

# The Catholic Church and Economic Development in Papua

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## Introduction

### 1. The Sources

The pre-history of the Catholic presence in the islands of Melanesia is rather well known from the voluminous research of Dr Ralph Wiltgen (1981), which covers the period up to 1850, and the earlier German work of Dr Reiner Jaspers (1972), which reaches up to 1855. However, the uninterrupted presence of the Catholic church in these island dates back only 100 years. The first half was treated in 1932-1935 by a collection of essays, *Pioniere der Sudsee*, edited by the German, Fr Joseph Hueskes, and concerned with the Rabaul Mission, and, further, by the French classic of Fr Andre Dupeyrat, *Papouasie: Histoire de la Mission 1885-1935*, dealing with the Yule Island mission. For the Marist Fathers, Hugh Laracy produced, in 1976, a slim volume on *Marists and Melanesians*, which treats the whole of the Solomon Islands archipelago. On the side of the Divine Word Fathers, there are partial studies by the Fathers Patrick Murphy, John Tschauer, Jaokob Noss, and, again, Ralph Wiltgen. These general works can be supplemented, especially for the Rabaul Mission, 1880-1900, by *Papers prepared for the visit of Pope John Paul II to Papua New Guinea* (1984), and by ten, or so, biographies, or by the collected letters of Bishops H. Verjus and A. de Boismenu, of Fathers Bourjade, Chabot, Genoechi MSC, Mazzuconi PIME, Morschheuser, Ross, and Schaefer SVD, and of Sisters Marie-Therese Noblet, and S. Bazin de Jessey AD. The latest Catholic Mission histories are by Fr Georges Delbos, *Cent ans chez les Papous* (1984), and by Ms Mary Taylor Huber, *The Bishops' Progress* (1988). Delbos' work is mainly on Papua, and has been translated into English as *The Mustard Seed: From A French Mission to a Papuan Church*; it also provides a rather full bibliography. To see the general context of Christianity in the Pacific, two overviews are available: Charles Forman's *Island Churches in the South Pacific*, and John Garrett's *To Live Among the Stars*, both published in 1982.

### 2. Coordinates in Catholic Mission History

It is not possible to treat past church life in Papua New Guinea as a unit, because the nation is still growing towards a greater cohesion and unity. For that reason, it is advisable to follow up the past decades, starting from the four

historical centres, from which Catholicism spread, and, in which it developed, more or less, its own life till after World War II. Actually, a 1913 plan to begin a fifth centre in the Wewak area, to be staffed by Picpus fathers, did not get off the ground, because of World War I, while the 1923-1931 establishment of a Central New Guinea circumscription did not change the fact that the whole of North-East New Guinea remained entrusted to the Divine Word Society. Any historical treatment of the Catholic church in Papua New Guinea has, therefore, to start from a fourfold beginning:

- In the north, there is New Britain, where the first MSC Fathers landed in 1882;
- In the South, there is Yule Island, or Papua, begun in 1885;
- In the west, there is North-east New Guinea, evangelised by the SVD Fathers since 1896, starting from Tumbleo Island; and
- In the east, we find the SM or Marist Fathers, who resumed their task in 1898, after having abandoned the area in 1851, because of heavy losses in personnel.

Their first attempt to take a foothold in Melanesia was followed by the short-lived initiative of the Milan Fathers (PIME Society), on Woodlark and Rooke Islands, which the Italians also abandoned after three years, because of hardships and deaths. Revd Giovanni Mazzucconi lost his life near Woodlark in 1855.

It has been said that, during uninterrupted decades, the work of evangelisation went on in an almost uneventful way, while a greater diversification and cross-fertilisation in the missionary enterprise came only after World War II, and, even more, after the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1969. These changes went together with the breaking up of the old boundaries, and the influx of new men, with new ideas, who came to do their part in the evangelisation of the country. Monsignor Romolo Carboni, head of the Apostolic Delegation in Sydney, between the years 1953 and 1960, played an important part in “dividing, redividing, and subdividing” the ecclesiastical map of Papua New Guinea, and in welcoming newcomers to staff his creations. He alone erected, during his term of office, not less than seven new prefectures, or vicariates.

The first to be made independent were the Australian MSC Fathers, some of whom had worked together with the Yule Island Fathers, and who

became, in 1946, the only ones responsible for Samarai, in the Milne Bay district. Six years later, divisions began in the SVD missions. In 1952, the westernmost part of the country, around the third historical centre of Aitape, opposite Tumleo Island, became entrusted to the Australian Franciscan Friars (OFM), who, in turn, in 1963, left the border area with Indonesia to the Australian Passionists (CP). In 1957, the diocese of Rabaul, which, up to then, had staffed New Ireland and Manus, shared the latter two districts with the American MSC Fathers. The following years, more divisions occurred in Papua, with, in 1958, the establishment of the Mendi Prefecture, give into the American Capuchin Order (OFM Cap), and, in 1959, the transfer of the southern border area to the Canadian de Montfort Fathers (SMM). In that year, too, the old mission of Yule became a separate diocese, leaving its previous name, Port Moresby, to the new headquarters in the capital, now officially staffed by the Australian MSC Fathers. During the next year, three parts were separated from the diocese of Alexishafen: Mount Hagen and Goroka, both still cared for by the Divine Word Society, and Lae, taken into the care of the Dutch Marianhill Fathers (MHM). After ten more years, another division of Yule Island (now called the Diocese of Bereina) occurred, thus creating the new see of Kerema (1976). In 1966, the Catholic hierarchy was established, and the erstwhile “commission” given to religious societies ended. Local bishops became directly responsible for staffing their dioceses. In this context, diocesan priests of the Melbourne Archdiocese entered the scene at Kerema.

The latest new dioceses were made only in 1982, when Kundiawa was split off from Goroka, and Wabag from Mount Hagen, and these four dioceses, together with Mendi (which, up to then, came under Port Moresby), formed the new ecclesiastical province of Mount Hagen.

This complicated history explains, somehow, the different physiognomy of the various dioceses. Some have long-established churches, while others are of recent origin; some are internationally staffed – especially in the places originally entrusted to the Oceanic province of the Marists, and to the Society of the Divine Word, while others had a more-homogeneous staff, that is, of one particular country, or language, as was the rule for the MSC-staffed dioceses of the past, and for most of the new dioceses erected after World War II. However, after 1966, the principle of “one diocese – one congregation” had been abandoned, and one can see, nowadays, especially in Port Moresby, that all willing hands are welcomed to engage in apostolic works.

The natural watersheds of the last 100 years of mission history in the Pacific area are the world wars, both of which brought the missionary movement to a standstill. With these natural divisions, the history of the mission can be separated into three or four periods:

- The time of foundation till World War I;
- The expansion, in width and depth, between the two great wars; and
- The consolidation and structuring after the Second World War.

Since 1966, with the establishment of the Catholic hierarchy, the church has entered into yet another phase. For some time already, overseas recruitment has practically stopped, and increasing numbers of expatriate missionaries are going into retirement. A growing number of Papua New Guineans is getting ready to take over the challenges of the past. In fact, with Bishops Louis Vangeke and Benedict To Varpin in Bereina, Herman To Paivu and Peter Kurongku in Port Moresby, Gregory Singkai in Bougainville, and George To Bata as Auxiliary in Rabaul, some of the top positions have passed, already, into the hands of nationals, who, in other areas of church life, too, have begun to assert themselves.

In the following pages, we will limit ourselves to the ecclesiastical circumscription of the old British New Guinea (1899), later called Papua (1922), Port Moresby (1946), or Yule Island (1959), and presently named after the episcopal see of Bereina (1966).

