Chapter 3
Imaging the Kiwai

Gunnar Landtman was an avid photographer as well as artefact collector and folklorist. By 1911 he had made a sufficient collection of glass-plate negatives to send back to his father in Helsinki. These plates were sent through his missionary friends at Badu from where Rosalie Walker, the wife of Rev. F. W. Walker, wrote thanking him for allowing them the opportunity of seeing the negatives and for giving the missionaries the chance to make prints if they wished (Landtman 1910–21: R. Walker 19 October 1911). In all, Landtman took over 500 photographs while in the field. During his expeditions not only did he travel with his personal effects, his own food, a growing artefact collection and phonograph recording equipment but he also took along his photographic equipment and special photographic papers brought from Finland. When this ran out he was forced to use lesser quality material from Australia. He regularly complained of this to his family.

Ethnographic photography at the turn of the 20th Century

Ethnographic photography was a developing field technique. It had a long tradition in colonial India where Lord Canning, the first Viceroy after 1858 and a keen photographer, requested civil and military field officers to make collections of the different tribal groups for his personal interest. Much of this material was subsequently published in the eight volume work, *The People of India* (Watson and Kaye 1868–75) which contained 480 photographic portraits of various races, castes and tribes in India together with descriptive and historical information (Falconer 2002: 52). This form of field photography was mobilised as a means for having knowledge about subject peoples and from its earliest days photography became a tool of ethnography in the service of colonialism and imperialist expansion. This invested photography with a power greater than just mere technology. The photographs are stylised, composed images that are certainly impressive but lack any feeling for the humanity of the subject. Along with comprehensive data obtained from topographical mapping, revenue surveys and detailed archaeological surveying, ethnographic photography became part of the imperial ideology to tabulate, systematise, catalogue and ultimately control the natural and human resources of the Indian subcontinent (Falconer 2002: 55).
In Papua photography had been used extensively by the members of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition in 1898 and the Haddon collection at Cambridge holds around 300 photographs of the Torres Strait and 300 of Papua taken by Anthony Wilkin, the junior member of the expedition (Edwards 2000: 123 note 9). Many photographs from these collections were published in the reports of the expedition (Haddon 1901–35). The members of the London Missionary Society were also keen recorders of local scenes and customs and Ben Butcher and the Rev. W. G. Lawes, among others, took many images now held in the Council for World Mission Archives at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (www.cwmission.org.uk). Photographs by Charles Abel from the Kwato mission are held at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby (University of Papua New Guinea NG collection ALX-1)(Pacific Manuscripts Bureau 2006). Most of these images were originally collected to be used in talks and lectures on the success of the missionary enterprise in Papua.

At the same time, photography was being used in the Australian colonies as an exercise in attracting settlers and securing ownership of the vast alien continent. Between 1886 and 1888 an outstanding collection of engravings, and some photographs, was published by Andrew Garran in subscription format under the title, *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*. It also played a significant role in developing a sense of nationalism in late 19th Century in colonial Australia (Garran 1886–88; Hughes-d’Aeth 2001). J. W. Lindt, one of the most important figures in early colonial photography, also published a series of illustrations titled *Picturesque New Guinea* that was part of a group of photographic studies of Pacific island communities that supported Australian sub-colonial expansionism in the Pacific (Lindt 1887). The use of the term ‘picturesque’ in the titles gives some indication of the style, and orientation of these publications. Photography, for ethnographic study and research, was not part of the early scene.

In Finland many linguists, ethnographers and travellers at that time used photography during their excursions and adventures in Karelia, Siberia, North Russia and Central Asia. Marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, on an early intelligence gathering mission from Moscow to Beijing between 1906 and 1908 took over 1500 photographs and even developed a celluloid film in his tent. Mannerheim also returned with over 1000 artefacts collected with money from the Antell legacy (Mannerheim and Hilden 1969). Photography has a rich history in Finnish ethnology (Varjola 1982).

**Techniques and technology**

The political and social power of the image was beginning to be recognised early in the life of ethnographic photography. Everard im Thurn, the botanist and
museum curator who later became High Commissioner of the Western Pacific and Governor of Fiji between 1904 and 1911, was very influential in anthropological circles in England and published an important paper on the anthropological use of the camera in 1893 (im Thurn 1893: 184–203). im Thurn was also to become President of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland from 1911–20 and he lectured on the intrinsic, aesthetic and humanising use of photography, though largely in terminology that would be considered patronising and derogatory today. He supported naturalistic photography of ‘native’ peoples that removed the posed arrangements commonly affected at that time.

Everard im Thurn was one of the first to actually describe and recommend photographic material to travellers and ethnologists. For his earlier work in British Guiana [Guyana] he used both a smaller hand-held camera for immediate photographs and a larger fixed view camera. However he wrote that the small hand cameras of that time ‘are an abomination and are really much more difficult to work with [for] satisfactory results than are fixed cameras’ (im Thurn 1893: 201). The large view camera of the period consisted of a front standard that held the lens plate, the shutter and the lens. This was joined to a back standard by means of a bellows, a flexible, accordion-pleated box that had the ability to accommodate the movement of the two standards. The rear standard held the film plate. This rear standard was a frame that held a ground glass used for focusing and composing the image before exposure. The whole apparatus could be collapsed for transportation but required the solid support of a fixed base.

im Thurn also recommended the use of tele-photographic, concentric lens, and although film substitutes based on xylonite [celluloid] were becoming available, he preferred the use of the heavy glass-plate mainly because the lighter films of that time did not keep their condition in tropical regions. His recommendation, and this would have still been relevant to Landtman in 1910, was ‘On the whole it seems best at present to take a certain number of good glass plates for the special work’ (im Thurn 1893: 201). It was then necessary for the ethnologist to have a dark room or darkened tent and a changing bag to keep the plates after exposure. Dry developing chemicals, such as amidol, a colourless crystalline compound, were also available but in addition to this cumbersome equipment, clean water and chemicals, it was essential to have good ventilation to counter the effects of heat, damp and insects.

All would be handicaps to Landtman’s work in Papua. The field photographer then had to store the plate in dry, preferable black, velvet bags and the bellows of the camera had to be kept supple with vaseline. This would certainly have been very attractive to bush insects and cockroaches. The glass plates had to be packed carefully in air tight, lockable containers with naphthalene and then transported with waterproof coverings (im Thurn 1893: 203). All this equipment
would have be beyond the ability of one lone field researcher to manage: it was still a time when an ethnologist could be sure that he could employ a number of local porters to assist in his work. Landtman wrote regularly of his servants’ capabilities and even later people like Malinowski employed a servant in the field. The fact that Landtman managed to compose over 500 images in a difficult and unpleasant physical environment was indeed impressive. As Michael Young noted in his excellent study of the Trobriand field photographs of Bronislaw Malinowski, anthropology and photography have ‘parallel historical trajectories’ (Young 1998: 4). However, Malinowski, working in Papua from 1915 to 1918, was a much more successful photographer despite his claims to the contrary and his dislike of the art. He produced a collection of about 800 images (Young 1998: 21). Perhaps one can mildly disagree with the statement that ‘No other anthropologist of Malinowski’s generation made photographs work so hard in the service of ethnographic narrative’ (Young 1998: 5). Landtman was not a ‘militant’ self-promoter, nor a ‘Socratic teacher’ skilled at out-maneuvring his rivals (Young 1998: 3). Regrettably, Landtman was also not such a creative writer in English and Kiwai culture, unlike that of the Trobriands, had little power to attract following generations of students.

The search for objectivity

Whether posed or naturalistic, photography as a field research tool was also a technology that allowed for objectivity combined with commonly held evolutionist values. ‘Native’ or ‘primitive’ peoples were photographed in various performances, actions, dances or rituals to illustrate the hierarchy of human evolution. The positivist assumption was that if culture could be seen to be happening it would be embedded in observable gestures, ceremonies and artefacts. These photographs could then act as an aide-mémoire for the researcher or as a ‘transparent method of visual note-taking’ (Young 1998: 4). However, the idea that photographs could form neutral, transparent and objective data ignored the social role of the subject and the inherent power of the ethnocentrism of the photographer (Ruby 1996; Quanchi 2007: 11). What the camera sees depends on who is using it. Early ethnologists sought out subjects that followed a taxonomic classification inherited from the natural sciences. Images of physical types and facial structures of local people were keenly sought, social customs, rituals and performances were important subjects that were recorded either as they happened or were ordered to be performed for the photographer’s benefit. The other major subject was material culture of all types such as clothing, body decoration, house and building styles, weaponry and means of transport. Certainly early photographs by colonial officials, explorers, missionaries and ethnologists were part of a process that alienated and objectified Papuan peoples and cultures.
Landtman undoubtedly gained from association with W. H. R. Rivers and C. G. Seligman [Seligmann] who had accompanied Haddon on the Cambridge Torres Strait expedition of 1898. According to Edwards (2000: 105) a clear distinction can be made with ethnographic images of this period. Some are of a naturalistic, non-interventionist style representing observational photography of the style encouraged by Everard im Thurn. Others show a more controlled interventionist mode: a scientific photography designed to illustrate facts. For Haddon, both styles were important for they were strongly influenced by his romantic primitivist subjectivities that existed alongside systematic scientific intention (Edwards 2000: 112). In 1902 Rivers worked with the Todas tribes of the Nilgiri hills in southern India (Rivers 1906). Although he employed two professional photographers to take his field photographs he actively supervised their work. Rivers’s study of the Todas became an immediate classic and a major influence on ethnological fieldwork at the turn of the 20th Century (Hockings 1992: 179–86). Seligman and his wife worked with the Veddas [Wanniyala-Aetto] people of Ceylon [Sri Lanka] in 1907 and 1908 and they too used photography in the field (Seligmann C. G. and B. Z. 1911)(Poignant 1992: 64). Both Seligman and Rivers continued to publish well-regarded, influential material on Melanesian cultures. Seligman’s publication on the Melanesians of British New Guinea would have provided substantial background information for Landtman’s work with the Kiwai (Seligman 1910) and Rivers was also working on a major two volume study into regional cultural history at the time of Landtman’s Cambridge visit (Rivers 1914).

