towards land and we followed it as if ploughing through the mud. It all happened with a swooning speed, we were afraid every second that we would be stuck under the canoe or to feel a trunk of a tree or a fallen tree to hit our back, and we were not even able to shout to each other. When I saw Butcher let go and a tree trunk sweep over the spot where his head had been, I thought, “This is the way a man perishes”, and facing the horror of this sight, I thought, “This cannot be real”. I myself was close to being unable to breathe because of the amount of mud and water, and was pressed deeper down, but when I was almost forced to give up, the canoe stopped against something, I was not crushed and I was able to creep forward.

To my great joy I saw over the water Butcher, too, working his way towards land. He, as well as we others, had pulled through the adventure, unharmed. We all had eyes, nose, mouth and pockets full of mud and looked ‘beautiful’. Báidam, who had been at one end of the canoe, had been saved the simplest way. The surface of the river rose with the tidal wave several feet at once and continued to rise rapidly well over its earlier level. Water was wallowing deep in the spot where the canoe had been stuck in mud a moment earlier. Many of our belongings were
lost, I lost my cork helmet and rifle, the Browning [pistol] attached to my belt, the cartridges in my pocket and my hunting knife, and I felt totally disarmed.

We used the incoming tide for resting and for bringing ourselves, our things and the canoe together. Then we had to continue to paddle industriously under almost constant rain. The river was well over half a kilometer wide, but this remarkable water way was not marked in the maps. At each turn we expected to arrive at the place where it joins the proper Bâmu, but it was only in the late afternoon that we reached where two rivers come together. We still had over 40 kilometers to get to the coast, and to reach the “Pearl” before dawn (Landtman 1913b: 136–39. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

The survival of the party was remarkable considering the remoteness of the region, the lack of reliable communications and the uncertain nature of the response of the local people to the sudden arrival of strangers. Landtman was always careful in his letters home although he did mention that he would have to find a replacement Browning pistol lost on the boating accident there. He was more pleased with his abilities to undercut the going price for trade tobacco. The local white traders only gave the local people five sticks of tobacco for one shilling but Landtman always paid six sticks for one shilling and so was considered a more promising employer.

**Return to Kiwai Island**

The volatile nature of the wind and waves of the Fly estuary was a learning experience for Landtman. On the return to Ipisia, Butcher and Landtman were carefully watching out for one of the main long houses of the village when they realised in their absence it had been swept away by the same bore that had caused such destruction on the Aramia River. The inhabitants of the long house were able to salvage their belongings as the damage occurred during the daytime. The people presumably built a series of temporary small houses although later, in December 1911, when Landtman returned to Ipisia he found, to his surprise, that the 17 small ‘modern’ village houses had been pulled down and five new longhouses rebuilt in their place.

Ipisia was also a centre for the local recruitment of workers for the Torres Strait pearling fleets and in his letter home of 9 November 1910 Landtman reported on the lack of success that the recruiters were having that season. Ceremonial life still played a big part in the regulation of villager movements and the fact that Landtman reported on the concentrated efforts spent on gathering food to feed the dancers and onlookers of a ‘big dance’ are some indication that men
would not have been able to go away at that time. He tasted gamoda (kava) and found it unpleasant but found the behaviour of the missions just as unpleasant. In Landtman’s opinion the missions should concentrate on efforts to clean up the communities and introduce order and hygiene rather than try to change all that was original. In this letter he informed his father that he was beginning to find photography interesting and to be more content with the results of his early work. Landtman wrote that he was especially pleased with the results of interior photographs taken in darkened longhouses that lacked internal light and windows. He wrote that he had received some phonographic apparatus from the Psychological Institute in Berlin but was only able to experiment with it. However, by October 1910, he was able to report that he had already commenced writing down his 200th folktale.

In the meantime, Ethel Zahel, the head teacher at the Badu Native School, took the opportunity of regular correspondence between Badu and the mainland plantations to ask Landtman to obtain some artefacts for her sister in Europe. It would appear that Landtman complied with this request (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Zahel nd). The traders and plantation owners were both keen hosts and sources of useful information on the people in the region. At this time, Landtman had made the acquaintance of William (Fred) Hodel, a trader who had business interests on Thursday Island and in Cairns (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Hodel 10 October 1910 and nd). Hodel had other connections too: he started a short-lived newspaper on Thursday Island called The Pearler and he was a supporter of small-scale pearl-shelling operations, particularly the ones employing white labour. Hodel was a political supporter of the left-leaning Labour platform and against Papuan Industries and government assisted ‘company boats’ practice. He supported the growing Aboriginal protectionist policies of the State Government that were being implemented from Brisbane by Walter Roth, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals (Mullins 1997: 6 see also Mullins 1995).

Despite his opposition to the mission it appears Hodel joined Papuan Industries in 1912 and ran the company-operated shipyards on Badu and Thursday Island. Hodel and Walker saw commercialism from two very different perspectives: Walker, the evangelist, saw his goal the creation of a ‘yeomanry of producers’ (Ganter 1994: 96). Hodel, the trader and pearler, saw Islanders and Papuans as a labour resource to be exploited under the strict paternalistic guidelines of a settler society. Islander communities became Reserves, segregated from contact with white Australia, where every activity was regulated by the local Protector under a policy of paternalist exclusion. Hodel supported the Protector’s objectives and his presence in Papuan Industries eased the friction between the Queensland government and the mission no doubt at a cost to the Islanders and Papuans employed in the maritime industries (Ganter 1994: 86). Creating a working class rural peasantry in Melanesia was doomed to failure.
In a letter to his father from Ipisa dated 14 November 1910, Landtman told of how pleased he had been with his early work on Kiwai Island. Landtman was coming to terms with the internal dynamics of village life. An old man, Gabia, one of his most important informants and one keen to discuss everything even the most secret information, would only come to talk at a time and a place to suit the old man (Landtman 1913b: 118). Gabia feared he would be killed by sorcery if he were overheard and he sat with Landtman far from other people in a corner of the verandah that surrounded the mission house. The fear of sorcery was real especially in the estuary. By this time Landtman had begun to understand some basic Kiwai especially the stories told by an old man, perhaps his other informant Kaku, who had been a language teacher to the missionary James Chalmers. By 11 December 1910 his initial work at Ipisa was finishing and even though he planned to return in a year or two (around 1911) Landtman was pleased with the quality and quantity of his work in the region. According to other letters he had a difficult time with his health at Ipisa and had to go to Badu to recover from malaria over Christmas of 1910 (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Ethel Zahel and C. H. Walker 26 January 1911; Haddon 1916; Landtman 1913b: 122). Only later did he write of the terrible fevers, pains and sense of hopelessness that malaria brings:
After a short stay in Ipisia I had my first meeting with malaria, and it happened quite suddenly. The quickly rising fever lasted five days without a break and my temperature rose as high as to 40°C and a little over. I was feeling awful and vomited strongly. I had lively and beautiful dreams but waking up was terrible. The first grey dawn that strained in through the door brought along confusion and a painful feeling of an early winter morning at home. In the hopelessness that seems to be so typical of malaria it was my hope just to die a bit nicer than be sunk in the swamps of New Guinea. So this was what it all had come to after all the plans I had made for my trip. During daytime I dragged myself to the verandah for a while forgetting each time the low ceiling against which I hit my head. This happened when I was still living in the small hut. Although I made notes in my diary about my experiences each day I lost a day probably as the result of delirium and when I then was well again the missionary Tovia and I did not agree what week day and date it was. I insisted that he held his Sunday services on Monday. It took three weeks until we could set upon the correct date with the help of a white man who came sailing to Ipisia.

