Slit Gongs of the Sepik and Madang Provinces

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Perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to analyse the cultural significance of the distribution of the slit gongs of northern New Guinea[2] was that by David Penney (1980) but his essay is entirely based on published accounts and personal communications with museum curator and Sepik field researcher Douglas Newton. Penney therefore did not have access to the data that would be necessary for a detailed stylistic and iconographic analysis of slit gongs of this region.

On the basis of published images, he identified (1980:349):

> three basic categories defined geographically and by physical characteristics. These can be termed coastal, Middle Sepik and Upper Sepik types. It will be argued here that these varieties are but local manifestations of the same idea diffused throughout the Sepik region primarily by means of a cult.

He explicitly states, 'This is not an attempt to survey all the slit-gong variations and their repertoire of sculptural form' (ibid.). Rather, he focuses on their cultural significance and, despite the paucity of published data in the late 1970s and the theoretical context afforded by the noted diffusionist Douglas Fraser, provides a creditable basis on which further studies could be based.

In this paper, I will not attempt a critique or revision of Penney's analysis; that will be for another day. Here I am more concerned to do what he decided he was unable to do for lack of relevant data: from a dataset of a large number of slit gongs, documented primarily during field surveys in 1981, 1982 and 1983, **to demonstrate 'slit gong variations and their repertoire of sculptural form'**.

Don Niles (1983) established the relatively good fit between the distribution of slit gongs (slit drums, garamuts – organologically they are struck idiophones) and Austronesian languages (**Figure 1**). However, there is a remarkable exception: the slit gongs I am illustrating in this talk are of the Sepik-Ramu mainland of northern New Guinea (**Figure 2**), almost all carved by speakers of non-Austronesian languages. It is likely that this part of the distribution has to do with the presence of the Sepik-Ramu saltwater embayment, stretching from about Ambunti on the Sepik in the west to Annanberg on the Ramu in the east, that progressively infilled with sediment from around 6000 years ago to form the present coastline (Swadling et al. 1988:14, 15). The annual flooding of the Sepik and, at the mouth of the Sepik, the Murik Lakes to the west and Watam Lagoon to the east, are the current signs of this geomorphological process.

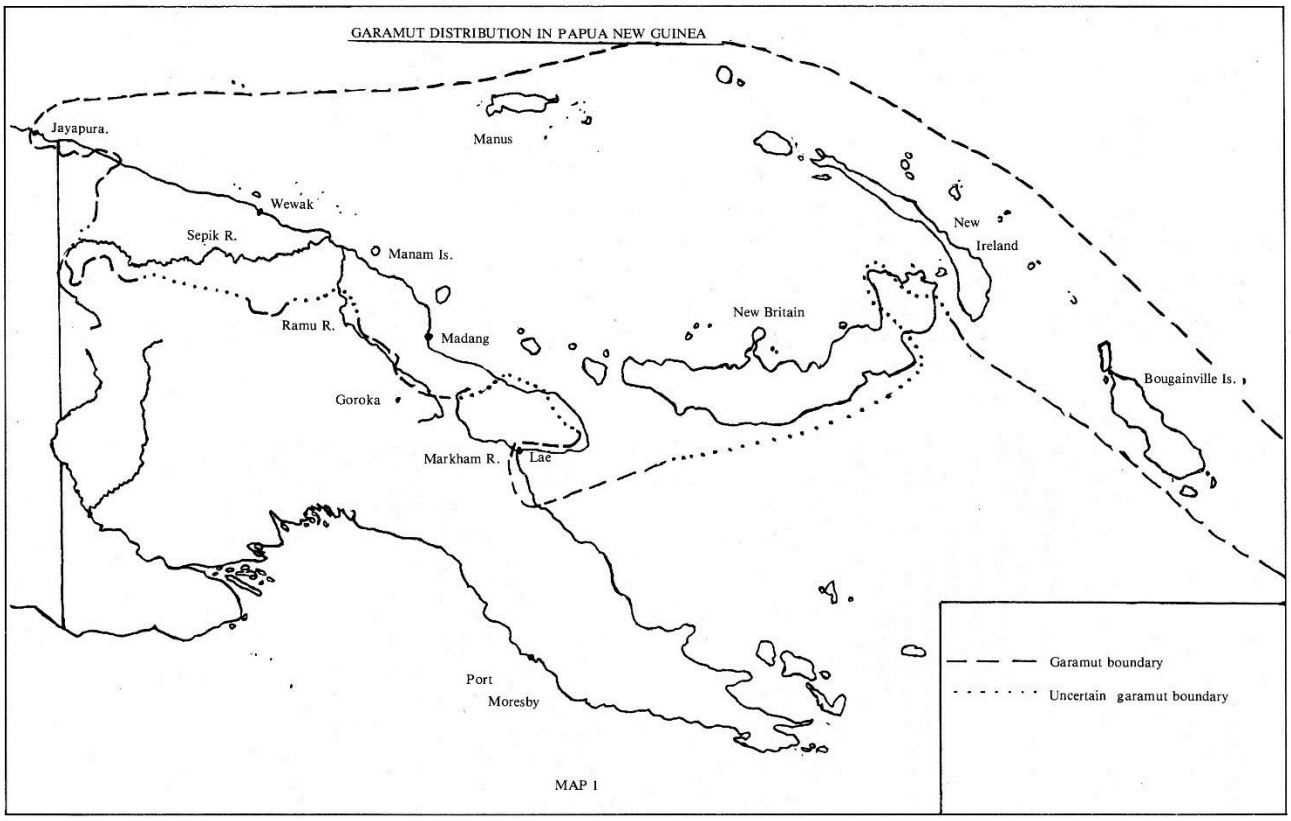


Figure 1. Distribution of Garamuts [Slit gongs]. Niles 1983, Map 1.

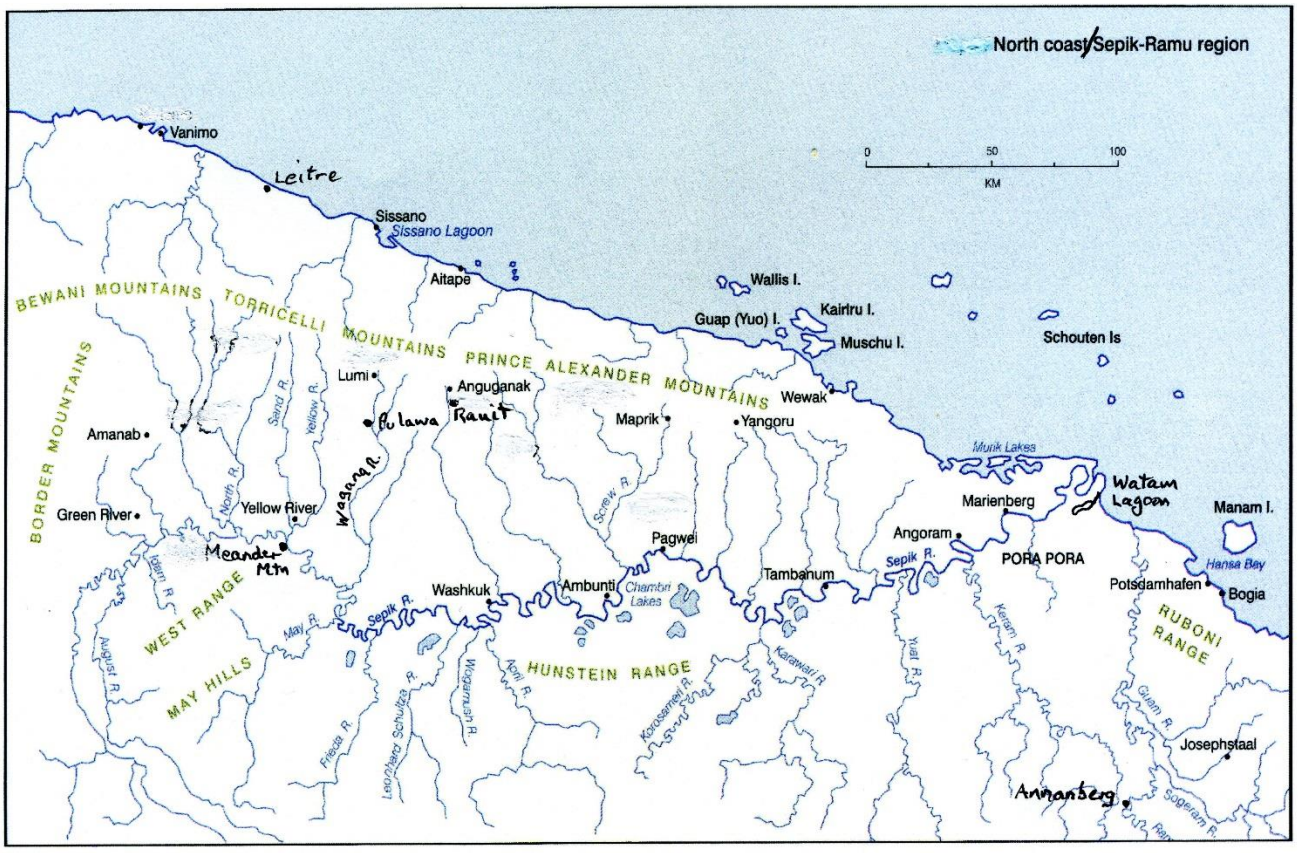


Figure 2. Map of Sepik-Ramu region (after Map 4 in Craig 2010).

Remarkably, slit gongs are found no further west on the New Guinea north coast than Humboldt Bay where present-day Jayapura is located. Van der Sande wrote up the ethnographic results of the 1903 Dutch expedition to northern Dutch New Guinea. Regarding slit gongs, he states (1907:304), '. . . H.B [Humboldt Bay] forms the western limit of the area of distribution of this kind of drum. I did not come across it on the adjacent Lake Sentani.'