In Papua perhaps the earliest use of the camera for ethnology was made by R. M. Williamson who photographed the Mekeo and Goilala people in 1910 using the grand vista imagery that was undoubtedly creative and inventive but retained a sense of cultural and physical distance (Williamson 1912; Macintyre and MacKenzie 1992: 158–64). The technique of the day emphasised the use of diffused lighting on the subject of anthropological photography. High art photography on the other hand called for the use of side lighting and the removal of extraneous elements like buildings and scenery. This approach placed the subject in a Romanised, Arcadian setting and examples can be found in the popular Pacific travel books produced at that time. Typical of this sort of material is Burnett’s photographic travelogue of Polynesia and Papua that included images of undressed women posed for visual effect in exotic scenery. Many of these images were taken by professional studio photographers although Burnett also photographed local people and scenery in places like the Solomon Islands where Melanesian women were not considered a ‘woodland nymph’ or a ‘Tahitian beauty’. (Burnett 1911 and Thomas 1992: 369). These photographs were used as picturesque illustrations to add local colour to the text. Photography was developing both a professional and a popular use. On
one hand ‘native’ people were the subject of racist misogyny that supported sexual stereotyping and on the other hand ethnologists were only beginning to understand the documentary significance of field photographs.

In another excellent study of the photographs of F. E. Williams, the Government Anthropologist of Papua from 1922 to 1939, Michael Young and Julia Clark (2001: 56) wrote that Williams would have accepted photography as a tool of his trade, used unreflectively and taken for granted as a medium of ethnographic recording. These photographs, held by the National Archives of Australia in Canberra, capture the immediacy of life of the ordinary villager. There is a tendency in Landtman’s photographs, like those of Williams, to position the subject in the middle distance in order to record the place of people within their natural environment. This positioning in the optimal distance meant that the image contained both the subject and enough situational background for the observer to read the social and cultural context of the subject. This was also a technique later favoured by Malinowski: it was in effect a ‘methodologically driven style’ rather than a sign of reticence or modesty (Young 1998: 17). In Landtman’s work there are few single portrait photographs but these are named and described. Landtman was not as skilled with his photography as Williams but then again Williams had the advantage of one decade of technological improvements, better local knowledge, a staff of carriers and as a government official was able to command the use of boats and equipment that were beyond the reach of a sole ethnographer like Landtman.

In a recent study of early photographs of Papua and Papuans, Quanchi (2007: 21 and 85), basing his interpretation of historical photographs on the theory developed by Roland Barthes (1993), states that images from the 1880 to 1930 period contain two essential elements: the ‘studium’, the coded, obvious and mostly singular reading, and the ‘punctum’, the divided and mostly multiple meanings. More simply the images contain both an intended meaning, established by the subject matter, composition or framing at the site of taking the photograph, and an unintended meaning, the one discerned by the reader at the site of use or exhibition. In other words, the scholarly versus the personal interpretation. According to Quanchi (2007: 86) photography undertaken by colonial officials, missionaries and early anthropologists serves as a metaphor for colonialism in that both are predatory, acquisitive, presumptuous and objectify the subject. However while Quanchi’s work contains a detailed, valuable list of references and substantial bibliography, the interesting hypothesis is marred by his numerous and unacceptable errors of fact: ‘Guntar Landtmann’ (Quanchi 2007: 290 footnote 12) being only one of them. There is no detailed analysis of Landtman’s substantial collection of photographic work.
The privileged position of the photographer

However, photographs do expose the anthropologist’s privileged field of view (Poignant 1992: 65). It is obvious that Landtman took his photographs from a position of power, he was a white man working in a colonial society where his subjects, both black men and women, were not in a position to challenge his privileged place and purpose in their communities. This is not to deny Landtman his sense of humanity for his photographs, notes and letters show that he was a man of perception, humour and decency. Some images may be posed but they are not contrived. Landtman’s photography was experimental: there are landscapes, vertical as well as horizontally framed images, a number of portraits, some stilted posed groups of dancers that lack colour but also some dramatic, powerful images, no sequences of images as can be found in Malinowski’s collection but like Malinowski the height of the camera is generally commensurate with the height of the subject (see especially Young 1998: 16–17).

Landtman’s photographs are socially constructed artefacts that tell us not only about Kiwai society and culture between 1910 and 1912, but also tell us much about the society and culture of the photographer. The meaning of these images can now be comprehended as something negotiated between subject and maker rather than fixed ethnocentric products of early 20th Century romanticism. There is a great deal of information on the subjects of the images that can only now be discerned with better access to sites, our greater ease and ability to communicate with people in the region and with over a century of documented history. Landtman photographed and recorded all his visits to story sites and villages and took numerous photographs of scenery, ceremonies, people and material culture. They document his personal journey along the Daru coast and into the Fly estuary. Apart from longhouses at Gaima, no photographs were taken on the near disastrous trip to the Aramia and the later journey to the Gulf. It is possible to follow this path commencing at Buji in the west.
Map 3. Daudai, Dudi and Manowetti (Paul Brugman ANU 2009)
Buji

Buji was established in 1897 with the remnants of the Agob-speaking people from the Mai and Wassi Kussa estuaries who had been decimated by raids from the Marind-amin or ‘Tugeri’ from the Merauke area of Dutch New Guinea. In 1898 the whole Agob population was reported to be only 250. Raids by the ‘Tugeri’ were common in the 1870s at Boigu and recorded on Saibai in 1882. Even in 1895 Boigu was a miserable collection of huts and a half roofed church and most of the population consisted of people from the Papuan coast seeking refuge from the raiders. Sir William Macgregor, with an armed patrol, made contact with ‘Tugeri’ invaders off the Wassi Kussa inlet in 1895 and captured and destroyed a number of canoes. Some were given to Boigu Islanders and some to coastal Papuans in compensation for damage done during raids. However despite acknowledging the need to repel the ‘Tugeri’ Macgregor was sorry that they were not inhabitants of British New Guinea as he called them ‘active, powerful, daring, enterprising spirits’ (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1889/90: 75).

The raids only stopped along the Daru coast with the death of the last war chief, Para, and a European trader named Martin near Mawatta around 1888 (Lawrence 1994: 412). This story is still told by the people of Mawatta and Mabudawan. Once the raiding stopped the scattered Agob-speaking people were able to move to the coast and re-establish traditional contacts with the Western Islanders of the Torres Strait. Life near the Dutch New Guinea border however was still precarious for the Marind-amin continued to raid the communities of the Morehead River as late as 1902. A report on the settlement of Daru by the Acting Administrator of British New Guinea in 1903 continued to refer to the trouble posed by the ‘Tugeri’. Only after the establishment of the permanent Dutch police post at Merauke was the raiding finally contained. The Dutch colonial government was then required to pay compensation to coastal villagers for loss of life and property (Beaver 1920: 11). Buji men continued to dress as warriors at the time of Landtman’s visit. Even today the Agob people supply cassowary feather headdresses, drums, bow and arrows to the Boigu and Saibai Islanders for their use in ceremonial dances for which they are renowned.

According to oral accounts, the people of Buji formerly lived in small bush camps where they slept on the ground. They had no permanent houses and moved according to the season between their hunting and fishing camps. The legend of Ubrikubri tells of their long connections with the Torres Strait Islands of Badu and Moa [Mua]: a man, named Ubrikubri, and his daughter lived near the site of Buji village. The girl had no children to care for and so she asked her father to find her a piglet that she could raise. This was an old custom that trained girls for marriage. The father brought her various animals but the daughter was not satisfied and eventually the father found a small crocodile
that he gave her. She lovingly raised this animal on yams and taro and fed it by hand. One day she told her father to care for the animal as she was going to the bush. The father reached in through the fence surrounding the crocodile but the animal grabbed him and dragged the father along the beach and into the water. It took the man to Boigu, nearby, and then back to Buji thereby creating the channel between the two communities. In the meantime the girl was searching for her father and eventually found his body near some rocks on the mainland. The girl left that camping place and moved along the coast. The crocodile meanwhile moved to Buru Reef, a story site for Mabuiag people, and to Moa [Mua] and then to Badu. It can still be seen in the channel between the two islands. In the story both the father and the crocodile are named Ubrikubri and the legend links the Agob people with the Western Islanders of the Torres Strait. It explains the wanderings of the Buji people (Lawrence 1994: 405–06; Schug 1995: 79).

Figure 8. Man from Buji village dressed as warrior with feather headdress, pubic shell cover, wallaby teeth necklace and hunting bow and arrows. The man is also carrying a hooped pig catcher mistakenly called a man catcher (VKK 248: 137)
Currently the Agob-speaking people continue to live in the small isolated and impoverished coastal communities of Buji, Ber and Sigabarduru between the Mai Kussa and the Pahoturi Rivers. They maintain close contacts with the Torres Strait Islander communities of Boigu, Dauan and Saibai and cross to these communities for fuel, food and medical attention.

**Mabudawan, Marukawa and Dauan**

The islands of Paho and Marukawa, and the hill at Mabudawan on the mainland, are particularly important being associated with the myths and legends of heroes such as Sido, Kuiam and Wawa. Mabudawan was the site chosen by Resident Magistrate J. B. Cameron for a police post in 1891 but this was moved to Daru by the R. M. Bingham Hely (Lawrence 1994: 300; Annual Report on British New Guinea 1897/98: xxiv).

![Figure 9. Marukawa Island off Mabudawan. Mabudawan and the small offshore islands are the only rocky outcrops along the southwest coast (VKK 248: 2)](image)

Cameron’s first problem was to determine the owners of Mabudawan and the offshore islands. The government finally accepted the Agob people’s rights of ownership of this area they called Mabunardi. However, by this time the
Kiwi who had come as police with the administration had occupied the coastal areas near the mouth of the Pahoturi (Lawrence 1994: 407). Mabudawan, the Agob people say, is a corruption of the real name for the hill that the Kiwi could not pronounce. Mabudawan is also culturally important for the Gizra-speaking people of the eastern bank of the Pahoturi. The legend of Geadap (Giadap) and Muiam, the most important origin story of the Gizra, tells how the two brothers came into being at Basipuk, also known as Basir Puerk (Laba 1996: 302), an area at the foot of Normandor (the Gizra name for Mabudawan) (Numandorr according to Laba 1996: 302). The important cultural sites at Dabu and Normandor are now too close to the Kiwi village for the bush people to visit (Lawrence 1994: 300 and 423–24).

