JÜRG WASSMANN

The Gently Bowing Person

An Ideal Among the Yupno in Papua New Guinea

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An Ideal Among the Yupno in Papua New Guinea

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Sivik, Wakine, and Numenepe in Gua village, Papua New Guinea

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Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs have been taken by Verena Keck

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Acknowledgements

In 1984, thus 32 years ago, Verena Keck and I visited for the first time the village Gua in the remote Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea. Two years later a larger interdisciplinary research was all set – we stayed 20 months until 1988. In this anthropological project, besides the two anthropologists (V. Keck and myself), another anthropologist (Christin Kocher Schmid), a psychologist, a botanist, an ethnomusicologist and two physicians participated. The research topics then were ethnobotany (*see* Kocher Schmid 1991), the concept of space (*see* Wassmann 1993c) and the local medical system (*see* Keck 1993, 2005). Afterwards followed many more visits (1992, 2000, 2004–2005, 2007, 2009).

Over time, interlocutors became valued friends and acquaintances, in whose daily routine Verena and I participated and we stayed in contact by means of letters and telephone, later on via cell phone and email. Needless to say, this multi-temporal, long-term fieldwork fieldwork has influenced my research topics and methods, has altered my understanding of the Yupno's culture and has shaped my status as an anthropologist (*cf.*, too, Keck 2015). Today, the babies of the early years have become the active adults of the village, who have already their own children. Some inhabitants of the village left Gua, now they live in the cities Madang or Lae, others attended school to obtain higher education and came back to their village. Many of the older generation have passed away.

In the course of these many years, conducting anthropological research, discussing the findings with colleagues and students, publishing parts in various journals and now writing this book, I own an enormous debt of gratitude to institutions and individuals for their help in quite different matters in various stages of this project over the years.

My special thank goes to the colleagues of the various disciplines, with whom I had the privilege to do joint research in Gua in the course of these years: Pierre R. Dasen, psychologist, Raymond Ammann and Don Niles, ethnomusicologists, Rafael E. Núñez and Kensy Cooperrider, cognitive scientists, and James Slotta, linguist, who has done linguistic

research in the neighbouring village of Nian. They all contribute to the following chapters from their disciplinary perspective. The topics addressed in the book, concepts of personhood, ideas of time and space, clearly reflect the influence of my teacher in my scientific work, Meinhard Schuster from Basel University. The methods of space games and induced situations I owe Stephen C. Levinson and his team from the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Netherlands; from 1991 to 1993 I was part of the team. Pierre R. Dasen from Geneva University discussed and advised me in topics and methods of cross-cultural psychology, both in the field and at home.

Between 2008 and 2011, a university partnership and exchange programme has been formed between the Divine Word University in Madang, Papua New Guinea, and the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Heidelberg with the aim to include an anthropology curriculum and strand within already existing Papua New Guinea studies programme there (it had been generously financed by the German Academic Exchange Program). Together with colleagues from Heidelberg, PhD students and graduate students, I gave anthropology courses for the Divine Word University students, and correspondingly lecturers from this institution taught in Heidelberg. It was an intellectually very stimulating time in Madang and a challenge to motivate and inspire students in Heidelberg and in Madang for anthropological themes and I am grateful for this experience.

My research during these years was generously funded by various institutions. I am indebted to the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Marsilius Kolleg of Heidelberg University, the Volkswagen Stiftung and the German Academic Exchange Service.

I want to thank Carmen C. H. Petrosian-Husa, who translated the text from German into English, Myrna und Robert Tonkinson, who edited the English version, and Holger Jebens for his critical comments and suggestions.

This book could only be written with the help of Sivik, Faiu, Megau, Wuli, Paul, Wakine, Numenepe, Yam, Tapri, Erarape, Kamake, Nanjañne, Napone, Wilma, Varenañ, Metareñ, Tangwaman, Yambat, Mupe, Wingulut, Umiat, Matupit, Tanowe, Koki, Eyupe, Domao and the many villagers of Gua. Their cooperation, warmth, hospitality and generosity made the different time of fieldwork so pleasant.

While I communicated with many of the middle-aged men in Tok Pisin, older people though only spoke 'tok ples' (Yupno), thus, many of their narratives and long debates had to be recorded and later on translated. This was accomplished with the help of Zaka Tingneyu to whom I am much obliged and very grateful. In all these years both in Gua and Madang, he helped as my field assistant, patiently trying to circumvent all my misunderstandings, and in the course of more than thirty years he became a friend with whom I grew older.

I wish to thank Verena Keck, my partner and colleague, for the many discussions we had on the veranda of our house in Gua, for reading und commenting on various drafts – we had a good time together in the field and ever since.

This book is the quintessence of thirty years fieldwork. My research focus was the indigenous, 'traditional' knowledge of old and middle-aged Yupno people. Many of the following observations and descriptions refer to the late 1980s but not exclusively. As my results of various topics clearly show: the time of the interviews and discussions and the age of the interlocutors were less important and determined their worldview, knowledge and attitude to a lesser extent than the experience of an ‚outside world', as longer or shorter time spent in town, experience of an urban life or school attendance. The volume contains new, as yet unpublished data as well as results that have been published over the years in German or English anthropological, psychological or cognitive journals. They have been re-edited and adapted for this monograph. Several sections of this book are based on some of my earlier articles and the German book *Das Ideal des leicht gebeugten Menschen* (Wassmann 1993a); the materials have been complemented and updated for this book. These sections are, too, indicated in the notes of the respective chapters. Sections of Chapter 2 appeared in an article titled 'Yupno Number System and Counting' (Wassmann and Dasen 1994a) in the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 25, 1994. Sections of Chapter 3 appeared in *Oceania* 83, 2013 in an article co-authored with Raymond Ammann and Verena Keck, titled 'The Sound of a Person. A Music-Cognitive Study in the Finisterre Range in Papua New Guinea' (*cf.* Ammann *et al.* 2013). Chapter 4 is partially based on the article 'When Actions Speak Louder than Words. The Classification of Food among the Yupno of Papua New Guinea' in *The Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* 15, 1993 (*cf.* Wassmann 1993b*),* and 'Hot and Cold: Classification and Sorting among