The fever stopped as soon as it had come [this is characteristic of malaria]. On morning I woke up with normal temperature and not even having a headache and when the fever did not return during the next days I knew I had won this time although for a time felt quite weak. After this I stopped being afraid of malaria particularly since it seemed that an attack could be won [caught] on the spot. During the fever I took 1,8 grams of quinine daily according to the advice of the doctor's book and I had to continue with rather large doses for some time. The permanent cure that is recommended for healthy people as a rather effective protection against malaria is to take regularly 0,9 grams of quinine each on two immediate weekdays for example on Sundays and Mondays (Landtman 1913b: 122–23. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Despite his physical trials, his work continued. Haddon's special task for Landtman was the collection of genealogical tables [släkttabeller] along the lines of the methodology pioneered by W. H. R. Rivers, the acquisition of material culture and the recording of 36 Kiwai songs on the phonograph for the Berlin Institute (VK 4919 Nos 1–3; 6–14; 17–39 and 45–46). Landtman's attempts at collecting genealogical tables from the various Kiwai and bushman groups that he visited were not particularly successful, likewise the recording of songs and dance music was only moderately productive. However, these are the first recordings of Kiwai music and include examples of the introduced ‘Taibobo’ dance and some traditional songs. By the time Landtman commenced
his work with the Kiwai the mass-produced hard celluloid cylinders had mostly replaced the fragile wax cylinders that were the first mass-marketed sound recordings. Although the hard plastic cylinders could not be shaved for re-use, they were practically indestructible and were a near permanent recording. The disadvantage of the cylinder was the quality of the recording and playing equipment: the phonograph used a belt to turn the mandrel and a slippage could result in pitch fluctuations. Consequently, the recordings made by Landtman are often uneven in quality. He was dealing with heavy equipment, a difficult physical environment, songs and dances that were performed outdoors often in a windy area and a lack of familiarity with the technology itself.

The Kiwai language recordings were made between 10 November and 9 December 1910 at Ipisia village. In a letter home dated 13 December 1910 Landtman reported that he had to travel from Daru to Thursday Island to pack and send material by ship to Haddon in Cambridge. His servant Apau left, having been contracted by a labour recruiter for work in the Torres Strait pearling fleets, and Landtman hired Ganame, another young man from Ipisia who had experience working for one of the Resident Magistrates in Daru and was familiar with European cooking. Landtman began to warm to the local people and found to his amusement that he was probably the first scholarship recipient of the Antell Commission to have been required to establish a tobacco and calico trading business to finance his local artifact collecting. In this respect he was following the path of his mentor, Haddon, who had commenced his ethnology work in the Torres Strait in 1888 with the collection of material culture to support his work as a zoologist. Fortunately Landtman’s efforts at collecting Kiwai material culture did produce results and by the end of his stay in Ipisia, Landtman had also recorded 250 oral accounts that he classified into legends (saga, pl sagor) and stories (sägen pl sägner) (Landtman 1913b: 141).

Christmas on Badu

Landtman left Ipisia on 18 December in the mission launch, the ‘Louisa’ although he had to chase the recalcitrant postman to Iasa to retrieve his badly missed mail from Helsinki. On the way to Daru the launch ran aground in Toro Passage, a treacherous narrow boat way between Parama Island and the mainland that still causes trouble for people entering and leaving the wide Fly estuary. On Daru he paid the customary courtesies and visited the officials in charge of custom’s declarations before sailing to Badu. On his first Christmas Eve in the tropics, Landtman experienced the dramatic differences between the frosty Nordic season and high summer in the Torres Strait:
On Christmas Eve we were approaching Bádu Island, more than uncertain that we would arrive there for the evening, and when the tide turned against us between Moa and Bádu we knew that we had to spend the night onboard. It was a Christmas night full of feeling. We lay at anchor in the middle of the sound and saw the hills on the both sides reflecting in the water, a strange sight to us, accustomed to the flatness of New Guinea. A light was flickering in a distance on the Badu station like a Christmas star. I gave the men some extra provisions and meditated for a while on the deck before retreating to the mosquito net hung up in the cabin. But once, waking up during the night, I went up to the deck in the beautiful full calm Christmas night. A decreasing moon illuminated the wonderful view getting paler, and big sea animals were splashing and breathing invisibly around us in the completely calm sound. Early in the morning of Christmas Day we dropped anchor outside the Papuan Industries station on Badu where I was warmly welcomed by the Walker family. A Christmas party was held in the afternoon in the village church, along with a Father Christmas and a tree with full foliage instead of a Christmas tree as there are no conifers in New Guinea. Here, amidst full summer, there was not much that could make one feel like the European mid-winter festival (Landtmann 1913b: 145–46. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Return to the Kiwai coast

Landtmann spent that Christmas, 1910, at Badu in the company of the Walker family for he wrote to his sisters Louisa (22 December 1910) and Irene (31 December 1910) that his letters were accompanied by nine large boxes and three bundles of artefacts for Cambridge and a smaller parcel for his family in Finland with instructions that they were to give the Samoan mats to their Aunt if they decided to keep the feather decorations for themselves. Landtmann returned to the southwest coast of Papua in early 1911 readily believing that he could survive a wet season on the Daru coast although another attack of malaria at Christmas should have made him more aware. He also obtained his replacement rifle and Browning pistol on Thursday Island before heading to his second study site at Mawatta (Landtmann 1913b: 147). He arrived back in Mawatta in February 1911 and although he delighted in the situation of the village at the mouth of the wide Binaturi river and surrounded by large coconut groves he was aware of the large swampy areas behind for access to any inland villages required days of trekking through these swamps particularly during the wet season. Even Masingara, the closest Bine speaking village, that was only a couple of kilometres along a solid path during the dry season was a difficult wet slog otherwise. In a letter of 2 February he again wrote to Irene to say:
I am greatly satisfied to be back in my own district [among the Kiwai]. This is where I enjoy myself best. This letter will probably be picked up by Walker who drops by on his way to Badu. The Freshwaters [managers of the Madiri Plantation] will be coming along and probably Murray [from Dirimu Plantation] and thus I may be the only other white person on the mainland from the Dutch border in the west to the Fly River in the east. I am living here in the mission house which is quite like the one in Ipisia except that it has been divided into three compartments, one of which is occupied by the Samoan missionary family (away at the time being) … The inhabitants [here] speak a dialect of the Kiwai language. People are falling ill with dysentery — many people particularly children are dying.