Fischer (1986, Plate IV, Nr 45) illustrates a canoe-shaped slit gong from Humboldt Bay (after Wirz 1920) three metres long and hung up in a 'temple' (**Figure 3A, Nr 45**) and quotes from several sources regarding these instruments (1986:19). They were more or less canoe-shaped, symmetrical, and suspended from the rafter of the men's cult house but not always hollowed out. This is the kind of gong referred to by van der Sande (1907: 304): 'The large drum hanging in the temple of Tobádi, also called signal drum, *kaduār*, by Finsch (1888:256-7) is however a religious instrument, only used at ceremonies inside the temple'. Kenneth Thomas (1941:184-5) reports that in settlements along 'the Vanimo coast', from Wutung near the border with West Papua to Leitre 70 km east,

> [d]uring initiation the young men are shown the large wooden drum or slit gong (known as *mumona*) and the bamboo flute (*diwana*) . . . [The drum is] formed like a canoe with raised ends . . . At Leitre . . . this drum, or slit gong, was suspended from the roof, giving more sleeping room when not required for ceremonials. This is beaten at special times, but it also seems to be the place into which the dual spirits [belonging to each clan] are called by the flutes. . . It is distinct from the ordinary wooden drum of the village used for calling in the people, and capable of a certain amount of message sending (Thomas 1941:184-185).

On the upper reaches of the North River, on the southern fall of the Bewani Mountains, one end is truncated and the pointed, extended 'prow'[3] is suspended (**Figure 3A, Nr 46**). At Busa, west of the lower Hordern (Bapi) River, I photographed a slit gong (*bu*) in 1969 (**Figure 3B**); I was told slit gongs were used in conjunction with 'tumbuan' ceremonies.

On the upper reaches of the Sand and Yellow Rivers the slit gong has a blade-like extended prow and a truncated stern (Kelm & Kelm 1980, Plate 31 at Kwieftim, Ak speakers and Kelm & Kelm 1975, Plate 20 at Wokien, Bouye speakers). The same kind was recorded 'at a village on a hill below Mt Meander'[4] (**Figure 3A, Nr 47**). South of Lumi at Bulawa (Karawa speakers), the prow has a hole for hauling (**Figure 4, left).**

The slit gong in the Lumi region of the Torricelli Mountains, however, is symmetrically 'canoe'-shaped with a characteristic double 'keyhole' slit (see **Figure 4, right**).

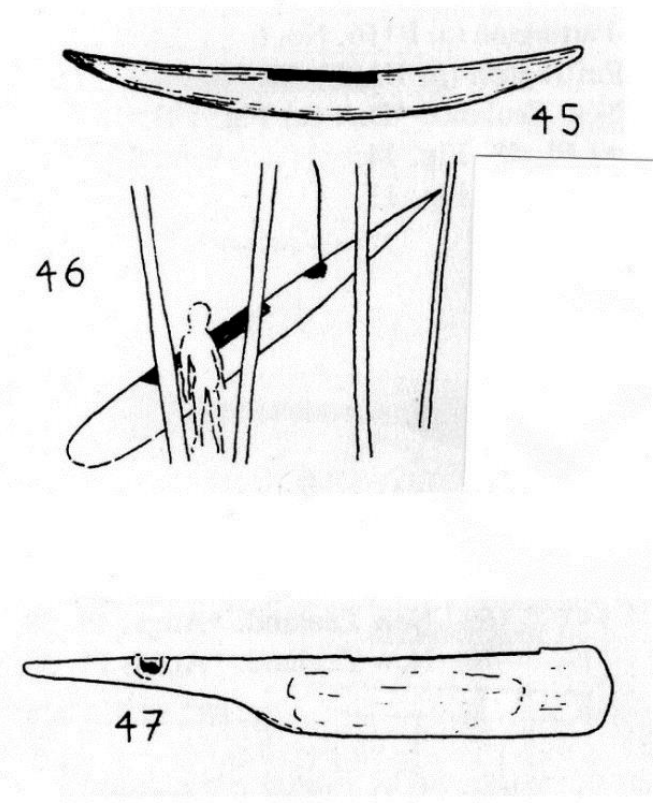


Figure 3A. Slit gongs illustrated by Fischer 1986, Plate IV: Nr 45. Hanging slit gong, Humboldt Bay, north coast, West Papua; Nr 46. Slit gong hung under house, upper North River; Nr 47. Slit gong near Meander Mtn, Yellow River people, upper Sepik.

Figure 3B. Slit gong (*bu*) at Busa village, west of the lower Hordern (Bapi) River, 1969. B. Craig USEE1969-M3:15.

Although the Abau speakers of the upper Sepik mention slit gongs in their legends, I saw only a couple of small, poorly-carved examples that I took to be derivative of slit gongs seen by plantation labourers. Large slit gongs did not seem to be appropriate for settlements consisting of one large communal house that changed location every few years.

In 1972, I photographed a slit gong at the Iwam village of Arai on the May River (**Figure 5**) but without information. It is consistent in form with those of the North, Sand and Yellow rivers, although it has a projecting peg at the stern.

Figure 4. <u>Left</u>: Slit gong at Pulawa (Bulawa), Karawa speakers, 20 km south of Lumi, E.A. Briggs 1926
<u>Right</u>: Slit gong at Rauit, Gnau speakers, near Anguganak, Torricelli Mountains, B. Craig 2002, M5:6.

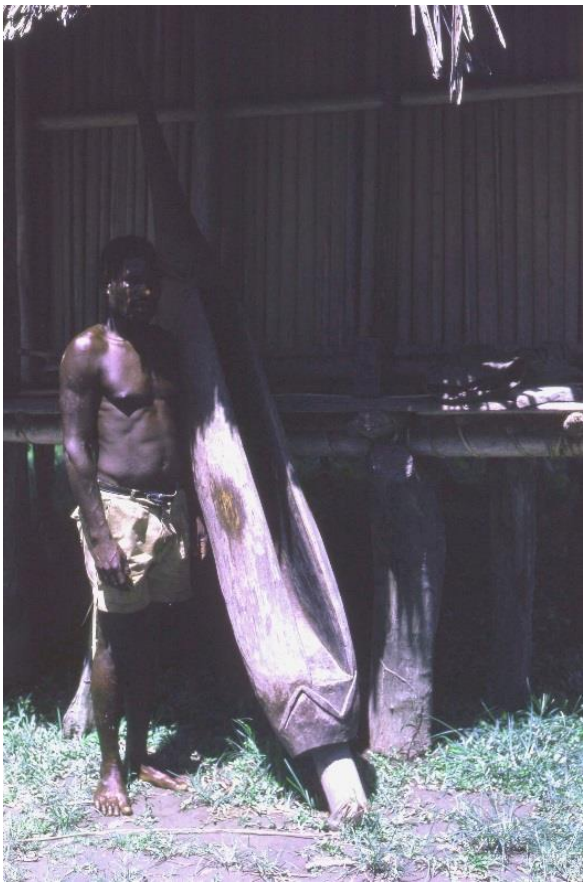


Figure 5. Slit gong at Arai, May River Iwam. B. Craig 1972-73, BK9:23.

Further down the Sepik, the slit gongs of the Wogumas, Nggala, Yasyin, and Kwoma are of the same basic form as those of the upper Sepik: extended prows, usually with a hole to facilitate hauling, and truncated sterns; however the prow is usually carved with anthropomorphic, animal or other forms (**Figures 6 – 10)**. Those of the Bahinemo of April River and the Hunstein Mountains south of Ambunti are also of that form. The slit gongs of all of these peoples were associated with water or bush spirits, were used in male initiation, in celebration of successful head hunting, and were symbolic of canoes.

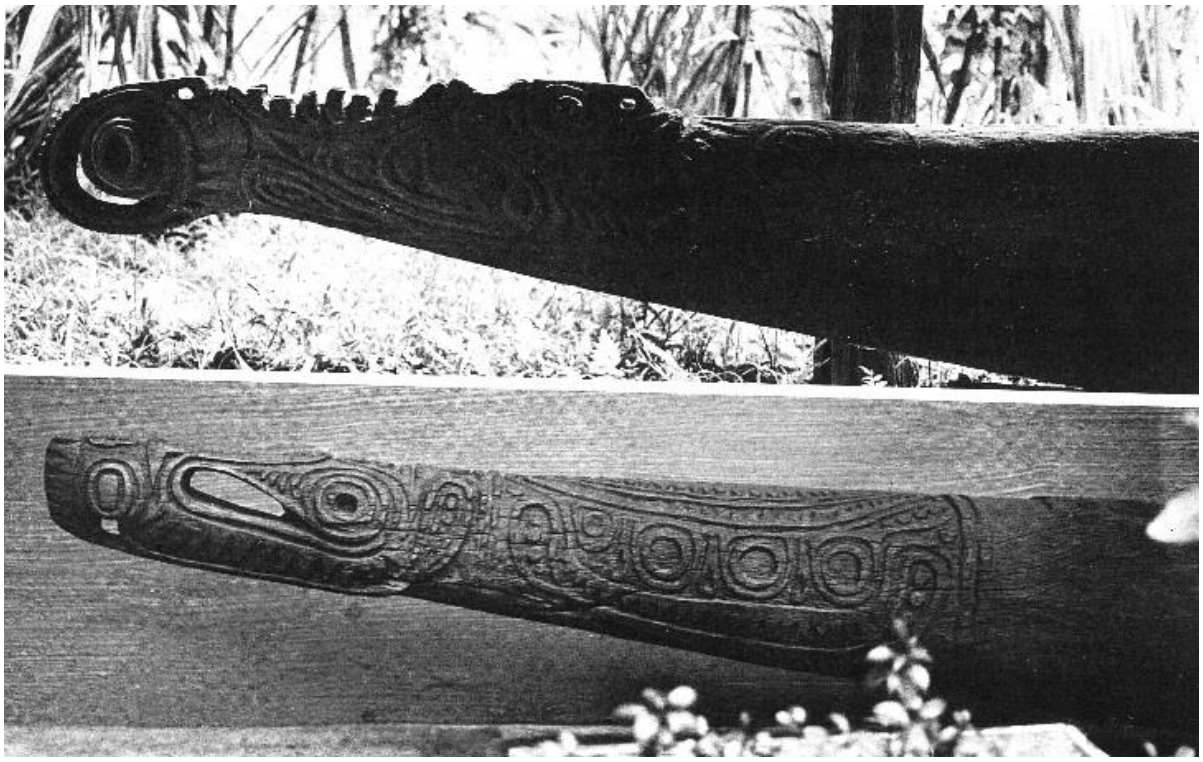


Figure 6. Slit gongs from Washkuk village, Wogamusin speakers, c. 45 km west of Ambunti. <u>Top</u>: 'Wobnerluk' (see Figures 7 & 8); <u>bottom</u>: George Kennedy collection, Los Angeles (Newton 1971, Figs 91, 92).