The Agob people of the scattered coastal and bush villages still tell of how the Kiwi came to occupy Madudawan and this is verified in colonial records. A Kiwi man from Kadawa [Mawatta] named Kesave came to Mabudawan with the government patrol officers and when he returned to Mawatta he told his people that Mabudawan was a good place to settle. When Kesave returned the Sigabarduru people gave him a woman called Makar, the widow of Kowdi. She had many children from Kowdi but Kesave and Makar did not have children together. Kesave also had a wife, Kutai, at Mawatta and sometimes he lived at Mabudawan and sometimes at Mawatta (Lawrence 1994: 408). Kesave [also spelt Kesawe] was often wounded during his long police service and acted as sergeant to Wilfred Beaver when on patrol around 1910 (Beaver 1920: 79–80; Annual Report on British New Guinea 1891/92: 48). Kiwi occupation of Mabudawan was only very recent when Landtman visited the site.

There are many story sites in and around Mabudawan on the offshore islands and reefs. Many of these sites are contested by inland, coastal and island people all along the southwest coast (Lawrence 2004). A complex network of social ties connects the people of the widely-spaced coastal communities of the northern Torres Strait. A geographical and social web fosters a feeling of identity strengthened by centuries of ritual, exchange, intermarriage and the shared use of land and sea (Schug 1995: 233). This fragile network is now being challenged by the imposition of international laws and treaties that prohibit and control movement across the open sea.
Legends of Wawa, Sido and Kuiam

The Legend of Wawa

According to legend, Wawa is a short, thick man who lives in the large rock at Mabudawan. When he wants to go to sleep he goes into the stone that closes over him and when he wants to make a garden, the stone opens up again. He carries a large bundle of arrows and a basket in one hand and a bow in the other. On his arm he wears an arm bracer and in it a cassowary feather decoration. On his head he wears bushes and flowers that he takes off when he works in his gardens. The taro that he plants grows overnight and so he has plenty of food. He can see both Saibai and Mawatta from his beach. One day on the beach, when the water had risen high, he saw two turtles: one male and one female. As he could not carry them himself, he called a bush man, Jabi, to help him. Jabi said that in return he should have one turtle. However, they argued over which turtle: the female turtle is better meat and so both wanted the ‘fat’ turtle. In the end, Wawa fell asleep and while he was asleep, Jabi picked off the lice in his hair and put them in a bowl. Jabi stole the female turtle and ran back into the bush. Because he was afraid of Wawa, he took his family further inland and built a
Gunnar Landtman in Papua: 1910 to 1912

hut high on poles away from the ground. He took with him animals from the bush like the dog, the wallaby, the cuscus, the pig and the cassowary. Wawa’s lice meanwhile had turned to crabs on the beach. Wawa went in search of Jabi and his family and wanted to kill them all. He asked other bushmen to help him. When Jabi threw out the cuscus, the bushmen killed it, when he threw out the wallaby, they did the same, and the same with the cassowary and the pig. In the end Jabi and his wife threw out their small daughter and they killed her too. The fight then stopped and Wawa, satisfied with his victory, went back to the beach and returned to his stone home. The bush people moved away from the coast and went inland. On the beach is a place where Wawa sharpened his stone axe. The area near the rock is well known for its mud crabs which are said to be the lice from Wawa’s hair. (Landtman 1917). This is also the story that accounts for the reasons why the coastal people and the bush people have to live apart from each other and why there is also no intermarriage between them.

The Legend of Sido

The most important ancestor legend of the Kiwai is the story of Sido. The legend of Sido links the islands of the Fly estuary to the southwest coast and the northern Torres Strait. It may be seen not only as a descriptive account of how the area became inhabited but as a political document. The movements of Sido are mirrored in the migrations out of Kiwai Island and along the southwest coast by the Kiwai people themselves. The image of the wandering culture hero is a common one. This hero, known by various names such as Muiam, Geadap, Kuiam, Sido, Hido, Iko or Souw, is part of a series of linked myths that serve to unite different cultures right across the south Fly, the Torres Strait and even as far as Cape York. The hero myth also serves as a metaphor for the supreme being capable of creating and improving people, giving them their social organisation and customs as well as revealing matters of human sexuality, reproduction and mortality (Busse 2005: 463; Wagner 1996: 287; Laba 1996: 300).

The following is a very brief account of a long and complex story of which a number of similar versions exist. Sido was created at Dibiri, but was chased away because he was making magic and went to U’uwo on Kiwai Island. There he met two women joined together at the waist. By magic one of the women gave birth to Sido [his rebirth] and after he grew they taught him the secrets of hunting and fishing. In return, using a ball of sago, he split them apart into two women, Asau and Oumo. In this way the two mothers became separate people (Landtman 1912b: 62). One day Sido went out hunting and met an old man who took Sido to his home. The old man had bananas and coconuts which Sido stole. He also stole the old man’s magic but later took the old man to the house of the two women and they all lived together in one longhouse. In this way Sido
was responsible for bringing together the knowledge of hunting, fishing and gardening. The old man made a drum which when beaten called out the name of Sido’s future lover, Sagaru.

Sido was told to go to Iasa to a longhouse there. By magic Sido was transported across the island by a swinging tree that shot Sido into the air. At Iasa Sido met Sagaru his lover. Sido and Sagaru had sex and commenced their journeys around Kiwai Island but Sagaru ran away because Sido did not satisfy her. Sido followed Sagaru around the island and after he learnt to make a fine canoe that floated on the water he crossed to Mibu. Sido followed Sagaru to Mabudawan and there he climbed the rocky hill (Lawrence 1994: 403–05).

Figure 11. The imprint of Sido’s foot at Paho Island near Mabudawan. Paho Island is only separated from Mabudawan by a small creek (VKK 248: 474. See also Schug 1995: 79)
From Mabudawan Sido went to Boigu. At Boigu a man named Meuri wanted Sagaru as his wife and fought with Sido for her. Meuri killed Sido and cut off his head. Sagaru then drank water from the head and then threw it away into the bush. The place where the head landed is now a well that is always filled with fresh water. Sagaru was killed after she ran away from Meuri and Sido’s spirit returned to U’uwo where it lies near the village in a place that is always fresh and green. The place near U’uwo is considered to be an important site still and people are discouraged, politely, from visiting it. The large tree that shot Sido to Iasa is to be found near the present Sagapadi village. Under the tree are many large stone axe heads (Lawrence 1994: 403–05 and 1995: 39). Other versions of the legend state that Sido, called the first man to die, drank from his own skull and that he killed his two mothers and one became a turtle and one a dugong (Landtman 1917: 112–13 and 1927: 285–87). The story of Sido remains the most important legend told by the Kiwai as it legitimises Kiwai occupation of the places named in the legend.

The Legend of Kuiam

Contact between the people of the Western Islands of the Torres Strait and Cape York is told in the legends of Kuiam, a culture hero of mixed Islander and Aboriginal heritage. These legends were also collected by Haddon (1904, V: 67–83 and 1935, I: 380–85) as well as by Donald Thomson (1933), the Australian anthropologist who recorded detailed accounts of Cape York Aboriginal hero cults, totemism and initiation while undertaking ethnographic research with the people of Lloyd Bay on the east coast of north Queensland. Landtman’s account of Kuiam states that Kuiam grew up as a small boy on the island of Mabuiag in the Western Torres Strait. He was cruel to his playmates and often teased them and hit them and he showed disrespect for elders by damaging the food and spoiling the camps. His mother was often angry with him. As he grew older, he continued to be cruel and his mother continued to be angry with him. One day he dressed as a warrior and waited for his mother. He killed her and cut off her head. He fought the Mabuiag people and killed many of them too. He cut off all the heads and decorated them and hung them on bush rope. With his mother’s head he filled the eyes with beeswax and put shells in as eyes and placed clay in the nose and put a nose stick in it. Taking his young nephew with him, he sailed to Dauan and climbed one of the hills there.
Kuiam sailed with the boy to Boigu where he continued to kill people. They then crossed to the mainland and they started killing the bush people from the Buji area to Jibaru near Mawatta. After this they returned to Kagaro Point on Saibai. On the way the canoe was caught in strong seas and so Kuiam threw some of the heads overboard and they created the sandbanks and coral reefs between Saibai and Gimini reefs. On the return from Saibai to Mabuiag, Kuiam threw more heads overboard and they created the reefs between Mabuiag and the northern Torres Strait islands. The number of dead killed on Mabuiag matched the number of dead from the New Guinea side. After he had finished, Kuiam climbed the highest hill on Mabuiag and made his home there. Mabuiag remains the place of his spirit and the western Islanders claim ownership of these reefs and sandbanks that are important dugong and turtle hunting sites (Landtman 1917; Lawrence 1994: 293).
Mawatta

Mawatta proved to be a valuable research area for Gunnar Landtman. The most sustained exchange relationships between the Kiwai and the Torres Strait Islanders centred on this community on the strand at the mouth of the Binaturi River. It has previously been known as Kadawa and Katau. When H. M. Chester, the Police Magistrate from Somerset settlement on Cape York, and Captain William Banner, who had established the first bêche-de-mer station in the Torres Strait, landed at the mouth of the Binaturi River in 1870 they found a village of about 12 small houses and one longhouse parallel to the beach located near another coastal village called Toura Toura (Tureture) (Lawrence 1994: 269). The coastal Kiwai were descendants of Gamea, who founded Mawatta, and of Kuke, who founded Tureture. At that time the population of the two villages was about 900 people (Gill 1874).

Coastal Kiwai language is spoken by the inhabitants of the villages of Mabudawan, Mawatta and Tureture. Further towards Daru are the large coastal communities of Kadawa and Katatai. Together with Parama village, these communities speak Eastern Coastal Kiwai. However, all communities share the same origin story: the legend of Bidedu that was recorded by Landtman (1917: 85–88). The story tells that:

Long ago at Mawatta, that is Tagara [old] Mawatta the area of beach and headland opposite Daru Island, people lived inside a creeper of a kind called Buhere-apoapa. When swimming in the sea at Dudu-patu [near the Oriomo River opposite Daru] they came across the intestines of dugong and turtle, which had been thrown away by the Daru people and had floated over to the opposite coast, and they ate them. A large hawk once flew away with a turtle bone and alighted on a Kaparo tree at Kuru [in the bush at the headwaters of the Binaturi River], close to a garden where a man named Bidedu was working. The hawk dropped the bone, and Bidedu, after picking it up and examining it, decided to go and find out where it came from. He found the people in the creeper and cut them out … Both the Mawatta and Tureture people had been in the creeper. Their leader Bidja came out first, and Bidedu made friends with all of them. They used to eat poor kinds of fruits, roots and earth, and to smoke the leaves of a tree called omobari, but Bidedu gave them food of the right sort and showed them the use of tobacco. He taught them to build houses and the founded the village of Old Mawatta [opposite Daru].