The Samoan pastor at Ipisia lost a child to dysentery and Apineru, the pastor at Mawatta, moved his family to Daru after two members of his family had died. In order to keep the spread of dysentery away Landtman was forced to stick to a diet of porridge, two baths a day and coconut milk. When the supply of coconuts dwindled he remained on powered milk and so was relieved when he would write that the coconut supply had improved. In the same letter, continued on 5 February 1911, Landtman wrote that the people of the Mawatta district were easier to approach than those of Kiwai Island and he decided to allow people to tell him the stories that they chose to commence with rather than the more delicate topics he would have like to discuss. The people of Mawatta had much more regular contact with labour recruiters, white missionaries, traders and government officers and so would have understood quickly Landtman’s role as a researcher and collector especially one who paid good prices. He noted that they rapidly organised themselves into some order and many people have been to talk with him.

Again in 18 February 1911 he wrote to his father in Helsinki that the people of Mawatta were much nicer than ‘my dear and difficult people of Ipisia’ and that they appear to be a bottomless well of tales and stories of magic. By now Landtman had 20 informants, all of a good age, a bit on the older side and ‘they wait their turn to be heard’. Landtman wrote that by now he had collected 325 stories and folktales and that ‘their number rises slower as the stories are so much longer and therefore also better’. He revised his research techniques for he noted ‘I have not started using the systematic questionnaires, I am merely skimming the overflow that comes unasked’. He also remarked that he was leading a very regular life: the same program every day followed by a walk in the evening come rain or shine. This pattern of regular habits would have eased his approach into the community of Mawatta as every move would have been
noted and discussed. His predictability would have calmed the fears of having a strange white man living within the local area. He would have been the subject of much discussion and amusement.

He still delighted in the strange, fierce beauty of the land and the good advice of settlers and administrators about not returning to the coast during the wet season gradually became understood:

It was now raining heavily every day, although almost never all day for at least part of the time, at regular hours, the sun burnt intensely in between. One was astounded by the high blue skies in the evening with sulfur-yellow clouds here and there predicting the bad weather that broke with frightening thunder, during which the rain was pounding so heavily that you could not hear your own speech. Along with the rain, and the wind from inland, there appeared myriads of mosquitoes, a most painful discomfort. During these days I was not able to stay in my room where the dark corners were filled with mosquitoes, and when I did venture in, I stood in a buzzing cloud of flying enemies looking for a spot where to get you - unless they had already found one. Also on the verandah I was, regardless of the breeze, a target of constant torture and was not able to stay in the same place for any long period. It might happen that in my desperation I crept in the middle of the day into my bed to find peace at least for a while inside the net, and in the evenings I had to dress myself in two layers of clothes (Landtman 1913b: 150–51. Translated form the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Comments on the Staniforth Smith Expedition to the Strickland River

Again on 5 March 1911, Landtman wrote to his father that it was Sunday and therefore a day for letters. He commented on the controversial expedition mounted by the Acting Lieutenant Governor of Papua, Miles Staniforth Smith (1912) who attempted to travel between the Aird River in the Gulf District to the Strickland River in the Western District on a rather wild adventure. Staniforth Smith only took along provisions for 30 days and when the expedition was reported lost a rescue expedition ‘the size of a small army’ according to Landtman was sent to find it (see also Schieffelin and Crittenden 1991: 33–40). One of the leaders of this rescue team was Wilfred Beaver, a Resident Magistrate from Daru and by now a friend of Landtman. Landtman expressed a wish to be part of the rescue mission but no doubt good sense prevailed for he did not go. In the meantime, he described his regular hunting parties searching for crocodiles and birds. The large hornbills and cassowaries were a particular hunting favourite as
they are easy to spot. The country behind Mawatta is full of wild pigs, Rusa deer and wallabies and it appears that Landtman enjoyed hunting with the local men but found the countryside both beautiful and deadly. One time hunting boars, while he shot at flying foxes nesting in the swamp trees he was standing only a few metres from a large crocodile (Landtman 1913b: 162–63) and although he appears to have enjoyed the exercise he found that even in the tropics one can be quickly chilled by the strong wind and sudden rain that blows across the Torres Strait.

**Life at Mawatta and Dirimu**

The particular problem was, and continues to be, mosquitoes. Landtman noted that ‘their number if absolutely phenomenal’ and in times of desperation he went to his room, and pulled down his mosquito net that covered the table and chair as well as the bed, in order to have peace. In this ‘room’ he ‘takes private lessons in superstition’. He also saw himself from the local people’s view for Landtman lived in the mission area but brought seemingly vast amounts of money, tobacco and cargo [goods] with him. His presence was a valuable status symbol. In return not only was he presented with valuable legends and stories but supplied with fruit, vegetables as well as dugong and turtle meat and fish, at high cost. One hand of large bananas cost two sticks of tobacco. His young servant Gename took charge of the cooking and no doubt both sides were pleased with the arrangements:

Ganáme took care of the kitchen most satisfactorily and our household was organized in the simplest way. I got up at about six thirty and had my breakfast of porridge, cacao and fruit as always with my meals. For lunch about 12 o’clock usually one or two cans of conserves were heated up in hot water, and rice was cooked most of the times to be mixed with it. The second course consisted of a little more rice mixed with jam, marmalade or cooked fruit. Instead of afternoon tea I had fruit and cocoa milk [coconut milk], and the supper before sunset varied according to circumstances. In the mission stations rainwater was collected in cisterns, but I hardly ever drank this water other than in the form of tea or cocoa, together with condensed milk, because the cocoa nuts were so much nicer for drinking. My only bread consisted of biscuits kept in hermetically closed cans, apart from the occasional baking of Ganáme who now and then made some kind of bread [damper] in a frying pan. What remained from our meals he divided between his friends amongst the villagers who were competing for friendship. Opened conserve cans and the like could not be kept from one meal to another. We were infuriated by the ants if sugar or something else tempting had been left in a place
where they could get access to it. Ganame who enjoyed displaying his skills made at times all kinds of New Guinea extravagances, chocolate blancmanges, fruit omelets or pancake. And I thought sometimes that with a work that mainly consisted of writing down stories, in a village with obedient blacks, with flowers, fruit and pancake, my existence could be compared with a life in a fairytale (Landtman 1913b: 154–55. Translated form the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Life in the community was not all Paradise or a fairytale existence for sharks often came up the mouth of the Binaturi looking for food scraps thrown into the river and crocodiles crept under houses at night hunting the village dogs or the remains of turtles left on the river banks. Crocodiles also took people from the village, particularly women and children washing in the river or the sea. Only small crocodiles were caught for food that reminded Landtman of lobster: only the tail can be eaten. While he was staying in Mawatta village he went on a number of dugong hunting trips and on one trip as many as eight canoes from Mawatta were joined by three from a neighbouring communities, possibly Tureture close by. Landtman thought that the group of canoes reminded him of a Viking fleet and remarked, with some perception, that ‘perhaps some similarities could have been pointed out in this respect’ (Landtman 1913b: 166). The reputation of the Kiwai as marine hunters and raiders was still strong. The use of the narato, the dugong hunting platform, was still evident along the Papuan coast at this time but declined due to safety:

Hunting platforms were erected on the reefs, one for each canoe, and when the high tide came at sunset, one of the men stepped on the platform while we others were waiting in the canoe anchored nearby. We knew that the man on the platform was busy calling in the dugongs with all kinds of magic and tricks of which we nevertheless could not see or hear. A little distance away were the other platforms with the figure of a man on top and the black shadow of the canoe nearby till the dark became too dense for us to see any of the others. We waited excitedly for the man to give a sign of catch, but our harpoon man kept standing although we were able to tell by his movements that he was following with his eyes a dugong swimming outside a throwing distance (Landtman 1913b: 167. Translated form the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

While the work was interesting and Landtman was pleased and proud with his efforts at Mawatta, he was often homesick and waited impatiently for mail from Finland and news of the daily life of his family far away. Contact with Murray from Dirimu was one source of comfort for the Papuan Industries plantation and store was only a short distance up the Binaturi river. It appears from
correspondence dated 15 April 1911 that the Papuan Industries mission was building Landtman a house at Dirimu where he could base himself in the region. Actually Landtman financed the building of the house himself:

Since my first visit in the place, I had had a house built at my expense in the part of Dírimo that belonged to Papuan Industries. At that time I had planned to make the village as my headquarters. This house that I planned to leave as a gift and small compensation for the Company was now very useful and allowed us each an airy room and a dining room to be shared, as well as the obligatory verandah round the house. Building with native labor and from native materials is cheap in New Guinea, and the rather large house cost me only about 250 Finnish mark. In this distant place, just about two days’ journey from the nearest white people in Dáru, Murray and I led an ideal life. Murray was a keen naturalist and collector although his work on the plantations did not leave him much leisurely time. We had each our servant taking care of us, and the only trouble was caused by the numerous mosquitoes, existing inland even during the south east monsoon. They even disturbed our meals (Landtman 1913b: 171. Translated form the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

From Dirimu Murray and Landtman made the long journey inland to Jibu village near the headwaters of the Binaturi that was located on undulating, long, low, grassy hills covered in eucalypts and pandanus trees (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Murray 15 June 1911). In early June 1911, Landtman planned to make a trip along the coast to Mabudawan and Marukawa: ‘a small island 12 hours from here [Mawatta], this island is a source of many stories. I am planning to shoot a bit too. … An old man by the name of Namai, the best of my teachers, follows me step by step almost’. Namai was to be one of Landtman’s most important informants and the subject of some of his best photographs. Landtman also wrote that ‘It is just Namai to whom I owe so much about my understanding of the Kiwai people’ (Landtman 1913b: 152). Namai also turned down a worthwhile job with a Resident Magistrate on Daru to work and travel with Landtman along the coast. On 15 June 1911, Landtman was able to describe the success of his trip to the west. He never ceased to be enamored of the scenery and the wildlife for he wrote:

We crossed the Mai-kasa river [Mai-kussa: actually a large tidal inlet] about two kilometers wide at its mouth, and visited an inland village on the other bank. The scenery at the estuary was one of the most beautiful I have seen in the country. A school of perhaps thirty porpoises were dancing around in the glimmering water, swimming a bit up the river, and here and there I saw the spiky elongated contour of a crocodile floating just below the surface. Besides crocodiles I kept observing sharks with a particular interest during this trip, to my mind they were
an object of legendary shimmer from the exciting books for boys. The elegant and suggestive back fin was cutting the surface of the water nervously swimming in circles around our vessel. Once I saw a long fight for life or death between two huge sea animals. They made the water splash high, but I was not able to make out which animals they were. I often had the feeling that these tropical depths were hiding secret and terrible monsters of an unthinkable kind (Landtman 1913b: 177. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

He reported on the journey to Mabudawan that every place near there has a history of some legendary ancestor. The coastal Kiwai told Landtman the stories of the travels of the souls on the way to Adiri the land of the dead in the west and of other legends that he recorded for his collection:

From my travels I particularly remember those made by canoe to Mabudavane [Madudawan] in the west on the coast, where the people had their gardens and a number of houses. A little distance away from the beach there was a single huge boulder, where the mythical being Wáwa lived. He was at times seen by the natives, grinding his stone axe against a cliff nearby, as you could see from some longish marks in the stone. On Páho island nearby I saw the place where the spirits of the dead cry under the dání tree, and the lumps of clay they throw at the branches of the tree. Also the spring out of which the dead people drink, the place where they dance and the foot prints of the mythical Sidó in the hill just as the natives had described. A small creek [Pahoturi] was running into the sound between Paho [Island] and the main land (Landtman 1913b: 160. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

By 20 June 1911 Landtman was again happily residing in his own house back near the Dirimu Plantation for he wrote: ‘Egen härd är guld värd’ [Your own fireplace is worth gold]. He reported to his family that Mawatta had been a goldmine of information and G. H. Murray, the manager of the Dirimu plantation, sent his whaleboat to collect Landtman from Mawatta so that he could study the inland people along the Binaturi River. The 20 kilometre journey by boat from Mawatta to Dirimu had taken a crew of six plus two in reserve, including his new servant Ganame and ‘uncle’ Namai. In Dirimu, slightly outside the area of the coastal Kiwai and located on Bine people’s land, Landtman was able to concentrate on revising and ordering his notes. He used Dirimu as a base for his photographic expeditions in the hinterland although these were not to be a great success. Landtman then made two recordings of Bine songs on 12 June 1911 at Mawatta. However, these would be the last recordings he was able to make (VK 4919 nos. 40 and 41).
Change came rapidly to the area Landtman was studying. Another correspondent of that time, J. Cowling of Mibu Plantation, reported that when he first came to

Figure 6. G. Murray and G. Landtman at Jibu (VKK 248: 549)
the Daru coast in 1896, Mawatta was a trading centre and that the Kiwai sailed canoes into the Torres Strait and sold them there. Now [in 1911], he wrote: ‘the Kiwai and the Islanders owned whaleboats and the trade has declined but the people at the “fountainhead” cannot understand the decline’. This canoe traffic, according to Cowling, commenced at the Bamu River and the canoes were sold on to Wabuda Island, then to Kiwai Island and on to Mawatta (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Cowling 27 June 1911). Cowling was correct in his general assessment but the patterns of customary exchange continued despite the introduction of the cash economy (Lawrence 1994).

