This is a PDF of the **accepted version** of

Dwyer, P.D. and M. Minnegal (20xx) On Reading Patrol Reports – 3: Burnett River people. *Journal of Pacific History*.

Available on-line at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2019.1679618>

On Reading Patrol Reports – 3: Burnett River People

Peter D. Dwyer and Monica Minnegal
University of Melbourne

ABSTRACT

Pre-independence patrols through remote areas of Papua and New Guinea were concerned both with mapping land and with identifying and counting those who lived there. People do not always stay in place, however, as colonial authorities envisioned, and patrols seeking to render them legible took different paths, at different times, through the same land. Reports from patrols to the vicinity of the Burnett River, which flows westwards from the Muller Range to the upper Strickland, used many different names when referring to groups of people who lived in that area. By cross-referencing between available reports, and supplementing interpretations with some post-independence information, we reach an improved understanding of the pre-independence distribution of people of different language groups. We direct particular attention to the role of interpreters in shaping the knowledge produced by patrol officers.

Key words: Papua New Guinea, patrol reports, knowledge production, interpreters

INTRODUCTION

In early 2016, the University of California San Diego Library, with permission from the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Archives, provided free access to available patrol reports through the library's Digital Collections website (<http://lib.ucsd.edu/png-patrol-reports>). Those reports are a major source of information on PNG's colonial-era history. For understandable reasons, however, they were prone to error. They must be read with care. In earlier essays we showed how understandings of depicted relationships between people and places could be improved by, for example, cross-checking descriptions of route and terrain against later topographic maps or by 'triangulating' across a set of reports that covered much the same area.¹ In the present contribution we shift emphasis from ambiguities of geography traversed to ambiguities of people encountered by patrols. Reports from the earliest patrols to the watershed of the Burnett River, which flows westwards from the Muller Range to the upper Strickland, use many different names for purported languages, clan-like groups, or place-based groups when referring to people from that area. In this article we examine factors

Acknowledgements: We thank Laurence Goldman, Bob Hoad, Jim Hunter, Chris Warrillow, those who established and made available the archive of PNG patrol reports at the University of California at San Diego, and Kubo, Konai and Febi people who have been our teachers since 1986. Our own recent research in PNG was supported by Australian Research Council Grant DP120102162

¹ Peter D. Dwyer and Monica Minnegal, 'On Reading Patrol Reports. 1: South of the Blucher Range', *Journal of Pacific History* 55 (forthcoming); Monica Minnegal and Peter D. Dwyer, 'On Reading Patrol Reports. 2: Travels in East Awin', *Journal of Pacific History* 55 (forthcoming).

shaping some of that variation, including ways in which accompanying interpreters influenced the knowledge produced by patrol officers. By cross-referencing between available reports, and supplementing interpretations with some post-independence information, we reach an improved understanding of the pre-independence distribution of people of different language groups in this area. We show that though individual reports may be flawed, taken as a set, they provide historical documentation that remains relevant.

FROM THE NORTH AND EAST: CAWTHORN AND HUNTER

The first government patrol with the specific aim of contacting people in the Burnett River area was led by W. A. Cawthorn in 1965.² On 19 February the patrol left Kopiago and headed west toward the Strickland River and the land of ‘Pogaia’ (Bogaia) speakers. Nine days later they crossed the ‘Balalo’ (Bulago) River and, travelling to the southeast, reached Wangose on 1 March (Figure 1). Here Cawthorn met 17 people. Fifteen were Bogaia speakers; two were ‘Sinale’ (Sinali) men who had apparently come from the south to trade bows.³ Cawthorn reported that people who lived north of Bulago River referred to southern Bogaia as ‘Muwa’.⁴ Two days later, at Wanagose in the watershed of ‘Na’ (Nali, upper Burnett River), they met four Bogaia people – two men, a woman and a child – and were told that others were currently across the river to the south, gardening with Sinali people. Here Cawthorn obtained ‘ample food’ for about 30 police and carriers. On 4 March, after crossing ‘Sinasu’ and ‘Uruabi’ creeks, the patrol camped at ‘Kamapere’. The next day, they left the Burnett watershed, reached Duna land and turned towards Kopiago.