Newton describes the Wogumas slit gongs (*ga'ha*) as associated with specific clans and having carved prows representing human heads, semi-naturalistic crocodiles and cassowaries. They had personal names and were believed to be personified female water spirits. The gongbeaters (*mi ras* or *ga'hei*) were also female; they symbolized paddles, 'so that the gongs themselves are, by implication, symbolic canoes' (Newton 1971:51-2, Figs 94, 95). Newton cites a legend associated with the Munggwal clan of Washkuk:

> A woman of Munggwal was married to a man of Kutbog village. The man knew how to beat slit gongs for secular purposes only, so the woman told him about her water-spirit and how it was given food offerings. The husband became angry and beat her, so she took him to Washkuk. The water-spirit, Miyanggutɔ, came out of the lake in the form of a slit gong with arms and legs, and began sounding of its own accord. The husband took a stick, prodded the slit gong's head, and it bled. Then he believed.

'Wobnerluk' is a remarkable Wogamus slit gong from Washkuk village (**Figures 6 top, 7, 8**), at present at the Catholic Mission, Wewak. It was purchased by a Mission priest in 1972 and gazetted National Cultural Property 30th March 1976. It has good pedigree documented by that priest.

The design carved on the prow of 'Wobnerluk' was said to represent *kohondok*, the D'Albertis Creeper (*Mucuna albertisii*) with its brilliant red hook-shaped flowers. The spirit (*masalai* in Tok pisin) of 'Wobnerluk' manifests as centipedes, scorpions, wasps and other stinging creatures. It is very old and was moved several times as the people relocated to new sites. Before it was sold to the Catholic Mission, its spirit was transferred to a replacement slit gong. Although it is now at the Catholic Mission, Wewak (**Figure 8**), it is not fully protected from the weather and ought to be transferred to the PNG National Museum.

Figure 7. 'Wobnerluk' at Washkuk, carved by Kumapui several generations before descendant Tirue, who was c.40 years old in 1972. Gazetted National Cultural Property 30 March 1976. Images and information courtesy Hubert Umlauf.

Figure 8. 'Wobnerluk' at the Catholic Mission, Wewak. Left: B. Craig Sepik 1981, C1:11; right: B. Craig 2002, C6:23. Note deterioration over two decades in an unprotected location.

The prow carving of the Kennedy slit gong (**Figure 6 bottom**) is similar to the carving of canoe prows and other objects of the Wogumas (cf. Kelm II, 1966, Plates 149, 150, 156)

The Nggala live in a single village named Swagup (and Kara by the Germans) located south-east of the Sepik River at the end of a waterway. Nggala slit gongs were said to represent personified male water spirits (Newton 1971:35). The most important Nggala ritual was Ga:neb, which involved the beating of the slit gongs by 'the important men who were homicides . . . The rhythms in general represented the voices of water-spirits, though individually they were onomatopoeic of natural sounds such as cassowary calls, fruit falling in water, sago pounding, crickets stridulating, and children crying' (ibid.:37). Newton reports a myth of Wolbi, one of the three wards of the Nggala:

> Dagabögela, the ancestor of Wolbi, built the first ceremonial house, and showed it to men, telling them to copy it. They did so, at first incorrectly, so he rectified their work. He then started to make slit gongs, and carved their ends with different designs. The first represented the grasshopper. He showed this to me, then sent them to the bush to make one like it, while he stayed in his ceremonial house. He listened for the sounds, criticized and checked them. Dagabögela then successively carved slit gongs with the mantis; the human head; and pig's head, teaching men to copy them in turn [ibid., Figs 70, 74].

The Bahinemo live south of the Manambu, in and around the Hunstein Range. The carvings on the prows of their slit gongs are relatively crude, representing the sun or a certain kind of fish (Newton 1971, Figures 11-14). The slit gongs are considered to be female, and they are beaten by a player seated, as Igoshua [a legendary woman living at the headwaters of the April River] ruled, astride the end of the gong behind the slit' corresponding to the position of women seated in canoes (ibid.:18).

The slit gongs of the Kwoma, living in the Washkuk Hills west of Ambunti, and of the Yasyin living opposite the Kwoma on the south side of the Sepik, used slit gongs to accompany songs for their ceremonies (**Figure 9**) – in the case of the Kwoma, for the Yina, Minja and Nogwi ceremonies associated with the planting and harvesting of yams. The Yasyin had equivalent rituals. The slit gongs were associated with bush and water spirits, called *sigilawas* (Newton 1971:82-83).

Bowden informs us (1990:487):

> Traditionally, [Kwoma] slit-gongs were decorated only on their extreme ends, the stylized carvings conventionally depicting human faces bordered by 'decorative' designs. However, nowadays, following the introduction of steel tools . . . slit-gongs tend to be decorated more elaborately, and the carvings themselves depict a much wider range of subjects [**Figure 10**].

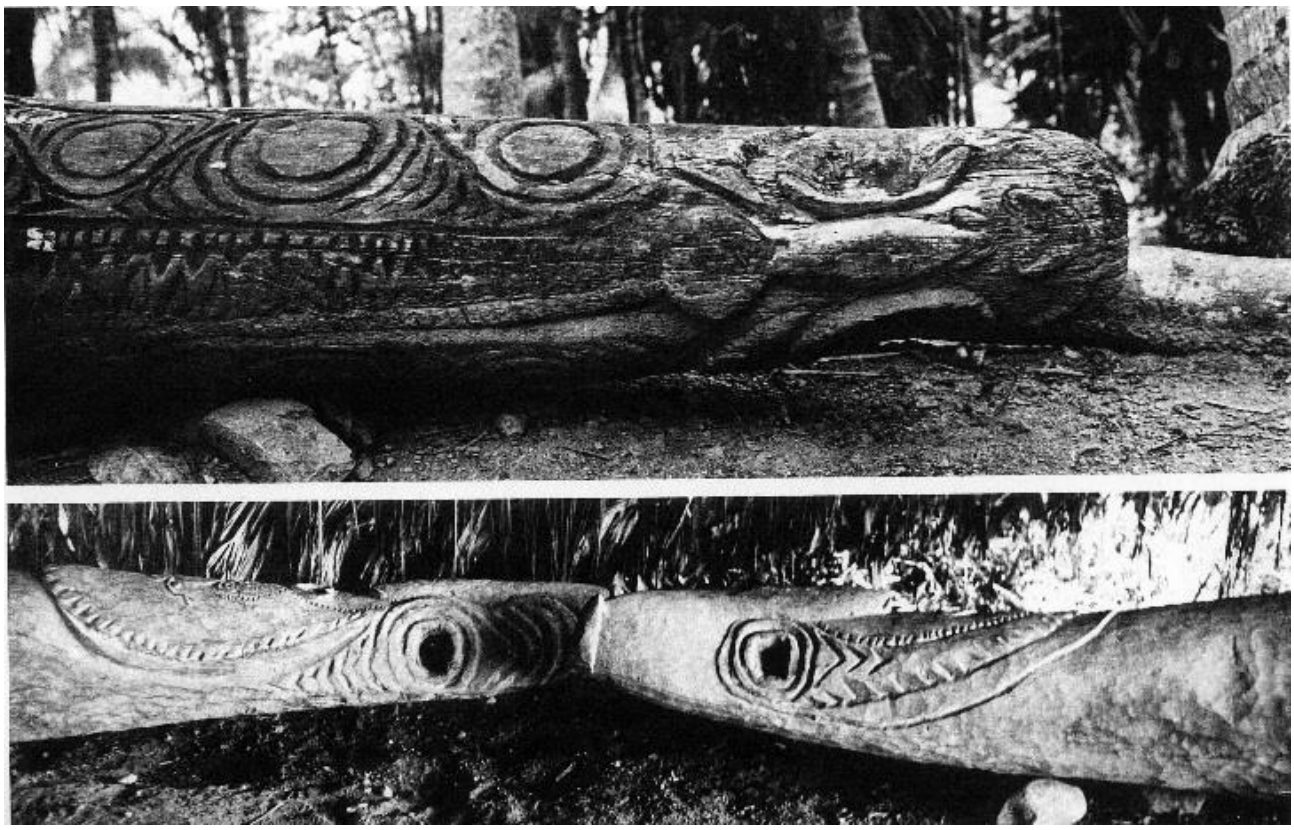


Figure 9. <u>Top</u>: Kwoma; <u>bottom</u>: Yasyin, 20 km west of Ambunti (Newton 1971, Figs 186, 187).

Figure 10. Four Kwoma slit gongs at Washkuk,[5] 8 km WNW of Ambunti. Prow images refer to powerful supernatural beings told about in myths (eg. see Bowden 1983 *Yena,* Appendix B). Photos, <u>clockwise from top left</u>: B. Craig 1972-73, BM26:26, 27, 28, 29.

There is a marked change in the form of slit gongs at the villages of the Manambu on the Sepik River in the immediate vicinity of Ambunti (Map, Figure 11).