All through this century of church life, the mission had pursued a double objective, to care for the people's souls and bodies, to evangelise, and to develop, or in the words of Bishop Navarre to Governor John Douglas, "to civilise, as well as to convert". The methods, however, and the emphasis, were not always the same, and we are lucky that successive leaders took care to spell out their guidelines, in numerous circulars and pastoral letters. We are fortunate, too, that the mission establishments used to keep track of events, through their station diaries. In more recent years, with the introduction of radio contact, the transfer of many responsibilities to non-mission agencies, and with the disappearance of parish chronicles, the written sources have become less traceable, but this might not affect, too negatively, our present point of investigation.

## **II. Priorities in Mission Policies in Papua**

### **1. The Foundation Period: Navarre and Verjus**

The initial period of Catholic evangelisation is marked by the figures of Andre Navarre and Henri Verjus, who have appeared, to some, as the modern Moses and Joshua, to guide the first MSC to this country.

Andre Navarre was ordained a priest in 1872, and worked in a parish for five years before joining the missionary society of Issoudun. He was responsible for the fact that the first team, after 13 months' travelling, finally set foot on Matupit Island, near Rabaul. He was a true leader, and a man of faith, showing determination to achieve the task set before him. This made him sometimes insensitive to the plight of others, but not always. He complained once, in Rome, that part of the subsidies granted for the mission was withheld to defray the expenses incurred during his illness. He knew that the misery and needs of his troops were much greater than his own. By giving his whole strength to the missionary cause, he shattered his health, and though bishop since 1887, he was forced to spend most of his time on Thursday Island, then part of his vast diocese, but a place away from the action on Yule, and on the mainland of Papua. This made him sometimes supercilious, and suspicious, in dealing with others. But he kept going, with or without the necessary assistance. On December 21, 1907, he gave the reins into the hands of Bishop de Boismenu, who had been his auxiliary for the previous eight years.

Henri Verjus was 24 years younger than Bishop Navarre, and arrived in the missions less than three years after him. The leader granted this modern Joshua the privilege of being first to enter Papua, which, for Verjus, was the "promised land". The Sacred Heart Society thus fulfilled, to the letter, the 1881 instructions, given by Rome, to enter new Guinea, from the beach head of Thursday Island, an ideal staging point along the way of the international sea routes between Europe and Australia. Already, during his secondary studies, Verjus had longed to become a saint, and a martyr, and the exemplary lives of the Curé d'Ars, who died in 1859, and that of the first martyr of Oceania, Peter Chanel, killed in 1841, positively inspired his high ideals. "To become a saint, or to die", was his favourite saying. A year after his ordination, he left for the missions, arriving at Yule Island on 1 July, 1885. He made the first explorations of the mainland among the Roro and Mekeo peoples, and was ordained a bishop at the age of 29. His initial appointment was for New Britain, but, because of the illness of Archbishop Navarre, the job was changed, to make him auxiliary bishop for British New Guinea. Three

years later, he died of exhaustion in Europe, where he had gone to restore his failing health. The secret of Verjus' missionary work lay in his vocation to be a victim soul. He wrote in his intimate diary (11 May, 1885): "Deep in my heart, I have the conviction that the first missionary to New Guinea must be crushed and destroyed, to assure the success of the mission. And, since I am good for nothing else, I really will be in my element." In due time, the text of Heb 9:22: "No blood shed, no remission of sins", pushed him ever further on his way of victim. He did not spare himself a bit, and when a village resisted grace, when catechumens were preparing for baptism, when a soul showed itself recalcitrant to God's call, he went to extremes "to supplement, in his flesh, the afflictions endured by Christ" (Col 1:24). For that reason, Verjus did not believe that either the Marists or Milan Fathers had failed; on the contrary, their sacrifice and martyr deaths were a proof of their success before God. In view of this goal, Verjus also founded "the Victims of the Sacred Heart of New Guinea", for whom he composed a manual. The common-sense man, Navarre, gave his approval to this enterprise, because he, too, believed in the ancient Christian adage that, "the blood of martyrs is the seed for Christians".

There is little doubt that Bishop Navarre believed that the method of apostolate used in European parishes would work equally well in New Guinea. He, therefore, would have to establish, firmly, some centres along the coast before reaching out to the mountains. The policy of the "spheres of influence" was partly responsible for the fact that, in due time, he did approve of an expansion into the Kuni and Fuyuge hills, as occurred with the foundation of Oba-Oba, (1900) and Popole (1905). Experience would also show that, in New Guinea, there were less pastors available than in Europe, and many more people to cater for. The essential material needs here were more demanding, and time consuming, while the hearers could not be expected to be as receptive as an already well-formed and age-old Christianity. Nevertheless, knowledge of the basic thrust of Navarre's guidelines for his missionaries, published in 1896, is necessary to understand the values and priorities of the MSC missionaries in Papua.

Nowadays, we are offended to hear people called "*mes chers sauvages*", as Navarre and Verjus did. We probably do not realise enough that, at that time, "savages" were the people who had been exalted by the French philosopher, J. J. Rousseau, for being naturally good, and still unspoiled, by the much taunted "education". The term has not the pejorative meaning attached to it later. This is also indicated by the attitudes and actions, called forth from those who worked here as missionaries. A first requirement is to respect the people, and to attempt to become one of them. Hence, the first

need, to learn the local language properly, and to be wary of interference with customs, social structures, and life-style in general. Navarre believed that, only through the vernacular, which revealed the people's souls, could true faith penetrate, and take roots. Such requirements led the fathers, of necessity, to specialise in linguistic and anthropological research, and not a few of them excelled in this, as can be seen in the printed results of their efforts. These range from prayer books, catechisms, and holy scripture, to articles in *Missions Catholiques*, and the *Annales d'Issoudun*, and in certain scientific journals (especially the studies of V. Egidi), as well as the composition of dictionaries and grammars for various local languages.

The mission certainly came with another culture, and it made a point of sifting carefully, to decide what, in the local customs, needed conversion, respecting, at the same time, such "stepping-stones" to the faith, as belief in spirits, and in the immortality of the soul. Again, it was imperative to find substitutes for what was deemed to be harmful in the local culture. To achieve this, the bishop encouraged the full use of local catechists. Bishop Navarre had tried already, in March, 1896, to have a catechist school opened in the vicinity of the Thursday Island headquarters, but he had to give up the venture in its second year because the governor, W. McGregor, would not agree to have Papuans trained outside their country. Navarre tried again between 1899 and 1902 at Mea-Era, but his second attempt, too, was not successful. Still, several Filipino men, recruited on Thursday Island, gave valuable service to the mission.

In Navarre's view, catechists were the go-between for the expatriate missionary and the local people. Their very presence helped, mightily, to "localise" the church, and to divest it of its foreign appearance. Catechists were also the men in the villages who guaranteed continuity of prayers and religious instruction. As a matter of fact, they had a definite role to play in the first mission schools. Besides the vernacular, they imparted the rudiments of English, the language of the civil administration, and, according to the bishop, the means to unify the country in the future.

