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MELANESIAN MASKS IN THE BISHOP MUSEUM

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PREFACE

Social scientists have passingly hinted at relationships between cultural foci, patterns, or values and their concrete expression in a work of art. For example, Raymond Firth, in Elements of Social Organization, says that symbolism in art has an important social function. Symbol is of common interest and knowledge and serves as a vehicle for the expression of values which are significant for the social relations of the people. An objective of primitive art is to produce an effective social symbolism.¹ John Honigmann, in Culture and Personality, writes of the possibility of a thematic analysis of plastic arts for clues to cultural personality.² This type of analysis has been made, for example, in Frankfort's Kingship and the Gods.³ However, the possibilities of such analysis are usually only mentioned in passing.

Further, Western artists have acknowledged the influence of exotic, primitive art on their works, but working in their own modern mediums they have given us no insights for understanding primitive art. A work of art, when we

¹ Raymond W. Firth, Elements of Social Organization (London, 1951), pp. 177-179.

² John J. Honigmann, Culture and Personality (New York, 1954), p. 133.

³ Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago, 1948).

know nothing of its creator, can exemplify either differences or similarities between the creator's culture and our own depending on the prejudices of the analyzer. One, then, must look at a work of art in the context of the society which produced it in order to get any clear idea of its meaning. If it is studied only descriptively we will know nothing of the emotional response that it was created to evoke and its cultural meaning will be lost.

With this in mind, I will present photographs and descriptions of ceremonial masks from Papuan Gulf, New Ireland, New Britain, New Caledonia, and New Hebrides now at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. The masks will be descriptively related to ceremonies in which they were used so that the cultural context and symbolism is made clear. Finally, stylistic definitions will be given for the local art styles and the regional style.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE CULTURAL BASIS OF ART

From time immemorial man has sought to enrich his life and interpret his experience through the medium of art. Artistic expression is often used as an example of the basic unity of mankind and is recognized as a part of all cultures. It is, however, a secondary aspect of culture rather than part of what Julian Steward has called the cultural core of social, economic, and religious patterns.¹ Bronislaw Malinowski distinguishes between primary biological needs and derived cultural needs. He says that for the satisfaction of the organic or basic needs of man a minimum set of conditions is imposed on each society and is solved by the construction of a new, secondary, or artificial environment which is culture. His theory attempts to show that "the basic needs and their cultural satisfaction can be linked up with the derivation of new cultural needs; that these new needs impose upon man and society a secondary type of determinism."²

At the base of human existence, then, are the biological needs. The core of social, economic, and religious patterns is derived from these biological needs and is instrumental in organizing a society. Where, then, shall

¹ Julian Steward, Theory of Culture Change (University of Illinois, 1955), p. 208.

² Bronislaw Malinowski, A Scientific Theory of Culture (University of North Carolina, 1944), p. 38.

we put art? Since it satisfies neither a basic biological need nor the need for cultural organization, let us say it comes from the mind. Perhaps, as Linton suggests,³ man's capacity for being bored is responsible for the creative desire to go beyond what is necessary for biological and social existence. Nevertheless, there must be a lack or need in men's lives for "Without the felt need, the imaginative potentialities will go unstimulated."⁴ This need is cultural and serves the function of giving additional meaning to men's lives. Art will here be termed secondary because it does not satisfy a basic biological need nor a need deriving from the cultural core but rather a need for creative expression.

Each society with its own peculiar cultural heritage has created these secondary aspects of culture to fit its own expressive needs and the results are often what gives a unique air to a society. Two societies, widely separated in time and space, may have similar economies or technologies and may be grouped together as a stage in a scheme of multilinear evolution such as Julian Steward has done with patrilineal bands and with ancient irrigation civilizations. Though the core elements may be comparable, a

³ Ralph Linton, The Study of Man (New York, 1936), p. 90.

⁴ Margaret Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea (New York, 1930), p. 244.

unique quality is still discernible in the art styles of the societies.

The traditional art style changes slowly, except in the case of intensive culture contact in which case it is often destroyed (or it degenerates) along with the institution that it served, e.g. religion. Often when we speak of other societies, especially if one is artistically oriented, it is these art traditions that immediately come to mind, because by the uniqueness of the style it is possible to separate one society from another. When we think of Greece, it may be the humanistic architecture or sculpture that comes to mind; when we think of Hawaii, possibly a carved symbol of a war god; or Indian, a multi-armed status of dancing Siva.

From what do these unique qualities derive? There are themes that crosscut the society that give to the culture a certain focus and these foci are symbolically reflected and expressed in art. For example, the humanistic Greek architecture and sculpture reflects the Greek ideal of man as the measure of things, the Hawaiian symbol of Kukailimoku shows the dominant place that war held in the minds of the ancient Hawaiians, and the Siva as Nataraja shows the emphasis on Brahmanistic religion. Through art a cultural value or idea can be expressed in a concrete way. The work will communicate its message, albeit in a symbolic way, in a shorthand manner, to the society. Art

then, is quasi-language based on feeling and emotion. It is a "language of feeling, mood, sentiment and emotional attitudes."⁵ And though difficult to explain in words, this language is capable of expressing the cultural focus in concentrated cultural symbols.

The concept of cultural focus, that is, "the tendency of every culture to exhibit greater complexity, greater variation in the institutions of some of its aspects than in others,"⁶ will be employed to show that the focus in the cultures with which this thesis is concerned is on ceremonialism, toward which the lives of the people are directed. The ceremonies are greatly dependent for their execution and effect on the associated art works. Because of the abundance of art work necessary for the successful completion of the ceremonies, art, an important part of Melanesian culture, is often elaborated at the expense of other aspects of culture.

Leslie White in The Science of Culture says that there are two basic ways of dealing with experience; one is through science, which deals with particulars in terms of universals. The second way of dealing with experience is through art, which deals with universals in terms of

⁵ Curt J. Ducasse, Art, the Critics, and You (New York, 1955), p. 52.

⁶ Melville J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology (New York, 1955), p. 484.

particulars.⁷ With art it is possible for any society to reduce the whole universe to an understandable level by particularizing it in a work of art.

In parts of Melanesia the focus of culture is on ceremonies that have existed long before and will continue to exist long after the present generation. Through the ceremonies and associated art works, the Melanesians bring the external world down to the level of particulars that they can comprehend, and then, by extension, the outer world becomes to them understandable and less fearful. They see the world as full of dread, and rather than struggle against the natural forces they submit to them. The gods demand submission and fear but when man represents them concretely they become more comprehensible.

I have tried so far to show that though art is only a secondary aspect of culture, it is so elaborated in some societies (including those with which this paper is concerned) that it becomes all important; it is the medium by which all life and experience is interpreted. Further, the style of art of these societies must be viewed in the context of ceremonies.

⁷ Leslie A. White, The Science of Culture (New York, 1949), p. 3.

CULTURE AND ART IN MELANESIA

Melanesia, comprised of the islands of the South Pacific northeast of Australia, including New Guinea, Bismarcks (Admiralties, New Ireland, and New Britain), Solomons, Santa Cruz, New Caledonia, Loyalties, New Hebrides, and Fiji, lies within the tropics south of the equator. The islands, rough and mountainous in character, are the tops of a sunken mountain system and volcanic action still occurs in various places. The temperature, generally in the 90's, varies about 15° between night and day, and decreases in the higher altitudes. The rainfall is heaviest during the northwest monsoon from December to April but varies depending on deflection by the mountains so that in leeward areas in some parts of the larger islands there is only enough rainfall to support open grassland. In most parts, however, the vegetation is dense tropical forest in which live wild pigs, crocodiles, mice, bats, rats, and hundreds of species of birds. This hot humid climate with its dense jungles and luxuriant plant life is often visited by violent storms and tidal waves.

The natives (of which there were an estimated two million at the time of European contact) are predominantly Papuans and Melanesians whose dark skins have given the name Melanesia (black islands) to the area. In the interior of the larger islands negroid pygmies are found and there is some Polynesian admixture along the Melanesian coasts.

The natives speak Austronesian and Papuan languages. The dialects are so numerous and diverse, however, that classification is exceedingly difficult.

Here, then, we have an area of excesses. High temperature, excessive humidity, dense, dark jungles, broken occasionally by rays of sunlight to expose brilliant leaves and blossoms or the plumage of the screeching birds. In the thick undergrowth are dangerous wild pigs, crocodiles, and snakes. And to add to the melodrama, there are unexpected tropical storms and volcanic eruptions besides the almost unceasing rain of the monsoon. No wonder that the natives feel inadequate in the face of these natural phenomena.

The natives live in small villages that they have cleared in the jungle and support themselves by horticulture, hunting, and fishing.⁸ Living is not particularly difficult in most places but the natives are often visited by tropical fevers, dysentery, colds, sores, and ulcers, which again add to the overall picture of excesses. The village groups, generally a few hundred or less, have no strict hierarchial organization. Often the groups are relatively isolated and hostile to outsiders. Headhunting and cannibalism are carried on only in certain localities

⁸ Throughout this paper I will use the present tense, although some of these practices have ceased to exist or have been greatly modified since European contact.

and organized warfare takes place only on special occasions. Specialized production and trade in certain commodities is engaged in by most groups and is often carried on in a ritual manner even though the objects are of real necessity.

Houses are either small family dwellings or large communal structures, made of a timber framework, covered with a roof of thatch, and tied together with vines, rattan, or cord. There is little or no furniture except for head or neck-rests and leaf mats. By far the dominating structure of many villages is the men's clubhouse which is the center of the ceremonial and religious life of the community. Often as high as 75 feet, the men's-house is strikingly differentiated from other buildings of the village by its dramatic structure and the huge masks and carvings that decorate it.

Little clothing is worn except for a tapa loin-cloth for men and a skirt-like fringe of finely shredded leaves for women. But this relative lack of clothing is supplemented by a profusion of ornaments of shell, such as arm rings, head and breast ornaments, necklaces, belts, leg ornaments, and ear and nose decorations. Animal teeth, pig tusks, and tortoise shell are used in addition to string, seeds, and fibers in various colors, fur, feathers, bright-colored flowers, and combs and hair ornaments of wood and bamboo. On ceremonial occasions face and body

are painted red with burned clay, black with soot, and white with lime from burned shells or coral, which has a binder of coconut or other oil. During these ceremonies, which are often the raison d'être of the lives of the natives, elaborate masks and huge head ornaments of bamboo and feathers are worn. Men often arrange the hair elaborately, anointing it with oil and red clay, adding stripes of fiber and bark, and bleaching it with lime to light yellow and brown.

The violence of nature, the extremes of climate, the sudden violent sicknesses, are forces that need appeasing and are mixed in native minds with supernatural ideas. Robert Redfield in The Primitive World and its Transformations tells us, "The mutual involvement of God and nature is, however, pretty plainly a common characteristic of most primitive or ancient world views. Sky and god, rain and deity are somehow together, aspects of the same thing."⁹ To appease these gods rituals are performed. Coupled with the natives' preference for bold color, which they see in the plants and bird plumages, the ceremonies have a dramatic intensity. The ceremonies, a focal point in their lives, are a spectacular outlet for their violent emotions.

⁹ Robert Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformations (New York, 1953), p. 102.

Art objects and especially masks are necessary paraphernalia for the ceremonies and these objects reflect the natives' preoccupation with dramatic, intense emotions. With their nightmarish qualities and their stylized overstatement and exaggeration, these objects, which are an outlet for the emotions of the artist, instill a spectre-like terror in the spectator. In this visualization of the invisible, the power to conjure up the supernatural and to capture it in a work of art, lies the genius of the Melanesian. Influenced by the excesses he sees all about him, he seizes the very spirit of the jungle. He infuses into a fear-inspiring object his own feeling of terror at his inadequacy in the face of terrifying natural forces. It is a chimerical apparition made real through the medium of art.

However, this art style, which (for lack of a better descriptive word) I have chosen to call expressionistic¹⁰ because it expresses the artists' collective, subjective emotions and sensations, is not universal in Melanesia. Among some Melanesians "we find nothing except possibly the crudest forms of surface decoration of their simple implements, clothing, or perhaps their own bodies,"¹¹ related

¹⁰ Expressionism as used here is not to be confused with the 20th century expressionistic movement in Western art which aimed at an individual style and symbolism (see p. 16).

¹¹ Albert B. Lewis, The Melanesians. People of the South Pacific (Chicago, 1951), p. 182.

perhaps to the extreme difficulties of gaining a living. Among other Melanesians, as the Arapesh of New Guinea, there is a lack of belief in their own artistic abilities.¹² While with still other Melanesians as the Manus in the Admiralties, art objects are traded by local specialists¹³ and children are not encouraged to exercise their imaginations.¹⁴

The two dominant art styles in Melanesia will be termed expressionistic where the appeal is to the emotions which are heightened by exaggerated form and color, and formalistic where the appeal is to the eye because of a controlled form.

The expressionistic art style is found at its best in the Sepik River area, Huon Gulf, Torres Straits, Papuan Gulf, New Britain, New Ireland, New Hebrides, and New Caledonia. In these areas masks are an important art form and ceremonies dominate the lives of the people. Some features are exaggerated and some so repressed that they are barely noticeable. Maximum use of color contrast is often made, usually in black, white, and red. The faces bear a terrorizing grimace and costumes are sometimes worn

¹² Margaret Mead, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies (New York, 1950), p. 45.

¹³ Margaret Mead, Growing Up in New Guinea (New York, 1930), p. 9.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 256.

to hide the human body. The masks present a nervous, intense look well calculated to inspire with fear and awe (Figures 3 and 4).

The formalistic style is found in the Massim area of New Guinea, the Admiralties, and the Solomons. The art of these three areas has a rather sophisticated appearance, art for art's sake, in contrast to the more spontaneous and uncouth beauty of the expressionistic style. Tribes in these three areas make no masks, and though they do have ceremonies, they do not try to terrify by masked dancing or theatrical suspense. The forms are three-dimensional with geometric surface designs in low relief, conducted in a small, delicate, and controlled systematic way. Human figures, though rare, are rather naturalistic and dull, especially in the Solomons. These people prefer conventionalized designs, often of birds, and close attention is paid to the technical execution of detail and extreme refinement of form and surface. Black as an all-over color is often used and sometimes red in the Admiralties. The white decorative design is inlaid shell or lime. In general the art is decorative and abstract and creates by its balanced volume and systematic design a feeling of repose (Figures 1 and 2).



FIGURE 1. CARVED HEAD FROM THE SOLOMON ISLANDS. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (C2609)



FIGURE 2. CARVED PADDLE FROM THE MASSIM AREA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (8783)

THE FORMALISTIC STYLE



FIGURE 3. MASK FROM THE GULF OF PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1140)



FIGURE 4. MASK FROM NEW CALEDONIA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (10,228)

THE EXPRESSIONISTIC STYLE

Note; The numbers in parenthesis following the legend are the museum specimen numbers.

The people of the Massim have been characterized as orderly, economical, persistent, and precise.¹⁵ These same generalizations are also characteristic of their art for it takes persistence to execute the precise, detailed, orderly designs found in their art work. (Figure 2)

Raymond Firth says, "I believe that there are universal standards of technical efficiency. An object, whether it is called a work of art or not, can be judged by these universal aesthetic standards, which are primarily those of its form."¹⁶ To him these objects would no doubt be first rate art.

The expressionistic art has none of the sophistication of the formalistic style. Isolated works in the expressionistic style can hardly be appreciated in terms of pure aesthetics except bizarreness for the sake of the bizarre. They do not appeal by form alone. They must, rather, be considered as a part of the whole dramatic ritual that constitutes the focus of these cultures. Inasmuch as these societies are intensely concerned with the successful completion of ceremonies, everyone is directly or indirectly concerned with art. Reality is revealed to them through

¹⁵ Alfred L. Kroeber, Anthropology (New York, 1948), p. 617.

¹⁶ Raymond Firth, Elements of Social Organization (London, 1951), p. 161.

art; it is their way of ordering human experience. Gregory Bateson has described the Iatmul (Sepik River) as emphasizing and valuing pride, self assertion, harshness, and spectacular display.¹⁷ The masks, in their distortion and boldness of volumes and color, vividly portray the cultural inclination toward harshness and self-assertion. They are the most important stage properties in the spectacular ceremonies. The artistic interpretation is toward stylization, conventionalization, and distortion rather than naturalistic representation of the human figure. There is little rendering of animal figures except where they are incorporated with the human figure.