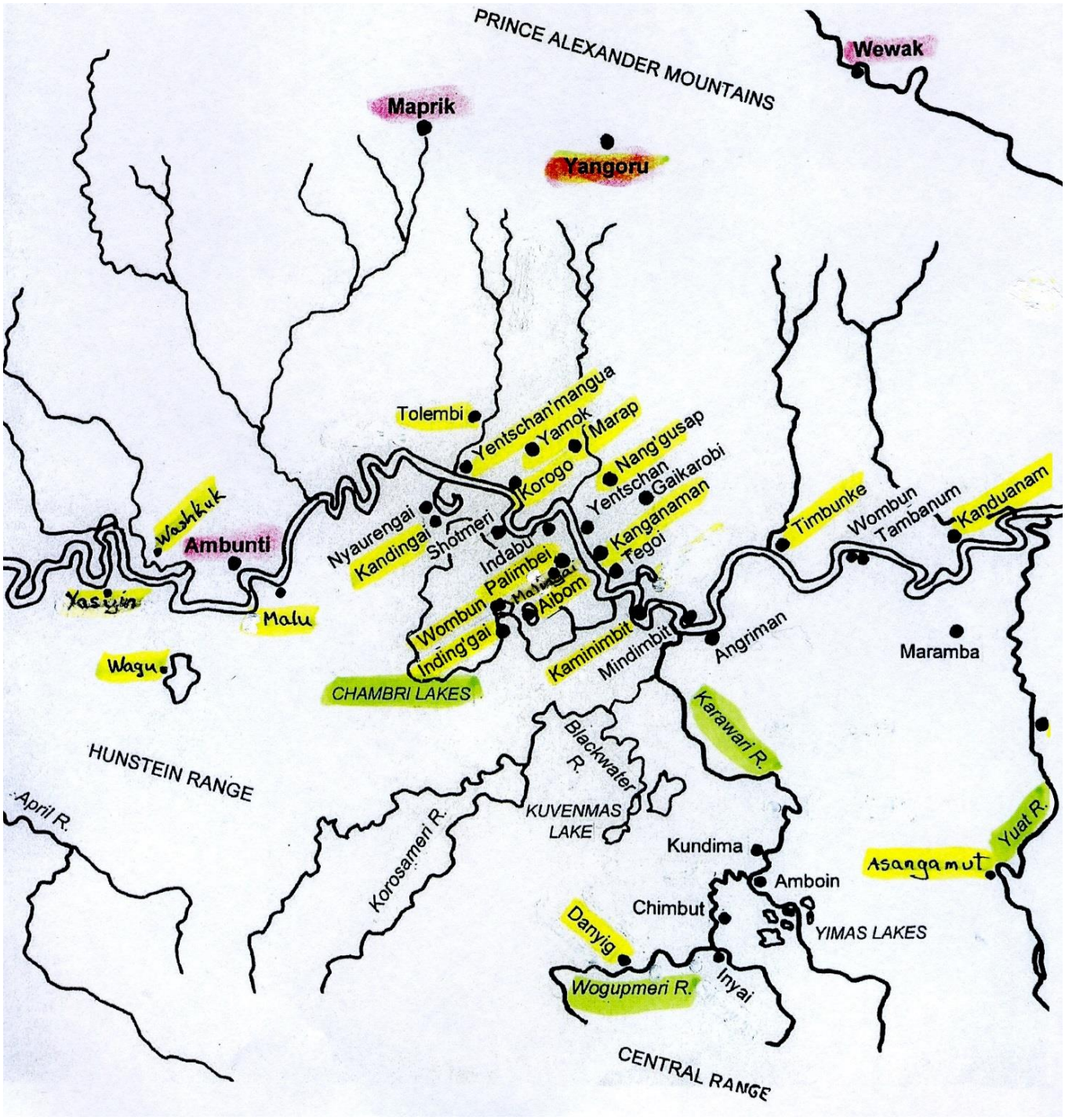


Figure 11. Map of middle Sepik River.

Newton (1971:68, 69) reports that, 'In Manambu mythology (and historical traditions) the original ancestors travelled along the Sepik River in slit gongs, or canoes identified with slit gongs' and 'According to the Yimarr [who came from Mount Garamambu] the gongs were invented by their hero Nggutabwi; the Avatəp version is that the sound of the gongs was first heard coming from underground by a Yimarr man Kobatemeliya, who tracked it to its source and secured the instruments. The sound of the gong beating is thus the voice of an earth-spirit, also called Ndumwi'. The gong-beating rhythms 'were onomatopoeic of the sounds made by fish, birds, wind, the rattling of leaves, and so on' (ibid:70).

Historical photographs of Manambu slit gongs show prows carved as crocodile heads, and truncated sterns (**Figure 12**). Elements of Manambu culture are related to those of the Iatmul; the slit gongs of the Western Iatmul are evidence of that. In particular note the close resemblance of the crocodile prow in **Figure 12, right** and **Figure 13A, right**.

Figure 12. Slit gongs at Malu, Manambu speakers, 5 km east of Ambunti. Right: 1939; left: 1964 (Newton 1971, figs 123, 124). Note the relatively naturalistic crocodile prows, typical also of western Iatmul slit gongs downstream.

At the western Iatmul village of Yentschanmangua, the slit gong 'Mandangu' (**Figure 13 A & B**) gets its name from what is most likely a clan migration crocodile. It has a woman (Waboimangu) on its snout indicating her open vulva (**Figure 11 B**). This tells the story of a huge flood that subsided when the people gave Waboimangu as wife to the crocodile Mandangu. This is a much abbreviated Yentschanmangua version of a Kandingai story recorded by Wassmann (1991:146-148).

Figure 13A. West Iatmul slit gong 'Mandangu', Yentschanmangua (stern at left, prow at right). Gazetted NCP 23 December 1971. Carved 19th C. at Yabalagwi, an older village site downriver. B. Craig Sepik 1981, C4:6, 7.

Figure 13B. Woboimangu on the nose of the crocodile Mandangu (ie. Figure 13A, right). B. Craig Sepik 1981, M4:17a

'Lapyan-nokwan' features a man Kambundu on the prow and the woman Kamburauwa on the stern (**Figure 14**). I was not told the significance of these two persons but they may be sibling clan ancestors. The wavy line along the sides of the gong (**Figure 14, left**) represents *kanu*, a poisonous snake.

Figure 14. Left: 'Lapyan-nokwan', Yentschanmangua, West Iatmul; gazetted NCP 23.12.1971; *kanu* (venemous snake) represented along the sides. B. Craig Sepik 1981a, M4:22. Centre: Kambundu (male) at prow; B. Craig Sepik 1981, C4:9. Right: Kamburauwa (female) at stern; B. Craig Sepik 1981a, M4:21.

The crocodile theme continues at Kandingai with 'Miangandu' and 'Yoangamuk', which have retained their painted sides (**Figure 15**). I do not know how common it was to paint the sides of slit gongs.

Figure 15. Left: front, 'Miangandu', Posugo clan; rear, 'Yoangamuk', Nyaura clan; at Kandingai, West Iatmul. 19th C. Right: painted sides of these slit gongs. B. Craig Sepik 1981, C5:35, 37.

'Kubulgego' features two pig heads and was carved by Kwegweyabi four generations before the 1981 owner who was c.65 years old – so early 19th century (**Figure 16**). The carver saw two 'masalai' (probably bush spirits - *winjumbu*) manifested as humans with pig heads so he carved them into the prow and named the slit gong after one of them; the other was Banjingego. Wassmann describes bush spirits as

> *good-humoured, harmless and always ready, when necessary, to protect the garden against other villagers. They live in treetops and usually appear in the form of flying foxes or birds, and sometimes also of wild pigs and cassowaries. They themselves are visualised as*

invisible breath or a movement of air which to be seen by men, must 'slip' into the animals mentioned (1991:18).

Figure 16. 'Kubulgego', Smat clan, Kandingai, West Iatmul. Carved by Kwegweyabi five generations ago, therefore mid-19th C. B. Craig Sepik 1981, C5:24.

Also at Kandingai, 'Nagongajawa' and its pair 'Nambelei' were carved with cockatoo prows (**Figure 17**). These were carved by two clan brothers Namokumbwan and Minjan. Cockatoos gathered in the trees where they were carving so Minjan, the more skilled carver, decided to represent a cockatoo on each prow. The men's wives provided food but they favoured Minjan with the best portions. Namokumbwan became jealous so he commissioned a sorcerer to kill Minjan. The poison worked and after the carving was finished, Minjan died. Both women mourned Minjan and although Namokumbwan tried to stop his wife from grieving, he sickened and died that same day as a result of his sorcery against his clan brother.

Figure 17. 'Nagongajawa', Smat clan, Kandingai, West Iatmul. One of a pair carved by Namokumbwan and Minjan late 19th C. B. Craig Sepik 1981, C5:19, 20.

In West Iatmul and some Central Iatmul villages, a different kind of slit gong may be found (**Figures 18, 19**). It features a large pug-nosed face with large nostrils and prominent disc eyes; many have a human head at the stern, usually representing a male ancestor. The prow is called *kami* (catfish) or *kaula* (carp or gudgeon) – 'bikmaus' in Tok Pisin. Information about eight of these slit gongs at Korogo reveals that all were purchased from the Sawos village of Yamok (cf. Haberland & Schuster 1964:58, 59). In all I recorded 26 of these slit gongs in West and Central Iatmul villages, only eight of which were carved locally, the rest obtained from Sawos villages which are inland, north of the Sepik River Iatmul villages. Penney, lacking the relevant information, took these to be a Iatmul artefact (1980:370-1 and Fig.16), in particular a sacred slit gong, and interpreted the snub-nosed prow as 'a large animal head' whereas it represents a fish.

Figure 18. Pair of Sawos-type slit gongs carved at Yentschanmangua, West Iatmul, late-1970s. Prow: 'bikmaus' (*kaula*: carp, or cod?); stern: male ancestor's head. B. Craig Sepik 1981, M1:21.