## **2. The Period of Expansion: Bishop de Boismenu**

If, in some regards, the first generation of Sacred Heart Missionaries came to New Guinea to give their lives for the sake of the gospel, the generation under the next bishop, Alain de Boismenu, was instructed to look after themselves better, so that they could work efficiently in the vineyard of the Lord. Where Verjus told a candidate for the missions that "the only true missionaries were those who were prepared to sacrifice themselves for the

salvation of souls”, Alain de Boismenu wrote: “Tell those who desire to come that they must have an iron constitution. . . . It is a sad mistake to think that holiness is everything.” Alain de Boismenu was well entitled to say this, because he, nobleman by birth, had been told that the rough Papuan life was beyond him; that he would last, at the most, two years. Without a doubt, they said, he was heading for failure when, eventually, he left France. Things turned out quite differently. Arriving early 1898, not yet 28 years old, he became, in his second year, religious superior of the mission and a coadjutor, with right to succession to Archbishop Navarre. From 1907 till 1945, he headed the Apostolic Vicariate of British New Guinea or Papua. After that, he lived for eight more years in retirement at Kubuna. He died in 1953, at the age of 83. Even though de Boismenu did not intend to make a drastic departure from the ideals held till his time, the quotation, given above, indicates a different spirit. More than that, nobody doubted the new bishop was not only a “perfect gentleman”, but a saint as well, and that he was not less convinced than others of the saving power of suffering and pain. The agonies undergone by the French mystic, whom he guided in Papua, Mother Marie-Therese Noblet AD, were, for him, the surest sign that, every so often, the devil had been defeated, and that a rich harvest of souls had been won for Christ.

Bishop de Boismenu noted, from the start, that, although the mission staff had done a remarkable job in exploring the country, and founding many stations, now the time had come to improve evangelisation proper, and to give more attention to the spiritual and moral needs of the religious missionaries. As things were, “they have neither common life, nor a real superior, or provincial, or visitor, (even though), from every point of view, (they live) a more difficult life than their confreres in civilised countries”.

In the first part of this term of office, between 1900 and 1926, Bishop de Boismenu engaged, especially, in deepening the faith. Part of this was to claim, for the Catholic church in New Guinea, “its entire share of freedom (to preach and to teach), recognised in the whole commonwealth, no more, no less”. While combating the spheres-of-influence policy, the Bishop took also steps to improve practical relations with other denominations. As to the internal apostolate, he insisted that the catholic teaching had to be progressive, and should aim at transforming conduct. To Father Fastre, who at the time, had begun the evangelisation of some mountain areas, he writes: “Don’t fear that I might reproach you for being too slow!” What the Bishop wanted was that more time and effort should be spent assessing the catechumens’ dispositions before they were to receive baptism, in order to build up a solid Christianity. At the same time, the Bishop did not neglect his mission



personnel: he restructured his vicariate in districts, each having a main centre, where some type of community life could flower, and from which the missionaries could visit the surrounding villages. Finally, to deepen Christian life, he founded two local congregations, one, in 1918, for the Sisters, the “Ancelles” and “Handmaids of Our Lord”, and a male society, in 1920, the “Little Brothers of Our Lord”. His pastoral letter of 1919 also launched the “Apostolic Vocations”, which found its expression in opening the Minor Seminary of Yule (1920), and in sending other candidates overseas. Joseph Taurino from Pari village (died 1922), and a young Kuni man, was to be Papua’s first priest and bishop: Louis Vangeke. In this whole programme, the Bishop put into practice stipulations of the new Code of Canon Law (1917). He was confirmed in this by an important apostolic letter, *Maximun Illu*, issued by Pope Benedict XV in 1919.

In a later period of office, marked by the encyclical of Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, of 1926, which was echoed in de Boismenu’s pastoral letter “On the Propagation of the Faith”, of the same year, the radius of missionary activity was definitely widened. This move inaugurated a period of reaching out in all directions: to the west, among the Toaripi (1926), to the east, up to Samarai (1932), and further into the mountains, into the land of the Fuyuge and Tawade peoples (1973). The continuity with the first phase in Bishop de Boismenu’s apostolate was not abandoned, since he clearly stated that the efforts at material development, exemplified in big buildings, and wide roads, had to make way for the main concern of spiritual conquest. But, even then, opinions would differ regarding the tactics to be followed, some emphasising more the need of religious instruction (e.g., Fr Fastre), and others, the administration of the sacraments (e.g., Fr Norin). The Bishop had, therefore, to wage a battle on two fronts, prodding some not to delay the sacraments too long, and advising others not to be too eager in baptising people. He said to the first, “It is a 100 times better to lead a lot of mediocre souls to heaven through their repeated falls than to present a meagre elite, leaving the rest at the gate”. And to the second, “Measure the speed and extent of progress . . . by the likelihood of its being continued after you. . . (Make) the baptism of individuals conditional to their chances of practising the faith, and of being faithful to it.” It was always a strong point of Bishop de Boismenu to consider a question from every possible angle, to weigh the pros and cons, and, thus, to steer a course between being too accommodating, on the one side, and too severe, on the other. Only a man of de Boismenu’s calibre could achieve this. His successor, Bishop Andre Sorin, when characterising the leaders, who gave their imprint on the Papuan church, has this to say: “Verjus laid the foundations, Navarre put the first stone, but de Boismenu is the real architect of the building.”

### 3. The Period of Consolidation: Sorin and His Successors

A house is not a home until people live in it, and make all kinds of adjustments and changes, which were not envisaged in the master plan. To do this, was the task for the third period of church growth in Papua, particularly with Bishops Andre Sorin and Eugene Klein, before Independence, and, with their local successors, Louis Vangeke and Benedict To Varpin, after 1976.

Andre Sorin, for some time, a collaborator of Bishop de Boismenu, was consecrated a bishop in 1946, and continued the expansion programme towards the Chirima and Kunimaipa Valleys, beyond the Vailala River, reaching Orokolo, and in the territory of the Kamea (or Kukukuku) people. At the same time, substantial parts of old British New Guinea went over into to the other hands. Samarai, an Apostolic Prefecture since 1946, got its own Vicar Apostolic in 1951; Mendi became independent in 1958; and Daru in 1959. Straight after the death of Bishop Sorin, Rome separated the historical centre of Yule Island from what, meanwhile, had grown into the natural centre of the country, Port Moresby (1959). In 1976, a last separation was made, the diocese of Kerema to be headed by Sir Virgil Copas, one time, the Archbishop of Port Moresby, and Administrator of Bereina.

Among the new initiatives of Bishop Sorin, one should note the employment, in 1974, of the first lay missionaries (the *Mouvement Laic Missionarie*), the more-professional organisation of health services (1948), and the upgrading of the school system to secondary level (1957). Being himself a fine musician, and an artist, the Bishop also fostered native Christian art, and introduced it to the liturgy (1948). His successor, in 1960, was Bishop Klein, who continued, as already indicated, the expansion policy of Sorin, and Sorin's particular concern with education, especially important in a country heading for political self-government and independence. Having been the business manager of Yule Island for seven years, prior to becoming bishop, Klein was the right man to see the mission becoming economically and financially independent. From then onwards, the stations had to support themselves, and several semi-commercial enterprises took shape, till that time came, when these ventures, too, were left to non-mission agencies. The question of local leadership was also one of the points, which received special attention in more recent years. Some initiatives, in this line, were the establishment, in 1974, of the Verius Catholic Council among the Roro people. It spread from there to the Mekeo and Kuni. A new formation centre for catechists was opened at Kubuna, in the same year, and the organisation of training sessions for permanent deacons was begun on Yule Island, between the years 1975 and 1978.

The diocese “lost”, in 1956, the formation house of the Handmaids of Our Lord, which was transferred from Kubuna to Nazareth, near Port Moresby. In its place, instead, it welcomed, in 1966, the novitiate of the OLSH Sisters. Since both congregations were becoming more localised, the significance of these events is much wider than the present topic of Bereina, and must be merely noted in passing. We have seen that, in the various periods of Papuan mission history, the emphasis of the apostolate has shifted more than once, but the constant factor seems to be the concern to introduce the acceptance of Christian values. Other things were usually done in a less-professional way, on a voluntary basis, out of necessity, or as a subsidiary to the main objective. The motives behind these other activities were not the motives of government officers, or businessmen, although, the effects say, respect for Western order, receptivity to white man’s domination, and his values, worship of a work ethic, and attention to hygiene, were often the same. Missionaries were not trained to be anthropologists and linguists, or builders and road engineers, or business managers and education officers; they became all these, and a few more things, out of necessity. Some of them – often the “export quality” within the overseas missionary societies – did quite well in their new, secondary capacities. It would seem that their not-too-technical approach, and their preference for grassroots development – using, for instance, makeshift means, and manual work, instead of advanced machinery, was most laudable. In no small way, it allowed the smooth integration of new values, and new technologies, into the traditional societies of Papua New Guinea.