It was three years before another government patrol explored the Burnett River watershed. In early 1968, Jim Hunter was posted to Koroba station. He had been enthused by reports of pioneering expeditions along the course of the upper Strickland River⁵ and, acting on rumours of uncontacted people, sought permission to lead a patrol into the area. Hunter left Koroba on 18 April, with six police, two official interpreters and, initially, 77 carriers. After passing through Kelabo and Geroro he made camp at Andugago, high in the Muller Range, on the 23rd.⁶ Through the next three days Hunter’s party negotiated the mountainous terrain of the upper Burnett watershed, saw but could not reach a ‘very large long-house’ close to the edge of a limestone cliff, found firewood stacked in caves, held a ‘small ANZAC ceremony’ accompanied by bugler on the 24th and, finally, after repairing a bridge, crossed

² W. A. Cawthorn, Lake Kopiago, Patrol no. 6 of 1964/65, 19 Feb.–23 Mar. 1965, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Lake Kopiago Station, 1964–1965, vol. 4, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb2390915z>.

³ ‘Sinali’ is a name used by Huli and Duna people for people living southwest of the Muller Range who speak East Strickland languages (Febi, Konai, Kubo, Samo and Gebusi). It does not qualify as a discrete language. Alternative spellings are Sinale, Tsinali and Tsinally.

⁴ Paul Sillitoe also named Bogaia speakers who lived south of the Bulago River as Muwna; ‘The Bogaia of the Muller Ranges, Papua New Guinea: Land Use, Agriculture and Society of a Vulnerable Population’, *Oceania Monographs* 44 (1993).

⁵ Des J. Clancy, Mendi Patrol no. 13, 1953/54, 11 Mar.–14 Jul. 1954, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Mendi Station, 1953–54, vol. 3, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb43704582>; James P. Sinclair, Koroba Patrol no. 2 of 1955/56, 25 Feb.–30 Apr. 1956, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Koroba Station, 1955–56, vol. 1, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb23226567>.

⁶ James O. Hunter, Koroba Patrol no. 11 of 1967/68, 18 Apr.–12 May 1969, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Koroba Station, 1967–68, vol. 13, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb1674186w>.

Figure 1. Part of the maps, redrawn, that accompanied reports by Cawthorn, in 1965, and Hunter, in 1968 and 1969, to the Burnett River area. Patrol routes are shown as depicted by Cawthorn and Hunter. A portion of Hunter's 1968 route is shown as dots rather than dashes. An alternative interpretation of this section is shown as 'dash-dot-dashes' south of the Nali River (see note 8). We have added the inset location map, the key and the scale; the last is indicative only.

the Nali at a place where 'the river surged around one main massive boulder in the centre of the stream' (Figure 2).⁷ Hunter encountered four people south of the Nali, six soon after recrossing that river and, at hamlets to the north, close to the Strickland River, another 24. At this time he assumed these people were all Bogaia, but in a later report stated that, on the basis of language and dress, two-thirds of them were probably 'Sinali'.⁸ He reported too that

⁷ Bob Hoad had crossed the river at the same place in 1964. He was returning to Nomad from a three-month patrol east through the lands of Bedamuni and Edolo peoples, north to Tari in Huli territory, and northwest to camp at Andugago before descending from the Muller Range into the Burnett watershed. R.A. Hoad, Nomad Patrol no. 4 of 1963/64, 16 Sept.–11 Oct. 1963, 13 Nov.–12 Feb. 1964, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Western District, Nomad Station, 1963–64, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb9934068h>. Before reaching the junction of the upper and lower Burnett rivers, Hoad's party disturbed 'two women and a child' who were working at a garden; they 'shrieked and fled'. No identification was made. Hoad did not report further contact with people in the area that is the focus of this paper.

⁸ J. A. Hunter, Koroba Patrol no. 15 of 1969/70, 29 Nov.–19 Dec. 1969, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Koroba Station, 1969–70, vol. 15, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0343118n> (misclassified as one of two files recorded as 1970–71, vol. 15). The map that should have accompanied Hunter's 1968 report is missing from the UCSD archive but is reproduced in James O. Hunter, *Stone Age Moon* (Bowen, QLD: James Oswald Hunter, 2015), 153. In his report Hunter described crossing the Nali from north to south on 27 March, camping for two nights at Gugusu and recrossing the Nali, from south to north, on the 29th. Photographs of the latter crossing are included in *Stone Age Moon* (177–78). However, the map associated with the report shows the patrol route, and Gugusu, well to

the people he met had little in the way of Western goods other than a ‘small number of steel axes’ most of which ‘appeared reasonably old and well-used’. He saw no ‘cups, billy-cans, mirrors or cloth’.