A work of explanation is necessary regarding my use of the term expressionistic. About the time of World War I there originated in Europe a new theory of art aimed at freely expressing the emotional reactions of the artist. This artistic theory, called expressionism, presented inner, subjective emotions in non-naturalistic terms. European expressionism was often aimed at presenting an individual style. Though we are able to recognize an overall expressionistic movement, we are still able to tell a Matisse from a Kandinsky because of individual style. It is with this reservation that I apply expressionism to Melanesian art.

¹⁷ Gregory Bateson, Naven (Stanford, 1958), p. 108.

Although the finished products of the expressionistic styles in both Europe and Melanesia are distorted, stylized, and non-naturalistic, the volitions that produced them are entirely different. In Europe an individual style is sought, while in Melanesia the artist works within the conventionalized art tradition. André Malraux feels the latter is "an art of collective subjectivism, so to speak, in which the artist invents forms deriving from his inner consciousness, yet recognisable by all, thus mastering with his art not only what the eye perceives but what it cannot see."¹⁸ The Melanesian art works are the end product of an art tradition that has evolved over hundreds of years. The primitive artist works within the art tradition defined for him by his culture. Though he may make some adjustment, it is a creative individual interpretation of an existing type rather than the creation of a new type. In Europe the artist working in the expressionistic style makes a conscious attempt for individualism.

But even with this reservation I feel justified in calling the Melanesian style expressionistic because the end product has an overall emotional quality. Expressionism here is used as a "feeling" of inner, subjective emotions

¹⁸ André Malraux, The Voices of Silence (New York, 1953), p. 547.

that are stirred or excited by a work of art. Whether or not these emotions enter into the production of the object I cannot say as we have no statement of this kind by a Melanesian artist; however, it seems to me that excited emotions motivate these works rather than quiet and repose. These emotions are culturally induced by the associated ceremonies and no doubt are vividly remembered when new objects are to be produced. Similarity in feeling can be inferred in that European artists did not "discover" the expressionistic art of Melanesia until they themselves began working in an expressionistic way. The affinity they felt was that of one artist for the works of another.

Expressionistic art in Europe is difficult for the masses to understand because of its individualistic nature. Not so the expressionistic art of Melanesia. Here the art can be understood by everyone and often everyone is an artist. The style suggests a submission to the supernatural forces of the universe, the acceptance of the unknown, the natives' frightened emotions. Influenced by excesses all about him, the artist reflects these excesses in over-exaggeration and through exaggeration comes the emotional quality of expressionism. It is an emotional feeling that is culturally induced by ceremonies and manifested in an art style.

I invite the sophisticated, scientifically rational mind of the 20th century Westerner to suspend disbelief and transport himself via his "histrionic sensibility"¹⁹ to the land of the primitive Melanesian where the primordial fears have not been allayed and life depends on successful rendering of ceremony.

¹⁹ See Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater (New York, 1955), p. 24. "The histrionic sensibility, like the ear for music, is a natural virtue....It is this kind of understanding of drama which one must seek; and insofar as one reaches it, one has direct access to the plays of other cultures."

CHAPTER II

PAPUAN GULF

It was dark and the flickering fires and torch flares cast an eerie spell over the villagers as they waited before the eravo, the men's-house. For twenty minutes they waited, every eye on the door that had not been opened for twenty years. The thirty-foot door began to move . . . then stuck at the top corner. The dramatic aura intensified at the slight delay and everyone held his breath as the corner was released and the door swung open. In the grey light of morning framed against the blackness of the open door . . . they saw it . . . the hevehe.



FIGURE 5. HEVEHE-LIKE MASK FROM THE GULF OF PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1157)

The mask stood there for a brief moment--a tall fantastic figure, one of the Immortal Story Folk, one of the Magic People. The crowd, breathless, gazed in silence. Then with a tremendous rattling and thumping it started down the ramp and behind it stood another hevehe poised on the dark threshold and then began a crowded succession of 120 others. The two leaders led their companions out of their long immurement to make merry in the village. Strange other-worldly figures descending the stair in stately fashion, beating their drums and dancing, they flew off toward the beach. Not only were the hevehe dancing, but the men, women, and children joined the hevehe and, dancing madly, weaved their way to the beach.

For half an hour the masks came, and by then the earlier masks had returned from the beach ready to begin a second time. Once more the masks emerged, pouring forth in a ceaseless stream from the eravo.

And then, Mairava, the Revelation, was over. An incomparable dramatic moment had culminated twenty years of preparation.

Hevehe¹ is a cyclical ceremony that takes place every ten to twenty years, depending on delays due to personal quarrels or sorcery. The Hevehe cycle is a series of events

¹ The capital letter in Hevehe indicates the ceremony. A small letter in hevehe indicates the masks.

centered around one eravo that is erected for the purpose of housing the objects of the Hevehe. Construction begins at the rear and often just the back part is built until the front is needed. The Hevehe cycle starts with completion of the rear of the eravo. The decision to begin the Hevehe cycle is made during a time of prosperity and increase in both pigs and young men. The pig is an important occupant of the village and is valued not for its meat but as a living symbol of wealth. The pig is the means of cementing friendships and of maintaining proper relations between kinsmen. They are killed at every social and ceremonial gathering of importance. Often there are more pigs in a village than human beings. The Hevehe needs a number of young men ready for initiation and available to do the heavy work of building the eravo and making the masks.

Unanimous thought and action are valued and when everyone is in the mood for cooperation, the leading man of the eravo ordains the process and the Hevehe cycle is begun. The leading man is the mouthpiece of tradition and keeps things going along lines which tradition dictates.

The first ceremonial step is the splitting of a coconut which marks the inauguration of the cycle. The next day the Drum-Leaders² and other young men set out to

² The Drum-Leaders are the first two to emerge at the Revelation, they play drums, and their masks occupy the places of honor in the eravo. Their positions are inherited and they function as overseers of the ceremony to make sure that no one is neglected, especially the distinguished visitors.

cut cane. They go to a tract of virgin forest where they find immense lengths of rattan reaching sometimes from the ground to the tops of trees. They bring back enough cane for the framework of the two hevehe masks which will belong to the two Drum-Leaders. That night a shell trumpet sounds in the village and anyone abroad quickly hastens to his house for the ma-hevehe (sea monster) is coming up from the sea. The young men from the several eravo who have been initiated previously are all down at the beach with drums, shell trumpets, and rattles. The initiates (usually there are only two or three of them) are led to the beach by their maternal uncles for what they think is quite a different reason, possibly an exchange of ornaments or anything to hide the real nature of the walk. Suddenly there is a tap on a drum; horrifying shrieks and drum, shell-trumpets, and rattles burst simultaneously into action. After a few minutes there is a brief pause--then a rhythmical resumption of the instruments. All the people advance to the eravo. More ceremony takes place in the eravo and then the ma-hevehe is supposed to return to the sea. Next day the initiated novices make gifts of pigs and the cycle has begun. Of a number of initiations in any full Hevehe cycle it is this first one that sets the whole series in motion. This is an initiation of grown men into the secrets of ma-hevehe, that is, that ma-hevehe is not really a monster from the sea and the noise that they had believed was made by the monster is

really made by their own tribesmen. These men have previously been initiated during boyhood into apa-hevehe, the secrets of the masks, that is, that the masks are made by human hands.

The hevehe masks are regarded as daughters of the sea monster and each time the ma-hevehe visits her daughters (for the individual initiations within the cycle) she brings them a few articles of dress or equipment until toward the end of the cycle the masks are ready for Mairava, the Revelation.

Now that the hevehe have entered the eravo, it becomes sacred and can only be entered by those who know the secret of apa-hevehe (that the masks are made by human hands). The place is tabu and trespass may be visited by vengeance.

A short ceremony called ivaiva is performed to safeguard the men as they go forth to cut the cane needed for the other masks that will be worn during the Revelation. The ivaiva, which is a sort of prayer for safekeeping accompanied by a food offering, is performed as ritual preparation for every major expedition into the bush called for by Hevehe. With the gathering of the cane the production of all of the masks is started.

Each mask is an individual entity with a personal name. It is affiliated with one of the totem groups of which there are 10 in the society. The mask has a theoretical immortality for it is believed to be re-created

in one cycle after another. It appears always in the same guise but does not necessarily appear in every cycle. There are far more hevehe in the abstract than ever appear in the form of masks at any one time. Missing one cycle or more, they may be forgotten and simply drop out of existence.

The ownership of hevehe in the abstract constitutes a right to make the corresponding masks. Ownership is personal and is transmitted by inheritance or bequest. Sons inherit from their fathers and in a family of brothers the different hevehe are divided among them. A woman can own a hevehe but the task of making the mask must be delegated to a man of the eravo. Hevehe can also be inherited or received as a gift from one's relatives.

When a hevehe appears concretely as a mask, several persons are closely concerned with its manifestation. First, there is the man who makes the mask or causes it to be made and who is called the "father" of the hevehe. Second, there is the "mother" of the hevehe who is the wife of the "father" or, in the event of her death, his daughter or his son's wife. The "mother's" duty is mostly collecting and cooking food for the maker and the ceremony, but she also contributes by preparing the sago-leaf draperies to be worn with the mask.

Third, there is the young man who will undergo the rite of initiation previously referred to and who will wear

the mask on its first formal appearance. Fourth, the maternal uncle of the man, or someone who has assumed his obligation, has ceremonial duties to perform at various times during the cycle. He gives shell ornaments to his nephew and in return receives pigs.

Every "father" of the hevehe is competent to make his own mask and though he is responsible for the whole, he may seek assistance from a formal, gift-exchanging friend or a maternal uncle. Some general craftsmen who like the work will help and the old men may dictate the special forms of decoration which the mask should traditionally wear. The making of the masks is a long slow business because in the limited space of the eravo only a few masks can be worked on at a time.

The building up of the masks follows a series of well defined stages³ which are correlated with the stages of the cycle. Each time the ma-hevehe comes from the sea she brings the materials for one of the stages and then the eravo members proceed with the work. This accounts for the fact that all the masks are usually at the same stage of construction.

The masks vary in quality but in general the workmanship is excellent. Artistic expression is most evident in

³ See Francis Edgar Williams, The Drama of Orokolo (Oxford, 1940), pp. 240-242.

the embroidery of the face. The framework, made of rattan cane and thin slats of palm-wood, is covered with tightly stretched barkcloth and laid upon low trestles (headrests of the hevehe). A braid of thin strips of cane, which have been split and scraped, is bent into the desired form and affixed to the barkcloth by a finer thread of cane with stitches about an inch apart. The needle is a bone from the wing of a flying fox with a hole drilled through one end.

The designs are worked right onto the barkcloth without previous marking. The "father" of the mask or an expert who knows the required patterns directs his assistants. If a mistake is made, it can be easily undone, but often a mistake will be left in and the design will depart from the traditional form. So, though theoretically hevehe always appear in exactly the same form, this is not true. After the braiding is completed, the artist roughly paints in the designs and the background. The full final painting is not done until a designated day shortly before the Revelation.

The designs are a series of polychrome patterns painted on a white (lime) background. Colors used are black (charcoal), grey (soapstone), red and pink (ochre), and yellow (clay). They are applied as water paints and are readily absorbed by the porous barkcloth. The lime background tends to flake during the rough treatment the mask receives during the masquerade, but the other colors seem to be permanent.

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Williams describes the colors as blending happily together, delicate hues all with a pleasing matt texture.⁴ The colors do not clash because instead of hard pure color they are, rather, shades of color. The red is either rose pink or Indian red, yellow is pale, grey is a soft range of greys leaning in some cases toward green or diluted indigo. Since European trade contact bright red and blue are sometimes used but are regarded as being out of tune with the more subtle, original colors.

The designs on the mask face are conventionalized and are easily recognized as belonging to one of the 10 totemic groups. Although the number of designs is fixed, considerable variety is attained as each totemic group has a fund of them to draw upon. Each mask design consists of three main parts; 1) symmetrical eye-designs, some of which are highly ornate, 2) a narrow border, filled most commonly with a tooth design, and 3) the simple formal themes of the center that distinguish the mask as belonging to one totemic group or another. There is, then, a close correlation between the decorative art of the hevehe and the social group to which the masks belong. Although not every man can identify all the designs or the groups to which they belong, he realizes the importance of the designs and is able to recognize those of his own group so that he can join the mask in its dance to the beach after the Revelation.

⁴ Ibid. p. 245.

Before the final Revelation, the hevehe make three preliminary descents from the eravo. As there is not enough room to work on all the masks at once inside the eravo, it is necessary to take them outside. The uninitiated are, of course, not present. The excuse to disguise the practical necessity of repairing the masks, which have lain for a long time in the eravo since their original construction, is that the hevehe must stretch their backs which are cramped from sitting so long. Actually no ceremony accompanies this first descent except that a group of old men sit on the ground and beat drums and blow shell-trumpets which the women believe are the hevehe beating their drums as they take their exercise.

The second preliminary descent takes place seven weeks later when the masks are to be painted. This time there is more ceremony and the descent of the masks is accompanied by the hum of a bull roarer and a rattle of drums. The third descent occurs the following day when the masks are given borders and center lines of white or multicolored feathers of cockatoo, parrot, and hawk. The brilliant mantles of sago-leaf are brought out and draped on the framework. The masks, at last, are completed.

Festivities, spectacles, and ceremonies follow the next day and night. The climax, at the time of Revelation, is reached the following dawn. After the Revelation, the dancing lasts one month.

There is then a final ostentatious feast and the hevehe are slain. Four masks are shot with arrows and collapse theatrically. The rest are thrown carelessly on the ground, to be borne off to the creek, flung on three piles, and set on fire. The hevehe destroyed, their spirits depart. A final procession of the population, led by a hohao (a large plaque of carved and painted wood), makes its way to the beach and all stand facing the sea, waiting. Each man in turn calls upon his ma-hevehe. Finally a large black fin appears in the water, a signal that below it is the ma-hevehe. Everyone rushes madly into the water and is thereby purified. There is the hunt for a bush pig and a second purification. The eravo is swept and any remnants left from making the masks are burned. The final rite, "Plucking out the Hornbill Feathers," is performed. Those who had worn masks for the first time in the present cycle had continued to wear feathers. During this final ceremony they are taken off and finally put away.

Having no hevehe to house, the eravo is empty and falls into decay. The members seek other sleeping quarters and at last the eravo is a ruin. When it has collapsed or is ready to collapse, the community makes a final strenuous effort to demolish it and the men will be content for some years with humbler lodgings.

Then, when the time and circumstances are again right, the people build themselves a new eravo and fill it with

hevehe. Years hence there will be a new Revelation and the re-created hevehe will again dramatically appear and astound the assembled throng with their delicate beauty and supernatural mystery.

Three types of masks are made in the Papuan Gulf. Besides hevehe, which have been described, kovave and eharo masks are made.

The kovave are conical masks that rise to a tall point. They have round eyes and projecting ears and an open mouth lined with teeth. The Kovave, a cyclical ceremony performed every few years, is primarily a rite de passage to initiate the boys of the society into some of the mysteries. Figure 6 is possibly of this type.

The third type of Papuan Gulf mask is eharo which simply means "dance-head." They are worn during the dances of the Hevehe ceremony by the men of the village which is giving the ceremony as well as by men from the other villages who attend the ceremony. They may or may not represent totems. They are extremely varied, often fanciful or comic, and give a carnival effect to the ceremonies. All of the Papuan Gulf masks at Bishop Museum are eharo with the possible exception of Figure 6. The Museum catalog lists the masks as being associated with the Raiva Ruku ceremony. No doubt, this is the same name as Kaiva Kulu (note consonantal shift) which Williams gives as the

generic name "for the mask ceremonies of the Gulf in general."⁵

The Bishop Museum has 19 masks which came to its collection on March 3, 1916. The masks are from Muru, a bush village behind Orokolo (where Williams did his study) and were collected by S. G. MacDonell who notes, "These masks are nearly always burnt after the ceremony known as the Raiwa Ruku and totemic dance. The women and children are not allowed to see them, as they are supposed to promptly die if they are allowed to do so, but this seems to be relaxed after the ceremonies. However, when taking them away, I always have to carefully cover them up."⁶

The Bishop Museum masks can be divided into two groups. One group (Figures 6 to 10) fit over the head in helmet fashion. Figures 6 and 7 fit all the way over the head while Figures 8, 9, and 10 have only a helmet top. The second group (Figures 5 and 11 to 23) is composed of face masks that the wearer holds in his hand in front of his face.