With these introductory remarks, it is possible to concentrate on a few areas, in which the subsidiary role of the Catholic mission can be seen improving the economic development of the nation. We will treat, successively, the impact of the missionary activities on (1) food and agriculture, (2-3) building and road construction, and also (4) the formal introduction of a cash economy, before touching upon (5) education, and (6) health services.

### **III. Examples of Development Projects**

#### **1. Food and Agriculture**

Food and shelter were the first requirements for survival. The first missionaries had bought their stores along, for food, with various manufactured goods, designed for barter, to pay for work, for locally-grown vegetables. But the supplies did not last, and the missionaries’ lives were soon threatened by scarcity and illness. What, in September, 1885, seemed like an expulsion, by a not-very-cooperative government, was, in fact, a providential

intervention to save the life of the first team of missionaries. Experiences of a famine were sure to recur. One recorded example dates from 1887, when Bishop Navarre wrote to Father Chevalier the famous words: “We shall go to the end.” The saving answer was found in the dispersion of the mission personnel over several villages on the Papuan mainland. Another case dates from 1892, when the bishop was about to wind up the whole missionary enterprise, because, as he wrote to one funding agency in France, “of necessity, the fight would soon cease, for lack of fighters”. Misery and penury were never far away, but this situation sharpened the inventiveness of Sisters, Brothers, and Fathers, in finding ways to live off the land. It was in these circumstances that the mission gardens of Mea-Era were started, labouring the fields with teams of horses – as on a European farm. However, the example did not catch on.

After this, a beginning was made with rice growing in Papua New Guinea. The name of the Italian Brother, Salvatore Gasbarra, (“Kala”), is connected with the initiative, and, it is known, that he obtained his seeds for red rice from the Philippines. It is not too sure when, and why, the idea took shape. Brother Kala arrived in 1885, but the Mekeo stations were mainly started between 1894 and 1897, while it took a few years before the people themselves began to imitate the rice growing started by the Fathers. The latter might have got the idea from their own experiences in northern Italy, or from the Filipino catechists – the so-called Manila boys – who worked with them, or just because they had repeatedly faced famine, and delays of supplies, needed to supplement the native diet with some inexpensive storable crop. Incidentally, Brother Kala is still remembered at Inawai for introducing there taros and sweet potatoes. For the Mekeos, the growing of rice created an opportunity to have a source of cash income, to buy extra food or clothing, and pay taxes – all factors, which contributed to joining the mission’s scheme. It might be of interest to quote here one page by Father Van Goethem, describing the beginnings of this proto-commercial venture:

For many years, only missionaries cultivated rice, and, as a rule, planted a couple of acres every year. The harvesting was a real pleasurable time, and every soul in the village would assist to get the crop in, and would help cutting and threshing and winnowing. We preserved the rice in its husk, in order to protect it from the weevil. Winnowing was generally done by the wind, in standing on an elevation, in the breeze, and pouring the rice out very slowly, so that the chaff might be blown away. But we learned, after a time, from a Filipino how to make fans, by plaiting thin strips of bamboo. We had to protect the rice from the

rats, who were eating through the bags, and so we used an old tank, or well-lined corner of the house. Whenever we required rice for our food, we undertook the husking. We used either mills or mortars for that purpose. Our mills were made of two blocks of hardwood, with grooved surfaces, the one block hanging over the other on a wooden pin, and being turned by hand, while the rice was poured in between, through a hole in the upper part. The mortars were dug-out logs, in which the rice was pounded with long, heavy sticks of hardwood. In both processes, in order to get the rice through unbroken, it has to be carefully dried in the sun for a day. The pounding method became very popular with the natives, who would clean two bags of rice a day in that way.

One year, Brother Salvatore succeeded in floating, among the natives, a rice-growing company, over which he presided. He directed the planting operations, the fencing –for the wild pigs are very keen on rice – the weeding, and, finally, the reaping, when he divided the crop among the shareholders, and gave them bags to store the rice in. The crop was so successful, and the natives found themselves having such an amount of rice, that they grew ambitious, and each native individually decided upon having his own field of rice, and doing better next year. Banquets were held, to which natives from other clans were invited, and were lavishly treated on the much-relished new food. Those, that had regaled their neighbours on a sumptuous feast of rice, had the right to expect a rice banquet in return, and made it incumbent on them to buy rice from the store of the trader, or to grow rice for themselves. Such was the origin of rice-growing in Papua.

The initiative of the Catholic mission was subsequently encouraged by the Native Plantation Ordinance of 1918, which aimed at making the territory self-supporting, as regards rice. In 1921, the Administration attracted the services of a Filipino agriculturist, Anastasio Buonsuccesso, and in 1931-1932, a patrol officer, A. A. Williams, was charged with supervising the Mekeo rice-growing industry. In this way, every able-bodied man was obliged to plant half-an-acre of rice. The result was that, in 1931-1932, 94 tons of rice were processed at the government rice mill in Port Moresby, and 112 tons in the following year. The Mekeos discovered that, working in family for only a few months, yielded as much cash as one year of work on a faraway plantation. In the years before the Second World War, the yield went up to 300-400 tons, but, during the hostilities, things became disorganised. The mission stepped in, once again, and bought, from the people, all the surplus rice, with which it supplied its several boarding schools. The people appreciated, very much that prompt payments were made for their goods, but, the intricacies of a cash

economy, they found very mysterious. It once happened in Mekeo, says Brother John Delabarre, the longtime storekeeper of Yule Island, the Major Thomson, the government officer of Kairuku, collected the school fees at the same time that he paid off the rice farmers. And when “the mission” ran out of cash, the paymaster borrowed from “the government”, later to be repaid by cheque. A rather confusing situation for people, who inquired from the brother: “How come? You give us the money. We give it to the government, and the government gives it back to you. . . . And we keep planting rice. . . .”

In the later 1940s, the mission, that is, Father D. Coltre, became instrumental in introducing, again, rice in the Western district, around Orokol, which was then processed at a government-owned rice mill at Iha. Not long after that, Father Michel Gasser started with rice at Terapo, and switched over to the wet variety, and also began using fertiliser, thus allowing a fourfold crop within one year. In due time, the Kukipi people started themselves a local cooperative, using the mission facilities of Terapo (Singh 28). However, none of these initiatives ever took off commercially.

The Mekeo rice project, too, had had its many ups and downs, and never really affected the huge rice import from overseas. Many uncontrollable factors played their part in this result, among others, the erratic nature of rainfall, and floods, which were too much for the industrial equipment to move, or not enough for the rice to grow. Nowadays, since the Hiritano Highway has overcome the problems of isolation and transport, the proposition has not become much more attractive either, because, with bananas and betel nuts, the Mekoes have more readily available means of cash income.