In another version of this story, Bidedu from Kuru was in search of the origins of the turtle bone dropped from the sky when he heard the people in the vine tree. When he split the tree, Biza was the first man to come out, followed by his
brothers one of whom was named Gamea. Bidedu made the first man out of the
vine tree, Biza, go to sleep and caused him to dream of finding a way to the coast
and other secret information. Biza moved to the coast and settled his people
there. Biza named that place Mawatto, meaning to take someone and to cross
to the other side of the river. While there they made rafts to cross the water.
The people on Daru had canoes and hunted dugong and shared this knowledge
with the people from the bush (Lawrence 1994: 408–11). The stories serve to
illustrate the close connections between the people of the inland bush villages
and the coastal Kiwai who established themselves on the coast after moving out
of the Fly estuary. It was then that they learnt how to hunt dugong and turtle
and to sail ocean-going canoes.

Having settled on the coast, the Kadawarubi began to grow in number. The
headman, Gamea, who had gathered people from the Fly estuary, Parama and
Daru then traveled westwards along the shore naming the coast, rivers and
headlands and went as far as Saibai Island. From the Saibai Islanders Gamea
and his men learnt many things to do with fishing, marine hunting, and making
*narato* [dugong platforms]. He returned and later moved back along the coast
in a canoe. Fighting broke out between the Kadawarubi (the descendants of
Gamea) and the Tureturerubi (the descendants of his younger brother Kuke)
and so the communities separated into the villages of Mawatta and Tureture

Other stories and recorded history confirm these events. When the Kiwai began
moving out from Kiwai Island some moved north across to the Manowetti
coast and some west to the Dudi coast. One man, Sewota, sailed as far south as
Koipomuba near the present village of Katatai. Another man, Bagari, was living
there. Bagari gave Sewota fire but he told Sewota to go to live at Huboturi,
near the entrance to Toro Passage. Bani, from Boigu Island, came from the west
and he too went to live with Sewota. Later, Sewota gave his son to Bani to
bring up and told them to go to Doridori. Gewi and Doridori are both on the
Dudi bank just north of Toro Passage. At Doridori other people joined Bani and
they established two longhouses called Kudin and Wasigena. These longhouses
existed when the Rev. Samuel Macfarlane traveled up the Fly River with Luigi
D’Albertis and Henry Chester in 1875 (Macfarlane and Rawlinson 1875–76).
Macfarlane was not only exploring the country but looking for a suitable site
for a mission in the lower Fly. However, following the abuse of one woman from
Iasa, the warriors from Kiwai Island raided the two longhouses and drove the
people south past Parama Island. From Doridori the people of the senior clans,
the Gebarubi, went and established Parama village. The group of people in the
junior clans, the Kadawarubi, went south back along the coast and established
a village near Katatai. It was here that they came into contact with Bidedu from
These stories illustrate how the Kiwai came to settle on the southwest coast of Papua, how they learnt the techniques of dugong and turtle hunting from the traditional inhabitants of Daru, the Hiamo-Hiamo, and the technique of building, and sailing ocean-going canoes from the Saibai Islanders. This mix of coastal and inland peoples separated into two different groups: the eastern communities of Parama, Kadawa and Katatai and the western section of Tureture, Mawatta and Mabudawan (Lawrence 1994: 302–03). There were most likely a series of migrations and back migrations as people searched for new land or occupied old village sites. While the historical record notes that small communities of Kiwai lived at Mawatta and Tureture before 1872, the migration of larger numbers of people from the Fly estuary certainly occurred after 1875.

In his report of a visit of inspection to the Western Division in 1895, the Administrator of British New Guinea, William Macgregor, noted that Tureture was a well established village of Kiwai-speaking people who wore European clothes and had many young men working in the Torres Strait pearling and bêche-de-mer fisheries. In Mawatta, Macgregor found the people had extensive contacts with European traders and fishers but the South Sea Islander mission teacher was reported to be demoralised. The teacher insisted that children attending school wear European clothing but the parents argued that if the mission wanted them to attend well dressed then the missionaries must find the clothing for the children. This very Melanesian debate remained unresolved (Annual Report of British New Guinea 1895/96: 40).

By settling on the coast at the mouth of the coastal rivers the Kiwai effectively controlled the customary exchange patterns that had been established between the Torres Strait Islanders and the inland bush dwelling Papuans. The Kiwai became, in effect, littoral dwelling entrepreneurs. The land they built on was owned by the inland Bine-speaking people of Masingara village. The Bine-speaking community of Kunini had moved close to Tureture but eventually they would move back inland to the banks of the Binaturi River when their houses were damaged by sea storms. Only recently has the good relationship between the Kiwai and Bine peoples broken down.

Kiwai villages today are still built close to the sea, or on narrow rivers and waterways. Houses are generally small, consisting of two to three rooms, and while they may look flimsy from outside they are strongly built. The nipa palm walls are made so that they open on the lee side and close on the windward side thus keeping the houses cool and weatherproof. In the northern part of the Fly estuary villages are physically different. People use plaited sago canes woven into broad screens for walls. This is a Gogodala custom that has been adopted by some Kiwai in the northern part of the estuary. These walls are more attractive but are not as water-proof as the closely folded nipa palm. Kiwai villages vary tremendously in their internal dynamics. Some are noisy and full of life, others
Imaging the Kiwai

quiet and sleepy. Landtman's period of research in the Fly region corresponded with that of the Resident Magistrate Wilfred Beaver who wrote that the Kiwai were ‘most intelligent and forceful’ (Beaver 1920: 154) and that they were the first to be recruited as members of the armed constabulary and in much demand as boat-hands both in Papua and in the Torres Strait. Beaver noted the vitality of the Kiwai village and wrote: ‘a village is nothing but one continual state of chatter from dusk till dawn and the laughter is often as annoying as it is constant’ (Beaver 1920: 155). Little has changed. By comparison with societies higher up the Fly, the Kiwai have a richer and more complex material culture — their canoes have elaborate rigging and they make and maintain a much wider range of baskets, nets and other fishing equipment — lending a ‘busy’ air to their villages. Consequently, their ability to travel within the estuary and by sea over considerable distances and their long tradition of contact with other cultures means that the Kiwai are unusually well-informed on many subjects, particularly the lack of development in the Western Province and have a good command of English (Lawrence 1994: 259–89). When Landtman arrived in Papua the Kiwai had been in touch with traders, missionaries and government officers for more than 30 years. They had learnt to adapt to changing social and economic circumstances. This is evident in their acceptance of new forms of hunting and fishing.

Figure 13. Coastal Kiwai dwelling for one or two families with storage and sitting area underneath (VKK 248: 37)
Hunting and fishing

Figure 14. Young men from Mawatta with hunting bows and arrows. Landtman’s servant, Ganame, in the right is holding his Mauser hunting rifle (VKK 248: 150)

At Landtman’s time, harpooning of dugong was undertaken in two ways. On nights with a full moon a hunter would climb onto the tall wooden platform erected over good patches of seagrass and where the men knew that dugong and turtle grazed (see illustrations in Landtman 1920 and 1933: 28 but originally from Haddon 1901: facing 123 and Haddon 1912; IV: plate xxiii). The hunter had a long wooden harpoon in his hand and in the head was the harpoon dart attached to a long rope made from eight-ply coconut fibre. Other men would wait in canoes nearby. When a dugong approached the platform the hunter would throw the harpoon at the animal. He had to throw it with all his might and dive onto the animal as well. If the head of the harpoon struck the animal and embedded itself in the flesh the animal would swim quickly away with the rope attached. Landtman records that ‘at the present time [1910–12] the end of the harpoon line is generally tied to the platform, but formerly the harpooner had to catch hold of the line and allow himself to be towed away by the wounded animal’ (Landtman 1927: 125–26). The hunter would be collected by the men on the canoes that would have to give chase. When they reached the dugong
they would have to drown it by holding its tail in the air so that the breathing hole was submerged, or they would have to stun it by clubbing it to death. Landtman sailed with a hunting expedition where the men erected *narato* over the reef but this would have been one of the last times the platforms would have been used (Landtman 1913b: 167–68).

The use of the hunting platform declined because it was highly dangerous and could only be used on clear moonlit nights. The hunter could easily be caught in the long rope as it unwound, he could be drowned if the other men lost sight of him in the water at night and the blood from the wounded animal could attract sharks. One hunter, Maiva from Mawatta, drowned when he became entangled in the rope. Subsequently, when other hunters saw the ghost of Maiva he was surrounded by a pod of dugong and so they threw food into the ocean to ensure that fishing was good (Beaver 1920: 71).

The second method of hunting involved the use of the large double outrigger canoes. This form of hunting could be undertaken in all weathers and was more versatile as general reef fishing, turtle hunting and even communal travelling to other villages and the islands of the Torres Strait could be undertaken while lookouts, perched in the rigging of the masts and on the outriggers themselves, watched for the telltale signs of dugong in the sea.

![Image of Namai, Landtman's informant at Mawatta, demonstrating the use of a long fishing spear (VKK 248: 319)](image-url)

*Figure 15. Namai, Landtman’s informant at Mawatta, demonstrating the use of a long fishing spear (VKK 248: 319)*
It soon became the main method of marine hunting with a lugger being substituted for the canoe in the Torres Strait (Landtman 1913b: 31–35). The hunter would stand at the bow of the canoe with the *wapo* in his hand. When a turtle or dugong was sighted the canoe gave chase and the animal would easily tire after a long chase. The harpoon was hurled at the animals in the same way, it is still usual for the harpooner to dive into the ocean, and the hunter would quickly grab on to one of the outriggers as the canoe went past him in the water. The benefit of the canoe was that a number of men and women, and even children, could be together at one time so the men were safer than on the *narato* and the inside storage space of the large canoes would hold food, firewood, goods and sailing equipment (Lawrence 1994).

Figure 16. Man with dugong harpoon standing on the bow of a canoe while the lookout stands on the outrigger behind (VKK 248: 435)

**Religious life in Mawatta**

The London Missionary Society used Pacific Islander pastors from 1871 to 1915. Local evangelism was left to these pastors, many of whom subsequently intermarried into local communities and took over positions of local influence. Descendants of these pastors remain on both sides of the Australia/Papua New
Guinea border. As a result, Polynesian cultural influences have had a profound impact on the customary practice of the Torres Strait Islanders and the coastal Papuans.