the Yupno of Papua New Guinea' by Jürg Wassmann and Pierre Dasen in *International Journal of Psychology* 29, 1994 (*cf.* Wassmann and Dasen 1994b). Sections of Chapter 5 appeared in *Oceania* 64, 1993 in an article titled 'Worlds in Mind. The Experience of an Outside World in a Community of the Finisterre Range of Papua New Guinea' (*cf.* Wassmann 1993c) and in a chapter titled 'Finding the Right Path: The Route Knowledge of the Yupno of Papua New Guinea', that has been published in the book *Referring to Space. Studies in Austronesian and Papuan Languages*, edited by Gunter Senft, Oxford University Press 1997 (*cf.* Wassmann 1997). Chapter 6 draws in an abbreviated form on an article titled 'The Yupno as Post-Newtonian Scientists: The Question of What is "Natural" in Spatial Description', published in *Man* 29, 1994 (*cf.* Wassmann 1994), on an article written by Jürg Wassmann and Pierre Dasen titled 'Balinese Spatial Orientation. Some Empirical Evidence for Moderate Linguistic Relativity' in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, 1998 (*cf.* Wassmann and Dasen 1998) and a jointly written article, with Rafael Núñez *et al.*, titled 'Contours of Time' in *Cognition* 124, 2012 *(cf.* Núñez *et al.* 2012a). I am particularly thankful for the editors and publishers of these journals for permission to reprint parts of my own papers here.

Notes on the Text

All German quotations have been translated by Carmen C. H. Petrosian-Husa; abbreviated in the following as transl. CCHPH.

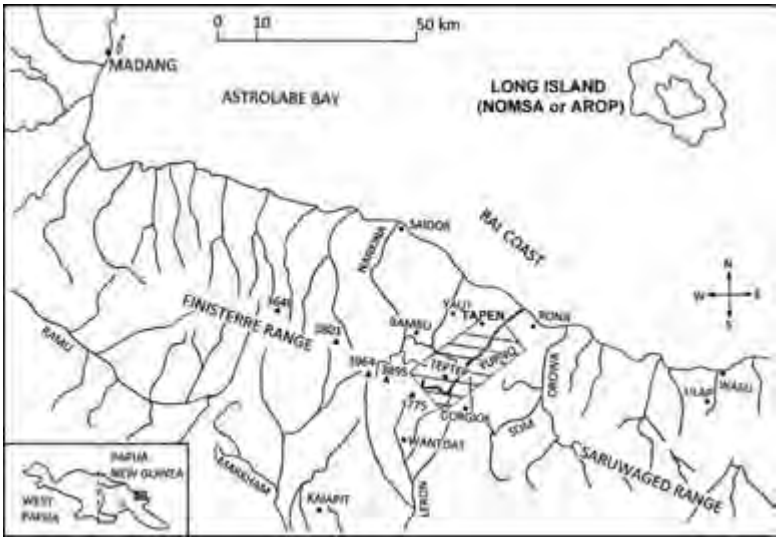
The special symbols used are:

- (ɨ) is a volatile upper vowel. It is best reproduced by attempting not to pronounce it at all. E.g. *amɨn* (man) is best pronounced as if the i was not present: *amn*.
- (ñ) is a velar sound pronounced like in 'to sing'
- Yupno terms are rendered in the text in italics, Tok Pisin words are put into simple quotation marks. Proper names, names of clans and topographical designations are written in capitals.

The Beginning

The Finisterre Range

When Antoine J.R.B. D'Entrecasteaux sailed along New Guinea's east coast in 1793 it is quite probable that he saw the mountain chain of the Finisterre Range – he mentions high mountains – yet the name 'Finisterre' is not mentioned in his writing. Thus, we may assume that the term goes back to Jules S.C. Dumont d'Urville. In August 1827, Dumont d'Urville sailed through the Dampier Strait, reaching first the small Crown Island and then the larger Long Island, Arop (Nomsa) in the west, on the way sighting for the first time the four thousand metre high mountains on the Huon Peninsula. Dumont d'Urville (1882: 542) calls them "Montagnes du Finistère", literally 'mountains at the end of the world'. The big bay in the northwest of the mountains was named after his corvette *L'Astrolabe*.



Map Beginning 1: The Finisterre Range (hachured the Yupno Valley)

The English captain John Moresby was the first European to name the individual mountains, the two highest peaks of which were named Gladstone and Disraeli after the two statesmen. Later, the German Otto Finsch renamed them Kant and Schopenhauer Mountains (Finsch 1888: 120).

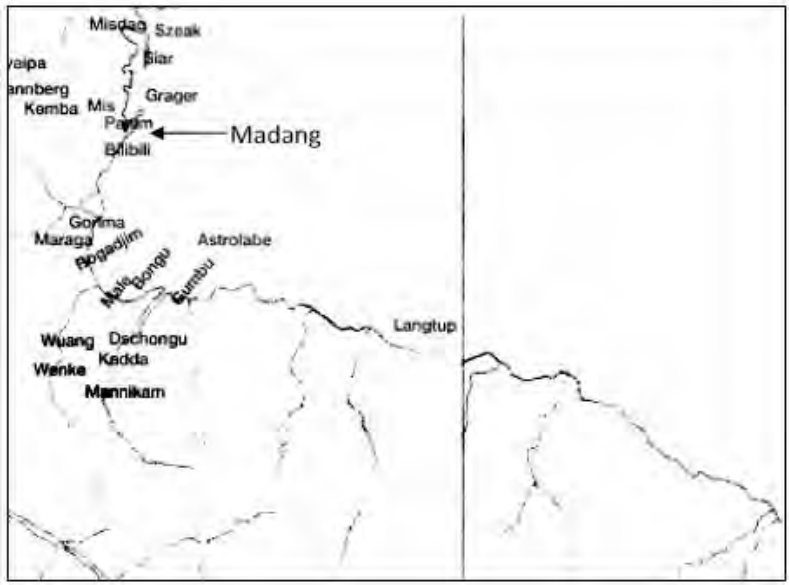
In 1876, when the Russian natural scientist Nicolai Miklouchо-Maclay set foot for the second time on shore in the Astrolabe Bay, he noticed in wonderment that the mountains had changed, because numerous spots on the mountain peaks had lost their forest vegetation. According to local people, just after his first visit a severe earthquake (followed shortly thereafter by a tidal wave) had struck the area (Miklouchо-Maclay 1975: 236-237). The Finisterre Range was presumed uninhabited – an opinion also held by Europeans in regard to the highlands of Papua New Guinea – and in the coming years it was mentioned several times in connection with planned and executed expeditions. I include a few examples below:

In 1883, Wilfred Powell presented his proposal to walk from the Ambernoli River (also called Mamberomno or today Mamberamo) to the Finisterre Range to the Royal Geographical Society, but this project was not realised (Wichmann 1910: 327-328). One year later, Otto Finsch, on behalf of the "Konsortium zur Vorbereitung und Errichtung einer Südsee-Compagnie" sailed with his ship *Samoa* along the coast of Papua New Guinea. He mentioned the Finisterre Mountains lying "in full pellucidity" in front of him (1888: 120) and was astonished about the sparse coastal population, which he attributed to decimation caused either by earthquakes or epidemics. In 1889, on behalf of the publisher Neven du Mont, Hugo Zöller, a correspondent for the Kölnische Zeitung, attempted to climb the two above-mentioned peaks. He began in Bogadjim, following the valley of the Kabenau River, but had to turn back (Zöller 1891). The Hungarian zoologist, Samuel Fenichel, planned in 1891-92 an expedition through the mountain range, but died before realizing it (Wichmann 1910: 539). In 1901, the botanist Friedrich Schlechter entered the Finisterre area, but at an altitude of only 600 metres "deep ravines forced him to turn back" (Wichmann 1910: 787). It was not until 1907 that Wilhelm C. Dammköhler and Otto Fröhlich accomplished the first crossing. They started out from Lae, walking along the Markham Valley to Astrolabe Bay (Fröhlich 1908).

The conquest of the Finisterre occurred much later and was carried out by the German Lutheran Neuendettelsau Mission Society, which spread to the west from their head office in Sattelberg (near Finschhafen,

east of Lae). In the thirties, visits in the Yupno area were sporadic, but after the Second World War mission stations, such as Tapen, were established and this started the 'occupation' of the area. By comparison, the Australian administration and its patrol officers played only a subordinate role, and the same is true for anthropological research.

In 1953, Peter Lawrence conducted research among the Ngaing, who live in the northern foothills of the mountain range (Lawrence 1964). In 1953, Carl A. Schmitz spent six months among the Wantoat, in the south western foothills of the Finisterre. He later spent two weeks walking through the Yupno and Nankina Valleys and published a report about this first visit in the Yupno Valley (Schmitz 1958). Besides scattered information in Schmitz (1960), nothing much is known about his visit to the Nankina Valley, and no relevant notes were found in Schmitz's estate. When the linguists Kenneth A. McElhanon and Father John Z'graggen visited the region, they attempted a typologisation of the Finisterre languages; the linguistic atlas of Stephen Wurm and Shiro Hattori (1981-1983) is based on their information.

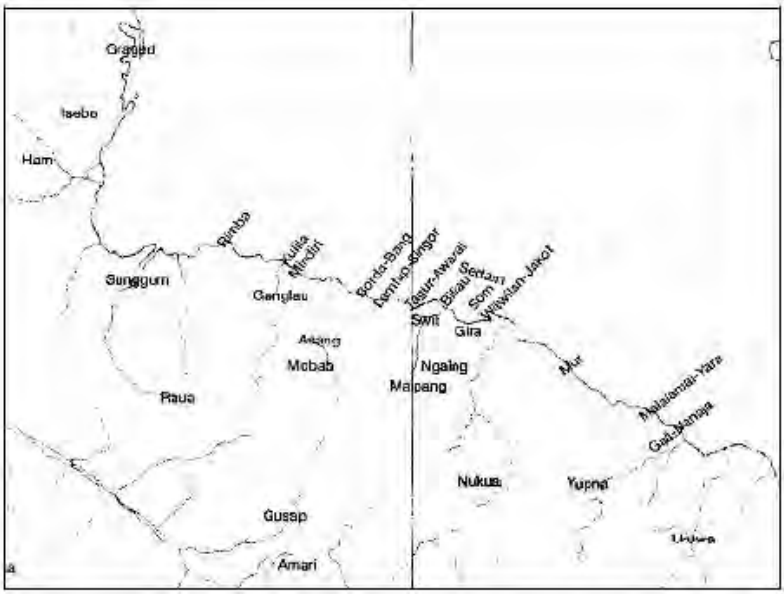


Map Beginning 2: Mentioned languages between 1873 and 1907

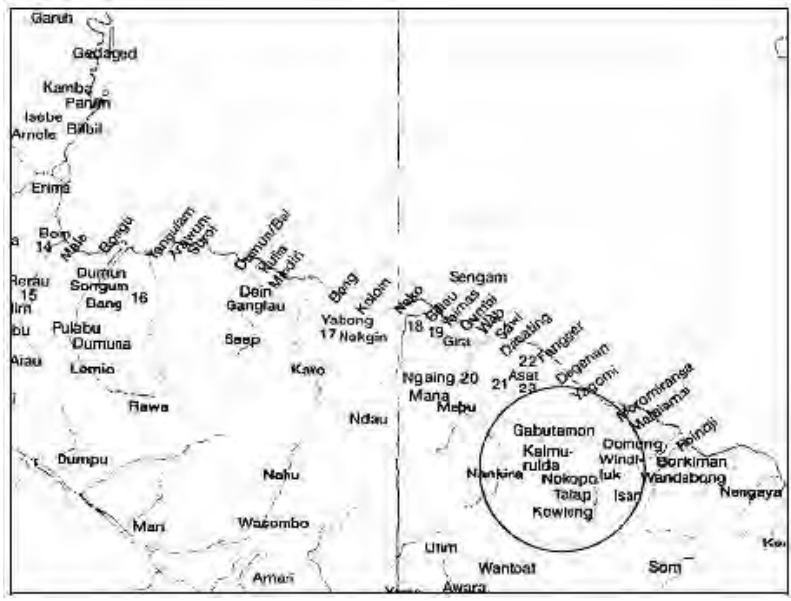
In 1960, Schmitz published his own list of languages, which was accompanied by a poorly detailed map.