The many initiatives taken during the foundation years of the mission had, as an effect, that, between the two World Wars, most of the stations had become self-sufficient in growing fruit and vegetables, having fresh milk, and meat, making their own cheese, wine, and tobacco – the latter self-evident commodities for Frenchmen, who were used to them from childhood. Flour, sugar, salt, (and Kerosene), thus became the few items available in the private store, open only for the mission personnel. As a matter of fact, up to World War II, the diocesan authorities strictly adhered to the new Church Law of 1917, which forbade clerics “all direct and indirect commerce, either for one’s own benefit, or that of others” (*Codex Juris Canonici*, cn. 142 and 2380.), a regulation, which Rome made even more stringent in 1950. It was agreed that such a stand contributed to distinguish the Catholic missions from those run by the London Missionary Society. For many years, therefore, people and missionaries lived as if money had not yet been invented. The furthest

departure from the traditional barter system occurred when, at one stage, typewritten docketts were issued for foodstuffs received, which could be presented in the small mission store. It did not even take long before the first “counterfeit notes” were presented. Only the contact, during the war, with Australian and American soldiers, generalised the use of regular currency.

Even though this way of life on the missions, up to the 1940s, had no great impact upon the modernisation of village life, there were a few indirect spin-offs. These occurred, almost unnoticed, by way of example, given by the expatriate missionaries, and also with the acquired skills of those who had found employment with the mission.

The war situation aiding, together with requests made by the village people, and a permission granted by Rome, a change of official policy came about under E. Klein, at that time, business manager. In 1957, the new head of the mission, Bishop A. Sorin, drew up rather specific regulations. No store might be opened, without having obtained a regular trading licence, with a written permission, from the bishop. Their first aim was to supply goods to people, who were unable to obtain them, otherwise. The profit made would be moderate, that is, never exceeding 33 percent, and not for personal benefit, but, in the first place, to pay the wages of the mission workers. In the early 1960s, after the death of Bishop Sorin, regular retail stores were opened in the mountain areas.

Experience proved that this decentralisation system worked, to the financial benefit of the outstations. The result was seen in the new buildings, which were erected, in the construction of airfields, and in the maintenance of a mission plane. The establishment of mission stores also had its drawbacks, because the time given to ordering and selling goods, and to the keeping of books, could not be spent on more-specific pastoral tasks. When then, in the mid-1970s, the mountain people, themselves, began to open village stores, and also felt that the mission stores proved to be an unfair competition, the official stand was again reversed, and the majority of station-stores were closed, keeping, however, the service of a bulk store to supply the small, local business ventures.

## **2. Housing and Buildings**

As foreigners, coming to a strange land, without knowing a thing about the language and the customs, it was unavoidable that the missionaries lived, for a while, on the ships that brought them, and, only when some accommodation was made available, did they settle ashore. Those, who came

first, were not builders by trade, and their housing neither matched the standards of the traditional houses, nor those of the Western trade, as can be seen from the early photographs and drawings. But things improved rapidly, and there are cases, where missionaries imported whole prefab houses, or, at least, the sawn timber to construct lasting dwellings. These are standing, still to this present day, some mission buildings, erected with first-class timber imported from Northern Queensland – some of the St Patrick's school buildings on Yule Island, one construction at Mainohana, or also the church of Inawi, and the pro-cathedral of Yule. The influence of the mission building teams soon affected, also, the village houses. Traditionally, the walls of the houses were made of long poles, which were tied together at the top, so that an ogival structure came about, with the roof descending to the ground. The new style was to use posts and columns, with a superimposed saddle roof. Later on, mission buildings were often clad with sheetmetal, and covered with corrugated iron. This method, too, was imitated, in the use of galvanised iron for the ordinary houses as well.

The regular set-up of a mission station comprised, as a rule, a centrally-located church, with, on one side, a Fathers' house, and, on the other side, a Sisters' convent. Often there was, in the village, a school, and frequently, also, a health centre.

The huge requirements for timber, soon led to the building of a mission sawmill. Trees not being available near the headquarters on Yule Island, they were cut at Nabuapaka, floated across Hall Sound, and further processed at a horse-powered sawmill near the mission workshops of Yule. History has it that, when the animals were exhausted, the men took over. In out-stations, men were, of course, the only force to rely on for pit-sawing, cutting, and dressing. In a second period, with Father Dubuy, at Ononge and Voitape, where an abundant water supply was readily at hand, the sawmills were worked by water-wheels, built against a steep slope, and, thus, needing a two-storey building to house them. Such a set-up, with turbine, still operates at Kerau. Yet, further improvements were in store, and, in the early 1950s, Father L. Gremaud organised a fundraising campaign, via the French Annals, for *Les scieries du Pere Louis*. With money thus collected, he bought, in Europe, a dozen or so second-hand sawmills, with laterally-placed power plants, and in which the lumber lorries were pulled, on the ground level of a one-storey shed. At this stage, local interest was aroused to improve private houses as well. As a rule, the people provided the logs, and the mission arranged the hauling and cutting. Of the sawn lumber, 50 percent went to the owners of the trees, and 50 percent to those who assured the final product. In



this way, Angabunga Mission, Muro plantation (Orokolo), and the centres of Beipa, Kosipe, Yongai, and Lese, had, for many years, a technically-uncomplicated, and financially-cheap, way of erecting permanent houses. Sawmilling, born out of necessity, was only a preparatory stage for housebuilding, geared to the immediate needs of a locality. Even if a particular brother or father had not been trained as a carpenter, before coming to New Guinea, he quickly learned to develop hidden talents, and the men employed soon learned the trade, and enjoyed the goods, or cash, which flowed from it. It even happened in Kosipe, with Brother George Tweedy, that the whole workforce of a sawmill was made up of women, since, at the time, most of the able-bodied men had gone to Port Moresby, in the hope of a better life.

### **3. Roads and Transport**

The European missionaries came to Papua New Guinea, first of all to obey Christ's command "to go out, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Therefore, travelling to a savage country, making contact with people of an unknown language, and deciding the best place for permanent centres, became an integral part of their missionary work. Their first steps were appreciated by the civil authorities of the time, such as Governor John Douglas, who, already in 1887, congratulated the French missionaries, because their explorations were "the most important ones ever done in New Guinea" (cf. Dupeyrat). He probably referred to H. Verjus's expeditions into the Roro and Mekeo areas, during the two preceding years. Fathers de Rijcke and Jullien followed his example in 1896-1898, in reaching out to Kuni land (map in Jullien), and many others are still remembered for their feats in the Papuan mountains, e.g., J. Dubuy, for his 1926 hikes out of Ononge, A. Maye, for going to the Yarima people around 1947, and the exploration of the team Delabarre-Michellod, and of Taphanel, in the early 1950s, to the then as-yet-restricted Southern Highlands – not forgetting the two months' long trek of J. Besson, and his horses, into the Kamea country, which some even compared with Hannibal crossing the Alps. In many cases, these trips brought the first white men into the New Guinea hinterland, and there is more than one instance, where the intruders were not well received, as happened in 1904, with Bishop de Boismenu, who went into the domain of one Baiva. This Fuyuge chief had sworn to revenge the death of his brother, fallen under British bullets, but he was impressed by the courage of the missionary, and did accept him in peace. It has happened, repeatedly, that the missionaries went, with the professed aim of stopping hostilities, and making friends. Bishop Verjus, in July, 1891, protected the life of a Mr Kowald, a government officer, based in Beipa, and was threatened by the people of Inawaia; the incident led

to the establishment of the new village, Jesu-Baibua, i.e., “the peace of Jesus”. A more recent example is linked with the foundation of Kamulai, under Fr Maye, referred to earlier.