⁵ Ibid. p. 452.

⁶ Card Catalog, Bishop Museum.

FIGURE 5 (page 22) shows a hevehe-like mask. It is not a hevehe, however, but an eharo ("dance-head"). While the hevehe are usually about 10 feet high, this mask is only 25 inches high and 11 inches wide. However, it is made and decorated in the same general manner as hevehe. The large hevehe have a semi-conical framework of open wickerwork at the rear of the mask which fits over the wearer's head. The mask in Figure 5 is flat and is carried by the wearer in front of his face. The outer loop of the framework is whole rattan cane, while the balance is split rattan. All is covered with porous barkcloth which, stretched over the mask when wet, dries taut and is sewn to the framework with a thread of cane. A raised rib down the center beneath the barkcloth forms a 10-inch-long nose. Lips of the open crocodile-like mouth project about 4.5 inches. This mouth projection is made of two cane loops covered with clay-red colored fiber. The eyes are two concentric circles of rattan that are covered with white fiber and sewn to the face. The inside circle is red, the outer circle is black. Above the nose, extending across the top, is a wide black eyebrow line. Above this and along both sides of the nose is a design of alternating black and red triangles. In the hevehe masks variations of this design indicate to which totemic group the mask belongs.



FIGURE 6. CONICAL MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1141)

FIGURE 6 depicts a mask in dunce-cap shape that is 26 inches high and has an irregular 8-inch diameter. Attached to the whole rattan cane that forms the bottom circle of the framework are vertical split rattan pieces that terminate at the open top, and cross pieces of an unidentified fibrous fleshy wood. (In Williams' account these cross pieces are made of palm-wood.) This framework is covered with white-painted barkcloth that has pale grey and pink chevrons in various places. A padding of the same fleshy wood in the shape of a T under the barkcloth forms a nose and eyebrow ridge that projects about 1 inch. The nose terminates at the mouth with a further projecting black ring. The red-outlined open mouth is in a shape somewhat like a bird's beak and has teeth carved in the rattan frame which show through the mouth opening. The eyes are two concentric circles of rattan that have been covered with white fiber. The inner circle is black, the outer circle red. Each eye is set in a larger area that is painted black-with-white-dots and separated from the white background by an outline of rattan. The face is twisted from left to right to left (viewed from the front, from top to bottom).

FIGURE 7, a helmet mask that completely covers the head, is 14 inches high, 6 inches wide, and 9 inches from front to back. The framework is constructed with loops of split rattan and fibrous fleshy wood. Attached to the



FIGURE 7. HELMET MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1140)

framework is a padding that forms a T shaped nose and eye-brow ridge. All is covered with porous barkcloth. The eyes are two concentric circles of rattan that have been covered with white fiber. The black inner circle is surrounded by an outer circle of red. Each eye is set in a larger black fish-like form that is outlined with rattan. The T shaped browridge and nose join the open mouth that has teeth carved in the rattan framework. The red browridge, nose, and mouth continues as an extended design along the bottom of the face and up the back of the helmet. A 1.5 inch barkcloth flange decorated with a black and white triangle design starts at the eyes and extends over the top of the mask. The face is slightly twisted from right to left to center.

FIGURE 8. Fourteen inches high and 7 inches wide, this mask with a cap-like back is 6 inches from front to back. The framework of loops of split rattan is covered with white-painted porous barkcloth. Padding under the barkcloth forms a T-shaped eyebrow ridge and nose that ends in pinched nostrils and joins the open beaklike mouth. This form is painted red. Two concentric circles of rattan that have been covered with white fiber form staring red eyes with black pupils. Around the eyes is a rattan-outlined design of several black triangles that extends to the forehead in a curved hook. The face, slightly twisted from right to left to right to left, terminates with a projecting



FIGURE 8. MASK WITH HELMET TOP FROM THE GULF OF PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1145)

1-inch flange that has a series of alternating black and white triangles starting at the eye level. The cap-like back has a red form outlined with rattan.

FIGURE 9 pictures a mask that is 17 inches high in front with a helmet top 7 inches high in back. It is 6.5 inches wide and 9 inches from front to back. The framework of split rattan loops is covered with porous white-painted barkcloth. A padded projecting T forms an eyebrow ridge and nose which connects with the open beaklike mouth that terminates in a 1.5-inch open projection and extends in an upturned crescent shape to the sides of the face. The eyes of two concentric rattan circles that have been covered with white fiber are set in black fish designs. The three triangles that form the front of the fish are repeated in red above the eyebrow ridge. The face is twisted from left to right to center. Rattan threads outline the designs that are simple but effective in producing a grimacing countenance.

FIGURE 10 shows a mask with a helmet top that is 13 inches high, 7 inches wide, and 8 inches from front to back. The framework of split rattan loops is covered with porous barkcloth and comes to a point along the center line. Padded eyebrow ridge and nose form a T that is painted black and joins a black, oval-encircled open mouth. Black eyes, outlined by circles of rattan that have been covered

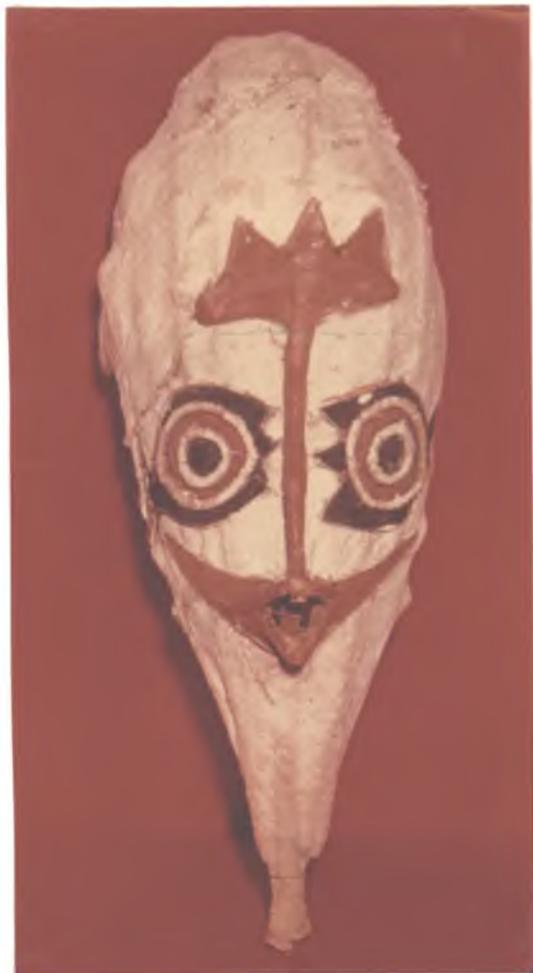


FIGURE 9. MASK WITH HELMET TOP FROM THE GULF OF PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1142)



FIGURE 10. MASK WITH HELMET TOP FROM THE GULF OF PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1143)

with white fiber, are set in a fanciful, elaborate eye design of red triangles that covers most of the cheek and curves upward to the forehead. Black triangles start at the lower part of the eye design and decorate the side of the head. These designs are outlined with rattan strips that separate them from the white background. The outer edge is painted red and a black crescent decorates the white cap-like back of the mask.

The following group of Papuan Gulf masks (Figures 11 to 23) are all face masks that the wearer holds in his hand in front of his face. The framework is made of an outer loop of split rattan with additional horizontal and vertical pieces as a base for the porous barkcloth covering.

FIGURE 11 shows the first of these face masks. It is 16 inches high, 8 inches wide, and has a 4.5 inch facial protrusion. The mouth and lower jaw are black, while the balance is white with scattered black dots. Prominent padding forms a T shaped nose and eyebrow ridge which join the mouth. The latter is placed right of center and is outlined with a rattan oval that has been covered with white fiber. Round, red eyes, outlined with black fiber covered rattan circles, give an inhuman stare to the face.



FIGURE 11. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1158)



FIGURE 12. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1144)

FIGURE 12 shows a similar face mask that is 11 inches high 6 inches wide, and has a 4.5 inch facial protrusion. A prominent browridge of an additional piece of rattan frame joins the nose, which is one of the vertical framework ribs, to form a T. This joins the mouth which is red inside and outlined by a piece of oval rattan that has been covered with white fiber. Black fiber covers rattan circles that outline white eyes. Although the face is twisted from right to left to right, the mouth is centered.

FIGURE 13 shows another of these face masks. It is 13 inches high, 7 inches wide, and has a 4.5 inch facial protrusion. An elaborate black design is separated from the white background by a rattan strip. Included in it are the eyes, tan colored and outlined by circles of rattan that have been covered with white fiber. The mouth is black inside and is outlined by a rattan oval that is covered with tan fiber and placed left of center. Nose and eyebrows join to form a prominent T in tan color. The face is twisted from left to right to left to right and at the bottom forms a handle for easy carrying.

FIGURE 14 departs from the normal style of these masks in that the upper two-thirds of the mask is painted black-with-white-dots and the lower one-third is painted white. Twelve inches high and 7 inches wide, this face mask has a 3-inch facial protrusion. Projecting padding in the form



FIGURE 13. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1154)



FIGURE 14. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1151)

of a T forms the eyebrows and nose which are painted light brown. The mouth, also light brown, is outlined with rattan that is covered with white fiber. The brown-centered eyes are outlined with rattan rings covered with white fiber, and are set in a larger design shaped like a fish. A rattan strip separates the design from the background. The face has a slight twist from right to left.

FIGURE 15 depicts a face mask with a 5-inch facial protrusion that is 15 inches high and 8 inches wide. It has mottled black, white, and tan blotches of color that give an over-all appearance of a tan cowrie-shell. A prominent T shaped nose and eyebrow ridge is formed by sewing the barkcloth to the frame. Two concentric circles of rattan that have been covered with white fiber form eyes composed of red iris and black pupil. A rattan oval covered with white fiber outlines a red mouth that is not quite centered. The face is twisted from left to right to left.

FIGURE 16 is unique in this group of face masks in that it has no mouth. It is 15 inches high, 7 inches wide, and has a 2.5 inch facial protrusion. The background is painted white but the features are set in a black area that is outlined with rattan in a many-pointed starlike design. Within this larger figure is a rattan-outlined, funnel-shaped brown figure which in turn encloses a T shaped nose and eyebrow projection. Eyes are brown circles outlined



FIGURE 15. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1156)



FIGURE 16. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1152)

with rattan that has been covered with brown fiber. There is a facial twist from left to right to left.

FIGURE 17 shows a white-painted face mask that is 14 inches high, 6 inches wide, and has a facial protrusion of 2 inches. Eyebrows and nose merge in a funnel shape which is painted black-with-white-dots and is outlined with rattan covered with white fiber. Circles of rattan, similarly covered with white fiber, form eyes set in a larger, black-with-white-dots, teardrop shapes that are outlined with rattan strips. The face is twisted from left to right and has an oval, black-with-white-dots mouth outlined with a rattan strip covered with white fiber.

FIGURE 18 is one of the masks of this group which has no clearly distinguished eyebrow ridge. This face mask is black with scattered white dots and is 13 inches high, 7 inches wide, and has a 3-inch facial protrusion. The black eyes are outlined with rattan circles that have been covered with white fiber. They are set in a larger area of natural unpainted barkcloth that is delineated from the background by a rattan strip. The face is twisted from right at the forehead to left at the nose and right again at the bottom. The mouth is tan barkcloth. It is outlined with a rattan oval covered with white fiber and placed right of center. The nose is the central rib of the framework.



FIGURE 17. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1149)



FIGURE 18. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1150)

FIGURE 19 shows a mask that is similar to that in Figure 18 in that it has no eyebrows and the nose is a prominent vertical rib of the framework. Its features, twisted from right to left to right, this mask is 15 inches high, 7 inches wide, and has a 2.5 inch facial protrusion. The eyes and mouth are of tan barkcloth, outlined with rattan strips that are covered with white fiber. These features are set in a larger black form that is delineated from the white background by a strip of rattan.

FIGURE 20 shows another mask in which the features are restricted to an area that is separated from the background by an outline of rattan. This area, painted white, includes black eyes and a red mouth both of which are outlined with rattan strips that are covered with white fiber. The background is black-with-white-dots and is slightly twisted from right to left to right. Eleven inches high and 6.5 inches wide, it has a 3.5 inch facial protrusion.

FIGURE 21 shows a face mask similar to that in Figure 15 in its painted blotches of tan, black, and white. It differs, however, in that no nose or eyebrows are indicated. Twisted from right to left to right, the mask is 11 inches high, 6.5 inches wide, and has a facial protrusion of 3.5 inches. Two concentric circles of rattan that are covered with white fiber represent red eyes that enclose black



FIGURE 19. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1155)



FIGURE 20. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1148)



FIGURE 21. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1153)

pupils. The red mouth is outlined by two oval-shaped strips of rattan that are covered with white fiber.

FIGURE 22 depicts still another face mask that is unique in this group. It has a crown of alternating black and brown triangles, the latter being outlined with rattan strips. The design tops the face proper which is set off from the background by an oval shaped rattan piece. There is very little facial twist in this mask. It is 12 inches high, 5.5 inches wide and has a 3-inch facial protrusion. No nose or eyebrows are indicated on the white-painted face. Rattan pieces that have been wrapped with white fiber outline the oval black mouth and the circular black eyes with their white pupils.

FIGURE 23 shows the last mask of this group. It is 14 inches high, 5.5 inches wide, and has a 2.5 inch facial protrusion. The face, on which no eyebrows or nose are indicated, is painted black with scattered white dots. The eyes and mouth are tan colored and are outlined with the usual rattan pieces covered with white fiber. There is very little twist to the face.



FIGURE 22. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1146)



FIGURE 23. FACE MASK FROM THE GULF OF
PAPUA, NEW GUINEA. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B1147)

THE PAPUAN GULF MASK STYLE

The style of the Papuan Gulf masks, although there are three types, remains quite uniform. The rattan framework, in oval or elliptical shape and usually pointed at the bottom is covered with porous barkcloth. The background, though most often painted white, is sometimes black-with-white-dots, or occasionally mottled in tan, black, and white. The main theme is a conventionalized human face with supplementary design motifs composed of triangles. Designs are outlined against the background with a thin strip of rattan. The design elements are usually clearly separated from each other by the background.

Eyes are formed by a single circle, or two concentric circles, of rattan covered with barkcloth fiber. They are often set in a larger, fanciful design area of black. The eyebrow ridge and nose usually form a T which is padded under the barkcloth and sewn so that it projects from the face. Sometimes the nose is a raised rib of the framework and adds to the facial protrusion (Figures 18 and 19). Occasionally neither nose nor eyebrows are indicated (Figures 21, 22, and 23). The mouth form is variable, ranging from a single, simple oval of fiber-covered rattan to a prominent openmouth that resembles that of a crocodile; sometimes it projects in a more beak-like fashion. Occasionally the red mouth itself is set in a larger red area which is crescent-shaped and extends to the sides of the

face. Only one of the Bishop Museum masks has no mouth clearly indicated (Figure 16). None of the Bishop Museum masks have ears. However, on the masks described in the literature that traditionally display ears, these are triangles of barkcloth added at right angles to the face. The face has a grimacing appearance, heightened by a dramatic use of color. The faces are basically symmetrical as in life, but a frequent skewing from side to side adds to the conventionalized distortion. The facial design is always a large and dominating part of the mask and is carefully worked out to fit within the total surface area. Though at first sight weird and frightening, the lasting effect is more often comic or hilarious. The intense look can equally fill the spectator with terror or laughter. The masks are a sophisticated expression of the interdependence of tragedy and comedy.