The Historical Atlas of Ethnic and Linguistic Groups in Papua New Guinea[1], a project of the Institute of Anthropology at the University of Basel, is a compilation of material published between 1873 and 1975 (structured in five periods, including maps) about different parts in Papua New Guinea. While in the first time period, 1873-1907 (*see* Map Beginning 2) only few linguistic groups along the coast were known, knowledge about the languages and ethnic groups in the interior of the Huon Peninsula grew continuously after the Second World War (1947-1959, *see* Map Beginning 3). On Map Beginning 4 (1960-1975), the upper Yupno are also indicated with their linguistic terms, Kewieng, Nokopo, and Isan.

Prior to the 1980s, there are very few scientific publications about the Finisterre, with the exception of its border region, the Ngaing and Wantoat, though the missionaries and patrol officers must certainly have known a lot about the area.



Map Beginning 3: Newly mentioned languages between 1947-1959



Map Beginning 4: Newly mentioned languages between 1960-1975

However, for them this meant a sort of knowledge useful for their work and they never thought of writing it down or publishing it. Yet, there was one exception: Patrol Officer Leigh G. Vial. Besides some small papers about the Wantoat (Vial 1937, 1938a), he wrote the first attempt of an overview of the ethnography and the languages of the area. In 1938, it was unfortunately published in an obscure place: the appendix of the Australian government's *Report to The League of Nations*. As a result, it was not noticed by Schmitz. From the 1980s, more thorough research was conducted in the region. Douglas Dalton presented initial information about the Rawa (Dalton 1988, 2002), Claudia Gross worked about the Upper Awara (Wantoat, Gross 1998), Sam Kaima published several articles about the Wantoat's indigenous knowledge (*cf.* Kaima 1999, 2000b), Wolfgang Kempf and Elfriede Hermann wrote about the Ngaing (Hermann 1995; Kempf 1996), Verena Keck reported on Taip village in the Nankina region (Keck 1992), Christine Kocher Schmid, Verena Keck and I wrote, in the context of a research project of Basel University, about the Upper Yupno (Kocher Schmid 1991; Wassmann

1992a, 1992b, 1993a; Niles 1992; Keck 2005). The anthropologist Christin Kocher Schmid, together with the Christensen Research Institute Madang, has written on ethnobotanical topics in the village of Nokopo, Verena Keck, in collaboration with the physicians Sandra Staub and Andreas Allemann (Basel), wrote about the local medical system in Gua, and I myself, in cooperation with the psychologist Pierre R. Dasen (Geneva), reported on the village of Gua near Teptep. Here in Gua further collaborative field research and publication took place with the ethnomusicologists Don Niles (Port Moresby) and Raymond Ammann (Innsbruck), and with the cognitive scientists Rafael Núñez and Kensy Cooperrider (San Diego). The psychologist Mirjam Hölzel (Heidelberg) worked with children of the village Gua on the 'Theory of Mind' (Hölzel and Keck 2013). Since 2002, the anthropologist James Leach has published many papers about the Nekgini speakers on the Rai Coast and further publications are anticipated from the linguist James Slotta (Chicago) concerning the village of Nian near Nokopo (see Slotta 2014). In 2013, the most recent research in Gua village was conducted by R. Núñez, K. Cooperrider, and J. Slotta.

While more and more outsiders in increasing numbers came into the Yupno region, such as the above mentioned researchers, developmental aid volunteers, people employed at the subdistrict centre Teptep station, and the Health Centre, at the same time many younger Yupno returned home, who had migrated to the towns in search for education and jobs. Many were disillusioned from the urban live in towns and coastal areas, and even when they graduated with good grades in secondary school, they failed to find jobs there. Back home they built new houses, usually in the traditional style and well adapted to the climate. There, they live in a subsistence economy, based on gardening. Today, an internal conflict is palpable in the village Gua between Christians who have turned away from local traditions and now spend Sunday morning in church. On the other side are those who want to keep many of their old but adapted traditions and often disappear, living in their garden houses and meeting one another outside the settlement. Admittedly, with the arrival with the mission in the 1950s, traditional men's houses have been burnt to the ground, the initiation of men has been banned and many cult objects have been buried, yet, many traditions live on.

Many Yupno cherish the village school, the water supply system, medical support at the Health Centres in Teptep and Kangulut, and the airfield. Still, those travelling to the coastal towns of Madang or Lae

must walk two days downhill to catch one of the ships on the Rai coast (or two days uphill via Kewieñ and Wantoat to the road to Lae). Quite influential and of ongoing importance is the vegetable project of Ernest Haab, a Swiss agriculture development worker of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, who, in the 1980s, introduced new European vegetables and marketed them in the hotels of the coastal towns. This earned some men in Gua and in other villages a modest income in cash – despite vegetable cultivation being traditionally a female domain. This clever double engagement, to hold on 'traditional' concepts and practices on the one hand, and, on the same time and the other hand, to be open for new forms of knowledge and Christian belief, was also noticeable in the respected and recently deceased (2012) Megau, who has two sons: Paul, who is a Christian and participates actively in the vegetable project and Wuli, a traditionalist, who is well versed in all that was forbidden by the mission. Asked why his sons' curricula vitae turned out so differently, he replies: "I do not know what the future holds in store for me, but in this manner I am well-funded in both directions".

Pastor Faiu, a Lutheran, is a remarkable person. Every Sunday, he holds mass in the village church. Still, he keeps a keen interest in the own traditions and he participates with great enthusiasm in debates about the Yupno past. With his humour, his diplomacy and considerate ways he became an indispensable mediator with all the other villagers and one of the interlocutors I worked with most.

The written history of the Finisterre Range from a European point of view – the colonial intrusion and the proselytizing – is comparably short, but well documented. Nevertheless, let us change this perspective and attempt to describe the Yupno's past. Only few elderly men know and are willing to share their oral history that they recall in bits and pieces. It can be assumed that in former times due to their nomadic lifestyle less people lived in today's Yupno territory (Schmitz 1958); their cultural practices resembled those of the people in the neighbouring Wantoat and Nankina Valleys. In the middle of the 17th century, a massive volcanic eruption on Arop Island (Long Island) was followed by a 'time of darkness'; its recollections can be found in many parts of Papua New Guinea (Blong 1982; Allen and Frankel 1991: 96). Arop islanders had to leave their island and began to settle along the coast of the mainland. In the course of time, some of these groups walked up into today's mountainous Yupno Valley and adapted their economic, social and religious traditions accordingly.