The history of the Christian missions must be seen in terms of colonisation for mission paternalism mirrored the economic and political paternalism of the white administration (Beckett 1978). However, Islanders and coastal Papuans made considered judgments about the value of the missions for many communities welcomed the pastors as protection from the lawless behaviour of boat crews from the pearling and bêche-de-mer stations. With the establishment of the mission centre and trading post at Mawatta this village became the most important economic and cultural site on the southwestern coast. The community members acted as middlemen in trading all along the coast and long canoe-buying expeditions were undertaken during the calm weather before the northwest monsoons. When Landtman stayed at Mawatta, the village consisted of two streets of pile houses built off the ground generally containing two families, a flagstaff, a small village courthouse, the wooden LMS church and a trader’s store (Beaver 1920: 61).

Figure 17. The LMS church at Mawatta (VKK 248: 538)
Figure 18. Samoan pastor, possibly Pastor Apineru, and his wife at Mawatta mission station (VKK 248: 544)
Ceremonial life in Mawatta

Ceremonial life continued despite the presence of the missions and administration but it occurred in seclusion. Landtman wrote to his family that he had to ask the men of Mawatta village to dress in ceremonial dance costume for him to photograph much to the disapproval of the local missionaries. It was acceptable for men and women to engage in approved introduced dances such as the formation dance, the Taibobo, and gradually a fusion of dances, ceremonies and costumes evolved. Men began to wear grass skirts over lava-lavas and in the formation dances the wearing of dori headdresses became common. Dances became competitive occasions with one section of a village or another village competing with another group for prizes.

Figure 19. Men from Mawatta dressed for ceremonial ‘ship’ dance wearing dori headdresses made from woven cane and decorated with white reef heron feathers (VKK 248: 355)
Figure 20. Man at Mawatta dressed for dance as warrior with cassowary feather headdress, chest ornament, arm bracer and gabagaba (fighting club) made with wooden head (VKK 248: 359)
Figure 21. Dance ‘machine’ in the shape of a crocodile. These objects were held in the hand of the dancer and moved with the music and singing. Dance machines form part of contemporary Torres Strait Islander cultural dance (VKK 248: 512)

Figure 22. Namai, playing a fine old style drum (warupa) decorated with a shark emblem (baizam) and cassowary feathers. This drum was known as ‘Kowio’ from the name of a mountain [Mt Yule] near Port Moresby where Namai had lived. Landtman stated that the drum was remodeled from a Buji buruburu. However, from the shape and style it is more likely that it was remodeled out of a large Morehead River drum (VKK 248: 324; Landtman 1927: facing 44 and 47)
The most important musical instrument of the Kiwai was the wooden hourglass-shaped drum. This remains the major accompaniment to dances and songs in the wide Torres Strait and Fly estuary region and is even used to accompany hymns in church. There are two types of drums: the older more finely carved and decorated warupa and the more modern often over-painted buruburu. Landtman’s original comment (1927: 44) was:

New drums are made at Mawatta like the Budji buruburu in shape, but provided with different decoration. It is also common practice at Mawatta to remodel imported Budji drums slightly by obliterating the original ornamentation and making the woodwork thinner by scraping them outside and inside (thereby improving the sound), then incising fresh ornamentation.

He was generally correct except that the drums originated further west of Boigu in the Morehead River region. This activity is still practiced and Papuan drums are still traded into the Torres Strait Islands were they are often again redecorated with bright paint.

Figure 23: Man at Mawatta burning the centre of a large drum (VKK 248: 323). One end, from the root end of the tree, is then covered with a tympanum made from lizard skin. The other end, from towards the branches of the tree, is left open. Thus the sound always comes from the ‘top’ of the drum. On the ground is a large Melo sp shell in use as a fire container.
Special ceremonies

Mawatta was an ideal place for Landtman to observe the still thriving ceremonial life of the coastal Kiwai. Spiritual beliefs and cult activities were recorded in some detail by Landtman no doubt at the specific request of Haddon. The goal of much of this data was to record the evolution of cultural forms, patterns of diffusion and migration across the ethnographic region (Knauft 1993: 31). While the Kiwai of the Fly estuary still practiced the Mogeru ritual, or what Landtman called the ‘life giving ceremony’ (Landtman 1927: 350–67), those on the coast celebrated the Horiomu, or more correctly, the Taera ceremony held before the onset of the southeast winds around April or May (Landtman 1927: 327–49, Knauft 1993: 195–201).

![Image of a ceremony](image)

**Figure 24. Men dressed as Oromo-rubi oboro in the Horiomu or Taera ceremony (VKK 248: 388)**

The Taera, called by the missionaries ‘The Great Pantomine Ceremony’ was a celebration of the deaths that had occurred during the previous year and involved all the village men. Landtman considered it to be a ritual that aided in the access of marine hunting for turtle and dugong and as such had been borrowed from the Hiamo-Hiamo people of Daru and had spread along the southwest coast as far as Saibai and Boigu Islands in the Torres Strait and to Yam
island and the western islands of the Torres Strait (Landtman 1927: 329–30). The *Horiomu* was in fact the name of the ceremonial ground near the beach that was screened off with bamboo and coconut leaf partitions for performers.

The ritual pantomime consisted of a long dance and performance cycle held at dusk over a number of days. Men dressed as a series of spirit figures and either wore simple masks of bast and leaves or complex ritual masks in the shape of fish and crocodiles made from turtle shell. These were worn over the head and required great physical effort by the dancer. Groups of men, dressed as dead warriors, the *Oromo-rubi oboro* [river-people-spirits], had an important place in the ritual (Landtman 1927: 338, 339, 342) It was believed that the dead spirits (*oboro*) can travel to Adiri, the land of the dead, but are able to return at certain times. Most likely Landtman had these men dress in ceremonial costumes for his photographs. Other collectors have also documented aspects of the *Horiomu*, though generally without any real understanding of the role, importance or the context of exchange of ceremonies and rituals across this vast region. In 1907 Charles Hedley and Alan McCulloch from the Australian Museum in Sydney photographed a Murray Island (Mer) man wearing *Horiomu* mask. They also purchased it for the museum (AM archives photograph no.vv2841 and Catalogue no. 176, AM E.17339; see Florek 2005: 39 and 60). McCulloch made a sketch of this mask that he called a ‘crocodile-kingfisher’ mask. Hedley incorrectly noted that the ceremony was part of rituals promoting the fertility of the ‘wangi palm tree’ [wongai plum] (Florek: 2005: 60). However, this is probably the only complete extant *Horiomu* mask in any museum collection in Australia.

Figure 25. Mask in shape of human face photographed at Mawatta (VKK 248: 511)
Canoes and sailing

The first description of the impact of European tradestore goods into the customary exchange system that ran from Cape York to the Manowetti coast of the Fly estuary was written by Edward Beardmore, a small trader and buyer of pearl-shell and bèche-de-mer who had lived at Mawatta in 1890:

Canoes are made at Kiwai and Paramoa [Parama] (Bampton Island) but not, I am assured, up the Maikusa [Mai Kussa] (Baxter River), where the people [Tugeri] are cannibals and deadly enemies to all the others this side of their country. Payments are made to suit the purchaser, sometimes in advance, but usually by three installments of shell ornaments (or in recent times of trade, such as tobacco, tomahawks, and calico). The unadorned canoes, with but a single flimsy outrigger, are transferred from one village to another until the destination is reached; each party receiving the canoe being responsible for the payment by the next. The builders, or rather diggers-out, usually deliver at Mowat [Mawatta], from thence the canoe travels to Saibai, then to Mabruag [Mabuiag] and from there to Badu, Moa [Mua], and ultimately say to Muralug [Muralag] or Nagir [Nagi]. In the case of evasion of payment a row ensues between the immediate parties and the delinquent is injured invisibly [by sorcery] in some way at the instigation of the sufferer. The wooden harpoon used in killing dugong and turtle is got and worked into shape about Mabruag [Mabuiag], Moa [Mua] and Badu and sent in the same manner as canoes to New Guinea, via Saibai (Beardmore 1890: 464–65).

The lines of exchange for canoes were also identified by James Chalmers during his work at Kiwai Island:

They [the Kiwai] have canoes (pe) with one outrigger. These canoes are chiefly got from Dibiri, on the mainland, near the mouth of the [Bamu] estuary, and on its eastern side [the village of Maipani]. A few of the smaller ones are made by themselves. The large canoes obtained form Dibiri are traded to Parama, Tureture, Kadawa and Mawata [Mawatta]; and they trade them to Saibai, Daun, Boigu, Mabuiag, Badu, Moa [Mua], Prince of Wales [Muralag], Waraber [Warraber], Damut [Dhamudh], Masig, Stephens Is [Ugar], Darnley [Erub], and Murray [Mer]. In all of these places, the single gives place to a double outrigger, with a platform in the centre, and a large amount of ornamentation fore and aft; these canoes are used for dugong fishing, and for going [on] long journeys (Chalmers 1903: 117).
Perhaps the most accurate and detailed report on the trading expeditions of the Kiwai was written by A. H. Jiear in 1904 (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1904/05: Appendix S: 69–71). Again, this was a public document that would have been readily available to Landtman on Daru.

![Image of a group of Mawatta villagers posed on a motomoto, a double outrigger canoe with a half-platform decking](VKK 248: 439)

**Figure 26. Group of Mawatta villagers posed on a motomoto, a double outrigger canoe with a half-platform decking (VKK 248: 439)**

Jiear noted that the ‘most important form of native trading in this [Western] Division is that of buying and selling canoes’. He noted that the cash economy had made a significant impact into the barter economy with the Kiwai Islanders no longer interested in bows and arrows and shells and the bushmen having to buy their fish with cash rather than vegetables. However, the need for canoes was still strong. Katatai, Mawatta, Parama and Tureture villagers sent parties to Kiwai Island especially to Auti, Iasa and Sumai villages to buy canoes.