Figure 19. <u>Left</u>: 'Tambalanmin' (front) and "Wailumunagwan' (rear), both carved with steel tools c. 1900 by Morogan of Wogumyambei clan, Yamok (Sawos); bought by Tovantemi of Korogo, West Iatmul with a captured Kandingai woman, Winjan, who was sacrificed to strengthen Yamok. Prow represents *wundauwun* ('bikmaus' fish). B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M3:26. <u>Right</u>: 'Yumbianmei', Nauwa clan, Kanganaman (Central Iatmul), looted from Marap (Sawos). B. Craig Sepik 1981, M7:30.

In the Sawos villages, most of the slit gongs were of the 'bikmaus' kind (**Figure 20**) but there were also ones at Tolembi similar to those of the Iatmul (**Figure 21 –** see also Yamok slit gong in Haberland & Schuster 1964:57, bottom), and others that were profusely painted (**Figures 22, 23**).

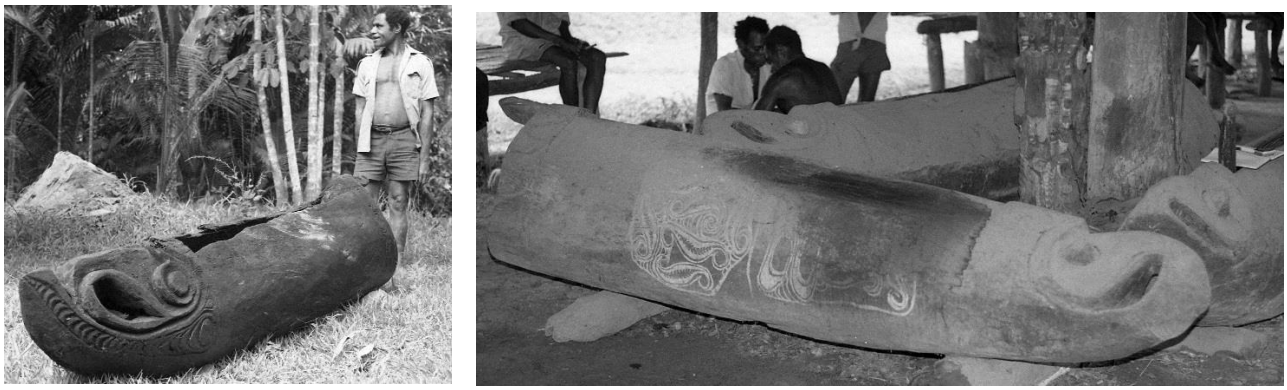


Figure 20. Left: 'Yambunkaman' at Waniko, near Yamok (Sawos); carved by Bandei with steel tools 1930s; prow is *kanambu* (water spirit), stern is male ancestor's head. B. Craig Sepik 1982, M6:32.
Right: 'Kweiman'gauwi', Numanamba clan, Marap (Sawos); prow is *kami* (catfish), stern is male ancestor's head; note painted design on the side. B. Craig Sepik 1982, M13:9.

Figure 21. Front: 'Yamban'gowi', Nyauraq clan, Tolembi Nr 3, Sawos; carved several generations ago; prow: cockatoo-headed man. Rear: 'Samsam', Ganma clan, Tolembi Nr 3, Sawos; carved 1979 by Leiodumian; prow: man with head of *samsam* (long-legged black water bird, perhaps the Great-billed heron (*Ardea sumatrana*). B. Craig Sepik 1982 – C2:6.

Figure 22. 'Emasuwi', Wang'gwante clan, Tolembi Nr 2, Sawos, carved mid-19th C. Prow: pig's head with human-headed crocodile on top and water animals on either side. Black water bird (*salang*) under concentric circle at front and painted at the rear. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – C3:4, 5 (images joined).

Figure 23. 'Kombunduma', Nambwi clan, Tolembi Nr 2, Sawos, carved c. mid-19th C. Prow: crocodile with pig's snout and boar's tusks. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – C3:8, 10 (images approximately joined).

Others in Sawos villages to the east have quite truncated prows (see Haberland & Schuster 1964: 57, top) and carved designs of inter-locked birds' beaks (**Figures 24, 25**) related to those of the *malu* boards (cf. Howarth 2015:196-201).

'Nipande' at the Sawos village of Nang'gusap (**Figure 24**) was carved by Kisowei in the 19th century. Apparently Kisowei wanted to have intercourse with his wife and suggested she lie waiting for him just inside the entrance to the mosquito-proof sleeping bag. However, she substituted her daughter and Kisowei had intercourse with her by mistake. He was ashamed of this and although it was accepted as his wife's fault, he carved this slit gong in recompense.

Figure 24. 'Nipande' ('Nubandi'), Soro clan, Nang'gusap (Nogosop), Sawos. Carved by Kisowei of Weng'wan clan, 19th C., gazetted NCP 17 October 1974. Note *malu* board motifs at prow; pig's head at stern. Carved as recompense for 'unintended' incest. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – M9:5.

'Sang'gerei'ban' (**Figure 25**) is of similar form but with a rat's head carved at the stern.

Figure 25. 'Sang'gerei'ban' ('Sangruimban'), Soro clan, Nang'gusap (Nogosop), Sawos. Carved by a forgotten Weng'wan clan ancestor, 19th C.; gazetted NCP 17 October 1974. Left: Two faces of *mambian* (small bat) and intertwined bird beaks at prow; right: head of *mali* (rat) at stern. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – M9: 13, 15.

These Sawos slit gongs are not unlike some of those of Karkar Island (**Figure 26**) and the Madang hinterland (**Figure 27**) in form but I am not necessarily suggesting an historical link.

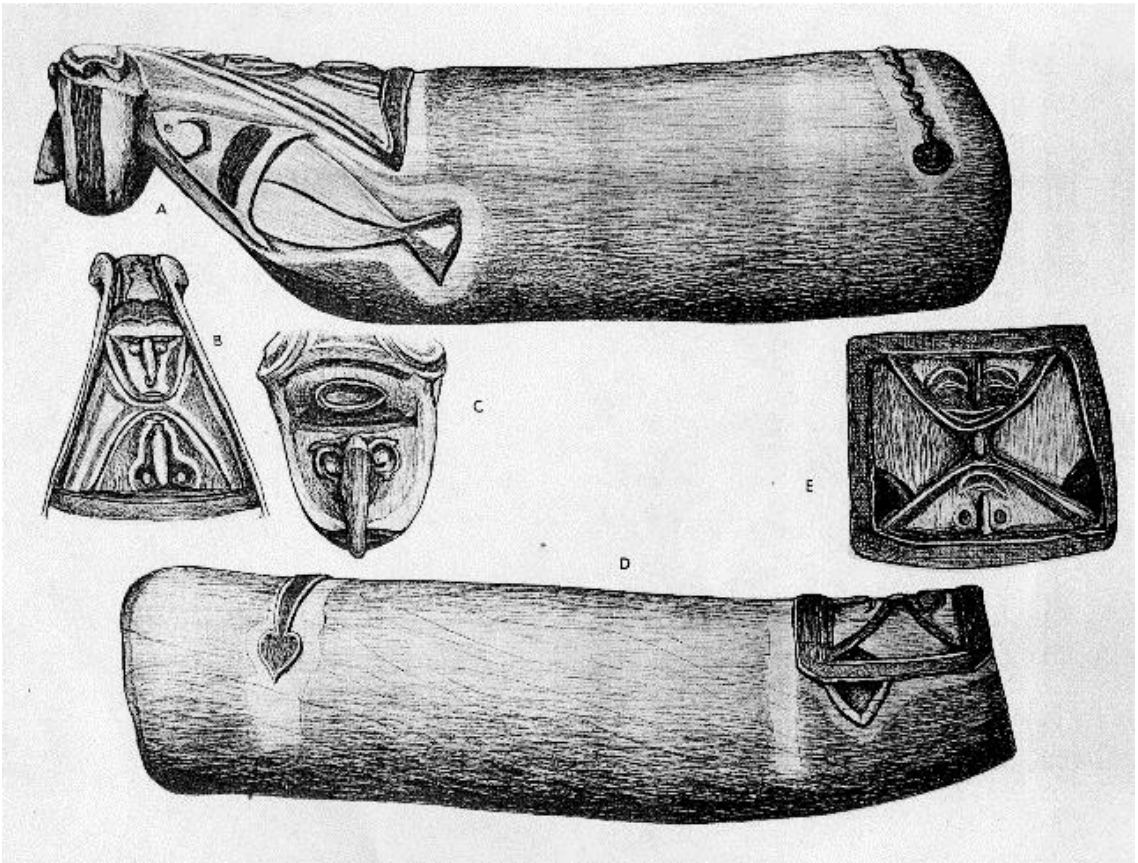
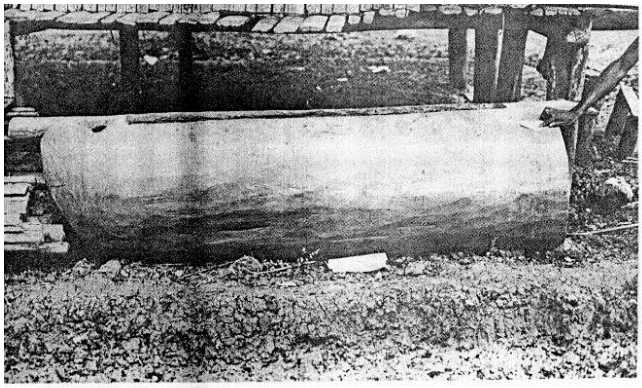
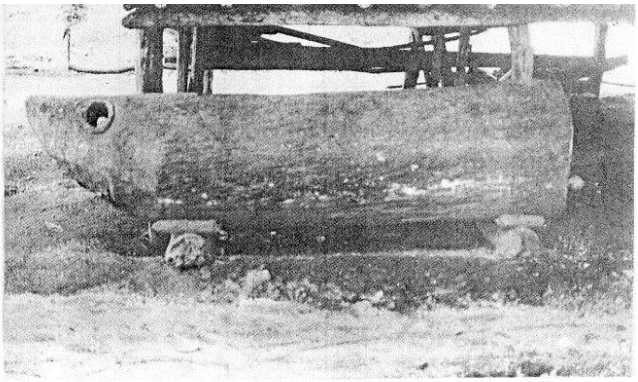
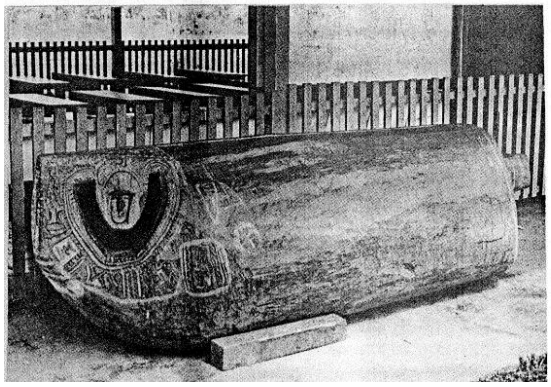


Figure 26. Slit gongs of Karkar Island, Madang Province. R. Christensen, ed. 1975. *Traditional Art and Craft: Madang and Siassi,* p.27.