Essential Questions

Although it is a small and remote world in the Finisterre Range, important and general applicable questions are nonetheless posed. My research among the Yupno began in 1986, two years after my first visit in the Finisterre Range, and it has continued to this very day. Needless, but still important to say, the following presentation, just like any monograph, is partially subjective, shaped by and limited to the times I had spent in the field and it is based on the knowledge Yupno people shared with me and what I could understand of it. Although I frequently use the expression 'the Yupno' for readability purposes, the views I present are those from individual Yupno people mainly from the village Gua. However, other people from the village Gua as well as from other Yupno places might have slightly different emphases and points of view.

The monograph is based on an in-depth ethnography and on archival material. The attention is focused on the Yupno's point of view and it is their voices that should be heard 'between the lines'; therefore, two extensive debates that are so typical for the problem-solving strategies of the people, are rendered. Many research topics have been investigated in an interdisciplinary way. Researchers from neighbouring disciplines joined my research about various topics: the body-part number system, the sorting tasks, the hot-cool-cold-system, the analysis of individual melodies and the cultural conceptualisations of time and space. Linguist James Slotta, who did research in a neighbouring village, shed light on the complex linguistic situation. These diverse forms and intensities of collaboration are mirrored in the distinctive structure of this book: chapters are included that were authored (in the case of James Slotta) or co-authored by these colleagues and myself, representing our joint research experience.

Three basic cultural-cognitive topics are the main themes of this book:

A) The concept of the human being. This includes questions such as: what constitutes a person (the body, the vital essence, two souls, the physical dichotomy and the canonical position: gently bowing and looking downhill (Chapter 2, "The Concept of the Person"); furthermore the unique and distinctive *koñgap* melody that marks a person's identity, because the Yupno sing at each other (Chapter 3, "The Sound of a

Person"); and the difference between the hot, cool and cold state of humans and their interpretation in debates and dreams (Chapter 4, "To Be Cool").

B) A person's location in space: the perception of a person's surrounding environment where the Yupno River is a landmark and the question how these surroundings are mentally depicted (Chapter 5, "Downhill and Uphill"); and

C) A person's concept of time: the geocentric and not only egocentric perception of space (a predominantly European concept) and the related time where the unknown future lies uphill, while the (known) past is located downhill (Chapter 6, "Time in Space").

The Morning of June 25

Let us turn and look at the Yupno's daily life for example in the village Gua, in Motamba's house, by using the morning routine of June 25, 1987, in the course of which many important topics of this book were addressed. Motamba is a fifty year old, quiet man (*see* Illustration 2.6), he lived next to the house I shared with Verena Keck. His first wife died years ago, in the same way as did the daughter of his first marriage; she had been unmarried and given birth to her daughter Roti, then she died shortly afterwards. In a second marriage Motamba is married to Varenañ, a thirty-year-old woman from the village Nian, they have a twelve-year-old son, Uñgwep. Uñgwep and Roti (who actually is Motamba's granddaughter and who is younger than Uñgwep) grow up like brother and sister. All four live in a house situated on the edge of the village, on the path uphill to Kewieñ; like all houses it is orientated downhill, in the direction to the mouth of the river Yupno, on the left hand side of the ovally imagined valley. Here follows a shortened, but still verbatim protocol of what happened this morning. All participants belong to the Tuval clan and its partner clan Ngandum.

In Motamba's house: present are Motamba, his wife Varenañ and their two children, Roti und Uñgwep. It is 6 o'clock in the morning, daybreak. Varenañ gets up, and lights a fire. Now everyone gets up. Everyone is sitting at the elongated fire place that stretches along the house's oval floor plan (Varenañ and Roti are sitting on the left hand side

and Motamba and Ungwep on the right hand side), they warm some sweet potatoes, that were already roasted the day before.[2]

> Roti [to Varenañ]: Give me a sweet potato!
>
> Motamba: It is no longer dark, it is not yet light, take this one [sweet potato] and blow into the fire, to make it glow, do not sit around in the dark, but go outside!
>
> Roti: Get up yourself and go outside!
>
> Motamba: The bush uphill looks completely different [two days ago, two women carelessly started a bushfire above the village].
>
> Uñgwep to his father Motamba: Your T-shirt is torn or what happened?
>
> Motamba: I did not wash it [coughing].
>
> Varenañ: Yesterday [pointing in front of her] I brought my pig uphill; I left it there [in her garden Gualbok, the 'place of the *tiktik* grass blades', above the village].
>
> Motamba: Did you see the sun? The sun is much too strong, why did you bring the pig up there?
>
> Varenañ angrily: No, it is standing in a shady place, under trees. Everything is withered, as if fire would be burning everywhere. The place is desiccated and the ground is hard. How should the pig dig in it?
>
> Motamba: At last give me a [new] net bag. Several times I remind you, you do not listen, this net bag here is old.
>
> Varenañ even angrier: Oh, you probably want one of the large pig-net bags [only worn by women]?

Varenañ stuffs sweet potatoes into the net bag and without a word of greeting she and Roti leave (go down) the house. Both are going to their garden in Gualbok.

> Motamba to Uñgwep: Turn the wood so that it will glow. You see, now it glows.

Motamba: When you come back downhill, there is still firewood lying around, I've put it there [in the bush above the village, at Wamenokaa, the 'place of many tree bugs'], carry it down. [This morning Uñgwep, together with other boys, plans to go into the bush, uphill the village, in order to hunt rats and birds.]

Uñgwep: Mm [yes]. [He is playing a jaw harp made of bamboo.]

Motamba [relating his last night's dream]: We fell asleep, my father was also there, we made a *koñgap* dancing feast at the Yupno River, but this drum did not resound, it did not resound at all, I think someone will die. However, I could not see who (...) [coughing]. Is Mbasona still here, oh?

Uñgwep: I have not heard anything yet [Mbasona lives one house further down].

At 7:10 they are leaving the house. Uñgwep grabs his bow and arrow. Afterwards, Motamba with bow and arrow follows him and also leaves the house; he locks it, blocks it and walks to Mbasona's house.

Motamba: Manao! [On the way, he meets Manao, a man from the neighbouring village Uskokop, 'the village above', who stayed with his mother's relative in Gua.] Mbasona, I am coming!

Mbasona: Morning!