The masks are a means of theatrical suspense as well as an outlet for artistic expression. But more than that, they are an inseparable part of the ceremonies. These ceremonies give to each individual and to the community as a whole an objective to work toward. They offer recreation. They provide an opportunity for leadership and organization of the social group, and for wider intercourse with other social units in the neighboring territories. The spirits of the Immortal Story Folk and the Magic People, as well as the ghosts of the deceased, are placated, worshipped, and

entertained by the living so that sickness, hunger or calamity will not descend on the village. The mask designs symbolize the totemic groups and serve as a means of integrating the various members into a cooperative group. The Hevehe is a means of education and enculturation of youth and of continuation of the society's traditions. The Hevehe expresses the fear of a universe inhabited by spirits of nature and of the dead that must be placated. But the people are confident that through their art and ceremonies these supernatural forces will be appeased and that the cultural traditions will be maintained by the newly initiated. Every man becomes an artist. He works in his culture's stylistic tradition of two dimensionality based on emphasis of line and contrast of color. The symbolic character of the designs, their stylization and distortion, place this art style in the realm of expressionism. It is a traditional expressionism that is culturally defined.

CHAPTER III

NEW IRELAND

Hundreds of squatting natives were assembled around an open space on the beach. Darkness was falling rapidly and the sound of shell rattles was heard from inside the cremation enclosure. Six large figures advanced in file toward the waiting throng with a slow, stately tread. They wore huge masks and bustle-like bunches of leaves. Shell rattles were tied around their ankles and carried in their hands. The murua! These reincarnated spirits of the dead had answered the call of their mortal kin to appear at their commemoration rites. After each heavy step the figures paused, slowly turned their huge masked heads, looking uncertainly at this now unfamiliar world of the living. Suddenly an old woman rushed forward and placed her hands on one of the murua and called it by name. Others followed and soon each figure was surrounded by a number of old women. They called the murua by name and wailed and mourned again for their long dead relatives. All too soon, accompanied only by the dull rattling of their shells, the masked figures made their way slowly back to the enclosure in a perfect line with a continued stately movement. The women called to them to wait so that they could come too, but it was dark and the masks had disappeared.



FIGURE 24. MURUA MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1662)

This intense, dramatic moment is but a small part of the Malangan ceremony which is a dominating feature of life in New Ireland and Tabar Island societies. The Malangan is essentially a post-mourning ceremony which occurs usually one to five years after a person's death. Malangan honors the recent dead in a large-scale community ceremony in which the relatives and the whole society express sympathy and reverence. It is not, however, carried out with a feeling of grief. It is more like a festival where the members of a particular group and members of related groups come together. And though the reason for the ceremony is the death of one or more of the society's members, the function of the ceremony is to acquire prestige for the living. Malangan is the way of passing on tradition.

New Ireland society is matrilineal and matrilocal and has two moieties, the Eagle and the Hawk, whose function is to regulate marriage. Each moiety is divided into a number of clans (extended family groups related in the female line). Each clan has a sacred totem center (masili, tsenalis) which is a portion of land, part of a reef, or passage of water and is associated with the animal which is friendly to people of the clan but hostile to others. The totem is usually a pig, a shark, or a snake. Because the moieties are exogamous, their members are scattered throughout the households of a community and function as a unit only at certain rites such as exchanges of food at life-crisis

ceremonies. The clan, however, often functions as an economic unit in any important undertaking and the old men of the clan are its governing force. Although a child is a member of his mother's clan and moiety, he may inherit magical spells from his father. The nuclear family forms the basic economic unit. There is also a division by sex which crosscuts the society especially for ceremonial purposes.

Death is one of the most mysterious aspects of life and these people have made their peace with it. Through Malangan a man not only gains prestige for himself during his mortal life, but he is assured that his death will be properly mourned, that his spirit will go to the world of the dead, and that he will maintain a connection with his people after his death.

Immediately before a person dies he is moved to the house of either his children or his parents. The whole community shows its concern by discontinuing dance rehearsals and by cooking meals in the vicinity of the sick person. Everyone is very attentive and relatives from distant villages are sent for. As soon as life leaves the body everyone in the community begins to wail. The spouse, parents, and children are the chief mourners. The wailing is discontinued while the body is washed in the sea by people of the deceased's sex and of the opposite moiety. After it has been taken to the men's-house or the house

where the person formerly lived, wailing is resumed and all wait until the clan relatives arrive from the neighboring villages. The mourning continues until the body is buried which may be from one to three days depending on the age and prestige of the dead person. A burial feast of taro, pigs, and fish is prepared during this time under the direction of a clan relative while the spouse spends all of his time wailing. If the deceased was very old, there is ceremonial dancing on the nights following the death until the burial. The body is usually placed in an old canoe that has had its pointed ends removed and now serves as a coffin. It is carried to the cemetery by members of the opposite moiety who are decorated with leaves and have white lime on their faces. Everyone wails loudly and the chief mourner clings to the head of the corpse and wails most intensely of all. The body is either lowered into a shallow grave or cremated. There follows a feast during which people laugh and chat and the man responsible for giving the feast makes a speech.

For one month after the burial of the corpse the community is divided into three groups depending on the nearness of relationship to the dead person. Dance rehearsals are taboo to the entire community, sexual taboos apply to the extended family, and the immediate family observes food taboos. The ghost (tinuate) of the dead person makes its presence known by a low whistle. Fear of the ghost exists

until the next person dies and there is a new ghost to fear. This period of mourning is ended with a feast.

The family and relatives of the deceased then begin preparation for the Malangan. The first task is to collect enough shell money (Tsera) to buy a Malangan design and its associated dances and rites, to pay the carver and the dancers for their services, and to provide the necessary food for the feasts. The malangan¹ itself is a sacred board carved with grotesque combinations of human, bird, fish, and botanical forms. The Malangan ceremony is the responsibility of the maternal nephew if the deceased was a man, or the son if a woman. By giving the ceremony the sponsor gains prestige, and if he does not hold a Malangan he is disgraced in the eyes of the community. The cultural emphasis is on the wealth and prestige of the giver of the Malangan.

Each Malangan has its own series of dances, feasts, and special rites. It is a complete cycle of ceremonies, the feasts of which may last for years. Each Malangan design is named and is owned by a clan. An old man of the clan is the custodian of the design which may be purchased and resold. Malangan designs originated in the dreams of men or women and may contain the figure of a single man or one

¹ The small letter in malangan indicates the carved sacred board.

for each dead relative for which the sacred board, malangan, is made. These figures are intricately carved, incorporating the appropriate various animal forms.

The men of the village fell the selected tree from which the malangan carving will be made and place it in a small secluded hut built for the purpose. A skilled craftsman is hired to carve the board and one of the sponsors will show him the design if it is not already familiar to him. Only males of the clan owning the design are allowed to enter the hut. The latter is destroyed after the carving is finished. During this time the men eat communally and each week there is a special feast for them. When the carving is completed, the unpainted malangan is displayed at the end of the walled enclosure of the clan over the grave or cremation site in a shrine-like setting of palm leaves. The grounds are decorated with plants, flowers, and stones in traditional patterns and the preliminary rites are ready to begin.

Two men with grass skirts and ornate headdresses come from the bush to the open compound outside the clan enclosure. They represent spirit counterparts of the living (gas) and, vibrating their shell rattles, they invite everyone into the enclosure which contains the unpainted malangan. The dancers in the first dance represent birds. They wear feather headdresses and carry birds' beaks in their mouths. They dramatize birds sitting on reefs or in the trees.

Then there are feasts. Men of the village and visiting communities feast inside the enclosure and the women outside. The men make payments of shell money to the clan owners of the Malangan and make speeches telling how much they are paying and what the payment is for. The man responsible for giving the Malangan gives a long speech telling of the making of the malangan and how it was paid for. Meanwhile the women are feasting in the manner that is characteristic of the particular Malangan. Food is distributed and the women stand up and sing.

In the intensive preparations for the final rites, the men make costumes, complete the dance masks, paint the malangan, make the final payments of shell money, and have feasts. The women are busy preparing taro for the feasts in a large communal cookhouse which has been specially built. And both men and women rehearse their dances. The afternoon before the final rites the men hold a dress rehearsal to show the women their beautiful masks. In the evening the men, women, and children all dance together in the manner that goes with the particular Malangan. This dance is supposed to last until dawn. The great day has arrived.

Five or six hundred people from the surrounding villages have come and all sit around a large open space which is left free for the dancing. The men sit on the side nearest the clan enclosure and the men's-house and the women sit on the opposite side. Dancers from each village

will participate in the dancing. During the first dance each participant wears an elaborate mask and a leaf skirt. His body from the waist up is painted red to conceal his identity (since European contact he may buy a red shirt for this purpose). So that the dancers will dance well an old man blows some powdered lime from his hand in front of each performer.

Many different dances are performed in the following two to four days.² Each village tries to outdo the others in both dancing skill and beautifully carved masks. Some of the dances are solo but most are performed in groups. Some take place in the afternoon, some just as dusk is falling, and some continue all night. There is a musical accompaniment of wooden slit gongs, hand drums which are covered with snakeskin and beaten with the tops of the fingers, shell rattles which sound like castanets, and conch-shells. Sometimes a chorus of women sing in high-pitched voices and tap out rhythms with sticks on hollow bamboos. The pitch of excitement is heightened as they shout, gesture, and encourage the dancers.

The excited movements of the dance, the rhythmic theatrical presentation, the weird musical accompaniment, the painted bodies, and the beautifully carved and painted

² For descriptions of individual dances see H. Powdermaker (Life in Lesu, pp. 125-128) and W. C. Groves ("Melanesian Island Life; The Dance" in Walkabout, June 1937, pp. 40-43).

masks all add up to an intricate, involved composition of movement, music, and color. It is not seen by the people as something staged and contrived. Rather it is a part of life in which they are involved both physically and emotionally. The dancers often lunge into the crowd. The audience will participate as described above in the murua dance. The dancer himself is transformed from a living being into a medium between the living and the dead. And when the final feast and distribution of food is over there is a feeling of exaltation, a sort of transcendent expression. By submerging himself in the traditions of the group the participant has become greater than himself; he has established a mystic connection between the material world and the unknown. For this exalted experience he has worked long and hard and now he is content to grow old and die knowing that a similar connection will be maintained with his people after his own death. Through the associated dsafunfun initiation rites for youth he is assured that these traditions will be carried on by the following generations.

So we see that though Malangan is outwardly a commemorative ceremony for the recent dead, its meaning and function go much deeper. It is a community festival involving the circulation of wealth and the attainment of prestige. Those who have given the Malangan are now poor, but this is unimportant because they have acquired

considerable prestige. Moreover, since they now own the Malangan design, they will again be rich when they resell it. Wealth is important to gain prestige and is kept in circulation by the constant preparations for Malangan ceremonies. The Malangan maintains such values of the society as respect for the old who are honored after death in proportion to their age. The kinship system is maintained by the necessity of communal effort to hold a Malangan which serves to integrate the various elements of the society. The value of reciprocity is shown in the giving and receiving of food and shell money. Finally, the value of prestige is seen as the basic function of Malangan.

The main part of the actual ceremony and that which takes the most time and preparation is the dancing which occurs at the burial (if the deceased was very old), at the time the unpainted malangan is displayed, at the final rites, and at the boys' initiation rites which are intimately connected with the Malangan. The most important stage property of these dances are masks of several types. The murua are large carved masks which represent ancestor spirits (Figure 24). The tatanua, the masks worn during most of the dances (Figures 29 to 32 and possibly 33), are helmet masks with crests that represent the old way of arranging hair during the mourning period. The sides of the head were shaved and a crest-like strip of hair was left down

the center. The kepong are memorial masks worn by relatives of the deceased as display objects and are not used in dances (Figure 25 is possibly of this type). Other dance masks such as Figures 27, 28, and 34 are also worn, possibly by visitors who have no relationship to the deceased.

Of the 11 masks from New Ireland in the Bishop Museum collection, six were acquired before 1892 (Figures 24, 25, 26, 33, 34-35, and 37), one about 1893 (Figure 27), two in 1901 (Figures 32 and 36), and two in 1920 (Figures 28 and 29-30-31).

Worthy of note is the incorporation of trade materials in the tatanua masks that were more recently acquired. In Figures 29, 32, and 36 woven cloth, yarn, and glass marbles are used while in Figures 33 and 34 (acquired before 1892 and probably made much earlier) only indigenous materials are used. This use of trade materials demonstrates the inventiveness of New Irelanders in adapting new materials to old forms and techniques.

FIGURE 24 (page 68), a murua mask representing an ancestor spirit, has intricate openwork carving in vertical composition and is painted black, white, and red. Overall it is about 35 inches high and 25 inches wide. Three thin vertical attached pieces stand out from each side of the face and extend far above the helmet top. The center piece is straight, one piece comes horizontally from the nose and curves upwards and backwards, and the other piece starts from the back of the lower jaw and crosses the other two parts. The carved face, which lies about 3 inches behind these strips, displays further openwork. The eyes, holes cut through the mask, are set with green shell as pupils. A huge beak-like nose comes to a point in the front. The open mouth is represented in a tooth design of alternating black and white painted triangles. Part of the lower jaw rises above the mouth to meet the nose. From each side of the open mouth projects a 6-inch rod which holds a long vertical blade of wood. Above the mouth and extending to the sides is a bunch of long grass in mustache fashion. Part of the forehead is carved out and filled in with white lime plaster and other materials such as small sticks and stones that are colored red and tan. The face is painted in sections of black, red, and white with additional leaf and triangle designs filled with lines or cross-hatching. The designs on each side of the face are not identical. Over the top of the face and extending to the back in

helmet fashion is a wicker framework which is covered with porous barkcloth and grassy materials in white and black. Along each side of the mask a huge panel which represents an ear is minutely carved in conventional designs. The two panels, each about 6 inches wide, have pierced open-work carvings of triangles and leaves with sawtooth edges. Along the median line of the panel, zigzagging from front to back, is carved a black snake whose head extends above the top. The bottom of each ear is a huge open loop.

Each small part of the mask is beautifully designed and combines well into the overall unity. The grotesque combination of these intricate small designs creates an intense nervous appearance which is heightened by the bold red, black, and white coloring.

FIGURE 25 shows a mask 33 inches high and 9 inches wide that is carved in a columnar manner corresponding to the basic shape of a log. The plane of the face is cut back beneath an overhanging brow ridge. The protruding nose comes to a point and has huge flaring open nostrils. The eyes, outlined in red, are narrow curved slits which slant upwards from the nose. The mouth, a wide crescent also outlined in red, has a tooth design of alternating black and white triangles bordering a slit-like opening. The ears extend vertically the entire length of the face and end at the bottom in open loops. The mask has a sharp



FIGURE 25. CARVED MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1652)

pointed projecting chin. The face, painted black, white, red, and blue, has small areas designed as triangles and leaves filled with lines and cross-hatching. The massive forehead is black and extends upward on each side in a triangle. Above this is a solid central column encircled by five vertical poles that curve upward in blade fashion and almost meet at the top. This upper section is painted red, black, and white in design areas that are filled with triangles, tooth patterns, horizontal lines, and cross-hatchings. These areas are small and simple but are so closely and intricately combined that they make one complex overall design. The abstract features of the mask create a frightening appearance. It is hard to tell at first glance exactly where are the eyes or the nose, which furthermore seem to shift because of the curvilinear face painting.

FIGURE 26 pictures a mask about 11 inches high and 8 inches wide that is carved from one solid piece of wood. The carved face is recessed about one inch and the forehead is masked by seven 2.5 inch fingers which descend from the cap above. These latter are painted white with blue, black, and red stripes near the bottom. Brown paint covers the face and some parts bear a hard black resinous substance. The eyes, half-moons pierced through the wood, probably once were set with shell pupils. The nose, which comes to



FIGURE 26. CARVED MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1661)

a point, has large open nostrils at the side. The crescent shaped jaw is painted black. Its open mouth shows a slightly extended red tongue. Curving ears extending the length of the face are painted in a red, white, and black design. A stylized loop finishes the bottom of each ear. The roughly carved top and sides of the mask have perforations which possibly served for attaching some sort of headdress. A bent rattan loop at the back holds the mask on the head. The mask appears to have been originally painted dark brown with red and white designs, and the hard black substance was possibly added at a subsequent time to fill holes caused by weathering.