The price at that time still was measured in arm-shells (*mabuo*) but also European clothes, tools and tobacco were included as part of the payment. Jiear correctly noted that despite the impact of the European cash economy the demand for arm-shells and breast ornaments (*bidibidi*) had not decreased and that ‘the wealth and importance of a family is gauged largely by the number of arm shells the members of it possess’. He reported that the ordinary sized arm-shell could be valued at £2: a large arm-shell at £4. At that time, a skilled Torres Strait
Islander on the pearling boats in the Torres Strait would have been fortunate to
receive £2 per month but Papuans were only being paid £1 per month (Schug

From Kiwai Island, expeditions were made by canoe buying parties to the villages
of Balamula, Domori at the mouth of the Fly and those along the Manowetti
bank of the estuary. These expeditions could take between 14 and 24 days at all
times of the year but the most usual time was during the northwest monsoon
(the rainy season). At this time of the year the weather would be calm and the
southeasterly trade winds would have dropped making travel safer. Following
the rains the river would have been in flood and therefore the canoes would have
been easier to manoeuvre down the narrow channels and creeks and into the
estuary. Importantly most gardening and fishing would have been restricted at
that time and men would have been able to devote time to long-distance sailing
expeditions. From the villages along the Manowetti bank canoe buyers made
the more dangerous trips into the lower Bamu River where villagers would have
prepared canoe hulls for sale. Landtman, rather more concisely, wrote (1927:
213–14):
Since olden times an extensive trade has been carried on between different parts of the Kiwai region, as well as between these and the islands of Torres Straits. Different districts yield rather different kinds of produce, and, in addition, a certain distribution of labour exists as regards the articles manufactured by different tribes. The bushmen of the interior supply feathers of birds of paradise, cassowaries, parrots, etc, objects made of cassowary bones, bows, arrows, garden produce, *gamoda* [Piper methysticum: kava]; the Kiwai islanders [supply]: canoes, sago, garden produce, bows, arrows, mats, belts, women’s grass petticoats, feathers; the Mawatta people [supply]: coconuts, certain shells, fish, dugong and turtle meat, etc; the Torres Strait islanders [supply]: stone axes, stone clubs, harpoon-shafts, all kinds of shell, dugong and turtle products, etc. The most important articles of barter are the canoes.

In fact, until recent times, the trade in canoes continued to be a significant part of the traditional economic system in the Fly estuary and southwest coast (Lawrence 1994).

**Figure 28.** The *motomoto*, Mauwa, being prepared for sail at the mouth of the Binaturi River (VKK 248: 431). At that time canoes were only fitted with half-platforms and small standing areas on the bow and stern. Later on the large ocean going canoes were fitted with full platforms and the inside of the canoe was used for storage and equipment.
Figure 29. Photograph illustrating the method of steering using a movable steering board placed on the lee side of the canoe (VKK 248: 436)
Inland only a short distance from Mawatta is the large, well-ordered and prosperous village of Masingara with its church and school that serves the neighbouring communities of Mawatta, Irupi and Kunini. The Bine-speaking people of this lower Binaturi region live along the river and inland in the villages of Bose, Giringarede, Masingara, Irupi, Drageli and Kunini. The people of Masingara have large gardens surrounded by high pig fences to protect the crops from wallabies, wild pigs and the Rusa deer that have migrated from West Papua where they were introduced by the former Dutch colonialists as sport for hunting. The Masingara people also built these fences for the Kiwai inhabitants of Mawatta.

The people refer to themselves as the Masa’ingle and the old village site of Masingle is located near the graveyard of the present village and about one to two kilometres from the present village church. Landtman (1917: 77–81) visited the old site and recorded the origin story of the people:

The Masa’ingle were believed to be descended from the worms of a wallaby killed by the first woman on the earth, Ua-ogrere. She then taught these people how to make house and weapons and how to perform ceremonies. All garden foods, such as taro, yams and bananas, derive their origin from this woman, Ua-ogrere. When she died she returned to the sky. The people were all living together near Masingle but they fought among themselves and so separated into the various villages along the Binatruri River as far as Irupi, Tati, Jibara and Dirimo.

The Masa’ingle people were forced to move closer to the coast in former times to escape warfare inland. As they came near the coast they named the creeks and rivers around the Bullawe River and the larger Bineturi River [Kiwai for the Bine people’s river]. From there they made contact with people in the central island of the Torres Strait islands of Yam and Tudu. Legend tells of people first being washed out to sea on the rafts used to cross the inland rivers: one day Omebwale, a young Bine man, went in search of his father who had been washed out to sea. He took with him a pig and as he went past the reefs and islands he threw out parts of the animal: the leg became a turtle, the skin a stingray and the head a dugong. The sea spirits gave him a hunting harpoon and when he reached Tudu the people there gave him a wife. Omebwale returned to the mainland with his wife from Torres Strait and they had many children. From the union came the close connections between the Bine and the central islanders of the Torres Strait. This connection was broken by the migration of the Kiwai who settled on the coast and interrupted the direct contacts between the islander and inland dwelling peoples (Lawrence 1994: 306–07). Connections with Yam
Island in the Torres Strait are now strongest between the Kiwai-speaking people of Mabudawan, Tuteture and Mawatta villages. Many Kiwai have intermarried with Yam Islanders and settled there (Fuary 2000).

Other legends continue the Masa’ingle journeys: one man, Soriame, journeyed east in search of a new place to live and met Bidedu at Kuru [also mentioned in the origin stories of the coastal Kiwai] and so he traveled southwest and finally at the mouth of Kura Creek, at Siblemete, he rested. He brought his people to the coast. It was here they first met with the Kiwai-speaking people but fighting broke out between the two groups and so the Masa’ingle again moved inland. While inland they made contact with Gamea who had settled his people at Mawatta. Eventually the dispersed groups of Masa’ingle came together and formed a new community at the site of the old Masingle village (Lawrence 1994: 307–08).

In 1891, when Sir William Macgregor (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1890/91. Appendix M: 46) visited the area he reported that the Masingle village was located about five kilometres from Mawatta and had a population of about 400 to 500 people and that their houses were a compromise between the longhouses of the Kiwai and small family houses. The men’s houses were about 15 metres in length and decorated with trophies of hunting, mostly pig jaws.

Figure 30. Typical men’s house of the Masa’ingle people with pig’s jaw hunting trophies hanging from post (VKK 248: 33)
The small houses, often on the ground, were the homes of the women and children. About this time the government ordered the people to re-form near the site of the old graveyard and Hely in 1894 (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1893/94. Appendix E: 54–55) reported that the village of 400 people lived in 67 ordinary houses and four men’s houses. The people, he reported, mixed and intermarried with the coastal Kiwai. When Landtman visited in 1910, the Masingara village was one large community that had relocated near the Binaturi River. 

Figure 31. Communal living house for women and children in Masingara village (VKK 248: 36)

The current Masingara village, with all houses of the coastal single-family type, was established closer to Mawatta with access to the mouth of the Binaturi River about 1950.
Dirimu Plantation

The plantation of Dirimu [Dirimo] established by the Papuan Industries Ltd at the time of Landtman’s visit was built on Bine land and its location near the intersection of the Bullawe and the Binaturi Rivers was an important story site. However, European visitors saw the region only for its commercial possibilities. Sir William Macgregor in his report of a visit of inspection to the southwestern coast in 1895 noted that the land around Dirimu village was fertile and a large number of coconut palms grew there. He stated that the land was ideal as a plantation and that: ‘Along the Binaturi there is a belt of heavy forest timber, consisting of many different kinds of trees, and there are clumps of such wood at many places here and there amongst the undulating grassy ridges that give character to the district’ (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1895/96: 40). Added to the image of fertile grassy inland ridges was the discovery that the Binaturi could be navigated as far as inland as Jibu village. When living at Dirimu plantation Landtman made frequent use of the Binaturi as a highway to the coast at Mawatta.

Figure 32. The Papuan Industries’ manager’s house at Dirimu. Landtman shared this house with the resident manager, G. H. Murray. Photo shows cookhouse at back and bathroom on verandah corner (VKK 248: 534)
A story told to the Rev William Macfarlane (1928–29) and reprinted by Haddon (1935, I: 81–83) is similar to the story of Omebwale. At the site of the Dirimu plantation, in former times, many wild pigs roamed in the bush. One in particular was noted for its size and was feared for it ate people at the time. Amubalee, a man in that area, had a pregnant wife but one day when hunting his canoe was washed out to sea and it took him to Tudu [Warrior Island]. He was taken in by people there who wondered where he had come from for they did not know of Daudai. In the meantime, his wife had given birth to a son named Ui-balee. The boy grew and became a good hunter and eventually became so skilled that he killed the pig that threatened the people. The mother took the bristles of the pig and threw them around on the ground and the dead people were born again. The boy went in search of his father and he too travelled to Tudu. The father and boy were reunited and Ui-balee returned to the mainland to tell his mother. This original journey was the commencement of the bonds between the people of Tudu and the Bine.

Figure 33. Communal family house in Dirimu village (VKK 248: 39)
Figure 34. Boys with bows and arrows at Dirimu village (VKK: 248: 173)
Dudi

Koabu

Coastal Kiwai language is spoken by the communities of Sui and Daware near Parama Island, and at Severimabu, Koabu, Madame and Wederehiamo. Wederehiamo is the last Kiwai-speaking village on the Dudu, or western, bank of the Fly estuary. Koabu people originally came from Mugu near Teapopo on the Manowetti side of the estuary and the Wederehiamo people came from Sepe on Kiwai Island. When Sir William Macgregor came to the area in 1891 and 1892, the people of Koabu and Wederehiamo were still living as one community (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1888/89, 1889/90). But when Gunnar Landtman later visited Koabu he found a large village of people living in one long house and another located nearby at a community he called Ipidarimo [side or beside the men’s house]. It is possible that Ipidarimo was the first longhouse of the Wederehiamo village. As warfare had been common between the people of the Dudi coast and the Kiwai Islanders, villagers all along the Dudi coast lived together for protection and only after good relations had been established were they able to build new villages along clan lines. As the earliest villages on the Dudi side were at Tirio, near Balamula, Madame and Meai near Severimabu it is reasonable to speculate that the establishment of the more recent communities at Koabu and Wederehiamo would have occurred sometime between 1891 and 1910.

Figure 35. Communal longhouse at Koabu (VKK 248: 47)
Currently, Koabu is the largest of the coastal villages and is located close to Severimabu. The village is built on flat, dry land about two to three metres above the river at low tide and consists of about 30–40 dwellings. Unlike Severimabu, the village runs at right angles to the river. Koabu is a well organised community with a school located at the back of the village beyond a large grassy paddock with a church and hall dividing the village into two areas. Most of the other communities, such as Severimabu, Madame and Wederehiamo, are smaller with fewer facilities.