After the first exploration, it was often necessary to open mission tracks, which allowed the carrying of supplies, and shortened the endless travelling time needed to visit outlying places. The benefits were not only positive, from the point view of the mission. Thus, around 1890, when Bishop Verjus discussed with Governor W. McGregor the project of opening a road between Pinupaka and Inawuni, the Governor encouraged him, because that would be “an enterprise of much use to the people, and an essential means of promoting civilisation and peace”. With the establishment of the *Pax Britannica*, hundreds of kilometres of roads were built. As early as 1921, the Governor, Hubert Murray, reported that French missionaries had supervised the construction of 175 kilometres of road between Aropokina, on the coast, and the Ononge mission, in the mountains. The surveying and supervision were done by missionaries, without remuneration, while the administration assisted in providing tools and payment for the labourers. These mission roads were, as a rule, eight feet wide, and had an easy slope of about five to eight percent, which made them suitable for mules and horses, later for some “prehistoric” tractors, and, finally, for motorbikes and four-wheel drives. The strict adherence to the principle of not exceeding a ten-percent gradient made it necessary to have long stretches of switchbacks in the mountainous the Goilala area. Tom Crotty, an engineer with the PNG Department of Public Works, said of these roads, that “their location, in retrospect, has generally been superb”. Where needed, wooden bridges were added, covered, usually, by thatched roofs, to preserve their timbers, a practice, recalling some Swiss examples, and, again, followed by *kiaps* in later years.

Several fathers and brothers became specialists in pegging out roads in a country, which they knew by heart, and their contribution to the development of the country has been, more than once, recognised, by seeing their names given to particular features in the landscape.

Father R. Fraix, of Kubuna, still recalls the plan of Father Dubuy (died 1952) to have the mission headquarters moved to the mainland, and a road built to connect with Port Moresby, whereas Fr P. Morant, of Kamulai, reckons that, in the Goilala area alone, the French-Swiss missionaries have built around 2,000 kilometres of roads. This kind of work had its spiritual side, too. It gave the missionaries the opportunity to mix freely with the people, learn their language, and prepare specific pastoral contacts for other occasions. For these

reasons, Father Dubuy once said, "If the work on the roads did not exist, one would have to invent it."

Since the Papuan mission started on the Island of Yule, transport by boat to the mainland, and to the economic and commercial centre of the country, Port Moresby, were part and parcel of its history. One old skipper, Brother Alexis Henkelman, has even written a book of memoirs about plying the Coral Sea. The use of boats, even though mainly designed to support the mission work, had indirect benefits for the people, too. One was the provision of transport for both passengers and cargo; the other was the opportunity for employment, given to local skippers, boat crews, deckhands, and tradesmen of all kinds. Under the expert guidance of men like Brothers Camille Fridez and Joseph Moriceau, the boats were not only kept in good shape, but, in some cases, built on the mission. In this way, the *Gemma*, which carried ten to 12 tonnes, was built in 1939. Others followed, including the *Camillo*, *Georges*, *Joseph*, *Moriso*, all built at the wharf on Yule, measuring up to 40 feet long, and able to transport 30 tonnes. The bigger boats of the mission, like the *Saint Andrew*, ordered as far back as 1899, and able to carry 60 tonnes, left the stocks at Thursday Island, where it was built by Japanese tradesmen.

When Father Dupeyrat wrote, in 1935, it was still deemed too early to start flying the Papuan mountains, an idea already contemplated by the World War One pilot, Leon Bourjade, who came in 1921, and who had to be dissuaded from bringing a plane along. Later, the old skipper, Alexis, too, longed to see the day of planes (Henkelman 39), and, under Bishop Sorin, a Swiss lay missionary, Pierre Comte, obtained the first flying licence, but the project was shelved when the Bishop died. Later, in 1965, two French MSC brothers started to learn to fly planes. After a fatal accident, the plan was shelved till 1967, when VH-MYI was bought, and flown, by the lay missionary, Evan Duggan. At the beginning, the outstations benefited very much from the regular airdrops executed above Bema, Kanabea, Kainteba, in the Gulf, and Fane, Yongai, Kamulai, in the Goilala mountains. With this, the role of the old "caravans" was taken over by modern technology. Then came the time of the airstrips, successors to the old roadworks. The first mission strip was built in Kerau, soon followed by Fane, Onone, Kosipe, and Yongai. It was often very hard to find a suitable spur to fit a mere 500 metres landing place. Hence, the airstrips in the mountains have only a single approach, and often use a mounting slope of several degrees to cut down on the length of the strip. One of the most recent airstrips, built at Ononge, which has not only a seven-percent gradient, but also an axis in the form of a dog's leg. It took the people about ten years to finish this project. With the local strips completed,

an opportunity was created for flying vegetables to the outstations and to the capital, Port Moresby, and for providing a passenger service to and from places, where commercial companies were not keen to open business, because of the limited opportunities. The wholly-owned mission plane later inspired the creation of “Elomair”, a privately-owned company, of which missionaries were shareholders, as well.

In 1982, after a plane crash, but also because, meanwhile, the road system had improved, and commercial planes became more regular in their services, the flying enterprise was abandoned altogether.

#### **4. Cash Income**

Communication, by land, sea, and air, was the normal means of visiting people. Another means of contact was, in a way, the very opposite: to bring the people to the roads, where they could benefit from various goods and services, especially access to the new money-based economy. The Yule Island mission is only one, among many others, which have resorted to resettling people, to achieve this goal. This happened, from the start, on Yule, itself. Ancient maps show that, around 1875, there were two villages at the northern end of Yule Island to be identified with the old Puauka and Haruapaka: these two villages provided the settlers of the future Delena and Poukama, established only around 1880, thus leaving only one Motu descent group on the island. Tsiria became, subsequently, the place of the biggest concentration of people.

A much more recent, and also more spectacular, achievement, in this line, is the establishment of the Kuni village, Bakoiudu (van Rijswijk 1967). Its origins go back to the early 1960s, when Father A.Boell was appointed to serve the Kuni people, and to foster, among them, social and economic development. Before his time, some attempts were made by the Kunis to grow coffee, around the Oba-Oba. When the missionary came to settle among them (1959), he soon noticed that, for this very scattered population, living on such a rugged terrain, there was not much hope of economic success. They would have to leave their homeland and resettle elsewhere, somewhere around Kubuna and Bakoidu in a rather undulating landscape, with better access to the existing roads, and to some foreign-owned plantations. Under Father Boell's instigation, with the help of the titular landholder, Faika Peto, and with the personal backing of Ken Brown ADO, they began, in 1961, building a new station, Bakoiudu. When Father Boell's assistant, Father Louis Vangeke, moved as well, there was no doubt left that the scheme would go ahead. The Kuni people left Oba-Oba. From an estimated 400 settlers in 1962, and 840 in

1964, the new centre grew approximately to 1,300 Kuni people in May, 1971, with about the same number living, either elsewhere in Kuni, or outside the tribal territory. The allocation of land was carried out on the principle of first-come-first served, with the added stipulation, that claims to land, thus obtained, would be validated, only by actual occupation and use. Through community efforts, the first houses were established, the first gardens planted, and, in 1963, with the help of a resident agricultural officer, a rubber plantation was started at Bakoiudu. As a matter of fact, the mission had some previous experience with rubber planting at the Ukua plantation, which was built up by the MSC brothers in the early 1940s, to support the mission enterprise. (This was sold in 1952, when the trees started producing, because there were no longer trained brothers to manage and supervise the operation.) In the Bakoiudu venture of the 1960s, the time was, at first, divided equally between work in the people's subsistence gardens, work on the rubber plantations, seen as a communal project, and voluntary labour, or road maintenance, or help given to establish the local aid post and school. Gradually, the company-mindedness waned, and interest was turned to more-restricted forms of cash-cropping. Rubber tapping, on the most advanced sections of the company block, started in February, 1968, and, although only eight tonnes of rubber were produced in the first year, prospects for the next ten years of production anticipated an estimated annual income of \$75,000 by 1978. This proved to be too optimistic. Meanwhile, the involvement of the Department of Agriculture, Stock, and Fisheries (DASF) became more pronounced, supplying, even in October, 1979, an expatriate project manager. Although the missionary kept in the background, his help was still substantial. He arranged, in late 1968, the purchase of a tractor, and tried to keep the collective effort going, whenever it was threatened by disagreements and secessionist tendencies. Opinions may differ whether, in all instances, the wisest course of action has been taken, but there is no doubt that, in this case, the church has contributed actively to introduce an isolated, law-abiding, but also neglected people to a modern cash economy, which is now largely in the people's own hands.