FIGURE 27, a cylindrical mask painted clay red, black, and white, is 14 inches high and 9 inches across. A projecting slit, vertical ridge indicates a nose with large open nostrils. A horizontal ridge separates the upper face from the mouth which ends as a down-pointed, birdlike beak. The black beak has a design around the open mouth with red incised lines that separate white teeth. The face is painted white. Red-filled lines are incised in a leaf design around the eyes. One-half-inch projecting pegs carved as sockets hold inserted eye-pieces which project an additional 2 inches (one of these eye-pieces has been lost.) The elliptically carved eye-piece, placed vertically, is 5 inches high, painted white, and is inset with a green shell pupil.

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FIGURE 27. CYLINDRICAL MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (C1017)

Surrounding the base of one eye-peg is a circle of black that gives an unbalanced look to the face. The top of the mask is a helmet-like framework of rattan. Several strips of rattan project about 4 inches over the front of the forehead. This basic construction is the same as in Figure 25, so we can infer that this mask probably had a similar helmet covering of barkcloth and grasses. The back of the framework, by which the mask is held on the wearer's head, is still covered with a variety of stringy fibers and dried weeds and grasses. Overall the mask has a startling appearance emphasized by its huge projecting eyes and open, pointed beak mouth.

FIGURE 28 shows a pig mask 15 inches high including the fringe and 19 inches long. The carved wooden head of a pig is 9 inches long and painted clay red, white, and black. It has two tusks on each side, one 5 inches long that extends forward from the side of the cheek and the other 7 inches long that rises from the bottom of the jaw. They cross at right angles at the mouth level. Though it appears that the tusks have been added, both face and tusks are carved from the same piece of wood. The facial design is composed of triangle-and diamond-shapes. The eyes, outlined by incising, appear as black diamonds inset with green shell pupils. The long projecting face ends in an upturned black snout with indented nostrils. The partly open mouth has



FIGURE 28. PIG MASK FROM NEW
IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE
P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B2214)

teeth suggested by incised lines. Triangular, 3-inch long ears, which stand out from the head, are also painted with black, white, and red triangles. From the lower jaw hangs a 4-inch fringe of twisted black yarn and natural fiber. The top of the mask is a rattan frame covered with white cotton and a thick layer of dried grasses.

The pig, a symbol of the moon, is rather naturalistically presented in this mask compared to the more conventionalized rendering of the human face. It does not have the intricate surface design characteristic of most New Ireland masks but instead has bolder more sweeping brush strokes to emphasize the length of the pig's face. The skill of the woodcarver is apparent in the deep undercutting necessary in order to cut face and tusks from one piece of wood. The surface has a smooth finish well suited to the simply painted design.

FIGURES 29, 30, and 31 show three views of a tatanua mask which is 20 inches wide and an equal length from front to back. The carved wooden face, which is 8 inches high and 8 inches wide across the eyes, is painted in clay red, black, white, and blue. The projecting eyes have green shell pupils. These projections overhang deeply undercut sections that are pierced with holes to permit the wearer to see. The nose comes to a blunt point with deep nostrils cut away in triangular shapes. The wide gaping mouth is bordered with a black and white sawtooth design. A ridge



TATANUA MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION
BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B2212)

FIGURE 29. FRONT VIEW
FIGURE 30. LEFT SIDE
FIGURE 31. RIGHT SIDE

5 inches long and 0.5 inch deep along each side of the face is probably the stylized rendition of an ear.

The painted design has a degree of bilateral symmetry but it is far from perfect and the colors on either side of a medial line are opposed rather than matched. Even the carving is not strictly symmetrical. The eyes are dissimilar, the nose leans to the left, and the mouth gapes wider at the right than at the left. This lends a weird, supernatural appearance that contrasts noticeably with the natural symmetry of a human face.

The helmet portion above the face is made of bark and rattan covered with lime plaster and commercial cotton cloth. The sides of the helmet are not matched in design, color, or material which again adds to the overall feeling of unbalance. Thus, the left side has painted swirls of white, red, and black and only a small patch of blue cloth, while the right side has one swirl each of blue, white, and red and the balance is covered with blue cloth. The helmet, surmounted by a 4-inch crest of brown fiber, is decorated with white fiber and red yarn.

In general the carving of the mask is not carefully finished and perfect symmetry is deliberately avoided. Design elements include curving swirls, triangles, sawtooth borders, and chevrons. Large volumes are boldly carved and low relief carving is supplemented by incising.

FIGURE 32 depicts a tatanua mask 17 inches high and 17 inches deep with a carved wooden face 6 inches in both dimensions. It is painted clay red, black, and white. Green shell pupils are inserted in the cut-out eyes leaving an open space at each side. The pointed nose is flanked by huge open nostrils. The open lower jaw, now partly broken, displays a black and white sawtooth design. Two triangular sections are cut through each cheek and the designs painted on the face are hachured triangles and leaves. A raised ridge covered with incisions along each side of the face forms a stylized ear. The face is not carved symmetrically nor is the design the same on both sides.

The helmet, made of bark and rattan, is covered with commercial materials, including white terrycloth, red cotton, blue fringe, and a lavender, blue, and white cotton print. The blue fringe shows mostly on one side while on the other side the largest part is terrycloth arranged in swirls with only the end of the fringe visible. The 4-inch crest that surmounts the mask from front to back is decorated on one side with red yarn and blue fringe.

The facial distortion gives the impression of someone making a face. The bold, asymmetrical painting, especially the black swirl that starts 2 inches wide on the right side, partly covers the eye, crosses the nose, and ends in a point



FIGURE 32. TATANUA MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (6732)

on the left cheek, takes the depicted facade out of the realm of human features and places it with the supernatural.

FIGURE 33 shows a tatanua mask whose carved face is 6 inches high and 8 inches across. The complete mask, which is 17 inches high and 17 inches deep, is painted various shades of brown, clay red, black, and white. Eyes are holes cut in the shape of a half-moon and made to hold shell pupil inserts. A black band area painted across the upper face includes the eyes. The nose comes to a point and the large open nostrils are emphasized by incised and painted designs. The squared-off open mouth bears a tooth design of alternating black and white triangles. A fluted hole pierces the bottom of the mask. The lower jaw has been broken.

The entire forehead is covered with a tiny checkered design in red and white. The balance of the facial design is done in red and white triangles, lines, and leaf shapes. Each ear, now a 1.5-inch flange along the side of the face, probably once ended in an open loop as observed in similar masks but this has broken off. Incised designs painted in black, red, and white enhance the ears. Although some symmetry is apparent, neither the carving nor the painted design is the same on each side. The helmet is made of pieces of bark that have been sewed together. The orange fibrous crest, 3 inches high at the center, is supplemented on the left side by an additional 2 inch high crest of the



FIGURE 33. TATANUA MASK FROM NEW
IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1665)

same material. Swirls of small, pointed shells set in a hard resinous substance decorate the left side of the helmet together with stiff grasses and sand burrs. The right side is covered with more exaggerated swirls of the resinous substance which in places is overlain with white lime. A piece of porous barkcloth covers the back of the head. The asymmetrical appearance is created primarily by the extra crest on the left side.

FIGURES 34 and 35 show front and side views of a tatanua mask that is about 14 inches high, 17 inches from front to back and has a carved wooden face about 7 inches in each dimension. Eyes are holes of half-moon shape inset with green shell pupils. The nose comes to a point and has huge cutaway nostrils. The rectilinear jaw, with black and white triangles as teeth, sags open on the right side. The face is painted in black, white, and red with incised straight and curved lines, chevrons and squares. The ears are 1.5-inch projecting flanges that end at the bottom in an open loop. They are carved with low relief designs of leaves with sawtooth edges and are painted black and red.

The face design is not the same on both sides and colors are opposed rather than the same. The helmet top is made of bark and wicker with a 3-inch high fibrous crest that is yellow where it has not been exposed, elsewhere it is orange-brown. One side of the helmet is covered with lime plaster with many, 1-inch long pointed sticks set into



FIGURE 34. TATANUA MASK FROM NEW IRELAND.
COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM,
HONOLULU. (1664) FOR SIDE VIEW SEE FIGURE 35.



FIGURE 35. TATANUA MASK FROM NEW IRELAND.
COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM,
HONOLULU. (1664) FOR FRONT VIEW SEE FIGURE 34.

it and is set off with a rising swirl of brown barkcloth. The other side has a free-falling fringe of twisted sennit over barkcloth. The sides of the face are perforated, probably for attachment of a covering for the back of the head.

FIGURE 36 shows a helmet mask that is similar to the tatanua type but has no crest. It is 15 inches high, 13 inches deep and has a carved wooden face 5 inches in each dimension which is painted clay red, white, and black. Eye openings are fitted with blue glass marbles as pupils. The nose comes to a point and has huge flaring nostrils. The mouth is barely open and has sawtooth borders painted in black and white. Along the sides of the face run 0.5-inch projecting flanges which are connected with each side of the nose by a narrow bridge of wood about 0.5-inch wide that was completely undercut in carving the face. Another pair of these connectors pass vertically over the side of the face from forehead to mouth, and join at right angles with aforementioned bridges. The cheek is cut away in open-work fashion in three areas. The carving is not bilaterally symmetrical since the nose leans to the right, the mouth gapes unevenly at the left, and the chin especially is placed far left of center. The surface design also is executed with a disregard for balance which enhances the asymmetry of the total composition. These painted designs consist of cross-hatching, triangles and swirl motifs.



FIGURE 36. HELMET MASK FROM NEW
IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (6731)

The bulging top of the mask is made of bark and rattan. One side is covered with blue and white cotton print material together with a swirl of red cotton. The other side has a similar red cotton swirl, and the remaining surface is covered with lime plaster from which project hundreds of tiny sticks.

The mask suggests a supernatural being elegant in full dress. It is a masterpiece of carving especially in the deep undercutting and fanciful openwork of the face. The use of trade materials in this mask is an example of the New Irelanders inventiveness in adapting new materials to old forms and techniques.

FIGURE 37 depicts a more realistic helmet mask. About 17 inches high overall, it has a carved wooden face 7 inches high and 6 inches wide that is partly covered with red-brown clay. The eyes are half-moon apertures set with green shell pupils. Eyebrows are indicated and the nose is formed quite realistically with moderately sized nostrils. The mouth is carved with lips everted, and teeth are indicated by carved triangles. Black grass and sand burrs suggest facial hair and side whiskers. Side-projecting ears with bottom loops are embellished with an incised leaf design painted red and white. The helmet top is a wicker framework covered with barkcloth and hair cut from sponges. From the crown projects a large white and brown nautilus



FIGURE 37. HELMET MASK FROM NEW IRELAND. COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1663)

shell cone. Attached to the sides are enormous panels made as wicker loops covered with barkcloth. The design of the top portion of each panel consists of a conventionalized fish and a band of triangles and zigzag lines. The bottom part is designed as a double spiral of black and red lines formed clockwise on the right side and reverse on the left. The whole mask is almost perfectly symmetrical and there is little that is frightening in its appearance.

THE NEW IRELAND MASK STYLE

The mask style follows a single general pattern. The eyes are represented as half-moon cutouts or pointed elliptical shapes with inset shell pupils. The nose is large and bulbous, comes to a point, and has holes cut through the mask to represent wide flaring nostrils. The lower jaws are either squared away or shaped like a bird's beak and bear a triangular tooth design. The ears on the small masks are long projecting flanges along the side of the face and usually terminate in an open loop at the base. In larger masks the ears are carved panels of intricate openwork (Figure 24) or barkcloth attachments (Figure 37). The tops of the helmet are made of bark or wicker, or both, and are often covered with barkcloth. The sides of the helmet bear a fantastic assemblage of common materials like shells, sand burrs, twisted sennit, lime plaster, inserted sticks, fibers, grass, and since European contact, commercial cloth and yarn. The large crest that represents the old mourning hairdo turns a plain fibrous material into a monumental adornment.

The designs themselves, although simple and organized in small areas, are so closely combined, however, that they form a complex overall design. There is a switching from one design to another that creates a feeling of nervous tension. The designs are generally not the same on both sides. Moreover, there is an opposition rather than a symmetrical use of color which adds to the mask's otherworldly appearance.

This asymmetry in carving, design, and color must be done deliberately in order to give the mask a non-human, immortal appearance. The mask shown in Figure 37 lacks most of the New Ireland conventions, results in a more realistic human face, and is therefore an exception to the general New Ireland style.

There seems to be an independent existence of the painted designs and the carved volumes. The designs painted on the masks do not necessarily depend on the volumes beneath them, that is, they could be painted on a flat or cylindrical object without losing their meaning. The sculptor here seems to be allowed less artistic freedom than does the painter. For example, in almost every mask presented the carving is essentially the same. The bulbous nose comes to a point with open flaring nostrils in half-moon shape cut through the mask. This half-moon is repeated in reverse form in the eyes and also cut through. The jaw is represented as a squared-off, crocodile-like mouth that gapes more on one side than the other. Ears are raised panels along the side of the face.

The painted designs, on the other hand, do not have this consistency. Although the same design elements are used, there is great diversity in their combinations. Leaf designs, triangles, cross-hatching, and curved lines are always used but are combined into very different patterns. Similarly, the helmet construction of the tatanua masks is always the same, representing the old mourning hairdo.

However, in the coverings of the helmets the individual artist gives his imagination free play.

This disparity between the more rigidly conventional carving and the artistic freedom in the design and surface embellishment is interesting and one wonders just how much individual expression the New Ireland artist is allowed. In my opinion this disparity arises in that the mask carving is made by a professional carver who uses the conventions that he has learned in "school," and portrays the cultural conception of manly beauty, that is "the broad, prominent nose, holed ear-lobes, stretched and pendulous, 'large mouth with healthy bite.'"³ The rest of the mask is made by the men who will wear them and the designs are made to suit the man who will wear it, much as he would do a face painting.⁴ The non-professional artist of the society, then, has much more artistic freedom and his individual interpretations and inventiveness are apparent in the seemingly endless variety of combinations and placement of design elements of the facial painting and

³ Henry Usher Hall, "New Ireland Masks," Pennsylvania University Museum Journal, 10;4 (1919), p. 184.

⁴ This is nowhere stated as such. However, Hortense Powdermaker in Life in Lesu states on p. 190, "The only carved objects are malanggans and masks, which are made by specialists who are paid for their work." Further, on p. 213 she says, "In the meantime the men have been busy rehearsing the dances, making costumes, masks and painting the malanggan." From this I infer that the masks are carved by specialists and painted by the men.

the variety of materials in the helmet embellishments. Noticeable again is the use of trade materials for surface adornment while the carving has remained the same.

We have here, actually, two independent arts; the carver's art of mass and volume done by a professional in the traditional conventionalized way, and the surface art done by a non-professional in free artistic interpretations. The carving art is primarily executed in conformity with the basic proportions of the log with an intricate openwork style which is a principal characteristic of all art works of New Ireland. The carving of a mask not only demonstrates the extreme virtuosity of the skilled professional carver who makes it but also symbolizes the totem of the clan for which it is made (see the carved snake in Figure 24). The painting art, though non-professional, demonstrates the sophisticated artistic sensibility of the common man of the society who has technical ability as well as creative inventiveness.

The masks, inextricably involved with the Malangan ceremony, are used in dances and memorial rites. Donning the mask, the New Irelander becomes a medium between the living and the dead; he worships his totem and pays his respects to his dead ancestors. But more important, in wearing his magnificently carved and designed mask, he shows the world his wealth and strengthens his position in a society which highly regards striving for prestige.

CHAPTER IV

NEW BRITAIN

There were no fires to light the large semicircle of silent natives, nothing but a little moonlight that filtered through the overhanging trees. Very slowly tom-toms began to play and a chorus of women started to sing in a wailing way. Suddenly a fire blazed up and creeping creatures were seen coming in all directions. The fire died down and another blazed from a different direction casting strange horrible shadows in the darkness. The tom-toms stopped and the yelling "Toberrans" rushed to the center of the open space. The music began again and the demon-like creatures did their terrifying dance. Some wore black masks and others had their faces painted green. They wore long black wigs of coconut fiber and were covered with dead leaves. Some had wings, long tails, or spikes down their backs. The yelling grew louder, the dance went faster, fires blazed up and died down. Here were all the necessary elements to enable these imaginative natives to project their fears into a terrifying reality. It was a violent kind of dance in a theatrical setting, heightened by suspense and weird music: a collective expression of sensationalism.