Mail to and from the isolated plantation at Dirimu was irregular: ‘I have been without mail for a record time recently. Latest letter from home had a date over 13 weeks old and it is now four weeks since it arrived. Both Murray and I are expecting to receive a fat mail bag each’. However, Landtman was dismayed by his trips into the interior: ‘I have made several excursions here [Dirimu] but with negative results for me, the surroundings seem to be uninhabited. A hut here and there and you meet almost the same people everywhere as these people move about constantly’ (VKKA Landtman to his father dated 9 July 1911). He found the inland people shy and difficult and it made him eager to ‘remember the dear Ipisia people’. Landtman politely turned down a wish by F. W. Walker that he should take up trading on behalf of Papuan Industries. While he often publicly and politely expressed his trust in the work of the commercial mission, in private he had doubts about its viability.

His work was proceeding rapidly however for he wrote to his father: ‘I have now been through my manuscript from Mawatta and I am still as content with it as before. The Ipisia manuscript seems insignificant in comparison even though I was quite happy with it at the time’. No doubt his faith in the Kiwai Island work was responsible for his decision to return there later in the year. Boredom as well as the need for change drove him to row the mission dinghy down the Binaturi River to Mawatta where he was well received by the locals eager for tobacco. Landtman miscalculated the current and the rapid darkness and the row back upstream took seven hours. Not only was he frequently tangled on underwater branches and logs but the crocodiles scared him more than once. The local people however had other explanations: ‘For the crocodile or whatever animal it may have been the people immediately had an explanation: it had not been a crocodile but the malevolent spirit of a woman who had recently been taken by a crocodile there’ (VKKA Landtman 1910–21 Letter to his father 9 July 1911).

However, not all his work produced positive results for, as he wrote to his father, certain ceremonies and rituals were still conducted away from the sight of traders and missionaries and especially visiting ethnologists:
During the night some time ago a ceremony was held in the forest a distance from the village. It went on the next day; we could hear the singing and the drums. I went there in the morning putting the Browning [pistol] in my pocket for the sake of romance because the blacks can be a little difficult concerning secret rituals. I do not know how they found out about my approach but when I arrived on the spot everything had been put aside and I was allowed to sniff around with my suspicions. But when you are with them alone, just the two of you, they tell you much more than they allow you to see (Letter dated 9 July 1911).

Malaria was a constant threat for all who lived in the region. Murray was found seriously ill on Landtman’s return from Mawatta and exhibited that standard pattern of symptoms: a proper fever for five days and then the patient feels immediately well again. However, if untreated, the bouts recur again and again. The only relief from work was hunting in the bush with Murray and local men. The water fowls in particular were curried by Landtman’s servant Gename. It appears that Landtman had not eaten curry before although he reported that he enjoyed the taste. He would have been unimpressed to learn that food was curried to disguise poor quality meat. He continued this letter on 17 July 1911 and was pleased to report that the Psychological Institute in Berlin had sent a praising letter about the collection of recorded songs sent off in December 1910. Landtman had not been especially happy with the results but was cheered by the letter of congratulations especially in contrast to a letter received from Haddon who: ‘had squeaked that the packing of the boxes was to be criticized even though the objects had luckily arrived in better shape than he [Landtman] deserved’. Landtman wrote of Haddon’s apparently difficult and demanding nature: ‘Hoppas linnet lägger sig till härnäst’ [I hope his indignation will disappear [at least] until next time].

By this time Landtman had perfected the techniques of collecting both artefacts and oral histories and was becoming better skilled with the use of the photographic equipment. On 8 August 1911 he wrote to his father: ‘how pleased I am with these masses of notes even if I cannot make a general overview and evaluate everything now — but if I had calculated my best possibilities for doing the job at 100 at home, I can now consider having achieved it all at a level of 1000 or a million …. The number of fairytales, adventure stories, dreams etc is now over 500’. While Landtman’s intellectual success was being quickly achieved in the wilds of Papua, the expansion of the missions was slow and tedious. The manager of the Madiri plantation, J. B. Freshwater, not only had to construct a house and store at the plantation, and single-handedly supervise the planting of the coconut and rubber trees, but he had to cross to Kiwai Island and supervise the construction of the new church at Sumai built in the standard prefabricated style of North Queensland Protestant chapels.
In August 1911, Landtman was able to visit Buji in the far west close to the Mai Kussa and Cowling in a long letter informed Landtman of the history of the settlement at Buji, the raids by the ‘Tugeri’ and the efforts of the government to establish a permanent police post on the coast (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Cowling 13 August 1911). Landtman was again able to visit Marukawa Island near Mabudawan and he crossed to Boigu and Dauan in the Torres Strait where he photographed important story sites. He felt well and happy in a letter to his sister Irene and wrote: ‘I think I have never been in a better [physical] shape and form than here. I made recently a rather difficult march to a village inland [from Buji]. Old Namai was so stiff legged on return that he had someone let blood from them, the universal cup’.

His ‘teachers’, the local people, were bottomless: ‘like the oil pot of the widow’. However, the time at Mawatta was starting to pall: ‘The next places I shall visit for shorter periods of time, [I] shall try to leave for the really wild [areas] in order to take photos and get ethnological artefacts’ (Letter to his aunt 3 September 1911). Despite the lack of adventure, Mawatta was a valuable field site and Landtman proposed sending his Mawatta manuscript to his father at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime he made up for the problem of European influence by ‘having had the natives dress themselves for an old ceremony and perform
some parts with dances and gestures, the missionaries did not particularly like it, I think but the whole thing was quite impressive and colourful, and identical with the descriptions I had before’ (VKKA Landtman 1910–21 Letter to his father 11 September 1911).

However, while the spectacle was impressive the phonograph failed to operate and the songs and dances could not be recorded on the cylinder. He continued to travel along the coast as far west as possible and on 1 November 1911 he again reported to the family on the successful journey to Buji, on the Mai Kussa, and other places and islands on the way. This trip appealed to the call of the wild for he wrote: ‘I went a bit inland [from Buji] and came to a village where I had a chance to take photographs of the people, stark naked, and obtained a collection of objects, some of them quite beautiful. My own wares intended for trade were finished (too soon) and finally I had to give away in exchange some of my own things, a shirt, a knife, soap, biscuits and other food’. By 6 November 1911 he wrote to his sister Irene that he was ready to return to the Fly estuary but had to make the journey by canoe as the mission boat was unavailable. He was nervous at having to get his precious photographic equipment, watch and gun ‘bound to the canoe as things are known to fall over the side from time to time’ but in fact in the Fly estuary the large motomoto, canoes with double outriggers, are more stable and comfortable than any European boat.