The following persons are present in Mbasona's house: Mbasona, the son of Motamba's sister; his wife Njenu, who comes from Urop; his small daughter; another child, who slept there; Kamake's small son, the grandchild of Motamba's brother; Gayu, Mbasona's old mother, she is also Motamba's sister. They are sitting around the fire, eating sweet potatoes. Motamba enters and sits down (on the right hand side of the fireplace, thus conceptually on the right hand side of the Yupno River).

Motamba: I want to chew a betel nut.

Mbasona: There are none! [addressing his wife Njenu] Ah, take down some *bumbum* [dried reed grass laying on the rack above the fire] and light them, take some big ones and light them.

Motamba to the girl: Come here!

Mbasona: *Ao, ao*! [Come here! He sings the girl's *koñgap* melody.]

Motamba: Come here, come; the two of us, we are sitting together, *aweh* [good so].

Mbasona to the girl: Sit so, the two of you now sit there.

Motamba: The two of us we sit there.

[All talk to the small girl]: Good so, yes, you two, you sit there (...)
[Everyone is laughing]

A woman enters the house; it is Manane, Motamba's older brother's widow. She sits down (on the left sight of the fireplace, thus conceptually on the left hand side of the Yupno River).

Njenu [to the boy]: Go and talk to the cat to come here. [Manane sings Kamake's *koñgap* melody; Kamake is the boy's father. She, thus, communicates that she wants to go and that everybody else should also go to the gardens.]

Mbasona: If you want to go to Kamkwam, the 'place where everything grows quickly', then go!

(...)

Manane: I met her [Ngasi, a young woman] in Kukamet ['the hill, where people take off their net bags, and then carry them again', a place to rest], the two of us, we met her there; Oñgam [Njenu's child] was also walking past, because she wanted to feed her pig.

Njenu to Manane: Who took the digging stick, when you met?

Manane: It was Quanjañne [the father's sister's son], who took it.

Njenu: I looked up on this *mbiap* tree [and no longer could find my digging stick].

Mbasona sings Quanjañne's *koñgap* melody.

Mbasona to a child: Ah! Why does she play around? Ah, ah, no, no [do not cry]!

Manane to Njenu: I'll take the two [children] along, I bring the two back [to my house]. I follow, the two of you, go ahead [to the garden].

Njenu: Yes!

Jurenu to Kamake's child: Namesake, come sit down on my knee. [To all of them:] I was down [at the village square], sat together with Numenepe, then I came up [Numenepe is the father of Motamba's older brother's wife].

Njenu: Is Numenepe here?

Jurenu: He said to Erarape [the father's brother's son], when he was walking uphill, that I should come down.

Mbasona: Did you go downhill?

Njenu to Mbasona: He told you, he had been sitting together with Numenepe and now he had come up.

Jurenu whistles. Njenu leaves the house; it is 7:50. Everybody leaves. Motamba walks on the trail to Mundogongowañ, 'the place below the dropping rocks'.

Notes

1 The Historical Atlas of Ethnic and Linguistic Groups in Papua New Guinea, an ambitious project of the Institute of Anthropology at Basel University, begun by Meinhard Schuster, is a compilation of published sources between 1873 and 1975 (structured in five periods, including maps) about different parts in Papua New Guinea. Its aim is to provide an overview of the distribution and location of ethnic groups and languages, and, as a reference book, to contribute to the history of anthropology in this country. As of now, two volumes have been published (Keck 1995, Wassmann 1995b). In the first period (1873-1907), only a few languages are mentioned and localized around Madang (*see* Map Beginning 2); in the years 1908-1921 a differentiation of the languages around Madang and in the eastern part of the Huon Peninsula becomes known and the first languages in the Markham Valley are mentioned; in the period 1922-1946, for the first time, highland languages appear on language maps and the knowledge of the interior languages of the Finisterre is slowly increasing; the years 1947-1959 bring a flood of new languages especially in the highlands, and in addition, more research on the linguistic situation in the Finisterre and along the Rai Coast

results in a more detailed knowledge of languages (*see* Map Beginning 3). During the period 1960-1975, linguistic research has been intensified and most of the languages in the Finisterre as well as in other parts of Papua New Guinea are mentioned and localized (*cf.* Keck 1995, *see* Map Beginning 4). Linguist James Slotta describes the linguistic situation in the Finisterre language research more detailed in the following Chapter 1.

2 Parts of the following daily conversations have been published in Wassmann (1993a: 172-188).

1 The Setting. When Heaven Fell to Earth

Prologue

Daom is an old man from Urop, the place where the *urop* tree grows. Urop is a village situated 2,500 m above sea level in the Yupno Valley, Finisterre Range (*see* Map 1.1), and Daom is talking about his ancestors:

> One, no, there were two men from Nomsa [Long Island or Arop in the Astrolabe Bay], 'the thing, that rises like the stem of a fern from the sea', who carried a drum to Ronji [a place on the Rai Coast close to Saidor, situated just opposite Long Island; *see* Map Beginning 1]. They came to Ronji, and those who had arrived earlier were all sick. Thus, the two arrived and held a dance. They sang and sang, and one man had no drum; no, he had no drum. So it happened that one day they held a dance, and the man without a drum fought the men who had drums. Thereafter, they fought; they fought with each other and against each other, and some separated and wandered upwards [into the Yupno Valley].
>
> The men and women who had separated went upwards and remained there for a long time; we go there to fetch betel nuts. Four men built a house in this area. They came, built a house and lived there. Here they were, and again some groups came here. Well, the group of people that had come first made room for the following group. They went into the bush, through the bush and they then came down to the river Kael [a tributary of the Yupno]. There they were. And the men of the second group, who had left the first settlement close to the coastal shore, also came. They came up, crossed the mountain, and went down to the place where they built a settlement for themselves. They built a settlement and stayed there (...)
>
> They then left the settlement, went some distance upwards and settled in Koponkaa [*1*, *see* Map 1.1]. This is a plot of land in Koponkaa, 'the place of many hamlets', and they also settled on another plot of land, which we call Tukwalen; there they settled. (...) Then they met up there in Uroplen, 'the hillside where the *urop* tree grows' [*2*], and they came and settled down on the steep slope [beneath what is today the village of Urop]. They came and lived down there, and they built a men's house,

they built a men's house and they remained. I also was born there. When I was small, I saw it, all our people lived there.