The rubber project in Bakoiudu, and, much earlier, the rice growers' company of Brother Kala in Mekeo, or, also, the setting-up of sawmills in the mountains were all small- or medium-size enterprises, which brought some cash to the people. But there have not been many other enterprises of the kind. The only ones with mentioning are the cattle projects. Since the 1950s, there had been, at Wanono, near Kubuna, a herd of up to 120 head, to provide the outstations with fresh meat. But then, Father Besson introduced the idea, also, in the mountain stations of Fane, Ononge, and Kainteba. Orokolo followed suit, but a start at Muro, in the 1960s, was without issue, because there were no

suitable pastures. At times, the mission bought back the animals for slaughtering, and organised a cattle drive to the abattoir of Port Moresby. In the early 1970s, Kamulai picked up the idea, and started a kind of local organisation for cattle owners. As a rule, the missionaries were not too much interested in “making big money”, but more in improving the diet. On one occasion, they were grateful for even the moral support the cows and goats gave to their evangelising. When Father A. Maye, in 1947, had the difficult assignment of settling among the Yarima, he brought some cattle with him. “The village constable, and the notables of the tribe, came to tell (him) that, with such beautiful ‘pigs’, (he) could no longer leave them.” The animals had made a greater impression than any missionary preacher could ever have achieved!

Plantations, as such, were never a big issue in the Yule Island mission, and that for several reasons. Geographically, the terrain is not as suitable as in many other parts of the country. There are many swampy areas. However, where there was suitable terrain (as proven by the existing plantations of, say, BP, and STC), there were legal hurdles. The British Administration, after 1900, did not allow the acquisition of freehold land in Papua, and it was not prepared to allow Catholics to get a foothold in an established LMS “sphere of influence”. Again, the French missionaries were never after large properties. They asked, in 1918, for half-a-dozen leases in Kuni and Fuyuge land, each measuring only five acres, (i.e., five times less than the 10-hectare properties Bishop L. Coupe applied for in the New Guinea islands, about the same period of time). Hence, most of the plantations of the mission came rather indirectly into its possession. At Kivori, there were 120 acres, and Obo 320 acres, which formerly belonged to J. Oberleuter. The copra produced in these places, and at Mea-Era, Araimiri, and Waima Taovia, was rather limited, compared with the expenses of schools and outstations. An interesting detail to note, which confirms the priorities of the missionaries, is that the Muro plantation, near Orokolo, was only acquired because it allowed entry to an area formerly reserved to non-Catholic missions. Like the cows in Yarima, the coconuts of Orokolo served the apostolate. In the recent years, some of the Papuan mission plantations have been returned to the government, which has sold them back to the people, e.g., at Mea-Era. This is just one more instance of mission involvement in economics, as a secondary concern only.

## **5. Schools and Education**

We have already seen how seriously Navarre, Verjus, and de Boismenu viewed catechetical training. Not surprisingly, schools became an important part of the mission, the first elementary school beginning on Yule Island in

1891, and, subsequently, in the other areas following sufficient contact. Filipino catechists and European sisters were the mainstay of these developments, and Yule Island became the centre for the best achievements. From there, a press printed local legends in the “native tongues” (Navarre, among his many directives for teachers, having stressed the importance of teaching local language). Sometime in 1931, Governor Hubert Murray was greatly impressed, when the pupils of Inawaia school staged, before him, a play of Shakespeare. No wonder, then, that, in 1932, the official education report of the Territory of Papua acknowledged that Yule Island “pupils read, write, and speak English better than pupils in other schools elsewhere”, an accolade for the OLSH sisters teaching there. The government had formally relinquished its responsibility for schools to the mission as far back as 1907, but the Queensland Education Department subsidised “native children”, according to their levels of attainment, and sent both syllabi and inspectors.

By 1926, a technical school was established, and, during the 1920s, MSC brothers were teaching carpentry, sheetmetal work, and smithing, in various centres. Then 1926 also saw the commencement of a Catechists’ School at Kivori, first under Father Regler, and then Father Paul Sorin. Thus, the foundations for a seminary were laid, especially since the school, to be called St Paul’s Teachers’ Training College, was transferred to Bomana in 1936, to a site outside Port Moresby, very near what is, today, the Holy Spirit Seminary. The entrance level of the Bomana school was set at Standard V, and the teaching was no longer done in Roro (as earlier at Mea Era), but in English. This requirement automatically limited the intake of pupils to the schools of Yule Island, Inawaia, and later, also, Terapo. The war, however, interfered with all this educational work, with many boys being sent off to be carriers, and the catechists’ school was temporarily moved to Wanono, in Kune country. Still, two of St Paul’s ex-students, Guy Pioma and Ani Mange, were later to be called among the first permanent deacons in the diocese of Bereina.

After the war, mission schools gained in importance, not only on Yule Island itself, and in the coastal villages, but also in the mountains. Sister Terence Hogan, for instance, started in 1950, a school at Ononge, and, in order to make it a success, had to make innumerable trips on horseback to the surrounding villages, where she convinced the parents of the benefits of a primary education. Eventually, she managed that all children, big enough to walk, and not yet married, turned up for classes.

In due time, the step was taken towards secondary education. On Yule, where hundreds of pupils had been trained on the primary level, the mission began, around 1960, first extended primary, and then secondary, teaching. The de la Salle brothers took charge of the boys, the OLSH sisters of the girls. This training was soon supplemented by mixed teacher training as well. The boys' school was later transferred to Mainohana, near Bereina township.

As the country moved towards Independence, the cooperation between government and churches increased, thus leading to an integrated National Education System (1970), in which the church functioned as one of the many school agencies, providing buildings and facilities, but relying on the State to pay the wages of teachers, and other subsidies.

Under the heading of education, it would be remiss if we did not mention the more-scholarly activities of the missionaries themselves. Over and above the collection and translation of local traditions, and the translating of biblical materials and liturgies, were more-systematic intellectual endeavours, most notably, Fr Paul Fastre's account of (Western) Fuyughe manners and customs (*Moeurs et coutumes Fouyougheses*). This ethnography, which has since been translated, and privately published, formed the basis of many popular books on Papua by his colleague, Fr Andre Dupeyrat. The same Dupeyrat also published the first history of the mission in 1935, and various scholarly essays.

## **6. Health Services**

In 1912, MSC Sister Gabriel (Marie Houdmont) arrived at Yule Island. Although not a trained nurse, she established a clinic at the Mekeo village of Inawaia by the end of this year, and, for over 30 years, the medical work of the Papuan mission in the Roro-Mekero area had much to do with her labours – in treating hundreds of sick children, people with skin lesions, yaws, ulcers, snake bites, etc. She was joined by various sisters, mainly French, who received some training in nursing and midwifery before coming to Papua, and whose pioneering efforts first led Hubert Murray to secure government subsidisation of mission medical work.

By 1935, a Foundling Hospital was erected at Kubuna (Kuni territory), babies being cared for by Revd Mother Solange, and a group of Papuan nuns (Handmaids of Our Lord, begun with Mother Marie-Therese Noblet). Further inland, at this time, among the Western Fuyughe (or Mafulu), one of the Papuan sisters was providing medical care, helping also to combat there the practice of infanticide, whereby a new-born child could be killed in favour of



rearing piglets on women's breasts (so crucial, for the people, were the great pig kills and feasts, called *gab*).