Return to the Fly estuary

Landtman meanwhile made a complete inventory of his artefacts, notes and supplies and left them in the care of Murray at Dirimu. After eight months in the Mawatta area he once again he set out for the mouth of the Fly and another trip to Gaima. By 13 November 1911 he was writing to his father from the home of the Freshwaters at Madiri Plantation and again planning to cross to Gaima on the other side of the Fly River. Gaima, a Gogodala community, had recently been the scene of the murder of nine men who had returned from the pearling fields in the Torres Strait. They had been robbed and murdered by their own villagers and Landtman was advised by the civil administration not to travel to the community until it had been secured by the police from Daru. However, accompanied by the local Samoan pastor and his own boat crew he travelled over to the village and found it peaceful. While his own men did not want to stay overnight in the longhouse, Landtman and Ganame remained on shore for two nights. He wrote to his father: ‘I am particularly content with this trip. I got a good deal of photographs and also objects, among them a number of them deriving from the excursion [made previously] with Butcher and myself. We brought them in but had not been able to take them along and had sent them back to Gaima where they were well cared for’.
Landtman voiced some general criticisms of the nature of colonial pacification of the middle Fly region and, while the Papuan government of the day could be described as little more than benevolent, well-regulated police rule, someone so strange and foreign to the local people as Landtman would not have been seen as a threat. The fact that he was accompanied by a pastor and carried valuable tradestore goods would also mean that he was unlikely to be a victim of communal violence.

Again, luck was with him. From Madiri, Landtman reported that he had gathered large numbers of artefacts and made many good photographs: ‘the several dozen that I have taken here leave all the others far behind in all respects, the topics too are absolutely better, the people are so original and naked that the pictures cannot be looked at by gentlemen and ladies simultaneously’. From Madiri, Landtman planned his circumnavigation of Kiwai Island. He started in Sumai (Paara) village and wrote (24 November 1911) that he had arrived on the mission boat the ‘Goodwill’ and paid Walker for the transportation. Life was a mixture of adventure and work but he wrote to his father that he could feel the final four months of his stay in Papua coming to a close. His perceptive criticism of the role and operation of the Papuan Industries mission would not have pleased his kind and generous hosts, the Walkers, Murray or the Freshwaters:

The whole of the Walker family is leaving for England in February [1912] in order to stay for one year. So we will probably meet there. The intention of Walker is to get more capital for his Christian industrial mission company. The original share capital of £31,000 plus income from seven years is almost gone and he hopes to get support by appealing to the religious souls in England. If Walker were not obviously an honourable man this would all be a pretty swindle because Papuan Industries has been a pure business company with God’s name put between the numbers and calculations, not one pound has been given by the company for mission purposes. ... The prices of the company [stores] are the same as those of their competitors as “it is not good at all for the natives to be sold products too cheap.”

In all he found the people of Sumai stiff and unwilling to communicate unlike the open people of Mawatta. Still, the Kiwai Islanders had not been influenced to the same extent by European influences and the information gained was rich and important. Again, the success with the photographic equipment was a source of pride and in particular a series of photographs of the inside and outside of long houses, possibly at Auti, was the topic of a letter to his sister on 6 December 1911.

By the end of December 1911, Landtman was in the large village of Iasa on Kiwai Island. He planned to continue his journey around the island by canoe.
and was preparing for a special trip, once again with Ben Butcher, to the Gulf District. The plan this time was to go in a new motor boat the ‘Tamate’ [named after the missionary James Chalmers] along the coast of the Gulf of Papua where Landtman hoped to meet real ‘cannibals’. Indeed the ‘Tamate’ was the envy of government offers and traders. Landtman was well aware of this and wrote:

The meeting of Butcher and I was very hearty, and he was extremely happy with his boat that offered him a most comfortable place to stay and that reached a speed of 11 knots making him independent of all flows of tidewater. The “Tamate” had a beautiful salon furnished with wood, a room for the men plus a kitchen, bathroom and illumination with acetylene, it had cost 50,000 marks although not directly paid for by the London Missionary Society but paid by separately collected funds for this particular purpose. Due to his new boat Butcher was now the foremost person in the area, leaving the government officials far behind. Generally, there prevailed an ambitious jealousy between “the government” and “the mission” and both wanted to, although for different purposes, be seen as the real protectors of the natives. Without taking so much the side of the government, all traders were against the mission, and on the whole the general behaviour between the few white people in the area left much to be desired. The atmosphere was so irritating that people often did not even want to tolerate other people’s opinions. Perhaps this worked in analogy with experiences of other circumstances like those on sailing ships, polar expeditions etc. Butcher and I agreed that he should come to fetch me in Ipisia on about the 15th of January for a joint expedition east along the coast to the wild areas around the Aird or Kikori Rivers, where we would be meeting cannibalistic tribes. I went with him to Iasa where we parted from each other for the moment (Landtman 1913b: 180. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

From Iasa, Landtman sailed by canoe to Ipisia. He was comfortable on the ‘rather spacey platform [deck] in the middle’ of the motomoto but the tides and currents of the Fly estuary conspired against him. The tide had gone out and the large, heavy canoe had to be poled across the mud of the Iasaoromo channel that divided the districts of Samari from Iasa and Wiorubi. This took hours and by the time the tide had turned, the canoe had only just reached the other side of the island. Here the exhausted travellers slept on the beach. As there was no wind in the early morning, Landtman walked the long beach to Ipisia: a route that he knew well. Now, instead of imagining a difficult time ahead he was pleased to be welcomed as a returnee: ‘jag översätades’ [I was overwhelmed with hugs].
Gename’s village wedding

Landtman returned easily to the established life of the village. Gename, his servant, married amid feasting, dancing and fighting when one village argued that their dancers were better than those of another community. The fight, with fire brands being thrown, coconuts and sticks raining on the crowd, women and children shouting and screaming, appealed to the sense of adventure in Landtman. The tumult was carefully documented, photographed and recorded:

Ganáme got married a couple of days after my arrival — I had the honor of donating the wedding dress to his bride. There was a big dance during the night, and later an infernal fight broke out. I was told it started because of a quarrel between the people of our village and those of another, about who were the best dancers. I was developing photographs when the “spectacle” broke out. The racket grew louder with miraculous speed until it all exploded in a wild tumult. You could hear feet stamping as if there were a herd of horses, smashing with poles that were breaking, shouts and thuds. I hurried out. I have seen many fights before but this one was the prettiest. The village was illuminated like in daylight, full of flaming torches lit in haste by the women. People rushed back and forth like blind men, hitting around with stakes and throwing cocoa nuts, pieces of wood and firebrands at each other. It was no play; there was savagery in their gestures. You could hardly see who belonged to which side. The firebrands flying about made a magnificent sight, and seeing the sparkling lights it felt at first that the house was on fire. The women were screaming loud when one of them was hit. The missionary Tovia and I up on the verandah shouted to a man running past asking what the fight was all about, and he stopped for some blinks of an eye gesticulating, when he was hit in the back by a projectile that was too much for him and he sprang off again. The grand gesticulations and the excitement of the man were worth seeing, and almost all of the people were still wearing their full dancing outfits. We had to press ourselves against the wall because of the projectiles coming towards our roof. … In about a half an hour the tumult began to quiet down, changing more into shouting and lesser handling, and I returned to my plates. The next day a great number of men showed marks of the fight, some of them of rather serious kind. One man came to me with a wound by an arrow in his foot (Landtman 1913b: 181–82. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

When the village returned to normal, and he had finished treating the injured he and his crew continued their travels around the island. The strength of the tide in the estuary can be daunting when sailing on a canoe without motor
power and Landtman later wrote to his family that: ‘we reached strong tides in the Fly, many times it was completely calm. It was tearing hot in the middle of the day, you could not read because looking at the paper blinded your eyes, nor could you lie outstretched, it was just possible to sit straight and a banana leaf inside the [sun] helmet was welcome’.