Well, my ancestors, in the time of my grandfather, left this place, the Sandul *mbema* [*3*], 'the men's house of the *sandul* bird', as it was called. They then went to Kovawuklen [*4*], 'the hillside where clay had been found'. Well, when the Mission came, we also left [under pressure from the Mission] these places, and we came to Isan. Now we plant our gardens there as well as in this place, Kovawuklen. Here too, we plant our gardens. We plant coffee beans; we lay out gardens. This is all. [Recorded July 26, 1987]

Time of Darkness

I

The culture of the Yupno people is often described as an old mountain culture; for example, the mission's records speak consistently of a mountain tribe (Saueracker 1929: n.p.), of typical mountain dwellers (H. Wagner n.d.: 1), or of mountain people (Munsel 1951: 2)[1]. Patrol officers also emphasise in their reports that in general the health of all the mountain natives was good (Rylands 1945: Appendix A), and praise them as excellent agriculturists (Steven 1952/53a: 5) and, in summarising, they state, that "the Yupnas [sic] impressed as being well content within their own environment" (Trollope 1954/55: 7).

The upper Yupno Valley is a typical alpine region: narrow, with steep precipices and villages situated along tributary rivers (*see* Illustration 1.1). In 1956, Carl Schmitz (1958: 337f) was the first anthropologist, who spent three weeks perambulating the region, which he considered to have been previously uninhabited. Semi-nomadic people used it as hunting grounds and only later are people believed to have moved in from the west (Wantoat) and the north (Nankina). Patrilineal clans, whose members spoke non-Austronesian languages, then lived on their territory, near to the place of their mythical creation: a bamboo grove; Austronesian groups settled along the coast. It was not until after the Second World War that this situation started to change.

Yupno culture is distinct from those of neighbouring groups in two respects: houses are surrounded by high fences and built in the shape of a 'beehive', resembling enormous haystacks. The upper Yupno villages are situated at an altitude of more than 2,000 meters, and are among the

settlements at the highest altitude in the provinces of Madang and Morobe. The people are semi-nomadic, especially in the elevated villages, and they are well adapted to the cold climate of the high mountains. Yupno villages may remain deserted for months, when their inhabitants move to higher steppes where they live in widely scattered compounds, hunt marsupials and collect the nuts from the pandanus palm. In the past, these were the most important economic activities.

The other distinct characteristic is the *koñgap,* the 'voice of the spirit of the dead' (*koñ*: spirit of the dead; *gap*: dance). Each Yupno, man or woman, owns his own short melody, which belongs to a person like his own name – it is a person's sound. This melody is communicated in dreams or invented by its owner. In the first mission reports, yodelling shouts are mentioned. If a Yupno, while walking through a garden or through the bush, senses that someone is present, he will sing the melody of the particular landowner. In doing so, he identifies himself as an insider, someone whose position within the territory is clearly indicated. Only foreigners, who in the past were considered synonymous with enemies, are noiseless, because they do not know the personal melodies (*see* Chapter 3).

The image of a deep-rooted mountain culture, borne by an old-established mountain society, is partially misleading. According to Yupno people, most though not all Yupno ancestors originate from Long Island, the volcanic island in Astrolabe Bay. In the prologue, the venerable Daom described how his ancestors left the island, settled first on the Rai Coast and later, after some dispute, moved in groups into the Yupno Valley. This origin of some of the Yupno – unexpected by any foreign observer – is for themselves a much-discussed topic. Again Daom narrates the reasons for the emigration from Long Island:

> I am telling the story about heaven that fell down to earth. First this substance fell down little by little, and they, the ancestors, said: "Later a great amount of this stuff will come down". So they said, and they built a bigger, stronger house. And quite a lot of people went inside and filled this new house. And this stuff came down and covered all the crops and all the houses. Everything was buried underneath it. This stuff destroyed all the gardens, and all provisions were ruined. This happened, and it lasted about three to four weeks. During this time there was no sun and no moon, everyone lived in darkness. However, then they heard a bird and came outside and saw the entire place was white, completely white. Then the sun came out, and this stuff, this white stuff, dissolved. And

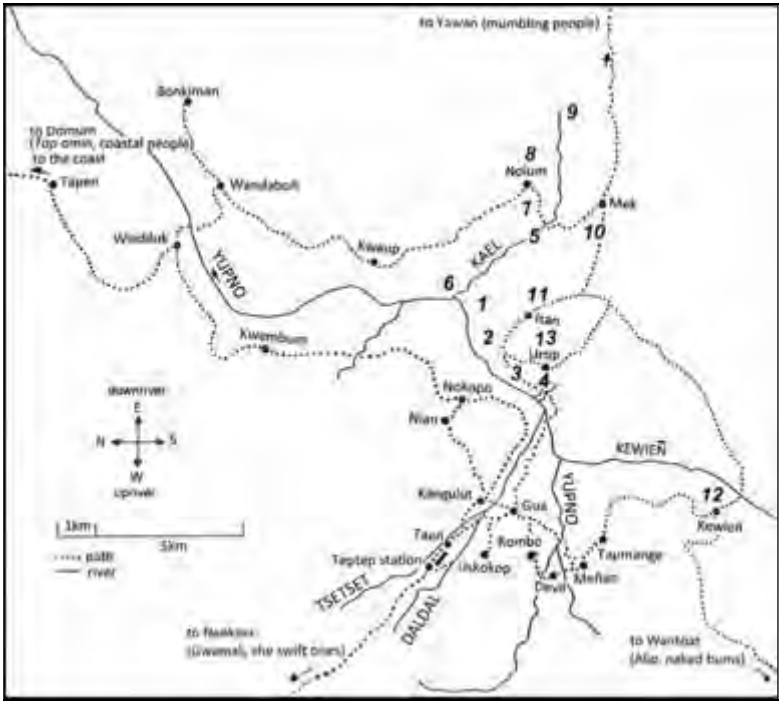
> they built new houses, planted new gardens and some children and all the dogs and all the pigs were very hungry – and they died. Later on, there were again only big men there, they laid out new gardens, these produced food; they ate and were there. All thought that heaven had fallen down. [Recorded May 15, 1987]