FIGURE 38. BARK MASK FROM NEW
BRITAIN. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1666)

The masks they wore looked like black toothless skulls and that is what they were. The front of a skull is filled in and modeled with a paste made from mashed Parinarium nuts. A stick on the inside of the skull at the mouth is gripped in the teeth of the dancer to hold the mask on. His identity is completely concealed by his long leaf dress.

FIGURE 38 shows a mask similar in conception although it is not made from a skull. Instead it is made of a flat piece of bark covered with a grey-black hardened paste probably of mashed Parinarium nuts. A strip around the chin is painted a clay-red color. The eyes are cutout slits, 0.5-inch wide, around which the paste projects slightly. About one inch above the eyes there is a slightly projecting ridge indicating a forehead. The nose is built up with paste and projects about one inch. The mouth is a gaping hole placed far left of center. The lips are of paste and teeth are cut in the wood and painted white. A white line indicates the bottom of the eye hollow and white dots are distributed in a rather random pattern over the face. Around the lower jaw the pithy bark is shredded to form a beard. The mask has a sinister appearance achieved by the distorted off-center placing of the features, especially the mouth which is greatly pulled out of shape. This mask has been in the Bishop Museum Collection since

before 1892 as it is mentioned in the catalog of specimens which came out at that time.

In New Britain the natives do not have long cyclical ceremonies similar to those of the Papuan Gulf or New Ireland. Rather their ceremonial life is more spontaneous and any occasion is an excuse to hold a dance, such as the Toberran described above.

Another ceremony is the Miaus, snake dance, which the Baining of the Gazelle Peninsula hold on such occasions as the birth of a child or completion of a new house. The snake dance takes place after darkness has fallen in a secret meeting spot in a dense part of the jungle where a clearing has been made. There is a huge fire blazing. The men chant softly and beat on log drums with bamboo sticks. The women form a circle and dance around the fire. About midnight everything is silent except for a distant beating of drums from the bush. The excitement grows and suddenly a native bounds into the dancing area. He wears a large white mask with red markings. The framework (kavat) of split bamboo covers the upper part of his body both in front and in back. This framework is covered with a bark material variously designed in red. His body is painted black and white and his limbs are decorated with grass. But most spectacular are the small snakes he carries curled around his forearms and a larger snake which he uses like

a jump-rope. Seven other dancers join him one by one. Four of the dancers carry a kavat and four do not. As they dance with their large snakes, they also jump through the flames. Occasionally they dance into the crowd, provoking screams from the women and children.

The masks for this dance are made of barkcloth and combine human and animal features in truly fantastic designs. About 15 to 20 inches high in cylindrical or conical shape, they have projecting foreheads and huge concentric circles for eyes. Out of the open crocodile-like mouth protrudes a tongue which is painted in geometric patterns. The designs on the white background of the mask are black, tan, and a deep red color obtained from blood drawn from the tongues of the young men. There seems to be little that is magical or religious in these masks or dances. Rather, they seem to focus interest in dramatic presentation, dance, and mask artistry, used to best advantage in a suspenseful way.

Initiation ceremonies in most parts of New Britain are connected with the Dukduk. The Dukduk is a male secret society that in many places is the government as well as the agent for the maintenance of tradition. Those things that are considered wrong in native public opinion are punished by the dukduk and the tubuan (female counterpart of the dukduk) by levying fines of shell money. A person representing the dukduk wears a large conical shaped mask of

fine wickerwork. It is about 5 feet high and covered with leaves or barkcloth. A dress of leaves which extends to the knees completes the costume.

The Dukduk society has two types of masks: the tubuan, two short, black, conical masks which are kept from year to year and are believed by the uninitiated to "breed" the dukduks; and the dukduk masks which are made anew each year by the initiated men. The dukduks venture out into the village carrying spears or sticks and sometimes a human skull. Women believe them to be spirits from the bush and hide when they see them. The chiefs appoint the boys that are to be initiated. The boys are beaten and terrorized during the ceremonies and must pay a good deal of shell money. They are shown the secrets of the society, that is that the dukduks are really their own people under the masks, that the masks are made by human hands rather than "bred" by the tubuans, and the secret signs of the society. The ceremonies, dances, and feasts last for some weeks and then the dukduks are believed to sicken and die. The masks are destroyed and the dresses burned, but they will be recreated the following year by the female masks that have been carefully stored away.

The Sulka of the Gazelle Peninsula, New Britain, make bizarre masks in conical and umbrella shapes. Strips of pith are sewn together and look somewhat like basketry. Some represent human forms while others are entirely

geometrical. I can find no reference to the use of these masks in the literature. Linton and Wingert, however, feel that they may have been used by a secret society similar to the Dukduk using violence to exert its power over the tribe.¹

In addition the natives of New Britain hold many dances which seem to have little or no ritual significance (though this may be only an assumption due to lack of information on ritual aspects of New Britain life). The dancers usually form two lines and move their arms, legs, and heads in rhythm to the musical accompaniment of tom-toms, tree-trunk drums, panpipes, jew's harps, and a primitive sort of banjo.

FIGURE 39 shows a mask worn in this type of secular dance. It is a wooden face mask with a conical grass-covered top. Nine inches high and 6 inches wide, the wooden face is painted white, yellow, red, blue, and black. The red triangular nose joins the eyebrows and forehead which overhang the blue encircled cutout eyes. The mouth is a simple oval marked with black and white teeth, and decorated at each corner by small bunches of dried grass. Around the face in bearded fashion is a 3-inch fringe of stiff grass. The face is surmounted by a conical rattan framework that tapers to a point on top. This framework is covered by black-dyed

¹ Ralph Linton & Paul S. Wingert, Arts of the South Seas (New York, 1946), p. 152



FIGURE 39. DANCE MASK FROM NEW
BRITAIN. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (B2213)

and natural, long grasses that come down to the shoulders of the wearer. From the point of the cone to the bottom of the grass it is 26 inches high. Through color the mask presents a frightening appearance and through bold simplicity carries a feeling of sensationalism. This mask was purchased by Bishop Museum in 1920.

THE NEW BRITAIN MASK STYLE

There is great variety in New Britain masks from one tribe to another and within the same tribe from one ceremony to another. However, in nearly all cases the art is confined to surfaces. The masks are either flat constructions of pith, wickerwork, or barkcloth (Sulka, Dukduk, and Baining respectively) or low relief modelings or carvings (Figures 38 and 39). Their distinctiveness is achieved by distortion of the human face, grotesque combinations of animal and human features in the same face, and accentuation of colors by their separation on the white background. Although the two examples of New Britain masks at Bishop Museum are not of the more fantastic type described in the literature, the affinities of style can still be seen in the distortion of features (Figure 38) and the arrangement of color (Figure 39). Emphasis is given to the eyebrow ridge as in Figure 39 or to the mouth as in Figure 38. What all New Britain masks have in common, however, is their dramatic use. The waiting natives, playing instruments or wailing or dancing, build up an air of intense expectancy. The climax is reached when the masked and costumed figures rush from the bush and dance against the shadowy background of the dark jungle.

CHAPTER V

A PROBLEM MASK

Because of the difficulty of ascertaining whether the mask shown in Figure 40 is from New Ireland or New Britain I have placed it in a separate chapter. It has been in the Bishop Museum collection since before 1892 and is listed in the catalog as coming from New Britain; however, in the display case it is labeled New Ireland. Confusion between New Britain and New Ireland is understandable in that New Britain and New Ireland used to be known collectively as the New Britain Archipelago. Moreover, with the closeness of these islands, there was no doubt considerable trade, so that a mask made in New Ireland might be traded to New Britain and subsequently acquired by a white man who would note only that he got it in New Britain. Furthermore, a mask received in trade from New Ireland might be copied by a carver from New Britain, so that though from New Britain it would still be in the New Ireland style.

The mask is about 10 inches high and 6 inches across. Cylindrical in shape, it is similar to those in Figures 25 and 27 from New Ireland. It is painted clay-red, black, and white as are New Ireland masks; New Britain masks more often bear other colors. It has the sculptured appearance of the New Ireland style, that is, of being executed in a manner influenced by the basic shape of the log. The nose is a 0.5-inch projecting ridge running vertically from forehead to mouth. This nose construction is very similar



FIGURE 40. DANCE MASK FROM NEW IRELAND
OR NEW BRITAIN. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1836)

to that in Figure 27. The eyes are slanting, elliptical shaped projections that extend to the side of the head. There is an indentation where the pupil should be. This probably held a shell pupil, which is definitely a New Ireland characteristic.

However, when comparing the Bishop Museum mask (Figure 42) with a photograph of a New Britain mask from the Chicago Natural History Museum collection (Figure 41), definite similarities are noted. The projecting mouth of the Honolulu mask is wide and narrow, and almost identical with the Chicago mask. The lips are black, a red tongue extends slightly beyond them, and no teeth are indicated. On each side at the top of the mask is a crescent-like form that creates a V-shaped depression over the forehead. This is suggestive of the forehead of the Chicago mask which, equipped with a crest-like hair arrangement, leaves a triangular form on either side.

On the outside face of the projecting crescent-like forms of the Honolulu mask there is a design of concentric ovals between two triangles. This is similar to the design elements of New Ireland masks except in the manner of combination; in New Ireland these small elements are usually combined in a larger complex design. On the top of the head between the two crescents the wood is roughly carved and bears a number of holes. Possibly a fiber crest head-dress was attached here which would not only make it look



FIGURE 41. CARVED MASK
ATTRIBUTED TO NEW BRITAIN.
COLLECTION CHICAGO NATURAL
HISTORY MUSEUM, CHICAGO.
(137.685)



FIGURE 42. CARVED MASK
FROM NEW IRELAND OR NEW
BRITAIN. COLLECTION
BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM,
HONOLULU. (1836) SEE
ALSO FIGURE 40.

more like the Chicago mask but would also give it the appearance of the characteristic mourning hair style of the New Ireland tatanua masks (see Chapter III). The projecting ridge that starts back of the eyes and outlines the face in bearded fashion is also very similar to the form of the lower face in the Chicago mask. This ridge, however, also suggests the way of depicting ears in the New Ireland tatanua masks, that is, a raised panel at the side of the face. For example, if the incised designs on the ear and lower jaw of masks in Figures 30 and 31 are disregarded, a similar construction is noticeable.

Personally I suspect that both masks may better be attributed to New Ireland or else to a part of New Britain that has been greatly influenced by New Ireland mask styles and ceremonies. I previously pointed out that the New Britain mask style was essentially a two-dimensional one; carved in low relief, or low modeling. On the other hand the New Ireland mask style is true sculpture in three-dimensions. On this basis both masks clearly belong to the New Ireland variety.

CHAPTER VI

NEW CALEDONIA

No fires light the intense blackness of the night. Only the resounding drums echo through the stillness to call the people to the Pilou. Vague, black silhouetted natives move toward a large pole whose grotesquely carved top is profiled against the sky. More and more diabolical forms arrive until there is a large mass. A soft humming starts from the nuclear group around the pole, then grows louder and louder as it spreads outwards until it becomes a guttural monotone chant. Suddenly an orchestra of loud resonant instruments begins and the massed humans start to move in rhythm. Stamping the ground to the fierce tempo of the orchestra they form an immense turning disc with the carved ritual pole as the pivot. Round and round they move in rhythmic contortions in the black night. The culminating focus of the culture!

The Pilou is a periodic ceremony that takes place every three or four years. A good deal of preparation is necessary to obtain food for the several hundred people. The chief assigns the tasks of gardening, fishing, creating new paths, building the ceremonial house, and carving the sculptures. When everything is ready the chief sends messengers to the distant villages with invitations to the festival. Each group sets up a camp some distance from the dancing ground. Here they put on their ceremonial dress--turbans, crests, girdles, necklaces, bracelets, and black glazing--and present themselves before the Masters of the

Pilou. Carrying their ceremonial weapons they pass in review to reveal the aesthetic traditions of the society.

The whole ceremony lasts several weeks. Social contracts are renewed, exchanges made, debts paid, and the prestige and power of the clan is reaffirmed. Without this periodic manifestation life would be rather dreary and without goal. This ceremony, however, requires all the initiative, talent, energy of the people and gives them an objective to work for. The Pilou makes the society conscious of itself, and celebrates births, initiations, final mourning for the dead. The Masters of the ceremony handle political matters and anything of interest to the public.

After these affairs have been settled, each group presents a part of the spectacular ceremonies. Sometimes they are drama, sometimes dance, and sometimes both. Through the symbolic medium of gesture and poetry the totems are exalted and a sense of direction is given to the lives of the people. It is during these theatrical dances that occasionally a mask will appear, looming up to terrorize adult and child alike. Various pantomimes contribute further to the success of this primitive theatre.

It would appear from this account¹ that the mask in New Caledonia is merely a stage property of the theatre.

¹ Maurice Leenhardt, Gens de la Grande Terre ([Paris], 1937), p. 168.



FIGURE 43. MASK WITH FEATHER CLOAK FROM NEW CALEDONIA.
COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1933)
PHOTOGRAPH BISHOP MUSEUM. (937)

However, there are conflicting ideas about the function of the mask in New Caledonia. Although there is abundant literature about the ethnology of New Caledonia, references to the use of masks are conspicuously meager. Even in monographs devoted strictly to the art of New Caledonia, only a few paragraphs pertain to masks while the balance is concerned with petroglyphs, bamboo engraving, and sculptured roof spires. Luquet, who writes only two paragraphs about masks in his chapter on bodily adornment in a whole book on the island's art, divides the masks into two types. One is a dance mask that is held by a handle in front of the face. The second type (Apouema) he says have been diversely defined by Europeans as masks of war, as a ceremonial costume, as something women threaten their children with, and as an aquatic demon.² Erskine saw a mask fastened to a canoe and was of the opinion that it was a patron saint of the canoe.³ Wingert, following Luquet, divides the masks into a dance type with handle and a ceremonial type representing aquatic spirits.⁴

² Georges Henri Luquet, L'Art Néo-Calédonien (Paris, 1926), p. 8.

³ John E. Erskine, Journal of a Cruise Among the Islands of the Western Pacific (London, 1853), p. 357.

⁴ Paul Stover Wingert, An Outline Guide to the Art of the South Pacific (New York, 1946), p. 25.

Codrington, on the other hand, feels that the masks belonged to a secret society because of their similarity to masks of the Tamate Society in the Banks Islands.⁵ Rivers follows Codrington by saying that there are indications (such as masks, no doubt) that secret societies did exist.⁶ Lewis is cautious here, saying, "Some regard these masks as evidence of a former secret society, having survived because of their play acting interest."⁷ And Guiart takes the middle road saying that the masks are half ritual, half theatrical.⁸ Another interpretation is given in the Bishop Museum card catalog where the masks are noted as "funeral masks." It says further, "Persons with these masks guard the grave of a chief immediately after the interment." So we see that there is no clear agreement about the use or function of masks in New Caledonian culture.

⁵ Robert Henry Codrington, The Melanesians, Studies in their Anthropology and Folklore (Oxford, 1891), p. 73.

⁶ William H. R. Rivers; The History of Melanesian Society (Cambridge, 1914), II, 205.

⁷ Albert B. Lewis, Ethnology of Melanesia. Field Museum of Natural History, Department of Anthropology, Guide Part 5 (Chicago, 1932), p. 182.

⁸ Jean Guiart, L'Art Autochtone de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Noumea, 1953), p. 21.

Maurice Leenhardt, probably the outstanding authority on New Caledonian ethnology, does give a plausible interpretation of the masks which he backs up with native legends.⁹ He says that there are four types of masks which represent the four culture heroes of the legendary world, that is, Alowena, Wanepuri, Jawarabai, and Mapi. Of these four types there are examples of only two. Alowena (sometimes called Apouema) is characterized by a large nose and feather cloak and is the type usually referred to as representative of New Caledonia masks. The second type, Mapi (also called Mawaraba), is a modeled mask of which (to my knowledge) there is only one example.¹⁰ This singular mask was found with a number of skulls in the mud of a sacred place in Northern New Caledonia.