Tirio, Balamula and Madiri

The village of Madiri is located on the site of the former Papuan Industries plantation and comprises people from the three neighbouring villages of Tirio, Balamula and Madiri. They mostly speak the local Bugumo language (Lawrence 1994). These villages were visited by Sir William Macgregor in 1898 who on his inspection of the Fly River noted that Madiri was the location of the largest longhouse yet seen in the Western District (Macgregor 1888–89). It measured 159 metres long and was 30 metres wide. Later, when this longhouse deteriorated, the people of Tirio built two smaller communal houses nearby (Beaver 1920: 133). The Kiwai would not go past this point for fear of sorcery but continued to obtain canoe hulls from the Bugumo-speaking people. Madiri people have traded inland with the communities of Iamega at the headwaters of the Oriomo River and with the people of Sepe on Kiwai Island who had extensive relations with the people of the Manowetti coast. Their external relations are wide and a number of communities now live in the Madiri region. From the inland people on the Oriomo Plateau they obtained drums, bows and arrows and exchanged in return sago, bananas and coconuts. Tirio and Balamula [also known as Odogositia] villages at the apex of the Fly estuary have always been in an advantageous position for customary exchange with their neighbours. Their position as a major site of canoe building was noted by Wilfred Beaver (1920: 139) who wrote: ‘the Balamula [villagers] are among the best canoe-builders on the Fly. Pulling up the Baramura [Balamula] Creek I have seen scores of canoes of all sizes in the making. All are dugouts with the single outrigger, but without a platform’. Madiri plantation continued as a commercial copra and rubber venture until 1932. The Papuan Industries interest in Madiri was then sold to the Kwato mission but as the plantation was seen to be a suitable site for the development of a mission to the Gogodala it was gifted to the Unevangelised Fields Mission (UFM) the first ‘faith’ mission to operate in Papua. The introduction of the UFM in effect broke the sphere of influence agreement of the established churches (Wilde 2004; Dundon 2002). However, because the UFM was not an ‘industrial mission’ like the Kwato mission or Papuan Industries the operation of a plantation was seen to be irrelevant to their evangelical activities. Mission
activity was disrupted in 1932 when the UFM missionaries at Madiri, Albert Drysdale, Len Twyman and Theo Berger, were forced to move to the relative safety of the northern Manowetti banks to escape potential threats from Suki raiders. Twyman later successfully established a UFM mission at the Suki lakes and converted many of the people there (Lawrence 1995: 63).

Mission activity among the Gogodala on the Manowetti coast was active before the Second World War. After the war Australian and New Zealander evangelical missionaries were successful in converting most of the remaining Gogodala living along the Aramia River further inland. The UFM changed its name to Asia Pacific Christian Mission in the 1960s and later the Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea (ECPNG) was constituted but the ECPNG and the Asia Pacific Christian Mission are two parts to the one religious organisation (Crawford 1981: 40). After nearly 70 years in the field, the expatriate missionaries left the Balimo area in 2003 when the church to the Gogodala was fully localised (Wilde 2004: 34).

**Manowetti**

**Gaima, Wariobodoro, Maipani**

Landtman first visited Gaima, a Gogodala community on the Manowetti bank of the Fly estuary now known as Kaviapu, with Ben Butcher in 1910 (see Haddon 1916, Crawford 1981: 38, however Beaver 1914 confuses it with the second trip and states it was in 1911). Gaima was the first outlet to the Fly River for the Gogodala people and they maintained close trading relations with the Kiwai of Domori Island. The land is really owned by the Pagona Kiwai who inhabit Domori Island and who gave the Gogodala the village site on the river. The Kiwai of the Manowetti bank call the Fly River, Gimioturi, but the Gogodala name for the river is Kalama Wasewa. In fact, Landtman was the first person to photograph the Gogodala and his journey there was not long after the first government contact with the local people.

Gaima had been the location of a government police station established in 1903 and from there Butcher and Landtman walked to Balimo via Kubu. Contact with the Gogodala had only been made a few years before Landtman’s visit. The Resident Magistrate at that time, C. G. Murray, visited Gaima in 1900 and headed a long inland expedition visiting Mida, Bida, Warigi, Dogona and Barimu [Balimo] that discovered the large freshwater lagoon areas around the Aramia River (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1900/01: 82). The next RM to travel to the Aramia was A. H. Jiear who made the journey inland from Gaima in 1902 covering the route taken by Murray. With the settlement and growth
of Gaima it was decided to close the police post at Buji. The main reason was to stop the people from the middle Fly region raiding the coastal villages along the banks of the Fly estuary. The decision was not well received by the Boigu and Saibai Islanders who reported false sightings of ‘Tugeri’ raiders in the hope that the police post would be maintained at Buji.

Map 4. Gaima and the Gogodala coast (Lyons 1926)

Crawford (1981: 38) also notes that Butcher and Landtman were in a party of men that reached the Bamu River in 1910. However, it appears that Landtman lost most of his Gogodala artefact collection in the canoe accident near the tidal mouth. Even so many objects were later donated to the Cambridge Museum. Presumably these were the artefacts retrieved from Gaima in 1911. Wilfred Beaver who was based on Daru at the time of Landtman’s fieldwork there reported that: ‘Messrs Butcher and Landtmann [sic] made a hurried journey from Gaima to Barimo [Balimo], there embarked in a canoe, and after two days and nights’ paddling, reached the main Bamu river but unfortunately the trip was so hurried that no notes were taken and no traverse of the Aramia made’ (Beaver 1914a: 410). Beaver repeated this account in his book (Beaver 1920: 199) but further explained that the ‘party, however, had an exceedingly narrow
escape in their canoe from the [tidal] bore which comes up the [Aramia] river from the Bamu' at full moon and high tide. The tidal bores in the Aramia, Bamu and Fly Rivers remain exceeding dangerous and unpredictable.

Figure 36. Gaima man in mourning net (VKK 248: 409)
Considerable use of Landtman’s photographs and collection was made by Haddon in his paper on the Gogodala, whom he incorrectly referred to as the Kabiri or the Girara (Haddon 1916). Haddon’s terminology was corrected by the Lieutenant Governor no less (Haddon 1916; appendix). The word Kabiri [Kibili] is the actually the name of the large lagoon in front of Balimo and Dogona villages and Girara is the Gogodala word for ‘language’ (Lyons 1926). However the village of Gaima on the Fly was a logical place for Landtman and Butcher to begin an investigation of the inland wetlands and the well populated area along the Aramia River that gave access to the Bamu River.

The longhouses at Gaima, said to be between 60 feet (20 metres) and 130 feet (43 metres) in length and 50 feet to 60 feet (approximately 20 metres) in width, were built on the high ground of red clay between the river and the narrow band of rainforest behind. A. P. Lyons, who served for many years in the Western District, reported that longhouses of between 60 and 390 feet (20 to 130 metres) in length with a width of between 30 and 90 feet (10 to 30 metres) and a height of 30 feet (10 metres) were common in the region (Lyons 1926: 335). Longhouses of 100 metres in length were seen by J. H. P. Murray in 1916 at Balimo and Waligi villages (Crawford 1981) and Beaver (1914a), an accurate reporter, stated the longhouse of Dogona village was an astounding 500 feet (166 metres) in length,
117 feet (39 metres) in width and 70 feet high (23 metres). These longhouses were up to three storeys in height. Cooking was undertaken on the bottom, ground level, the men slept on the middle level near the fireplaces and the women and children slept in side stalls between the open centre and the sloping walls. Men could also sleep on the top level.

Figure 38. Side stall in Gogodala longhouse at Gaima (VKK 248: 125)

In his contribution to the Westermarck festschrift, Haddon (1912: 25) wrote: ‘At Gaima and north of the Delta [estuary] between the Fly and the Bamu Rivers, the eaves of the roof [of longhouses] practically touches the ground, and the walled gable-ends are recessed to form a deep verandah, the angle of the outer gable being filled up with transverse bamboos’. Haddon’s comments were largely taken from Landtman’s notes.

The Aramia floodplain is wide and flat and in the annual rainy season it becomes a series of interconnected freshwater wetlands: one of the finest in the world. They can only be traversed by the long canoes without outriggers. In former times these were highly decorated, carved and painted. In the dry season the grasslands are burnt off and the isolated village communities can then be reached on foot. The Gogodala have a rich carving tradition and their distinctive style is readily recognised (see Crawford 1981; Beaver 1914a; Lyons 1926). During his
patrols, Wilfred Beaver made a collection of artefacts which was later bought by Albert B. Lewis from the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago who was later to criticize the quality of Landtman’s photographs (Crawford 1981).

Figure 39. Children at Gogodala longhouse in Gaima. Most of the children exhibit signs of kwashiorkor, acute malnutrition caused by protein deficiency in infants no longer fed milk that leads to grossly distended stomachs (VKK 248: 251)

Maipani

The village of Maipani on Dibiri Island is the first contact point between the Island Kiwai and the Wabuda Kiwai and the Bamu Kiwai. While the people from Kiwai Island exchanged sago for canoe hulls with the people from Maipani they did not venture further along the Gulf coast from there. The area is considered ‘spiritually’ dangerous and even now the Bamu people are renowned for their magic and unusual customs such as offering their women to guests. A custom that so upset the missionary Ben Butcher. The first canoe, Burai, was said to be created by magic and young women with magic powers, the Busere-busere, made the canoe outriggers in the shape of the canoe. They taught the Bamu people how to paddle standing, first to make one long stroke, then to rest and to call out. The Bamu people still paddle like this. The route Burai took parallels the
movement of canoe hulls from Dibiri Island and the migrations of people down the Fly estuary. From Bamu they traveled to Domori, the island near Sumogi Island, to Lewada, Tirio, Balamula, Wederehiamo, Severimabu, Daware, Sui and Parama. At that time the longhouses were still at Kudin and Wasigena just above Toro Passage. The story tells how the *Busere-busere*, after paddling down the coast finally reached Saibai. There they built a longhouse at Kagaro point that went as far as Otamabu Reef. The canoe, Burai, sank in the passage between Kagaro and Mabudawan. It is believed to be still there, its place marked by rocks (Lawrence 1994: 317).