It should be remembered that, up to 1959, Bereina and Port Moresby formed only one diocese, and that several initiatives in the capital were initiated by the mission of Yule. This applies to the Bomana clinic of 1948, which, after two years, was transferred to Koki, or Badili, and became a first training place for local nurses. Less than 20 years later, nursing training began also at Beipa, where the adjoining hospital provided the opportunity for practical work. Before this time, Yule Island, itself, had its health care centre, whereas, in 1970, another hospital was started at Fane, in the Goilala District.

From the missionaries' "inside viewpoint", one must appreciate that neither education nor health were ever strictly divorced from spirituality, or, in other words, from the need, both to study the Bible and spiritual writings, to enrich the reflective life to the church, and to pray for the total well-being of the Mission and the world. By 1934, the closed monastery of the Carmelite Sisters was built, to fulfil some of these needs, after an appeal to France for a group of contemplative nuns had been launched by Bishop de Boismenu. (Later the monastery was moved to Yule Island, in 1946, and then to Bomana in 1973.) The Carmelites have maintained the largest and longest standing of the two Catholic monasteries in Melanesia. (The other being that of the Poor Clares nuns at Aitape, in West Sepik Province).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The first objective of the missionaries was to obey the great commandment: "Go, baptise, and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19), or, as Father Chevalier expressed it, "To make Jesus' love known all over the world." After this, "Rome" entered the scene, to assign a specific mission field, and, subsequently, to support the enterprise by various mission encyclicals and other directives, sometimes, also, with money.

The difficulties of the task did not cool the enthusiasm of the mission workers, most of them volunteers, who did not hesitate to risk their health, and lives, for a good cause. No doubt, elements of contemporary theology, and, in particular, of 19th-century French spirituality, contributed to support their general outlook, and determine the priorities in their work. Bishop de Boismenu, who for half a century directed the enterprise, and was characterised by his solid realism in tackling an oversize task, was, nevertheless, a very "spiritual" man, who once said: "L'ennemi, c'est le material!"

## **1. Some since Characteristics of Mission Projects**

Material needs could not be ignored, and not a negligible part of the missionary effort was spent on socio-economic improvements. Our previous overview did show some characteristic aspects.

- i. Mere material development was never the first aim, but was engaged in, when called for by evangelisation proper, and was also abandoned, when other agencies took over the responsibility. Outstanding examples, are the part taken by the mission in providing educational and health services, and, more recently, in improving roads and transportation. In other words, the church played only a subsidiary role, and did not try to build up any exclusive position outside of her own specific field of action. An additional sign of this non-profit orientation, is the concern for activities in linguistic, anthropological, and related areas, by individual missionaries.
- ii. The fields, which received first attention, were those related to men's essential, or basic, needs, such as food and shelter, and also security. If the introduction of new crops initially served the survival of the missionary enterprise itself, it soon achieved, also, a better diet for the local people. The second characteristic is also shown in the introduction of village stores, where meat, and fish, and salt were some of the basic commodities offered. As to the role in the "pacification" of the country, there was more than one example that relevant moves followed the requests of civil authorities, one of the latest being in the Kunimaipa area, in the late 1940s.
- iii. The manner of introducing new ways often showed an unspoken respect for the social realities of the people. Hence, the resettlement schemes, and the various cooperative started, endeavoured to retain the natural ties of the population. So did the ventures involving family work. Since the preservation of traditional ways and procedures greatly contributes to continuity in society, we may also refer here on the methods, which were close to traditional village technology (e.g., in the early rice production, and in other labour-intensive enterprises). There were definite restraints on introducing expensive equipment in favour of fostering self-help (e.g., from pit sawing to waterwheel-powered sawmills). There is even the case of rebuilding, plank by

plank, a ship from “Steamships”, which the firm considered uneconomical to repair by its own means. Self-help, therefore, featured very prominently in upgrading material conditions.

## **2. Sources of Income**

Whichever way one views the missionary enterprise, and, particularly, its involvement in material improvements, finances were needed. Self-help and “tightening the belt” could go only some distance, and they stopped. So one may well ask: “Where did the money come from?”

- i. The missionaries belonged to a sending society, bound to a common life. Therefore, all gifts made in the home country, whether they resulted from articles and appeals in the mission magazines, or were given to individuals, on occasion of, or in view of, their pastoral ministry, were funnelled into the training of new candidates, the sending out of fresh staff, and into subsidising the overseas mission work proper. The latter also received some yearly grants from “Rome”. On the spot, the sum of all this income was administered by a kind of gentlemen’s agreement at the headquarters between the Bishop and the religious superior. From here, allowances were paid out to the mission stations, according to their respective importance. For example, Oba-Oba received, in the early 1950s, £50 per priest, and £25 per sister, thus making the yearly living allowance for four people £150. Voluntary work, and a token payment to local labourers, were the rule, while the government assisted in providing tools and equipment for ventures of direct public utility. Since, for a long time, home leave was granted only sparingly, say after ten years, and, even then, most of the time was spent in the society’s houses in Europe, the possibility for private actions was rather limited, although some missionaries squeezed in talks and conferences to interested Catholics. Father Dubuy, for instance, managed to return from leave, in 1930, with 16 tons of materials and equipment.
- ii. A major development occurred in the late 1950s, when the mission authorities decided to stop financing the operations, and to allow the stations to become self-supporting. The fathers could keep the contributions they received for their apostolic ministry (e.g., mass stipends), and they were permitted to engage in small business. The success of, say, the Bakoiudu resettlement scheme,

and the building of its rubber factory, were all paid for in this way, namely, by selling rice and root crops, grown in the mission gardens, to the schools and other institutions at Yule Island and Kubuna. The venture had, at some stage, a yearly turnover of K500.000. Once also, the Australian "Project Compassion" contributed 20 tons of corrugated iron for covering the roofs of the newly-built village.

- iii. Funding by overseas national, or international, agencies is a rather recent development. But, here, the French missionaries were not in a position comparable to that of, say, their German counterparts. The funds available to the French *Secours Catholique* are simply of a different magnitude to the money obtained via a national church tax. In addition, the psychological and emotional ties of France were rather geared to the country's old colonial territories, especially in nearby Africa, and not towards a British/Australian-administered Papua. Fortunately, there were Swiss and Spanish fathers, and, especially, the Australian, and even Belgian, sisters, who were able to contact their home countries to obtain funds, while "Rome" also regularly showed its generosity, especially towards the promotion of the school system.
- iv. Right now, the problems are changing once again. Many functions in the socio-economic field are being taken over by the government. The basic infrastructure of the nation is of such a nature that it calls for less initiatives, while the increasing age of the foreign missionaries naturally slows down the number of new ventures to be started. At the same time, national staff are filling the positions, and they might have different priorities from generations of the past. Hence, a natural disengagement in material projects, and a new search to make the priorities chosen more visible.

One has the definite impression that, as sons and daughters of this country, the full-time church workers of today are better supported locally than the "rich" missionaries from abroad. Yet, the national church personnel cannot fall back easily on friends and benefactors from overseas, when, e.g., they would need another teacher's house, or a replacement for a written-off car, not to mention the more sophisticated needs for audio-visual teaching of adults, or the necessary office equipment for publishing a local newsletter.

Hence, new questions are being raised. “Who is setting the priorities? Who is willing to pay for them?” And we hear counter-questions. “Is this or that project really a need, or rather, a luxury? Is it serving an elite group, or helping the group? Is it not more a pastoral project than a socio-economic venture?” Are the norms of accountability, indeed, appropriate, or defective, in one direction, or the other?

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