From this classification, then, it would follow that both types of masks identified by writers are really only large and small versions of one mask type, namely, the culture hero Alowena. And it is to this type that the three masks of the Bishop Museum collection belong. Leenhardt tells us that the heroes who come from the sea are called Pouama. Pouama (cognate of Apouema) are also totems of the sea, gods on earth, and chiefs of the spirits.

⁹ Maurice Leenhardt, "Mawaraba Mapi, La Signification du Masque in Nouvelle-Calédonie," Journal de la Société des Océanistes (I:I December 1945), 29-35.

¹⁰ For a photograph of Mapi see Maurice Leenhardt, Arts de L'Océanie (Paris, 1947), p. 75.

During wars they lead the warriors. They are guardians of the society and advise the chief. At the death of the chief an Apouema (Alowena) mask directs the mourning which ends during the Pilou. The chief's hair is cut and added to the hairdo of the mask. It appears, then, that the men who possess the masks are leaders of the society who guard the traditional sacredness of the chief. Rather than symbolizing the power of the chief, however, the masks show the power of the maternal clan. The mask is inherited by the maternal nephew.

If we follow this interpretation the other interpretations come into focus. For instead of being either right or wrong, rather they were only partial interpretations. The mask (as I understand it) is a spirit that embodies the accumulated wisdom of the clan, incorporating different legends and ideals of the society, in a concrete symbolization in the form of a culture hero.



FIGURE 44. MASK WITH FEATHER CLOAK FROM
NEW CALEDONIA, COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (1934)

FIGURES 43 and 44 show two very similar masks that came to the Bishop Museum Collection before 1892. The following description of Figure 44 can be used as a general description for both masks. The entire mask, about 50 inches high with the feather cloak, has a wooden face about 9 inches high and 7 inches wide which is painted a dull black. Curved overhanging eyebrow ridges meet at the nose and extend to the sides of the face. Diamond-shaped eyes have pointed projecting pupils. The large bulbous nose has large carved-out nostrils. The mouth is a hole carved through the mask and serves as a peep hole for the wearer of the mask. The cheeks are bulbous, projecting volumes which retain the strokes of the sculptors tool. The chin is a ridge along the bottom of the face which comes to a point at the middle. Stiff, tightly-woven sennit forms the back of the mask and supports a conical framework of cane. Braided sennit, sewed spiral fashion over the cone, is the base to which human hair is attached. Strands of braided sennit covered with human hair form a beard (now fallen away to one side, as seen in Figure 44). A loose netting of sennit with attached bunches of feathers and serving as a cloak is attached to holes along the bottom of the wooden part of the mask and sennit helmet back. The mask gives the wearer a strange otherworld appearance in gigantic proportions. The top is 16 inches above the peep hole, and the cloak extends nearly to the wearer's knees.



FIGURE 45. MASK FROM NEW CALEDONIA.
COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM,
HONOLULU. (10,228) FRONT VIEW.

FIGURES 45 and 46 show front and side views of a mask carved from a hollowed-out log. This mask is 23 inches high overall. The face is 12 inches high and 7 inches wide and is unpainted except for the mouth. Eyes are horizontal, diamond-shaped projections with huge overhanging eyebrow curves which meet at the nose bridge. The wide mouth is a hole carved through the mask and displays a toothy grin of carved triangles. The lips are painted red, the teeth white. The cheeks are rounded volumes which merge with the pointed chin ridge below.

The nose, by far the dominating feature of the mask, has an outside curve of 7.5 inches from eyebrow ridge to the tip. Wide-flaring nostrils are represented as huge indentations. The bottom edge and sides of the mask have drilled holes, probably for the attachment of a cloak to cover the body. Cloth-like coconut sheath forms a turbaned hairdo and also extends down the right side of the face. A large bunch of feathers decorates the upper part of the same side. The top of the mask is 17 inches from the mouth hole, through which the wearer sees, and gives the wearer the appearance of gigantic stature. It came to the Museum collection in 1910.



FIGURE 46. MASK FROM NEW CALEDONIA.
COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM,
HONOLULU. (10,228) SIDE VIEW.

THE NEW CALEDONIA MASK STYLE

New Caledonia masks are concrete manifestations of the culture here Alowena. They carry on the tradition of the chief's sacredness but stress the importance and power of the maternal clan. A sculptor's art of three-dimensional volumes, the forms are large and heavy. The horizontal, diamond-shaped eyes are rather minimized beneath the great overhanging eyebrow ridge. The open mouth has the practical function of lookout for the wearer but enhances the diabolical appearance of the mask. Although the huge bulbous or curved nose is the most obvious stylistic feature of the masks, the more subtly inflated cheeks and pointed chin ridge are characteristic as is also the turban-like hairdo.

Executed in durable material, the mask is used over a long period of time, possibly symbolizing the constancy of the maternal clan which continues from generation to generation while a chief has only a short sojourn on earth. The mask, that is, the accumulated wisdom of the clan, advises the chief, who in turn gives his hair to the mask to add his own wisdom and power for the direction of succeeding generations. Color is unimportant and if used at all, is a means of emphasizing form, rather than color for its own sake. The mask's impressive scale adds to the forcefulness of the controlled volumes, and the addition of the dead chief's hair gives it the added dimension of awe of the dead and the sacredness of a chief.

CHAPTER VII

NEW HEBRIDES

Along one side of the amel (men's-house) a cut bamboo platform has been erected. There are masks hung above the platform and behind each one a candidate sits so that his face is completely hidden. From the bush two men approach the amel to the rhythm of the slit-gongs. They carry bows and arrows and perform a dance, passing each other back and forth until they draw close to the platform. The gongs stop and each dancer shoots an arrow at the amel. The mask-hidden candidates play on their wind instruments that sound like birds; ancestral spirits reply from inside the amel. After a year of seclusion the candidates are ready for the special rank of Nalawan Vinbamp. They now come down from the platform, a pig is killed for the two dancers, and the period of seclusion is ended. The initiates bodies and faces are painted black and there are red stripes down the nose and both cheeks. Each in turn dances around the gongs wearing the nimu hat, a 9-foot conical structure which is supported by spears held by two men. One-half of the hat is painted red and the other yellow. Then a day is appointed for the candidates to formally enter the rank, for this is only the prelude.



FIGURE 47. PLATFORM MASKS FROM NEW HEBRIDES.
COLLECTION BERNICE P. BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU.
(8138, 8139, 8137)

In the New Hebrides life is one life-long striving for prestige which can only be gained by advancement to higher and higher ranks in the secret societies. Although this degree taking is theoretically voluntary, in practice it is absolutely necessary for any man who will take a normal part in his community. Two of the most important of these graded secret societies are the Nimangki and the Nalawan. A man's position in these societies determines his social rank and prestige in the community. These ranks are not inherited and must be achieved by each man through his own ambition. The elaborate ceremonial life in the New Hebrides centers around these two societies. In addition there are ceremonies for specific purposes such as the revitalizing of mankind, totemic fertility rites, and rites de passage. I will be concerned here only with the Nalawan for it is the society that makes extensive use of masks.

The Nalawan society is quite widespread in the New Hebrides. I will use Malekula as an example because we have more complete information in the literature and because three of the Bishop Museum masks are from that island. The Nalawan is divided into grades or ranks (usually fourteen) each of which has its own name, ritual, equipment, and title. Some of these grades are in turn divided into sub-grades such as Nalawan Nimbwilei which has six. Membership in each grade is purchased and carries with it increased prestige and ileo, sacredness of the male (igah is the

corresponding sacredness in women). The medium of currency is pigs which are also ranked and graded in accordance with the spiral development of their tusks. When the boars are still young the upper canine teeth are knocked out to allow the lower canines to grow in sweeping curves which eventually pierce the lower jaw and grow out again. In some areas pigs are ranked in as many as 23 grades. A pig may be borrowed but the loan must be repaid with a pig of a higher grade. It is only with pigs that the ranks can be purchased and for entry to some ranks it is necessary to pay as many as 300 of the animals.

In contrast to Nimangki which is more secular in importance, the Nalawan seems to have a religious significance and is connected with funeral ceremonial. The rank a man attains in life determines the nature of his death rites and the rank he will occupy after death. Sometimes he will hold his own funeral rites before his physical death, especially if he does not trust his relatives to perform them as elaborately as he wishes. Each rank has its own characteristic mask or headdress (temes mbalmbal). This accounts for the great diversity found in masks from the New Hebrides. The Nalawan also makes use of hollow wooden cylinders (temes naainggol) which when blown by the members are supposed by the uninitiated to be the booming voices of the ancestral ghosts.

The entrance rites for each of the different grades are alike in general outline. Membership, badges, insignia, and title must all be purchased with pigs. Temes, both masks (mbalmbal) and instruments (naainggol), are important as the temporary residences of ghosts and ancestors. There are four principal performers in any Nalawan rite. First, there is the candidate who is purchasing the advance in rank. Second, there is the sponsor (introducer) to whom the candidate pays pigs for the required objects. Third, there is the sponsor's assistant who is a friend of the latter. And fourth, there is a senior man of high rank who serves as director of the ceremony. Each candidate has his own sponsor and sponsor's assistant while one senior man presides over the whole ceremony. This last, an old man, takes the lead in "stoning" or "shooting" the Nalawan structure and finally gives the candidate his new title.

The actual rites of the Nalawan take about four days. During the first two days the necessary paraphernalia are manufactured, erected, and paid for. The candidate and his friends go to the bush and cut tree-fern posts to make the characteristic structure of the social grade. The candidate pays his sponsor a pig and they carve two tree-fern posts to represent "father" and "mother" and both ends of a bamboo pole to represent "children". The next day these carvings are painted and the masks are made. That night there is a dance from sunset until just before sunrise at which time

the structure is erected. Then gongs are beaten with a specific rhythm that invites the members of the Nalawan from neighboring villages to come for the ceremony.

During the second two days of the rites there are dances by visitors, candidates, and sponsors. Some dances take place during the day and some in the evening, when the dancers carry torches. The candidates are introduced to the sacred sound of the wooden cylinders. At sunrise of the second day every man goes to the bush to paint himself and put on the mask of his Nalawan grade. The candidates' faces are blackened and painted with red stripes on the nose and each cheek. An old man of high rank, and others who have purchased the right to do so, throw coconuts at the structure ("stoning" the structure). With a pig to be sacrificed the candidate purchases a feather that is the badge of the grade. A conch shell is broken against the forehead of the sacrificial pig and he is killed with a spear thrust as a token of the payment for the new title. The old man slaps the candidate on the back and thus bestows the title. The jaw of this pig is kept by the new member as a symbol of his rise in rank, and after his death is attached by his relatives to his memorial effigy.

This is the general form of the rites for entrance into any one of the Nalawan grades. Each grade has its own individual way of building the structure on the dance ground. Each grade has its own gong rhythm, its own botanical plant,

a special kind of hat or mask, and a special title for its members. Of the usual 14 ranks, the first is entered in childhood and the second and third are optional. The fourth rank is entered as an adult and is compulsory as are the fifth and sixth rank. After that the order in which the ranks are entered is not always the same. After a man has "cut the sacred yam" (sixth rank) and "stoned the pig" (seventh rank) he can attend Malawan ceremonies in other places and help "stone" ceremonial objects. The "stoning" of various objects is a regular feature of the Malawan rites and is replaced in higher ranks by "shooting" with bow and arrow. Only after "cutting the sacred yam" and "stoning the pig" does a man become a full member of the Malawan society.

In addition to the regular 14 grades of the Malawan there are two special grades. If a man can climb no farther in the society (because of the lack of wealth or motivation) he performs the Malawan Mbrulindew ceremony and ends his striving for higher rank. If he does not perform the ceremony during his life time, his son or next of kin performs it for him after his death and his effigy substitutes for him.

The other additional grade is Malawan Vinbamp which is more elaborate. This grade requires the seclusion of the candidates for a year which is ended with the performance of the rites described at the beginning of this chapter. The three masks in Figure 47 are, in my opinion, the type of

mask that would be attached to the platform and behind which the candidates sit. Platform masks are also called nitevis which usually refers to the carved tree-fern posts that are erected as some of the higher Nalawan. The masks in Figure 47 would not only be difficult to wear, but are more similar to the usual representation of the face as found on the tree-fern posts and slit-gongs than they are to the faces usually represented on the masks worn in the dances.

The three masks which the Bishop Museum acquired in 1898 are carved of soft wood. They are ovate in shape and the features are carved in high relief. They are painted with thick red, white, grey, and black pigments. All three are about 16 inches high and 7 inches wide.

The mask on the left side of the illustration has an overhanging eyebrow ridge painted white while the forehead is red and grey. The undercut eyes are actually narrow slits outlined by black and red. The nose is a straight vertical ridge from eyebrows to mouth and is carved free-standing at the bottom. The mouth is a small white indentation outlined by a design of concentric hearts which dominate the whole mask. The features, especially the eyes and mouth, are carved in such a way that they appear to be moving.

The mask at the center of the picture has a black and white scallop design at the top. The overhanging eyebrows are double chevrons which are repeated throughout the

remainder of the face. The eyes are holes outlined in red and set in a larger area of white. The nose is a vertical red ridge with black chevron-shaped wide-flaring nostrils. The mouth is a series of chevron shapes and below is a black chin. The multitude of chevrons in the mouth area make it difficult to tell which is the mouth and which are part of the larger design that gives the appearance of motion.

The mask on the right has a crown-like top which is painted black and white. The huge overhanging eyebrows almost hide the tiny round eyeholes. The eye and face design repeat the eyebrow curves and meet at the projecting vertical nose ridge. The curves continue around an indeterminate mouth and change to chevrons in the chin area. Eyes and mouth are almost hidden and emphasis is given to the eyebrows and nose.

The four masks in Figures 48 to 51 are from Ambrym, New Hebrides. They are noted in the Museum catalog as dancing masks for the yam dance. However, this seems unlikely as I can find no references in the literature to the use of masks in this dance which is part of the totemic fertility ceremonies. I feel confident that these masks belong to the Nalawan ceremonies because Deacon states, "My informants say that all the masks belong to the Nalawan....there is always the possibility, however, that



FIGURE 48. DANCE MASK FROM NEW
HEBRIDES. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (8456A)

certain especially 'sacred' masks belong to the Nevinbur
[Secret Society] but they are afraid to tell me."¹

Three of the masks are bearded diamond-shaped masks. The bamboo framework includes an oval piece of bamboo that holds the mask on the wearer's head. The framework is covered with pieces of coconut sheath and all is bound and sewn together with coconut sennit.

FIGURE 48 shows a diamond-shaped mask 22 inches high and 8 inches wide. It is painted brown, grey-green, black, white, and burnt orange. The pointed center-front is raised by addition of a piece of woody pith. Above the pierced eyes are eyebrows of coconut shell. A piece of woody pith forms a V-shaped mouth and the nose is a folded piece of coconut sheath. Long strands of fiber (the literature says this is banana fiber) are attached for hair and beard which is braided from the end of the pointed chin. Ears are tufts of the same fiber. The top of the mask is finished with a spray of black and white feathers.

FIGURE 49 depicts a similar diamond-shaped mask. Several layers of coconut sheath form the face of this mask. The eyes are elliptical holes that extend from the nose bridge to the sides of the mask. Eyebrows are added

¹ A. Bernard Deacon, Malekula. A Vanishing People in the New Hebrides (London, 1934), p. 386, n.

pieces of woody pith. The nose is a fold of the top layer of coconut sheath. Part of the second layer is folded under to form the upper lip of the open mouth, and the third layer makes up the lower jaw. The whole mask is painted in heavy earth pigments of brown, grey-green, black, and white. Long fibrous strands constitute hair and beard, and short tufts of the fiber form the ears. The face is 16 inches high and 6 inches wide. Both masks in Figures 48 and 49 were acquired in 1903.