Landtman’s program was essentially determined by external forces. He wrote to his aunt on 3 February 1912 that he was forced to remain in Ipisia longer than expected while waiting for Ben Butcher who had made an agreement to take Landtman on the trip to the Gulf District. Butcher had not shown up and consequently Landtman was running out of supplies in the middle of a heavy wet season when there was little garden food available. He wrote: ‘The worst difficulty in this country [Papua] is the impossible situation of communication’. In the Fly estuary this remains a problem even today. Landtman was concerned that he had to return to many places in the district where he had left his collections, photographs and notes and that time was running out before he was expected to leave for England. During the enforced stay he made short expeditions to the eastern bank of the Fly where he participated in some of the unplanned and unexpected drama of village life:

… just before daybreak. All the young men had quietly gone out the house, taking their weapons and dressing themselves up. They made a mock attack on the house at the early hour. It immediately led into a terrible commotion, with the men surrounding the house running, and screaming and banging the ground with their clubs and poles. It all was arranged to frighten and wake up the people inside, particularly the women and the children, and it served as an introduction to the ordinary dance to follow. I was awakened and told about the plan just before it began, because the men wanted me to fire a few shots to add to the enjoyment. I did so, but kept a number of shots at hand for certainty’s sake, just in case the gentlemen should be tempted to go further, now that they had started the fun (Landtman 1913b: 184. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

**Journey to the Gulf District**

Landtman again returned to Ipisia and finally, just when he was about to give up hope, on 3 February 1912 Butcher sent a short note to shore telling Landtman that the ‘Tamate’ was sailing for Wabuda Island, the Bamu and the Gulf District with a brief stop at Goaribari Island and that if he wished to go he must pack immediately. The region around Goaribari Island and the Purari delta was one
of the least explored areas of Papua and Landtman’s excursion, like his trips to Gaima and the Aramia region, were mostly made out of curiosity. They lay outside his field of research but he wrote in his travelogue:

We then spent some ten days in the delta area and a bit up the Aird. The delta was unbelievably large and offered the strangest landscape I had seen. The land was completely low and wet with vegetation of nipa palms and mangrove trees, and between them was a network of canals that transformed the delta into a hopelessly confusing labyrinth. We went in a wrong direction many times, for a couple of hours, at times, the “Tamate’s” speed was necessary to save us from being completely lost (Landtman 1913b: 190. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

The region had strong memories for the people of the London Missionary Society for Ben Butcher was seeking a place to establish a new mission and a chance to convert the killers of the missionary martyrs:

One day we visited the village of Dopíma on the island of Goaribári, where the missionaries Chalmers and Tomkins from the London Missionary Society had been killed and eaten in 1901, along with their party of eleven natives from Kiwai. How it happened is and will stay unsolved, because no actual facts are known, and the punishing party that was sent to the spot some time afterwards only found some traces showing what had happened, but no witnesses existed of how it had happened. Chalmers and his party had arrived with the mission ship “Niúe” presumably at a moment when one of the ceremonies of the natives was going on, and the presence of strangers could not be tolerated. Chalmers and his party went ashore despite warnings, and they were not to be seen again after the moment they vanished from the sight of the people remaining onboard. Even the “Niúe” was attacked but escaped (Landtman 1913b: 190–91. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Landtman and Butcher spent about 10 days in the Gulf District in search of a location for Butcher’s new mission. Despite the dangers and the discomforts Butcher and his family finally settled at Aird Hills on the Kikori River, a place discovered by Butcher and Landtman on this trip:

We spent the nights always onboard the “Tamate”, and when we stayed outside certain villages, it regularly happened that after nightfall men came paddling in their canoes, offering us the company of one or another female relative. There might be half a dozen canoes and more floating around the “Tamate”, each with a man and a woman or two couples. We gathered that this habit offered to strangers and especially the whites
did not solely have with hospitality to do but also was connected with certain magic beliefs [This was a custom in certain groups especially from the Bamu River region. It was a sign of friendship and establishment of fictive kinship relationships which prevented the stranger from attacking his host. There were no magic beliefs attached to the custom].

Sighing at the sinfulness of the world Butcher went around with his lantern, illuminating the canoes, perhaps to see what the girls looked like and giving them each a piece of tobacco. The quiet nights on the river were divine, and sitting in our deck chairs we listened to Butcher’s gramophone that brought back memories of forgotten melodies.

It was Butcher’s intention to find a place in the area for the main station for a new mission district they planned. Finally he found one on an island on the upper part of the delta at the foot of a group of rather high mountain peaks which, seen from a distance, melted together into one considerable elevation called Aird Hill. It was an isolated hill in the flattest of lowlands. The mountain formations in the middle of the island were surrounded by swamp on all sides but one, where Butcher found a piece of solid land high enough and safe from the reach of any kind of high tide. We spent a couple of days in the neighborhood trying, unsuccessfully, to make contact with the natives who from time to time cautiously showed themselves in their canoes from a distance (Landtman 1913b: 194–95. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

The successful mission and trade school established by Butcher was instrumental in the conversion of many of the local communities (Butcher 1963). Landtman wrote to his father on 16 February 1912 from Daru that he had only time, during the rapid travelling, to take some photographs and make notes but that despite the speed of the trip he was pleased to have made the journey.

**Meeting with Sir Hubert Murray**

Again, Landtman’s good luck favoured him for on the trip with Butcher he met Sir Hubert Murray, the Lieutenant Governor of Papua also on an exploration trip to the Kikori and Daru, and so was able to return to Daru on the government steamboat the ‘Merrie England’. However he was mindful of the state of his equipment and clothing after two years in the villages of Papua for he later wrote:

I spent then four days onboard the “Merrie England”. At the time of leaving my headquarters in Mawata I had not planned for a journey with Butcher and still less prepared to meet with his Excellency, and
that is why the clothing I had with me, worn through two years of hard conditions was somewhat slight. Luckily I had a small reserve so that I was able to join in at the dinner table with some decency.