Figure 2. Bridging a river in the upper Burnett watershed. Photo: R. A. Hoad, 1964, reproduced with permission.

In November 1969, Hunter again visited the Burnett River watershed.⁹ On this occasion he first travelled from Koroba to Kopiago and entered Bogaia territory from the north. He was accompanied by two other Europeans, three police, two interpreters and, at times, as many as 90 carriers. South of Bulago River his party was guided through apparently unoccupied country for three days, camping one night near Urabi Creek, before reaching a hamlet named Bala-Gasi (Figure 1). Some members of the party continued south across the Burnett River to find people at garden sites, and on 16 December the names of 44 people – 43 Bogaia and one Sinali – were recorded at Bala-Gasi. The next day, accompanied by several Bogaia men and women, and a child who needed medical attention, they headed northeast enroute to Koroba.

the north of the Nali with no crossings of that river. This is wrong. In 2009, biological surveys were undertaken from Gugusu, between the upper (Nali) and lower (Dio) Burnett Rivers at 5°43.751'S, 142°15.797'E, 515 m ASL. Stephen J. Richards and Banak G. Gamui, eds, 'Rapid Biological Assessments of the Nakanai Mountains and the Upper Strickland Basin: Surveying the Biodiversity of Papua New Guinea's Sublime Karst Environments', *EAP Bulletin of Biological Assessment* 60 (2011). Hunter's error is with the map and not with the text of the report. He did not have access to Cawthorn's map, on which he plotted his own route, until after he had returned from the patrol. It appears he was confused by that map's limitations, particularly in that it did not record the existence of the lower Burnett. The discrepancy is indicated on Figure 1.

⁹ Hunter, Koroba Patrol no. 15 of 1969/70.

FROM THE SOUTH: CAWTHORN AND BARCLAY

In 1970 and 1972, respectively, W. A. Cawthorn and Rob Barclay led patrols from Nomad Station both of which spent about two weeks in the Burnett River area.¹⁰ Cawthorn's report is accompanied by a detailed map, but the map that Barclay prepared is missing.

These patrols encountered a rather different social landscape than the earlier patrols from the north and east. Many people avoided contact with those earlier patrols. This was hardly surprising since, at any given living place, the local population was greatly outnumbered by the number of carriers accompanying the patrol.¹¹ By 1970 people of the Burnett River area were more willing to engage with government patrols. For several years they had been visited by emissaries from an evangelical mission at Kelabo.¹² Some Bogaia men spent months at that mission. While the earlier reports were primarily concerned to map people to ground at the level of language group, with greater access to people, the patrols from Nomad were able to record a finer scale of social organization. Cawthorn and, particularly, Barclay often mapped people to ground by using 'group' names for place-based assemblies of people. The primary language spoken by those residing in these places was not always clear. Indeed, sometimes the name of a residential group was treated as a 'language' name, or at least as a 'clan' name. That is, patrol reports often leave the impression that the people encountered at particular localities were all members of a single named group. The men leading these patrols were not aware that, in this region, hamlet or longhouse-based assemblies of people would have almost always included males and females from more than one 'clan-like' group, and often from more than one linguistic group.¹³

On 20 May 1970, Cawthorn's party camped near the 'Uwo' settlement of Bobeafi (Figure 3). This area is associated with what we know as the Febi 'clan' Wuo. Four days later, a little south of the lower Burnett River (Dio), they met seven people at a sago-processing site. One man spoke a 'dialect of the KUBOR language' (Febi); another 'was of a different language group though understanding some KUBOR' (Bogaia).¹⁴ On 25 May they moved to

¹⁰ W. A. Cawthorn, Nomad Patrol no. 13 of 1969/70, 11 May–7 July 1969, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Nomad Station, 1969–70, vol. 7, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb63160300>; Robin I. Barclay, Nomad Patrol no. 3 of 1972/73, 6 Jul.–17 Sept. 1972, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Western District, Nomad Station, 1972–73, vol. 10, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb7817749q>.

