

Appendix: Statement by Rakival people

Rakival Mission, Watom Island Meeting (1 March 2020)

1. The meeting involved Watom Local-Level Government (LLG) President, Enos Pulumen; Rakival Ward Member, Mr Pentecost Lome; about 35 members of the St. Michael Parish Catholic Mission, Rakival and Kepas Paon (facilitator/recorder);
2. Ward Councilor Lome introduced discussion and explained the request by Kepas Paon to seek further information on their knowledge and feelings about the Lapita findings at Rakival. He further acknowledged from his own understanding the work of Father Otto Meyer and other archaeologists who carried out studies at Rakival. Although not actually seeing Fr. Meyer in person, the link of the Lapita Culture to Watom Island may have never been known without his efforts. Lome had in his possession a copy of a volume of “New Zealand Journal of Archaeology” Volume 20, 1998, which was left by the Otago NZ University team who carried out studies at Rakival in the 2000s, which he encouraged his people to read and familiarize about the work on Lapita culture;
3. Watom Is. Local-Level Government President, Enos Pulumen urged the people to learn more of the findings and understand its value to the heritage of Watom Island. Development initiatives on the island must incorporate this heritage to ensure that it is protected for future generations. Apart from Lapita, Rakival is strategically located to host proposed infrastructure that will benefit the whole island. Perhaps there will come a time when the writings of foreign archaeologists and museums will be a resource for educational material about Lapita culture by our own local writers;

4. Kepas Paon simply informed the meeting that the people behind the Lapita exhibition (thru Professor Mathew Spriggs) at Melbourne Museum want to understand the people's feelings about the discovery of Lapita culture on the island and whether they remember any stories about Fr. Otto Meyer. This information would be important to make the exhibition more locality authentic. Kepas explained the important role of Fr. Meyer and his interest in discovering and preserving the Lapita find at Rakival for future generations. He hoped that they would later be available for photographs for the exhibition;
5. All who spoke remember the archaeological excavations that took place well after Fr. Otto Meyer's death. They remember his residence which was in a dilapidated state until its removal. A memorial to the late missionary was installed and during relocation when the new church was built the monument was lost. The new church is actually built over the old church where Fr. Otto Meyer served;
6. The Rakival Council Member and his predecessor both raised support to protect the excavation pits and its contents to remain the property of Rakival, and to be preserved for those museums that provide a house for Lapita safe keeping;
7. The people value the work that Fr. Otto Meyer invested into the Lapita discovery and for recognizing its historical value that the people themselves would have missed. The people would love to have a memorial built to this innovative missionary for advanced knowledge of the subject matter, and that none of their forefathers would have insight into;
8. Such a monument should include a small museum on the mission where Otto Meyer served that will foster further study if necessary into the extent of Lapita culture on the island and its related connections in the world. Their efforts to do this in the past have been in vain despite promised help from government authorities. The current local government executive is exploring ways to support the people's wishes according to the representatives present;
9. They are also inquisitive as to how Lapita culture relates to them as a people on Watom Island, who as a community speak a unique dialect of the Tolai language from other Watom Island villages. It is of course changing now due to inter-community influences;
10. They asked 'How much of our past is still yet to be revealed after this initial discovery?'

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Figure A.1. Some of St Michael's Church, Rakival, parishioners posing in front of the church where Fr Otto Meyer served as a missionary. This building is built over the old concrete slab of Fr Otto Meyer's church.

Source: Photo by Kepas Paon.

We the people of St. Michael Parish, Rakival (referred to in Lapita writings as Reber-Rakival) and the people of Watom Island are the proud host of the Lapita find on our land.

We acknowledge the contribution of Father Otto Meyer, who alone understood the significance of the findings and whom without his efforts the Lapita link to our island would have never been made known to the world.

We are also intrigued to learn more about what remains unrevealed of our island that may add value to the search of knowledge to serve our future generations and humanity generally in understanding our past. More effort on our part with support from our stakeholders is needed to expose more information about Lapita culture to the new and future generations so that they may value it more than what their past generation may have not appreciated or known of the past.

We look forward to future collaboration with Melbourne Museum, Papua New Guinea Museum, and other hosts of evidence of Lapita Culture in revealing more knowledge about it.



Figure A.2. Watom Island Local Council President Mr Enos ToPulumen (in blue cap) and Rakival Ward Councillor Mr Penticost ToLome (in white shirt), showing the *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology* Volume 20, 1998, along with some interested parishioners.

Source: Photo by Kepas Paon.



Figure A.3. The beachfront of St Michael's Church, Rakival, Watom Island. Two excavation sites are just a few feet from the church.

Source: Photo by Kepas Paon.



Figure A.4. Parishioners laPhilomena Lome, laRegina Pidik, laResina Ludwik and laSamuelsia Okor (left to right) outside on the church lawn.

Source: Photo by Kepas Paon.



Figure A.5. Parishioners laTheresia Talil, laDorothy Bosko, laPhilomena Lome and laKavivil Kulap (left to right) outside on the church lawn.

Source: Photo by Kepas Paon.



Figure A.6. Parishioners, led by Sammy To Iguna, standing over one of the excavation sites a few feet from the church building.

Source: Photo by Kepas Paon.

The editors would like to express their thanks to Kepas Paon for facilitating the community meeting at Rakival and for his interest and support of the Uncovering Pacific Pasts project.

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