This journey would have consolidated his association with Murray who as a man was careful with his friendships. Murray would have admired Landtman’s courage and dedication. Back in Mawatta Landtman wrote to his sister on 18 February 1912 that he was pleased to find his manuscript and collections safe but still distributed in three places and he had to make arrangements for the consolidation of the material before his imminent departure. After two years in the field Landtman was well travelled and had amassed a fine collection of folklore, artefacts and photographs. It appears he had also written a draft of his final manuscript and he later wrote in his travelogue:

How satisfied I was for the completeness of my notes; the pages of the manuscript that was kept in a large iron box had grown in numbers so much that counted them now by the weight, and I felt a certain satisfaction each time I lifted the heavy box. The number of fairytales, stories etc alone were over 800, variations included (Landtman 1913b: 196. Translated form the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

In his last letter from the field addressed to his aunt written on 18 March 1912 Landtman wrote to say that: ‘To my great pleasure I have just received all boxes and sacks full of objects, my manuscript and the photographs I was forced to leave behind on various mission stations in the area’. His packing more or less completed he managed to have a local merchant construct wooden crates and he filled them with coconut husk as packing material.

**Return to England and then to Finland**

Landtman returned to Europe by way of Cambridge in April 1912 where he stayed for a few months unpacking and sorting his artifact collection. At Cambridge he wrote the first of his many papers on the Kiwai (Landtman 1912b). Landtman made an early visit to Finland to see his family before returning once again to Cambridge. It was on the second trip home that he had a near disastrous experience when his ship sank in the Kattegat strait off Denmark and the manuscript of his main book on the Kiwai went down with his belongings. Letters from his friends record the distress felt at such a loss (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Rosalie Walker 17 February 1913 and F. W. Walker 17 February 1913). Landtman was not to be dismayed for long by this accident for he hired a diver to retrieve his material and, after drying the manuscript, only a few pages were found to be damaged (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: 24 May 1913). Fortunately his artefact collections and photographs had been shipped to Finland earlier.
Post-script: further letters to and from the field

Correspondence with missionary and trading friends in Papua continued after Landtman returned to Helsinki. In a letter to Landtman, G. H. Murray complained of the long and heavy wet season of 1913 that caused serious flooding to the Dirimur plantation. Murray condemned the narrow parochial attitudes of the European settlement in Daru and wrote of the small-mindedness of colonial officers in their dealings with each other (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Murray 15 May 1913). In the letter, Murray re-introduced Wilfred Beaver, the particular subject of some of these petty jealouslyies and someone Landtman had befriended in Daru.

Wilfred Beaver was an experienced government officer who later wrote requesting assistance with a monograph that he was preparing on the people of the Western District (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Beaver 24 July 1913 and 14 November 1913). Beaver had served in a number of areas in Papua and led the overland team to find Staniforth Smith and his expedition party in the Gulf District. After his year long leave in Britain, Beaver returned to Papua and was posted to the Buna and the Orokaiva Districts where he had previously served. He asked if Landtman would contribute a chapter to his book on the Kiwai and hoped to have the final manuscript ready by 1915 (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: 29 December 1913). He asked for permission to use eight of Landtman’s plates in his book although the published edition contains only a few of Landtman’s prints together with the photographs from other sources (Beaver 1920). In his final letter Beaver offers his gratitude to Landtman for sending the chapter on religious beliefs and practices to the publishers in London and comments, now that the First World War has commenced in Europe: ‘I have been trying to get away but can’t manage it just now’ (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Beaver 25 May 1915). Wilfred Beaver, a keen observer of Papuan social life and customs who had been educated at the University of Melbourne and in Brussels, was killed at the Polygon Wood in Belgium in 1917. His book was later published posthumously (Beaver 1920). It remains an interesting and useful descriptive account the Kiwai people and colonial attitudes during that period.

In March 1914 the Lieutenant Governor wrote to Landtman acknowledging the receipt of the travelogue, *Nya Guinea färden* (Landtman 1913b), a paper on the poetry of the Kiwai (Landtman 1913c) and the study of two Kiwai legends, *Två Papuanska sågor* (Landtman 1913d). Leonard Murray, the Official Secretary, later wrote from Government House in Port Moresby to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of Landtman’s substantial book on the folk-tales of the Kiwai Papuans (Landtman 1917) (VKKA Landtman 1919–21: Leonard Murray 26 August 1919).

The last letter in the correspondence file to Landtman, from Ethel Zahel (VKKA Landtman 1910–21: Zahel 3 November 1921) reports that the Madiri plantation
is doing better than the Dirimu one and she has returned to the islands to teach in the Badu Native School as she felt lost in England and more at home in the Torres Strait. It is of little wonder that she felt at home on Badu for Ethel Zahel was an interesting figure in the history of education and administration in the Torres Strait. She was born in Mackay in Queensland but moved to Thursday Island with her solicitor husband in 1905 (Lawrie 1990). When her husband died there Zahel became a temporary teacher on Yam Island. Her only daughter died of malaria and so Zahel moved to Badu and opened the Badu Native School in 1909. She lived with F. W. Walker and his family for many years.

In addition to her duties as teacher she was also the clerk and treasurer of the Badu court, the registrar of birth, deaths and marriages and in 1915 was given administrative control over the ‘company boats’. Zahel was one of the white teachers appointed to sign authorisations for the provisioning of vessels and determining advance payments for pearl-shell and bêche-de-mer brought to Badu for sale at Papuan Industries store. Zahel supervised the court on neighbouring Moa Island. She was praised for her work as she was considered bright, vigorous, intelligent and forceful. Together with Walker and his family, she would no doubt have been interesting company for Gunnar Landtman during his enforced stays on Badu. But perhaps unwittingly, she was part of the system of restrictive control over the very people she had come to love.

Papuan Industries Ltd failed to thrive financially despite the long years of work and Walker was continually forced to make representation to the LMS authorities and the Queensland Government for assistance. Walker and his family lived and worked in the Torres Strait until his retirement in 1922 when he briefly returned to the mission at Kwato (Wetherell 1996: 129; Ganter 1994: 86). The company continued under the direction of J. B. Freshwater, formerly of the Madiri plantation, who was the impetus behind the sale of the Papuan Industries properties to other agencies. Madiri was sold to the Unevangelised Field Mission (UFM) an evangelical religious society that relied more on ‘muscular’ Christianity but one that was ultimately more successful than the LMS. The presence of the missionaries did little to resolve endemic warfare in the lower Fly River. Following sale of the Madiri mission activity at the mouth of the Fly was disrupted in the 1930s by threats of attack from the Suki Lakes people to the west. The Suki were much feared and the UFM missionaries had to move to the relative safety of the Manowetti banks where the land was more productive and the population greater (Lawrence 1995: 62–63). For safety, the local people moved further inland to Balamula or southeast along the coast to Madame.

Despite the inherent paternalism of the mission Papuan Industries did increase Islander involvement with the Australian cash economy and some of the essential commercial foundations of F. W. Walker’s enterprise remain. Papuan
Industries became Aboriginal Industries when it was bought out by the Queensland Government in 1929 and in 1939 it became the Island Industries Board (IIB) (Beckett 1987: 49–50). Since a change in constitution in 1984 the IIB trades as the Islander Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) with stores on all inhabited Torres Strait islands and a local staff of 200. Papuan villagers along the southwestern coast, with permission to cross into Australian territory under the Torres Strait Treaty, continue to shop at these island stores. Pauans no longer work in the marine industries of the Torres Strait.