¹¹ The Cawthorn and Barclay patrols from Nomad were supported by helicopter food drops and could therefore operate with many fewer carriers than the earlier patrols from Kopiago and Koroba. With reference to a 1952 patrol in the Bosavi region of Southern Highlands District, Schieffelin commented that with about 90 men the size of the patrol was equivalent to the 'combined warrior force of twelve villages' and, at any one community, the requirement to provide food to the visitors would have 'put considerable strain on resources'. Edward L. Schieffelin, 'Early Contact as Drama and Manipulation in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea: Pacification as the Structure of the Conjuncture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1995): 555–80.

¹² Ossie Fountain, 'Sixty Years of Mission History in PNG', *Serving Together* (February 2012): 4–8. Cawthorn reported that Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML), Baptist, Seven Day Adventist, Roman Catholic and Apostolic churches were all active in the area (Lake Kopiago, Patrol no. 6 of 1964/65). Early mission contacts in the Burnett River area were by emissaries from the Sovereign Grace Baptist Mission. Later contacts were by pastors and an expatriate missionary of the Christian Brethren Church that is served by CMML.

¹³ Peter D. Dwyer and Monica Minnegal, "'We are Fire Clan": Groups, Names and Identity in Papua New Guinea', *Oceania* 88 (2018): 90–106, 4.

¹⁴ The East Strickland languages that are now named as Kubo, Febi and Konai are closely related. R. Daniel Shaw, 'The Bosavi language family', *Pacific Linguistics* 24 (1986): 45–76. Early patrols from Nomad tended to treat them together as Kubo, or as Kubo and Daba, but by the early 1970s a south-to-north separation

Kurosi, near the Strickland River, cleared an abandoned garden as a helicopter drop site for supplies, met seven ‘Kesemobi’ (Febi) people and were told of ‘Orabia’ people living to the east. On 31 May, Cawthorn’s party left Kurosi, returning along the Burnett River to the junction of the northern (Nali) and southern (Dio) branches, waded the latter and, for the next three days, guided by a man who they had met on the 24th, made slow progress though difficult terrain to the northeast. They passed through scattered moderately large garden areas, some of which had been recently prepared, and saw several houses with evidence of recent occupation. No people were met, perhaps because a recent killing – Cawthorn’s party had found the body – prompted people to hide from potentially revenge-fuelled neighbours or representatives of government.

Figure 3. Part of the map, redrawn, that accompanied Cawthorn’s 1970 report of a patrol to the Burnett River area. Details are as depicted by Cawthorn with addition of the annotation ‘Dogomo resurgence’, the inset location map, key and scale; the last is indicative only. Bridges shown on the lower Burnett River and on two branches of the Liddle River are included on Cawthorn’s map but are based on a map drawn by Hoad in 1964.

On 4 June, Cawthorn moved north towards the upper branch of the Burnett River (Nali) and met two men who guided the party across the river to Baragasi (Hunter’s Bala-Gasi) where seven people were based at a garden site. Here he was able to purchase enough food to feed his 18 carriers. He treated this group as ‘Orabia’, a subset within Bogaia.

Taking a word list from these people I found their language to be identical with the POGAIA language spoken by people living to the north [...]. They are the people known as AKALI by the Southern Highlanders.

between Kubo and Febi was drawn at the Carrington River, and an east-to-west separation of Konai from Kubo and Febi tended to be drawn at the Strickland River.

The name spelled as 'Orabia' does not appear in any other patrol report that covers this area. However, in March 1968, Cawthorn placed 'Uruabi Creek' immediately west of the future location of Baragasi (Figure 1). A year and a half later, Hunter's party camped for one night near 'Urabi Creek' – the headwaters of the stream named by Cawthorn – about seven kilometres north of Baragasi. It is very likely that 'Uruabi', 'Urabi' and 'Orabia' are different renderings of the same name and that, at Kurosi, Cawthorn was told that he would find people living near a stream, or at a place, with that name.

On 5 June the patrol headed west, passing through gardens that Cawthorn attributed to 'Orabia' people, camping near a longhouse occupied by six people who spoke a 'dialect of KUBOR' (Febi), to reach the Strickland River on the 7th. The vine bridge needed repairs. Ten men from west of the river assisted with this work and, on 8 June, Cawthorn's party crossed over to join 20 people of 'the WUOTIE' group at Takadui. Cawthorn made no reference to the language these people spoke, but 'Wuotie' is a rendering of the name Hwotie – a clan-like group of Febi speakers.¹⁵

Barclay left Nomad on 6 July 1972. His party included two police, a medical orderly, a personal 'domestic', an interpreter, 34 carriers and a guide. The guide was a Bogaia man. About a month earlier this man had joined a large group – five patrol officers, six police, three interpreters and 85 carriers – that, under the leadership of Assistant District Officer Bill van Rikxoort, travelled from Koroba, via the upper Strickland tributaries, to visit Nomad before continuing through the lands of Bedamuni and Edolo speakers on the way back to their highlands station.¹⁶ The Bogaia man, who had left that group at Nomad, would now accompany Barclay's patrol and, eventually, be returned to his homelands.