Photographs page 116.

A. Wood slit gong (Garamut). Garup Village, 1974.

B. Wood slit gong (Garamut). Rivo Village, 1975. This garamut was bought by Rivo from the Amele area, where it was made

C. Wood slit gong (Garamut). Utu School, 1975. Made in Utu area.

Figure 27. Slit gongs from Madang hinterland. R. Christensen, ed. 1975. *Traditional Art and Craft: Madang and Siassi,* p.27.

Back on the Sepik River at Kanganaman (Central Iatmul) we come across prows carved as fantastical monster-like combinations of the attributes of dangerous animals, such as crocodile or snake heads with rows of multiple boars' tusks, and doubled faces; the stern carvings may be of ancestors or totem animals (**Figures 28, 29**).

Figure 28. 'Kong'gunov'whei', Meiyambei clan, Kanganaman, Central Iatmul, carved early 20th C.; gazetted NCP 30.11.1967. Left: prow - *wagun* (mythical fish); right: stern - female ancestor with cicada nose. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M7:33, 34, 35.

Figure 29. 'Shampum'meri', Simal can, Kanganaman, Central Iatmul, carved late 19th C.; gazetted NCP 30.11.1967. Top: prow - *kwinjin* (snake), *ntubwa* (duck) on nose; bottom: stern - *mbol* (pig).
B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M8:9, 10.

On the opposite side of the Sepik from Kanganaman, and a little inland, are the adjacent villages of Palimbei and Malingai. The slit gongs of these villages are like those of Kanganaman with prows carved as relatively large, flat 'faces' bearing subsidiary faces and animal totems. An example is 'Meiyum'gauwi' at Palimbei (**Figure 30**). It was carved by several men with steel tools in the early 1920s. There is a bird on the face of the prow and the stern is represented as a woman named Banginyan wearing a plaited hood.


Figure 30. 'Meiyum'gauwi' at Palimbei, Central Iatmul, carved by Kolomei, Wobwolkamei, Wainsalatemi, Tambinmeri and Tumbungumeri with steel tools early 1920s and owned by Meiyumgauwi of Aingauni clan. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M17:18, 19.

'Sisyon'namat', a slit gong at Malingai (**Figure 31**), was said to have been purchased from the Sawos village, Yamet (Yamok). The prow represents a 'masalai' crocodile and the stern represents the head of a boar.

Figure 31. 'Sisyon'namat' at Malingai, Central Iatmul, carved with stone tools at the Sawos village of Yamet (Yamok) and later re-worked with steel tools. Bought from Yamet and owned by Nungwai of Glagen clan. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M15:10.

Chambri Lake is settled by speakers of at least two unrelated languages: a) the Iatmul at Timbunmeli and Palingawi at the southern end of the Lake, and at Aibom (famous for the pottery) to the east of the Lake; and b) the Chambri at Wombun, Inding'gai and Kilimbit around the base of a hill immediately west of Aibom.

The history of the settlements around Chambri Lakes is complex (see Gewertz 1983, Chapter 4) but it is evident that the Iatmul presence at Aibom has resulted in slit gongs similar to those of the mainstream Central Iatmul; for example, 'Mbauwi' in the PNG National Museum (Craig 2010: 184, MPNr 207/E.10190). Another example is 'Yesinduma', carved at Aibom by Tubasuwe of Pasko clan, with steel tools c. 1940 (**Figure 32 –**also Haberland & Schuster 1964:56, bottom; 60).

Figure 32. 'Yesinduma', carved at Aibom by Tubasuwe of Pasko clan, with steel tools c. 1940. The prow (<u>right</u>) represents Wanjamou'uk (a water spirit) with a woman (Ting'ebi) wearing a plaited hood seated on its nose and a black water bird (*maan* – little black cormorant: *Phalanocorax sulcirostris*) on its forehead. The stern (<u>left</u>) is a representation of a crocodile's head. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – M14:34, 35.

At the Chambri-speaking villages, the slit gongs (eg. **Figures 33, 34**) are narrower than those of Aibom and Central Iatmul. I was told that the carved tusks of the pig's head prow of 'Suwigamban' (**Figure 33**) would be trimmed every time an important man died; in the case of 'Tongkuliwus' (not illustrated), the head of the kneeling female figure at the tip of the prow had been cut off when an important man died. 'Alanbeiwan' (**Figure 34**) has a Central Iatmul prow (see also Haberland & Schuster 1964: 56, top). The carved motifs on the body of both gongs are similar to those of the Eastern Iatmul (cf. **Figure 35**).

Figure 33. 'Suwigamban' at Wombun, Chambri speakers, Lake Chambri, carved by Pwaimbun, father of owner Mipiang'gen of Suwi clan, with stone tools, c.1900. The tusks of the pig's head at the prow are trimmed every time an important man dies. The stern projection is carved as a male figure. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – M15:31, 33.

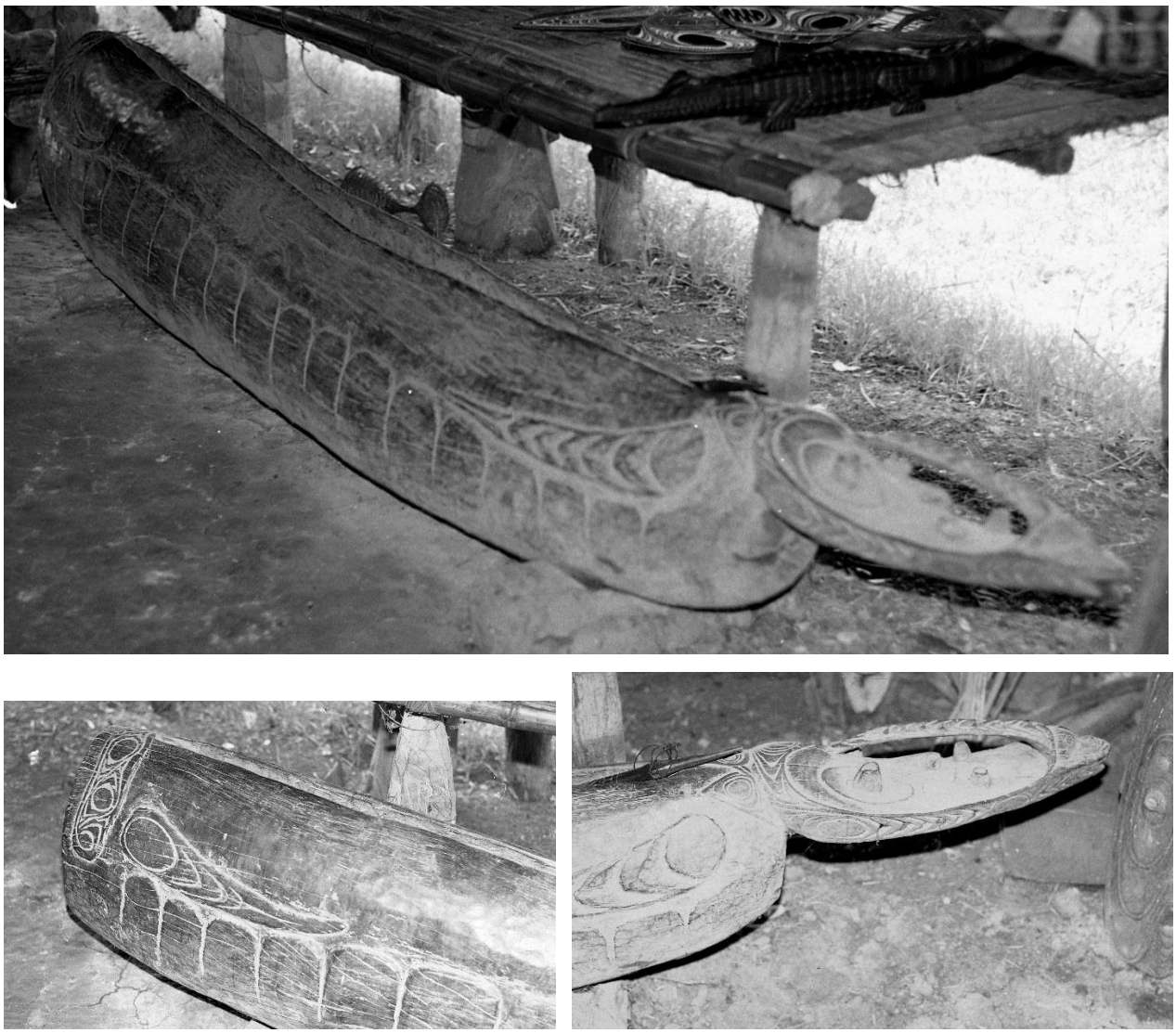


Figure 34. 'Alanbeiwan' at Wombun, Chambri speakers, Lake Chambri, carved by Tuma of Weing'weing'jap clan with stone tools c. 1900. Prow (<u>bottom right</u>) represents *kiabun* (prawn). B. Craig Sepik 1982 – M15:18, 19, 21.