**Kiwai Island**

Kiwai Island, the largest island in the Fly Estuary, is 60 kilometres long but only four kilometres wide and is generally more fertile at the southeastern end. The northwesterly end, near Sepe, is mostly sago swamp whereas in the south, between Sagapadi village and Samare, the inland is higher and covered by some good vegetation and tall trees. Sago from Kiwai Island is prized for its colour and taste. The population was recorded by Macgregor in 1889 at 5000 people and by Chalmers at 4000 people in 1903 (Macgregor 1888–89; Chalmers 1903). The legendary home of the Kiwai, Barasaro, was inland from Iasa village on the higher, more fertile land. It was estimated by Beaver, writing between 1910 and 1913, that the Kiwai moved out of Barasaro about 120 years earlier. This would estimate it to about 1800 and this would agree with the movement of the Kiwai along the southwest coast about 50 to 70 years later. The first move was made by one group to the northeast coast of Kiwai Island, near Doropo, and then to Wiorubi or Wapa-Ura. The next group to move went to Iasa on the southwest coast. From Iasa people moved north to Sumai or Paara, meaning death, for the leader remarked it was ‘a good place to die in’ (Beaver 1920: 156). The people in Iasa again separated and moved south to Saguane and Samare [Samari]. The most obvious reasons for the migrations was population growth, the resulting land pressure, growing food insecurity and social conflict.

However, legend illustrating the creation of Kiwai Island starts earlier. Stories say that once there were no islands in the estuary but the people from the Dudi and the Manowetti banks used to throw their rubbish into the wide river. The rubbish collected and eventually a sandbank formed. A dead nipa palm trunk became fixed on the sand and a hawk landed on the palm tree. It was carrying a fish in its claws and as it ate the fish bits of the flesh dropped onto the trunk and the sand. These pieces started to decay: women grew from this waste. From one worm came the first man: Meuri [the man who killed Sido was also called Meuri]. The hawk brought more food and other seeds grew. One day some men from the Manowetti bank came looking for the body of a boy taken by a crocodile and they met Meuri. They returned to their village and came
back with more people. They built a village on the beach and the Kiwai people started from there. The sandbank still exists in the centre of a large swamp in the middle of Kiwai Island.

Landtman’s informant at Mawatta, Namai, told him a second version. One day a log floated from Manowetti and became stranded in a tree near the site of the present Kubira village. In the tree was a ferocious, brightly coloured lizard. On Dibiri Island [near the Bamu River], a woman with a small son was going to her gardens and she asked her older sister, who was making a basket, to look after the small baby. The baby crawled into the basket and the sister, thinking it was a dog, hit it with a stick. She accidentally killed the child. When the mother returned home she grieved for the child so much that her husband decided they would move away from the other family. They sailed for a long time on the river and eventually came near the tree with the lizard in it. They became frightened by the animal but in a dream the lizard came to them and said it would help them. The couple buried their son near the tree and planted food and crotons. They subsequently had many children. These children were the beginnings of the Kiwai people. More Dibiri people came looking for the couple and they too saw the lizard and were afraid but the man and women explained that it was their protector. The lizard is still the protector of the Kubira people (Landtman 1917: 64–67).

The stories establish some common facts: some of the Kiwai people originally came from further along the Gulf of Papua coast from the area near Dibiri Island and settled at Kubira. Dibiri was also the source for canoe hulls and the origin of the first canoe, Burai. Other people first settled in the inland part of the island, near Barasaro, where they lived in the middle of the large marshlands protected from other peoples. From there, once they had established their position and the population had grown were they able to move out and settle on the coast and migrate further south.

When the first people moved out from Barasaro they dispersed and settled in various places along the banks of Kiwai Island at Sepe, Iasa, Kubira, Doropo, Sumai (Paara) and U’Uwo. From Sepe they again moved to Sumai (Lawrence 1994; Landtman 1917: 68). The elder brother clan remained there but the younger brother clan moved to Auti. The elder brother and younger brother clan separation usually describes the results of a breakdown in harmony between on two sections of a village: without resorting to violence the divisions agree to separate and build new villages and longhouses. From Auti people again moved to a new village at Sepe. Thus the people of Sepe, Auti and Sumai are all related. However other stories state that after they moved out of Barasaro, the people crossed to Mibu Island and went as far south as the present village of Sui but good land was scarce there and so they move back up towards the site of the
present village of Severimabu. Sepe and Severimabu have one common origin and through this the Kiwai people of the Dudi coast and those of Kiwai Island are related.

**Auti and Sumai (Paara)**

In 1888 Sir William Macgregor on his tour of inspection recorded the presence of five large communal longhouses at Auti and stated that the Sumai area had a population of over 500 people (Macgregor 1888–89). By 1895 he could proudly state that Sumai was ‘one of the most advanced communities in the colony, and one of the most powerful’ (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1895/96: 44). In 1895 the Resident Magistrate Bingham Hely published a map of Kiwai Island which showed it divided into ‘tribal areas’ (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1895/96).

The map remains generally accurate despite nearly a century of migrations, village separations and amalgamations and the impact of missions and the government. The area called Auti is now the land of Sepe village, which originated from an amalgamation of the old Auti and Sumai villages. However, because of coastal erosion at Wamimuba [Wami Point] a new village has recently been formed as a break-away from Sepe and this has been re-established back at the old Auti site. The area called Doropodai is now the land of Doropo village formed from a combination of people from U’Uwo [Doropo] and Kubira villages. Wiorubi [sand beach people] is now the land of the Sagapadi village, a recent amalgamation of the Wapa’ura [Hely’s Wapaura villages] and Sagasia villages that Hely recorded as the Doropotamurubi [branch of the Doropo people] and the Dameratamurubi [branch of the Damera people] communities. Wiorubi is an old name for the Wapa’ura communities and the area formerly had a population of 700 to 800 people (Macgregor 1888–89). The area marked Iasa remains the land of the present Iasa village. Prior to Landtman’s visit, Macgregor had recorded the presence of six communal longhouses at this location that measured between 50 and 70 metres in length. Iasa then had a population of 500 people (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1889/90: 36–43; Macgregor 1888–89) and in 1895 Macgregor reported that the people of Iasa traded sago as far south as Saibai Island in the Torres Strait and to Tureture village and even to the eastern Torres Strait islands of Murray (Mer) and Darnley (Erub) (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1895/96: 45).
Map 5. Map of Kiwai Island prepared by Bingham Hely 1895 (Annual reports on British New Guinea 1895/96; Paul Brugman ANU 2009)
Gunnar Landtman in Papua: 1910 to 1912

Figure 40. Group of longhouses at Auti (VKK 248: 81)
Figure 41. Interior of longhouse at Auti. Landtman was particularly pleased with the light effect that he achieved in the photographs of the dark and gloomy longhouses (VKK 248: 86)
Figure 42. Woman from Sumai demonstrating the pounding of sago (VKK 248: 295). Sago is still made in exactly this method today.
Figure 43. Sago strainer made from the outer bark of the sago palm (VKK 248: 296)
Figure 44. Wooden bridge at Sumai crossing the canoe landing (VKK 248: 461). This bridge was especially noted as ‘beautiful’ by the Administrator, Sir William Macgregor in 1889 (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1889/90: 37)
Figure 45. Woman from Sumai preparing tobacco pipe (VKK 248: 310)
Figure 46. Men dancing ‘Taibobo’ dance at Sumai (VKK 248: 369). The drummer is playing a hollow flour tin commonly called a ‘Tinny’. These dances were learned from South Sea [Pacific] Islander crews of pearling and bêche-de-mer boats in the Torres Strait and from the Samoan missionary teachers. These dances are still performed today.

Figure 47. Boy paddling a single outrigger canoe (tataku) used in coastal creeks and rivers (VKK 248: 449). The bundles are old style tiro mats formerly used as sails but now used as sleeping rolls.
Figure 48. Longhouse at Iasa: considered the principal coastal village of the Kiwai Islanders (VKK 248: 59)

Figure 49. Front of longhouse at Iasa (VKK 248: 64)
Figure 50. Interior of longhouse at Iasa (VKK 248: 68). The box on the floor is a ‘truck’ or trade box of a returned indentured labourer

Figure 51. Framework of a new longhouse at Iasa (VKK 248: 77)
According to legend, after the people moved out of Barasaro they settled at Iasa and from there some separated and went to Samare. Samare [Samari on Hely’s map] then divided into the Ipsia, Agobaro and Oromosapua villages all of which were related. Samare was also related to Iasa. From Samare people moved to Saguane and Ipsia. Saguane formerly had a population of about 250 but is now considered an abandoned village. The mission station at Saguane was located on a couple of acres near the village that contained two communal long houses and a number of smaller huts (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1895/96: 45). William Macgregor wrote bitterly that the sole missionary effort at Iasa village was a case of the LMS ‘holding the fort with a single sentry’ (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1889/90: 43; Wetherell 1996: 7). Early mission approaches were unsuccessful and when Chalmers was appointed to revive the flagging effort he based himself at Saguane in 1899 and 1900. Chalmers wrote that the longest communal house on Kiwai Island measured 692 feet (230 metres) with family stalls inside of 12 feet (4 metres) by 8 feet (3 metres). Communal feasting and dancing took place in the wide central isle of the longhouse. Chalmers wrote that the Kiwai were fine gardeners who built channels to drain the swamps and planted gardens of taro, yams, sweet potatoes, bananas, sugarcane, breadfruit and mangos (Chalmers 1903). Ipsia, which formerly had a large population
estimated at 1000 people and a small LMS post, is now a poor village of only about 15 houses built along the beach. However in the 1890s the Ipisia region contained the two closely related villages of Gamobolo and Agabara with over ten communal longhouses (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1889/90: 40). Landtman, in his travels from west to east, carefully documented the final stages in the construction of longhouses in the Fly estuary. With consolidation of colonial rule and missionary activity after the First World War, longhouses were considered unhygienic. Villagers were encouraged to build small coastal-style houses accommodating one or two families near latrines and to keep the village wells clean and tidy. The missions established churches, schools and medical aid posts near major villages with access to waterways.

Figure 53. Longhouse at Ipisia with decorated palm fronds and leaflets (VKK 248: 89)
Figure 54. Men in European clothing and waistcloths (rami) from Ipisia village on steps of longhouse (VKK 248: 216)

Figure 55. The longhouse at Oromosapua measured by Landtman at 154 metres (VKK 248: 107)
Figure 56. Man from Wapa’Ura in mourning costume (VKK 248: 404)