From Nomad, Barclay's party travelled northeast through Bedamuni land, swung north to cross the headwaters of the Nomad, Damami and Baia Rivers and turned northwest to reach and cross Dogomo (upper Liddle River) on 22 July. Barclay now visited essentially the same areas that Cawthorn had seen two years earlier, though the names of places and groups of people he reported were often different to those found in Cawthorn's report. In the submitted report Barclay summarizes his understanding by suggesting that people in the Burnett River area were members of three language groups that he named as Febi, Eobi and Wato.

Barclay's Febi speakers were those that Cawthorn had depicted as speaking a 'dialect of KUBOR' and included Wuo people south of the Liddle River and the 'Kesemobi' (Kesemo 'clan') associated with land close to the junction of the Burnett with the Strickland.

People who Barclay classed as Eobi were initially met a little south of Dio (lower Burnett) and, later, in the period 29 July to 5 August, at hamlets and gardens on land between the upper and lower Burnett rivers. Eobi comprised three groupings that Barclay named

¹⁵ In 2006, members of the Febi clan Hwotie identified Tobi and Tinahai as places of residence ('Papua New Guinea National Gazette No. G68', 30 March 2006). Tinahai is a predominantly Konai community on the west bank of the Strickland, a few kilometres north of the earlier location of Takadui.

¹⁶ No record of this trip is available in the UCSD archive. It was reported at length in *Post Courier*, 'PNG on its way to Nationhood', 1 August 1972, p. 5, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/250302379?searchTerm=Rikxoort&searchLimits=> (accessed 29 May 2019). Peter Turner mentions it briefly, commenting that 'after locating a few hitherto "uncontacted" Pogaia people' they were treated to Christian songs, played on a wind-up Victrola gramophone that had been provided by Fred Halliman, a missionary with the Sovereign Grace Baptist Mission that was based at Tangi, about 10 km northwest of Koroba. Ex-Kiap Network Forum, 'More Alleged but True Tall Stories', <http://exkiap.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=1303> (accessed 23 September 2016).

‘Gosugubi’, ‘Augusi’ and ‘Ulaitie’; they included 72 people.¹⁷ Gosugubi was the name of a place. It had been used as a campsite a month earlier when van Rikxoort’s party came south from Koroba. Barclay reported that there were quite strong connections between people living here and people of the Bulago River area to the north. ‘Augusi’ was almost certainly the Bogaia clan name reported elsewhere as ‘Agowsay’ and ‘Augose’.¹⁸ ‘Ulaitie’ (Ulatie), however, is the name of a Febi clan. Barclay met only two people who were identified as Ulatie – a man named Kono and a youth who was a deaf mute – and visited only one garden house attributed to people of this group. Their primary area may well have been to the south of the place named Nomohai (Figure 3) where the 1979 Karoma topographic map shows an extensive area of regrowth about 2 km northwest of the current settlement of Tobi. At the time of writing, Tobi includes both Bogaia and Febi residents and is the primary residence of Ulatie males, including Kono’s adult son. The area occupied by the people Barclay identified as ‘Eobi’ was the area occupied by the people Cawthorn had identified as ‘Orabia’. Cawthorn considered that ‘Orabia’ were probably of the same group as Bogaia. Barclay wrote that the Eobi language ‘is used I believe by those people farther North around the BALALO River’. It is a name given to Bogaia people by, at least, Febi speakers of Wuo clan.¹⁹¹⁹

Barclay’s first encounter with people he identified as Wato occurred as the patrol approached the Strickland River from the east. On August 6 the patrol ‘enter[ed] WATO territory’, and ‘WATO men’ assisted in repairing the bridge across the river to Takadui. Barclay then uses Wato in reference to all people encountered in the wedge of land between the Strickland and Murray rivers.