Back on the Sepik River, Kaminimbit, an Eastern Iatmul village, is divided into two settlements: the upstream section is Nr 2 and the nearby downstream section is Nr 1. 'Papweiyang'genau'gwi' ('Papfeyangenauwi') is at Kaminimbit Nr 2. This slit gong (**Figure 35**) was carved in the 19th century by Miatnagwan at Maimandang'gan, a previous village site, and was given as bride wealth for two women. The prow design represents a man's face and the stern is the tail of a crocodile. It was previously named 'Moninja' but was given its present name when it was transferred to Kaminimbit.

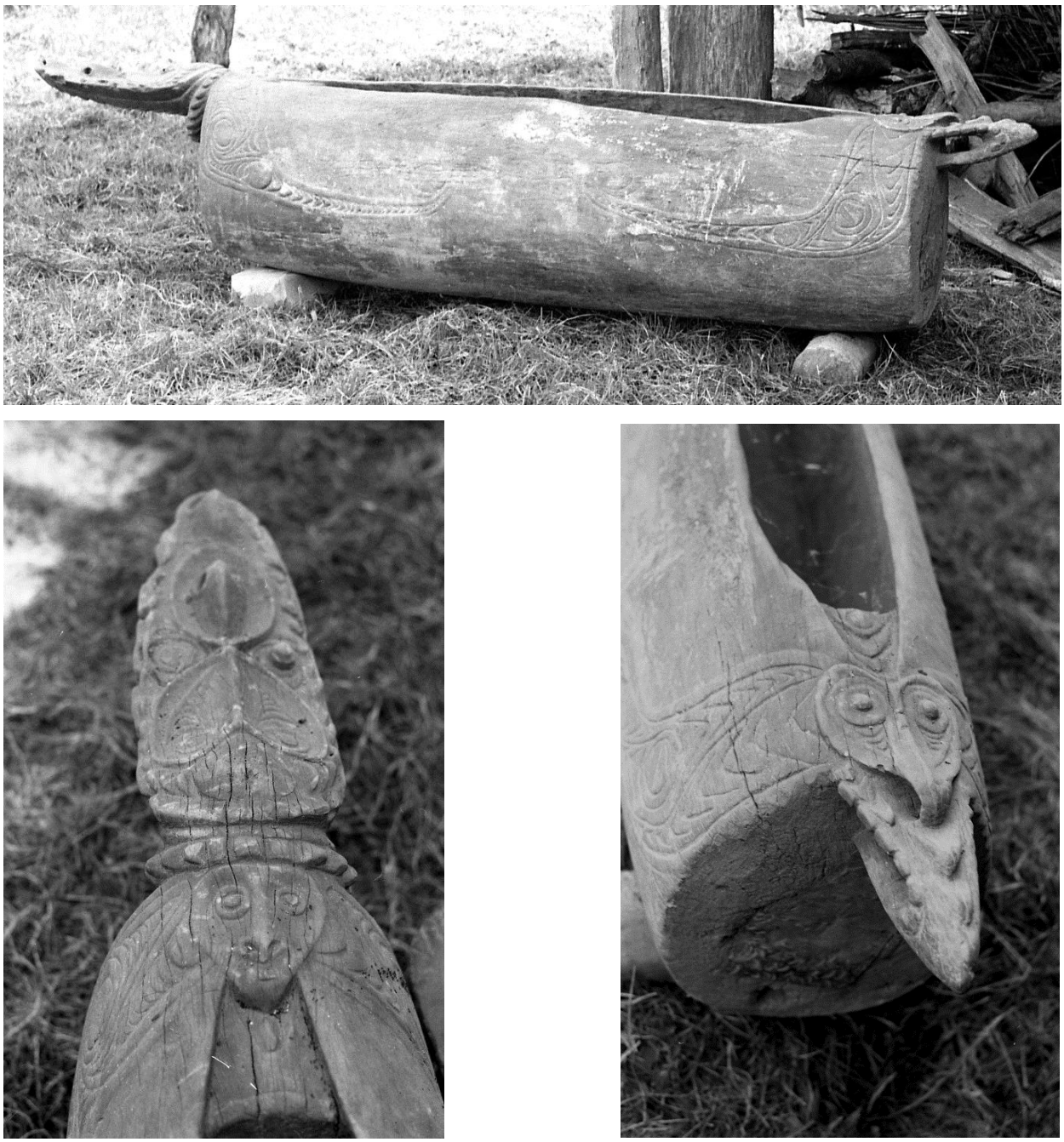


Figure 35. 'Papweiyang'genau'gwi' ('Papfeyangenauwi'), Wein'gwandu/Samanyak clan, Kaminimbit Nr 2, Eastern Iatmul. Gazetted NCP 8 March 1973. Carved by Miatnagwan at Maimandang'gan, a previous village site, 19th C., and given as bride wealth for two women. Prow design represents a man's face and the stern is the tail of a crocodile. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M19:27, 29, 31.

At Kaminimbit Nr 1, two slit gongs were gazetted NCP, also 8 March 1973. These were 'Kambung'gauwi' and 'Nauwang'gauwi' (**Figure 36 –** cf. Haberland & Schuster 1964: 54-5**)**. 'Kambung'gauwi' (**Figure 37**) was carved by Woboiyambi of Yanmari, an old village site prior to the founding of Angriman and Kaminimbit as separate villages. This slit gong was part of a bride payment for Woboiyambi's wife, Kalawunda. Her brother, Kabukavi, was a Kararau ancestor who founded Kaminimbit. It is very old – the children in 1981 were the 8th generation since it was made. This slit gong was beaten to celebrate the killing of an enemy.

Figure 36. 'Kambung'gauwi' (left) and 'Nauwang'gauwi' (right), Abelan clan, Kaminimbit Nr 1, Eastern Iatmul, gazetted NCP 8 March 1973. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M21:3.

Figure 37. Stern (left) and prow (right) of 'Kambung'gauwi', Abelan clan, Kaminimbit Nr 1, Eastern Iatmul. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M21:7, 10.

'Nauwang'gauwi' (**Figure 38**) was carved by Palakbang'gu, Kugului, Nogwangalabi and Ambundimi of Abelan clan about five generations ago (as at 1981), therefore early in the second half of the 19th century. When they had completed carving this slit gong, they killed two men of Kanganaman and painted it black. They used the bodies of the two men as rollers to pull it into the cult house. There are 34 notches along the slit near the prow as a tally of enemy killed. Thirty-two of those killed were of the village of Panglembi, which was completely destroyed. This happened in the mid-1930s and attracted retribution from the Australian administration at Ambunti, which they said gaoled many and hung five; two men died in gaol. This slit gong was carved as a replacement of an earlier 'Nauwang'gauwi' that was taken by Abelan clan members to Manmari (Mumeri) on the lower Korosomeri River. Subsequently this original was brought back to Kaminimbit but was later lost when it was swept downriver in a flood and retrieved by the men of Tambanum. I did not see it at Tambanum in 1981.

Figure 38. 'Stern (left) and prow (right) of 'Nauwang'gauwi', Abelan clan, Kaminimbit Nr 1, Eastern Iatmul. Prow design represents a face (*savi*) with a wallaby (*yeimbu*) on its forehead. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M21:8, 11.

A slit gong named 'Trumelaui', owned by Yaman and Vandi of Kaminimbit, was gazetted NCP 23 December 1971 but I have not found a photograph of it and I did not see it in my Sepik surveys of 1981, 1982, and 1983. It is possible it is the slit gong published in Friede et al. 2005, Nr 185.

Further downstream at Timbunke (Eastern Iatmul), were several slit gongs with monster faces representing the prawn (*kavun*) or some mythical being, and sterns representing totem animals such as the leach, eel or snake (**Figure 39**). They had a crescent appendage below the neck (**Figure 39, top right**)[6] and carved designs on the sides painted white against the all-over red ochre. One gong had part of its prow blown off by a bullet from an aircraft during WW2 (**Figure 39, bottom right**). The characteristics of these gongs, as well as those of Kaminimbit and Mindimbit (see Bateson 1980, Plate IX A), indicate strong links with the Karawari River region (**Figure 40**; see also Craig 2010:183, 185 – MPNr 206/E16040 for 'Kolmanki', Manjamai, middle Karawari River, gazetted 16 March 1972; Haberland & Seyfarth 1974:209 and Tafel 7: 1- 3 for Wogupmeri River villages).

Figure 39. Slit gongs of Timbunke, Eastern Iatmul, carved mid-19th C. Left front: 'Njamdu', Nyago clan; prow: *kavun* (prawn), stern: *malak* (leach); left rear: 'Koiyum-bangga', Nyago clan; prow: *kavun* (prawn), stern: *nyimkambai* (snake). Right top: 'Yang'gunbwi', Bowi'nagusmei clan, gazetted NCP 23 December 1971; prow: *kavun* (prawn) with *nyakna* (cockerel) on its brow; stern: *malak* (leach); Right bottom: prow of 'Njamdu' damaged by a bullet during WW2. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – C19:14, 26, 28.

Figure 40. 'Womboli'bien', Danyig, Wogupmeri River, upper Karawari. Carved by Mil'lagak five generations before 1982. Prow: spirit face with *wuniful* (pearl shell) hanging under the neck; side carvings: *sibulum bamal* (flying foxes) hanging from a tree; stern: head of a hornbill. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – M17:3, 4 (images approximately joined). Also illustrated by Haberland & Seyfarth 1974, Tafel 7, 1.