The geomorphologist, Russell J. Blong (1982), describes how he investigated terrain in the Western Province in the highlands of Papua New Guinea and found volcanic ash (tephra). Later on, he discovered oral traditions in some ethnographic records that included references of a time of darkness. Blong scientifically examined the volcanic ash, and with the help of comparisons, came to the conclusion that it could originate from an eruption on Long Island. Relying on historical facts, e.g., William Dampier's drawing from 1700, showing the same profile of the island that exists today, and, most significantly, citing radiocarbon data, Blong concluded that a big eruption occurred between 1630 and 1680. According to Bryant Allen and Stephen Frankel (1991: 96), Huli people in the Southern Highlands talk about a "great dark cloud [that] came over the sky blocking out the sun and spreading darkness (...)" They conclude that this description almost certainly refers to a widespread fall of tephra, or ash from a distant volcanic eruption "(...) [that] probably took place in the mid-seventeenth century and resulted from a catastrophic Krakatoa-like explosion on Long Island in the Bismarck Sea off the northern coast of New Guinea at a distance of more than 650 km from Tari" (1991: 96, note).

Two considerations could support this assumption. To begin with, Yupno genealogical data fit the presumed date, if one generation is assumed to be about 30 years. Different interlocutors (in 1987 most of these informants were around 30 years old) dated the emigration from Long Islands at 'ten generations ago'; i.e., around 1660. The move from the coast had supposedly happened seven generations earlier; thus, around 1750, the establishment of the village Nokopo, 'the place of the two related friends', was also about seven generations ago, and of the village Urop was six generations ago, therefore around 1780.

Secondly, the Yupno, like many other societies, especially in the Papua New Guinea highlands, have oral histories in which a time of darkness is mentioned that could be related to the eruption of the volcano (Allen and Wood 1980; Ballard 1998, 2009; Dureau 2001). Several eruptions took place on Long Island, the most recent of which was in

1952. The inhabitants were evacuated and resettled on the coast, where most of them still live today. Only two small settlements remain on the island.



Map 1.1: The Yupno Valley. The map is oriented downriver to the East, the numbers of the places are in italics and bold.

II

Five old men participated in a debate that took place on November 7, 1987 in Gua village: Kakaio, Manao, Opeke and two old men from a village of the southern flank of the valley. Here, they are called first and second old man, and are discussing how their ancestors left the island of Nomsa (Long Island).

Kakaio: On Nomsa this man collected bamboo. On Nomsa this man cut off bamboo cane and carried it to the water, crossed it [the sea], he sorted a group of human beings, he broke the bamboo and threw it away [for each bamboo two new human beings were created]. So he left the shore, sorting groups and breaking bamboo as he came up into the Yupno Valley. He arrived there where we live today and brought the Mek and the Nolum along [the inhabitants of the two villages Mek and Nolum on the right side of the valley, *see* Map 1.1]. In Mbemolek, 'the place of the men's house in the back' [*5*], he sat down, broke a bamboo and threw it away. This one grew upwards and broke into pieces, which turned into real human beings, who jumped out and settled there. Later on, they branched out: one group went to Mek, one group came here [to Nolum, colloquial Domum, 'the place of the wild coconut palm on the earth wall']. They came and settled around the men's houses Moapolek and Opapmivil [*7, 8*]. Others followed the water of the Yupno and Kael River all the way to the source [the men's house Mbelak, *9*]. When the time of the Bible dawned, they were called together and all of them met in Donatum. The [clans] Nasom and Kandatmevil sat there and cooked food together, and exchanged wooden plates [so they became a clan pair]. So it was. Now, all of them settled here.

Kakaio talking to Manao: Come and sit down and talk.

First old man: All immigrants split into two groups, they came down the mountain, those in Katsubuk [*6*], but all met again in Mbemolek [*5*]. Here they branched out again and they became many.

Opeke: All [the people of the second group] followed the path of Megak [between the coastal village Ronji on the coast and Nolum, *8*], there we picked up our betel nuts, then all of them sat down in Komitwandat. Here, they planted a certain coastal tobacco variety, they called it *wandat*. They [the people of the first group] followed the river Yupno and stopped in Mbemolek [*5*]. They [the people of the second group] sat in Komitwandat and planted tobacco. Later, they sat in Katsubuk [*6*], again at a later date they all got together in Mbemolek [*5*]. They sat here and separated. Some walked all the way to Ndapin [nearby Nolum], and all the Mek [the ancestors of today's village Mek] settled in Kaya [*10*].

First old man: Then came the Bible [in the 1950s]. We all settled, scattered in a wide area. They called us together, all came together and now all also live together.

Manao: I am looking and looking for my betel pepper, I do not find anything, I keep on looking in my net bag, still (...)

Second old man: I was tired; I slept. Then you called me, a child passed by and woke me up and I stood up. I thought, I am going and sit with them [in my house].

Manao: All people met in Mbemolek [*5*] and there, they discovered the spirit of the dead [a bullroarer, said to be the voice of the ancestors, meaning: the male initiation, the island people adopt elements of the local culture]. They played around with the broken bamboo, carved it a bit, created an opening into it and suddenly a sound developed [the buzzing noise of the bullroarer]. Two women watched. "What are we doing with these two women?" They said: "We cut some more bamboo cane [containers] and give them to the women so they can go and get some water". However, both bamboo canes were not only open at the top, but also had a small hole at the bottom. When the two women wanted to scoop water, the water leaked again and again into the ground; they tried and tried again. The men, however, continued carving [their bullroarers]; they drilled some holes for the string. As the two women reappeared, suddenly the noise rang again. In their shock, the two women threw their canes away and one turned into a frog and the other into a *golda* banana plant [two very cold objects, *see* Chapter 4].

First old man: This happened in Mbemolek [*5*].

Second old man: It is true, we come from the coast, separated and came up. This death spirit [bullroarer] was hot, a man [from the Paab clan] held it, thinking, "to whom am I going to give it?"

First old man: I cannot give it to just anyone. Not until this time, the clans established themselves [whereby two clans always got together and formed a clan pair, in order to take care of the bullroarer].

Manao: Paab gave it to the Kabublen, the two of them became a clan pair. Thus, they did, and they built the first men's house as a place to store the bullroarer.

Manao: In former times, we feared this frog. Why? Well, in case we had looked at it, or had eaten it and then would have liked to go hunting, then we would not have found anything, all would have been cold. [Recorded November 7, 1987]