At this stage, however, the interpreter accompanying the patrol was no longer able to communicate effectively. Barclay noted that the census at Takadui was ‘hampered by poor interpretation’, and the ‘WATO interpreter’ who joined the patrol at this time was of little help. The remainder of the patrol was overshadowed by difficulties with interpretation and by two extremely disruptive events, one that occurred when crossing the Strickland. These influenced Barclay’s reflections on, and interpretations of, the patrol.²⁰

¹⁷ Barclay’s census records include estimates of absentees. He reported that some people of the ‘Augusi’ and ‘Ulaitie’ groups were at Koroba and others were at a mission near Koroba.

¹⁸ Sillitoe, ‘The Bogaia of the Muller Ranges’, 105, Appendix II; Dwyer and Minnegal, ‘We are Fire Clan’, 16, note 17. In 1993, 16 people were killed in a landslide that buried a house on land south of the Burnett River and in the vicinity of the junction of its two branches. Most of these people were of the Bogaia clan Augose and it was said that they were living on their own land.

¹⁹ Spelled as ‘lobi’; Anaïs Gérard, *Procuring Game, Procuring Money: Dilemmas of Relationality with Outsiders among Febi People Western Province, Papua New Guinea* (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2018), 20.

²⁰ Patrol reports usually comprise a day-by-day diary that is followed by general comments providing overviews of, for example, political, economic and social matters; the performance of accompanying police; the appointment of village constables; the availability of rest houses and so forth. The typed diary, as it appears in a patrol report, is produced after the patrol. It is based on, but need not be a faithful transcription of, records in the ‘Field Officer’s Journal’ (FOJ) that, from about 1962, was to be completed every day, both on patrol and at the patrol station. *Departmental Standing Instructions: General Field Administration, Volume I* (Division of District Administration, Territory of Papua and New Guinea, 1970). Entries in a patrol report could be reduced in length, perhaps because a patrol officer was not an enthusiastic or competent typist or because some entries were better placed in the general comments that followed the diary, but entries could also expand or modify what was written in the FOJ. Diary entries in a patrol report should not, therefore, be uncritically accepted as primary documents and, as we have found in the present analyses, readers should be alert to the possibility that a point of information featuring in a diary may not, in fact, have been known on the apparent date of entry. When patrol officers were required to appear in court as witnesses, they drew on their FOJs – and not the patrol reports – as aids to memory.

Barclay wrote that Cawthorn had incorrectly named people to the northwest of Takadui as Faiwol (a Mountain Ok language), but failed to note that groups encountered south of Takadui were considered by Cawthorn to speak yet another dialect of Kubo that was named 'Kone' or 'Kanai'. Cawthorn was incorrect in thinking that the land of Faiwol speakers reached south of the Blucher Range. Barclay, however, was incorrect in his comments about Wato. In seeking to correct Cawthorn he relied on an earlier report by Bill Paterson.²¹ Patrolling from Nomad, with the aim of locating groups living in the Strickland–Murray wedge, Paterson's party spent four days making a canoe near the junction of the flooded Carrington and Strickland rivers (Figure 1, inset map). The canoe broke as it was being launched and plans to move north were abandoned. In the interim, however, Paterson spent time 'discussing groups north along the Strickland and along the Carrington' with the guide and interpreter. He commented that the information these men 'offered [was] very garbled' but, on the basis of that information, he showed 'Wato' as a language name west of the Strickland River level with the Burnett. This was wrong; Paterson misheard or was misinformed. As he himself had reported earlier, land associated with the Konai clan Watia is south of the Murray junction, a few kilometres northwest of Komagato on the Strickland River.²² In his own report, Barclay repeated Paterson's error.

It is likely, however, that Barclay's own hold on details in the Strickland–Murray wedge was weakened by the loss of one Samo carrier who drowned while attempting to swim across the Strickland at Takadui and, 10 days later, further south, the disappearance for five days of a Bedamuni carrier who ran amok. Many of the carriers were traumatized by these events. In response to the drowning, other Samo carriers were 'beside themselves with grief [...] falling to the ground and writhing about, beating their fists on the ground and chewing leaves and grass in the agony of their suffering'. At Takadui they sang through the night. When the Bedamuni man returned from his time alone in the forest, a séance was held at which the spirit medium 'Tabasi' – who we knew as a Febi speaker of the clan Deima – called upon 'malevolent forest spirits' to depart from the deranged man's body and mind because, until they did so, the 'Government' would not leave.²³ And at Suabi, when the patrol finally came out of the mountains, the carriers attended an all-night curing ceremony 'to banish the lingering effects of the numerous evil spirits that were encountered along the route'.