FIGURE 50 shows a diamond-shaped mask that is outlined with pieces of woody pith that have triangles cut out along the outer edge. The eyebrows of coconut shell sharply overhang the eye holes. The nose is an attached piece of folded coconut sheath and the mouth is a similarly attached piece of woody pith in inverted chevron shape. The brown background displays black, white, and grey painting. The face is 21 inches high and 8 inches across. Long strands of fiber are attached for hair and beard, and tufts of the same material form the ears.

FIGURE 51. The framework of this mask is a 10-inch oval of bamboo to which are attached projecting 9-inch pieces of split bamboo. It is covered with pieces of coconut sheath and forms a face rather like that of a bird. Large elliptical eye holes that are outlined with loops of woody pith look rather birdlike but the characteristic



FIGURE 50. DANCE MASK FROM NEW
HEBRIDES. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (11,655)



FIGURE 51. DANCE MASK FROM NEW
HEBRIDES. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (11,656)

folded nose looks very human. No mouth is perceptible but extending down from the nose in a tongue-like fashion is a 7-inch by 2.5-inch extension of coconut sheath. Hair and beard are of long fiber. The face is painted with black, white, brown, and grey-green earth pigments in designs composed of dots, diamonds, or chevrons. The mask is very grotesque looking, combining as it does human and bird features in a composition that hardly looks like a face. The two masks in Figures 50 and 51 were acquired by Bishop Museum in 1914.

FIGURE 52 shows a very fragile conical shaped mask that Bishop Museum acquired in 1908. The 32-inch high frame of this mask is made of split bamboo and fastened at the bottom to a wooden ring. It is covered with dried leaves, grasses, spider webbing, and wood shavings. This mask belongs to a type called temes mbalmbal noon iru (mask with two faces) and because of the spider webbing no doubt belongs to a high Nalawan grade. Each face is 10 inches high and 6 inches wide. Both are made of pith, and have a piece of pith added to form a vertical nose. Eyes are slits cut through the pith. No mouth is indicated. Both faces are painted black, white, grey-green, and red. Eight-inch long grasses represent a beard and extend to the wearer's shoulders.



FIGURE 52. DANCE MASK FROM NEW
HEBRIDES. COLLECTION BERNICE P.
BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU. (9655)

THE NEW HEBRIDES MASK STYLE

The dance masks of New Hebrides are imaginative collage constructions. Starting with bamboo, they are either split and reassembled or splayed into a cone and fastened at the bottom to a ring. This framework is then covered with layers of coconut sheath or dried leaves. The next layer is usually thick earth pigment in various colors. To this are added such diverse materials as woody pith, spider webbing, wood shavings, banana fiber, and coconut shell.

The vertical center is emphasized and continues as a well-defined nose. The eyebrows are also quite prominent. The eyes, on the other hand, are either almost hidden by the overhanging brows or are simple holes which, when seen against the black face, give the appearance of darkness. The repressed mouth either is not indicated at all or is a simple V shape which repeats the V-shaped bottom of the mask.

The platform masks, although they are carvings in relief rather than constructions of bamboo and other materials repeat these same features. The central axis is emphasized and ends in a well-defined nose. The prominent eyebrows greatly overhang the almost hidden eyes which are narrow slits in the larger facial design. The mouth also has no definite outline and is painted in vertical lines or as part of the larger facial design.

The face designs on both dance and platform masks are executed with an eye for overall unity. In the diamond-shaped masks, designs are triangles and chevrons. In the oval masks, curved and heart-shaped designs are used that follow the shape of the masks or sometimes gradually change to chevrons or vertical lines.

The dance masks are quite fragile as they are made of materials that deteriorate easily, reflecting the native idea of the transitoriness of life and the importance of afterlife. Even the platform masks are impermanent because the thick pigment will flake and wash away. The masks are made in one day and are used only once. They embody the artists' spontaneous direct inspiration. The artists work within the mask type of a particular Nalawan grade. But having no models to copy (except from memory) and working quickly after preliminary ceremonies, it is no wonder they produce individually creative interpretations. The group rites are collective, following which each man retires to the amel to produce his own idea of a ghost. And when he dons the mask he becomes the ghost, a part of the supernatural, while cleverly carved ancestral figures nod their approval from the edge of the dance ground.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: THE REGIONAL STYLE

From the masks used in these intense dramatic ceremonies in the five localities we can now abstract a single regional style. To go back to the expressionistic, formalistic dichotomy presented in the introduction, the masks of all five areas clearly belong in the former. I have tried to present the masks in their own milieu because what these objects have in common is their function and feeling rather than their form. They function in all cases as ceremonial objects that cover the face, and often the body, of a dancer who is a medium between the world of the senses and the world of the supernatural. The cultural focus in each of these five areas is on ritual ceremonies. No matter for what professed reason these ceremonies are performed, always in the background is the perpetuation of the traditional culture. As has been shown, with the new way of life resulting from extensive Western contact, the ceremonies die; without the ceremonies, life to Melanesians is no longer the same.

By studying Melanesian ceremony and its dependent mask art we can better understand the culture. Though the actual ceremony may last only a few hours or a few days, it is with the ceremony in mind that the individuals and the whole society direct their time, energy, and talents. Without the ceremonies, each village or family group could conceivably live by itself with little contact with its

neighbors. The ceremonies serve to integrate and organize the different sections of the society. This is usually done along clan lines. The clan has members in several villages who must cooperate for successful completion of the ceremony, and who thus stimulate the interest of other people in their respective villages. Wealth is circulated and prestige is gained by individuals who play specific parts in the ceremonies and by the clan or village group.

These ceremonies lend an element of the dramatic to an otherwise dreary existence. Expressionism is the regional art style intimately associated with this feeling for the dramatic. Surrounded by excesses and drama in climate and environment the people carry this exaggeration into their artistic expression. The willful distortion, achieved in different ways, is calculated to instill a feeling of elation and exultation in participant and spectator alike. These emotions must be deeply felt to insure the continuance of the practices. The expressionistic (subjective, emotional) distortion centers upon the human face, that part of the body most expressive of emotion. By artistic license the human face is transformed from the human to the superhuman, taken out of the realm of the world of the senses, and exalted into the world of the supernatural. One can imagine a native's feelings the first time he experiences one of the dramatic ceremonies described above. The masks are the embodiment of these

feelings of fear and terror that must in turn terrify a new generation. Here is an outpouring of emotion felt by the artist but culturally channeled.

The regional mask style is expressionistic and can be defined as an essentially human face that incorporates animal features and supplementary design motifs. The typical mask is made in such a way as to give the appearance of direct, spontaneous execution. The faces are huge in size. Some features are distorted by emphasis and exaggeration and others are repressed or omitted. The incorporation of animal features and supplemental designs give the faces a superhuman appearance while the grimacing distortion and menacing size add a terrifying quality. This definition of regional style is broad enough to include each of the local styles and can be encompassed by the term expressionism

Perhaps the key to the expressionistic style is spontaneity which distinguishes this style from the precise, ordered, and contrived formalistic style. The expressionistic style is a direct painterly approach rather than the controlled draftsman's approach in a formalistic style. This direct execution can be seen in such things as wavy, uncertain lines without precise edges; disregard for bilateral symmetry, for example, a mouth that gapes widely on only one side; simplification, such as, simple holes or circles for eyes, and straight lines for eyebrows and nose;

and adze marks retained in place of a smooth surface finish. A formalistic style, on the other hand, has sharp, precise lines that are often perfectly duplicated, bilateral symmetry, in overall composition, more naturalistic representation of features, and a controlled, polished, and well finished look. In contrast, the expression of spontaneity is vividly presented in the masks of all five areas.

In the Papuan Gulf, facial distortion is accomplished by reducing the nose and eyebrows to a simple T, reproducing a bird or crocodile mouth, and emphasizing the round staring eyes either on a white background or in a larger fanciful design which often resembles a fish. Supplementary triangles, circles, dots, and crescents are incorporated into the mask design. The simplified features of the often huge mask are sewn directly onto the face, giving the appearance of direct, unplanned execution though it may take a long time to complete the whole mask.

In New Ireland the intricate combination of many small and simple motifs within an overall complex design creates an intense nervous appearance that adds an emotional quality to the masks. Facial distortion contributes further to the expressionistic style. Eyebrows are ignored and staring eyes are emphasized by placing a projecting pupil in an open hole or against a white background. The curved nose is enlarged and painted asymmetrically. The wide, open mouth of bird or crocodile presents a terrifying appearance

in its emphasis on black and white triangular teeth. Though technical perfection of a master is often reached in the initial task of carving the mask, the painting is done directly in a fanciful rendering by the wearer of the mask as if seeking to embellish it as personal adornment.

New Britain masks achieve an expressionistic feeling by more simple means, namely, a plain face with greatly distorted mouth, extreme color contrast of black and red on white, and supplementary geometric motifs. A human skull is used as the foundation of a demon's face and bark-cloth is colored with blood drawn from human tongues. A huge, geometrically conceived, animal tongue is the dominating feature of the face, which is hardly recognizable so extreme is the stylization.

New Caledonians, on the other hand, use little color but depend on size to give the masks their special quality. Huge overall dimensions of the mask, as well as the tremendous bird nose, suppress the appearance of the remaining features. The carving of the eyes, the twining of the helmet, and the spiral construction of the conical hairdo has a geometric quality. Adze marks, clearly visible on the face give the mask an unfinished appearance of spontaneous execution.

In New Hebridean masks the features are more natural but gain an expressionistic quality by their placement in an inhuman facial shape and by the addition of fantastic

face painting. Because a function of the masks is to differentiate one grade of society from another, many variations exist within the local style. Elongated ovals or diamonds are the more common shapes, however, and bird-like eyes are used along with supplementary designs such as triangles, chevrons, hearts, lines, and scallops. Though the eyes, nose, and mouth are carefully built into the mask construction, a feeling of spontaneity is achieved in the facial painting.

Characteristics like these distinguish the regional style, and variations of these characteristics render each local style identifiable. By reference to a single feature it is often possible to tell from which of the five areas a mask comes. For example, a T-shaped nose and eyebrow ridge is certainly Papuan Gulf, a bulbous nose with pierced wide flaring nostrils is from New Ireland, a simple triangular nose connotes New Britain, a huge curved beak suggests New Caledonia, while a naturalistic nose folded from coconut sheath is New Hebridean.

The particular area can also be determined by examining the eyes. Single or concentric circles are Papuan Gulf, half-moon cutouts with inset shell pupils point to New Ireland, simple cutout ovals are from New Britain, protruding diamond-shaped eyes are New Caledonian, and holes cut through the mask, outlined in color, and resembling bird's eyes, are from New Hebrides.

The mouth in Papuan Gulf masks is crocodile-like, a bird's beak, or just a plain oval; in New Ireland, masks have a squared-off jaw with black and white triangular teeth; in New Britain the mouth is a hole cut through the mask, with carved or painted teeth and a huge inhuman tongue greatly pulled out of shape. In New Caledonia the mouth is also a hole cut through the mask but in the shape of a curve or inverted chevron; in the New Hebrides the mouth is a simple V.

An eyebrow ridge in the Papuan Gulf is represented as a T, no eyebrows are indicated in New Ireland, in New Britain they are a simple line, while in New Caledonia and New Hebrides the eyebrows curve and come together.

Face painting also betrays the area from which a mask comes. In Papuan Gulf black or red triangles and fish are used as design motifs, each clearly separated from each other against a white background. In New Ireland small triangles, leaves, and cross-hatching are intricately combined into a complex pattern. Separate lines or dots are used in a simple, flowing combination in New Britain. In New Caledonia the face is painted a dull black or the wood is left in its natural color. In some of the New Hebridean masks black, white, and red painting closely follows the details of the carving, while in others triangular patches of color highlight forehead, cheeks, and mouth.

The materials used in the masks may indicate the area of origin. Masks from the Papuan Gulf are made of porous barkcloth stretched over a rattan frame and decorated with thin strips of rattan. New Ireland masks are three-dimensional wood carvings, decorated with a fantastic assemblage of common materials. New Britain masks are carved or modeled in low relief or constitute flat constructions of pith, wickerwork, or barkcloth. New Caledonian masks are carved in controlled volumes with attached feathers, in capes or hairdos, and human hair. New Hebridean masks are either soft wood carved in relief or coconut sheath with attachments of banana fiber and coconut shell.

Although the forms and meanings of the masks are dissimilar from locality to locality, what enables us to group them together into a regional style is spontaneous execution, distortion of the human face by exaggeration, huge size, use of animal features and geometric designs, and emphasis and suppression to give an overall emotional quality. Forms are seldom naturalistically controlled, rather they are transformed to the supernatural. There is no effort to record a fleeting impression but instead to portray the traditional emotions that these objects are supposed to evoke.

From this regional art style perhaps we can enlarge our view to a regional style of life. The local focus varies according to the ceremony's function in initiation,

death, personal status, secret society ritual, or propitiation of spirits. Here is the essence of the local style of life and values. We can say about the regional style of life that the focus is on ceremony, dramatically presented, aimed at gaining prestige (village in Papuan Gulf, secret society in New Britain, clan in New Caledonia, clan and individual in New Ireland, and individual in New Hebrides), and has the function of maintaining the traditional way of life. We can apply Bateson's characterization of the Iatmul (who have an expressionistic art style) to these societies, "there is the same emphasis and value set upon pride, self-assertion, harshness and spectacular display. This emphasis leads again and again to over-emphasis; the tendency to histrionic behavior continually diverts the harshness into irony, which in its turn degenerates into buffooning."¹

Look again at the masks presented here with an eye toward the comic, and the frightening grimace of a mask easily changes to a grin. Compare this expressionism with the formalistic art style of other Melanesian areas which gives the viewer less feeling of emotion, either comic or tragic, but is more aesthetically accessible because of the controlled form. The expressionistic artist, on the other

¹ Gregory Bateson, Naven (Stanford, 1958), p. 108.

hand, portrays emotions that express a collective concept. Intense human feelings are made visible, the regional preference for the dramatic being captured in a work of art as the expressionistic style of Melanesia.

To say a few words about the Bishop Museum collection, the quality and condition of the masks vary. For example, the quality of workmanship of the Papuan Gulf masks is inferior to that generally associated with this area. However the superb carving and inventive painting of the New Ireland masks is quite well represented. The preservation of some of the masks, such as the New Hebrides platform masks (Figure 47) and some of the New Ireland masks, is almost perfect. Others such as the conical New Hebrides mask (Figure 52), the New Caledonian mask with feather cape (Figure 44), and a number of the Papuan Gulf masks, are in an advance state of deterioration. The condition and quality of the masks are partially related to the time taken to make them and the fragility of the materials use. However, if one compares the conical New Hebrides mask (Figure 52) with two similar masks from the Honolulu Academy of Arts (See Appendix, Figures 53 and 54), it will be seen that the Bishop Museum mask has almost completely fallen apart, while the two masks at the Academy of Arts, made in a similar style and of similar materials, are almost perfectly preserved. This reflects differences

in workmanship as well as the state of preservation when the masks were first acquired by the two institutions.

Melanesian masks are well represented in the Bishop Museum collection except the Sepik River and Torres Straits. Unfortunately, the collection also lacks any of the fantastic masks of the Baining and the Sulka of the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain. In order to make a comprehensive statement about Melanesian mask styles, based on a more representative sample of productions from the area, it would be necessary to study other museum collections such as those of the Chicago Natural History Museum, American Museum of Natural History and ethnological collections in Europe.

APPENDIX

TWO MASKS FROM THE HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

Besides the 44 masks described above at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, also in Honolulu are two New Hebrides masks at the Academy of Arts.

The two masks (Figures 53 and 54) are in conical shapes similar to Figure 52 but each has only one face. About 27 inches high, they have frameworks of bamboo and are covered with spider webbing and thick earth pigment. Executed with an eye to overall unity, the masks have an exquisite sense of artistic form, color, and design.

In addition the Academy of Arts has one mask from the Sepik River area of New Guinea. I have not included it here, however, because it falls outside of the five areas used in this study.



FIGURE 53. DANCE MASK FROM NEW HEBRIDES.
COLLECTION HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS. (3550)
PHOTOGRAPH HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS.



FIGURE 54. DANCE MASK FROM NEW HEBRIDES.
COLLECTION HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS. (3551)
PHOTOGRAPH HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS.

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