Barclay's patrol report includes an 11-page 'Area Study' and 44 pages of Appendices that discuss, among other things, 'carriers', 'perils and irritations of the journey', 'contacting people', 'health', and 'anthropology'. These are exceptionally rich in detail and, sometimes, richly ironic. In the later phase of a lengthy patrol, however, Barclay was confronted by the death of one carrier, the mental instability of another, and the deeply felt anxiety about threatening spirits by the rest. His key interpreter proved less than satisfactory. It is hardly surprising that some misinterpretations crept into his diary.

²¹ William R. Paterson, Nomad Patrol no. 3 of 1969/70, 18 Sept.–1 Oct. 1969, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Nomad Station, 1969–70, vol. 7, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb63160300>.

²² William R. Paterson, Nomad Patrol no. 19 of 1968/69, 12–29 May 1969, National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea, Patrol Reports, Southern Highlands District, Nomad Station, 1969–70, vol. 7, <https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb6964499g>.

²³ Fifteen years later, Tobasi's assistance as a spirit medium able to diagnose the cause of illness was sought by people outside his own immediate Febi language group. Peter D. Dwyer and Monica Minnegal, 'Supplication of the Crocodile: A Curing Ritual from Papua New Guinea', *Australian Natural History* 22, no. 11 (1988): 490–94.

LATER INFORMATION

In 1978, David Eastburn, then a high school teacher at Koroba, accompanied several Febi youths and men when they returned to their homelands after spending some time in the highlands.²⁴ The group was accompanied by N'Do, a young man with a Bogaia father and 'Sinale' (Febi) mother, who was training as a pastor and spoke Pidgin, Duna and Bogaia. They reached the Burnett watershed by way of the Nali, crossing this at a cane bridge, and then moved south past Dio and the Dogomo resurgence (Figure 3) to reach a Febi longhouse at a place named Bulong. N'Do said that Dio separated the lands of Bogaia and Sinali people.

Sillitoe's 1993 account of Bogaia people, south to the Bulago River, reveals strong links with Febi speakers, named as 'Tsinally'.²⁵ At least 11 Bogaia males were reported to have 'Tsinally' wives; these included 'Agowsay' (Augose) and 'Mbelitiy' men, with some residing well to the south in the land of 'Tsinally' people.

In 2013, a list of Febi clans asserted to be landowners of the Juha gas fields included Bilatie though, five years earlier, that name had not featured in a comprehensive list of Febi clans.²⁶ Stimulated by the prospect that an unambiguous association with the Juha gas field would be financially advantageous, it seems that members of a southern branch of the clan 'Mbelitiy' (Bilatie) realigned from Bogaia to Febi. The two Augose men who survived the 1993 landslide in the Burnett River watershed eventually did the same thing. In 2008, the land attributed to Bilatie people lay between the branches of the Burnett River to the immediate east of a 'mountain' that local people name Hogoiyu; this location appears as Hogulyu on Figure 3.²⁷

DISCUSSION

When taken as a whole, the earliest accounts of people in the Burnett River area, from 1965 to 1972, report small communities dominated by Bogaia speakers as far south as the lower Burnett River (Dio) and small communities dominated by Febi speakers north to the level of Takadui, a few kilometres south of Devil's Race. Febi speakers, named as Sinali, are reported as visitors, perhaps on trading missions, as far north as Wangose (Figure 1), but no Bogaia speakers are reported south of the upper Liddle River. Most of the small hamlets and garden sites visited between the upper (Nali) and lower (Dio) branches of the Burnett River were associated with Bogaia speakers, notably members of the clan-like group Augose. Only one Febi group – Ulatie – was unambiguously associated with this area. Our judgement, therefore, is that in the years before independence this land was occupied by established communities of both Bogaia and Febi speakers and, further, that if those people recognised distinct boundaries between their lands this was not evident in the way they were actually located on the ground. The communities were fluid with respect to both membership and residential location. The terrain was not easily traversed by people who did not know it. It was easy to miss hamlets and gardens. Indeed, living places were sometimes sighted from high points on the land but proved to be inaccessible. No single patrol could visit or account for all settlements in the area. The fact that patrols numbering 30 or more people were sometimes

²⁴ David Eastburn, 'Sinale', Unpublished transcript, n.d.

²⁵ Sillitoe, 'The Bogaia of the Muller Ranges'.

²⁶ Thomas M. Ernst, 'Full-Scale Social Mapping and Landowner Identification Study of PRL02', Unpublished report to ExxonMobil Corporation, 2008, Appendix 2; Monica Minnegal and Peter D. Dwyer, *Navigating the Future: An Ethnography of Change in Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017), 162.

²⁷ Henick Taprin, 'The Origin of Kesomo', Unpublished manuscript, 2007/8.

provided with 'ample food' by a handful of people who were met at a bush house suggested that there were more people living in the area than were seen by the patrol.

Hunter, Cawthorn and Barclay did not speak any of the languages used by local people in the areas traversed by the patrols discussed above. And, in those years, the people they met did not speak Tok Pisin. The information provided in their reports – as, indeed, in many reports from remote areas of Papua and New Guinea – was necessarily filtered through others. Sometimes that entailed sequential translation through three or more languages. It was common practice, in such areas, to encourage youths or young men to join a patrol, spend time at the government station, and act as guides or interpreters on later occasions. On 20 July 1972, for example, at a Wuo community south of the upper Liddle River, Barclay wrote:

two youths to accompany the Patrol to first helicopter re-supply [at Kurosi], when they will be ferried to NOMAD to work there and gain some civilization. SUABI carriers are known to them and these will bring the two back to their own area.

The quality and the accuracy of information provided in patrol reports often would have been contingent on the competence and experience of accompanying interpreters. Barclay's reporting was 'hampered by poor interpretation', and his mistaken assertion that some people in this area were 'Wato' was itself based on information that Paterson had reported to be 'very garbled'. In the Burnett River area, however, Hunter's contributions were greatly influenced by Himube, a Duna man who served as interpreter with the Christian Missions in Many Lands, at Kelabo. Himube accompanied Hunter's 1968 patrol

as a Carrier/Interpreter, together with a young POGAIA lad, YESERE, aged about 12. This lad [...] had been adopted by HIMUBE whilst out to the SW of GERORO some 6 months prior to the patrol, he and his brother KERENE coming back to KELABO to seek medical aid for the elder brother. After having spent 6 months at KELABO, and after I had brought them to Koroba for a short period, they both accompanied my patrol, KERENE however was 'spirited away' on return to their home ground some 3 days from GERORO. The lad YESERE however tagged along with HIMUBE throughout the patrol, and both were invaluable, HIMUBE understanding part of the POGAIA language and the lad, after some 6 months, some Duna.

Eighteen months later, Himube again accompanied Hunter, now with official status as interpreter. In the Burnett River area, it was Himube who would make advance contact with people who were inclined to hide, would bring them to meet Hunter and would report what it was they were saying. 'He is a very valuable man', Hunter wrote, 'with almost endless stamina and reliable bushcraft'. He was one of many Papua New Guineans whose contributions to the knowledge produced by patrol officers is less visible than it should be.

By treating several patrol reports simultaneously, and by being alert to factors that might influence reliability – translation, unforeseen accidents, traumatized carriers – we have moved to a more comprehensive understanding of connections between people and places than may be gleaned from any one report taken on its own. In no way, however, should our readings of those reports be taken to disparage the efforts of their authors. These men traversed exceptionally difficult country. Their achievements were remarkable. Barclay provided a graphic account of the physical context in which they worked.²⁸

Nothing about the country was easy: from fording its swift rivers with their beds of greasy stones which made sure footing impossible; to its roaring cataracts

²⁸ Barclay, Nomad Patrol no. 3 of 1972/73, Appendix 5, p. 56.

where one false step would see one whirled away in an instant; to seemingly bottomless limestone pits that yawned at the feet to trap the unwary; to its minor tributaries that suddenly vanished in some subterranean cavern only to reappear in some completely unanticipated location; to its almost unclimbable crags that had to be ascended with ladders; to its needle sharp rocks that could cut feet and boots to ribbons; to its chasms that again could only be negotiated labouriously with timber steps; to the occasional old gardens that had to be hacked through, bringing the Patrol almost to a standstill; to the incessant rain that made footing very unsafe; to the thick impenetrable jungle; to its voracious insects; and above all to the wilderness of unyielding depressing stone.