Borut Telban informs us that:

> The Ambonwari [of the middle Karawari River] have two sizes of [slit] drums, very large named ones, which always remain in a men's house, and smaller ones which do not have names, do not embody spirits, and can be moved from house to house when needed for ordinary house dances. The smaller ones are portable replicas of the larger ones.
>
> The larger, immobile slit-drums (*yimbung*) have their own names . . . and are regarded as beings in their own right. People say that these spirits used to live under the water with others, such as crocodile-spirits. They had their own villages under the lakes, their own men's houses; they performed all sorts of rituals, initiation being the most important one.
>
> Drums have a body . . . One end is designated the head (lit. 'chin'), the other end the 'tail'(sometimes called its 'penis'). Just under the 'chin' . . . is a solid hanging piece of carved wood resembling a pouch . . . This is called a 'fish basket' where the spirit keeps its food. The slit at the top of the body of the drum is referred to as its 'mouth'. . . On either side of the drum the pattern depicts its intestines and lungs . . . [incisions denote] the number of people killed by members of the owning clan (1998:189).

These interpretations of the carved motifs differ somewhat from those of the Wogupmeri (upper Karawari) River (see Haberland & Seyfarth 1974:209, Abb.65). The signalling methods are explained in detail by Telban (1998:190-3).

We come now to the Yuat River and Lower Sepik-Ramu region (Figure 41).[7]

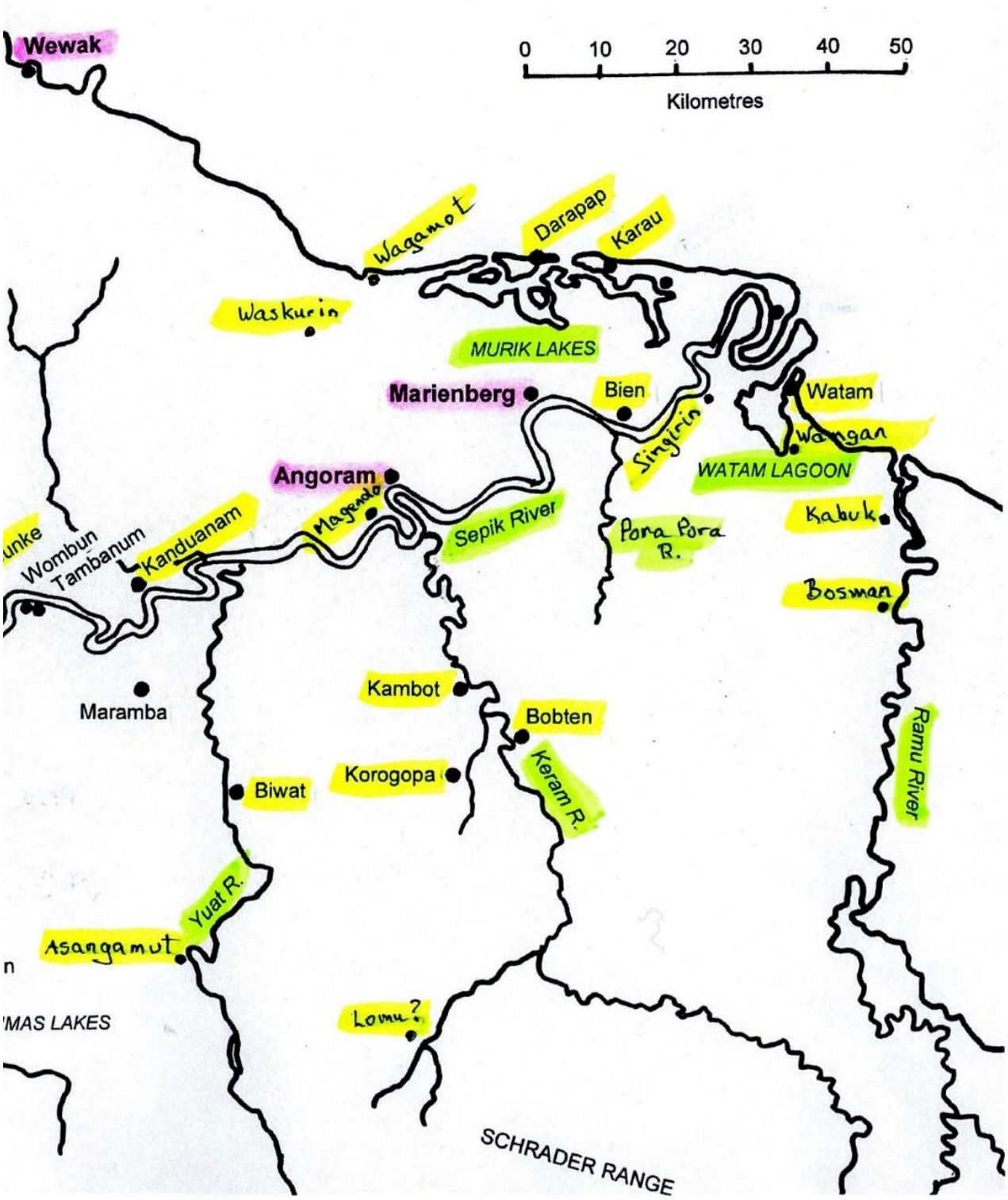


Figure 41. Map of Lower Sepik-Ramu region.

The people on the Sepik near the mouth of the Yuat River and a little upstream on the Yuat, and as far down the Sepik as Bien, are Angoram speakers. At Kanduanam the slit gong prows are a complex mix of human and/or animal forms embellishing a central spirit-face (*palanggo*). I was unable to find out what kind of spirit this is but probably either a bush or water spirit, or possibly a male war spirit like the *brag* of Murik Lakes (Lipset 1997:135-139).

Figure 42. 'Tugundul' at Kanduanam, West Angoram speakers, carved by Asam, Karawi & Gama late 19th C. Prow: *mamboang* (lizards), *kamiowal* (cockatoo) at front, man's face looking to rear & *palanggo* (spirit's) face looking forward; *plendum plendum* (bat's) faces on sides; *mamboang* (lizard) on stern. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M27:5, 7, 9.

The motifs on the slit gong 'Tugundul' (named after the place where the tree was cut for the gong) include the face of a man, in front of the spirit's face, who beats the gong, and lizards and bats that carry the sound over great distances (**Figure 42**). This gong, it was said, can be heard as far as the Mundugumor village of Biwat on the Yuat River, the most eastern Iatmul village of Tambanum, and as far down the Sepik as Moim – all roughly 20 kilometres away. The motifs on this drum are similar to those on the one from 'Inaramba'[8] on the lower Yuat River (Friede et al. 2005, Nr 134). The carved faces on the prow of 'Bianmali' (**Figure 43**) clearly show similarity to the Mundugumor carving style of the *paki* figures of Biwat (cf. Howarth 2015: 120) but the naming of the rows of small faces as *kandimbang* suggest links to the lower Sepik/Murik Lakes region.

Figure 43. 'Bianmali' at Kanduanam, west Angoram, carved by Abeloko, late 19th C. Prow: *palanggo* (spirit) face with rows of *kandimbang* faces on each side, and a man's face at the stern. Note similarity of the main face on the prow with Mundugumor (Yuat River) carving style. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M27:11, 12, 14, 16.

On the upper Yuat River, the slit gong prows represent water spirits (*saki*) and bush spirits (*maindjimi*) (**Figure 44**). These are represented with fantastic tusks and projecting horn-like features. McDowell (1991:95ff.) notes that people had personal names for individual spirits, which have defined territories associated with particular kin groups. They could appear as humans but also as cassowaries, crocodiles or wild pigs. They were capricious and although occasionally helpful to their human kin, could act harmfully towards people if offended; and they could be enlisted to do harm to others.

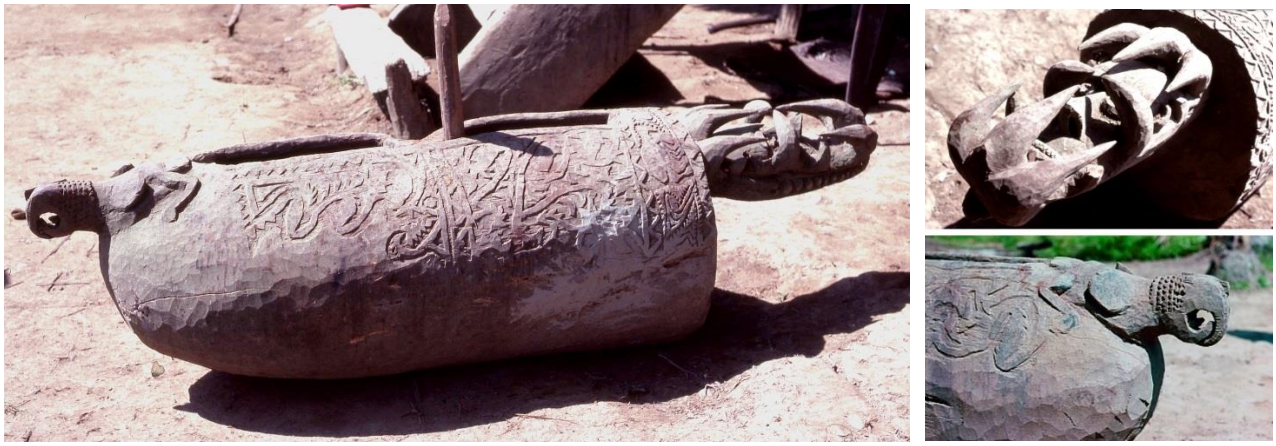


Figure 44. 'Muran-magan' at Asangamut, upper Yuat River. Prow represents the water spirit of that name and the spikes are its teeth; the stern is *suang-gasak* (black cockatoo). Carved by Alamblumang c. 1956. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – C25:22, 23, 25.

Among the Mundugumor, on the middle Yuat at Biwat (**Figure 45**), the prows are less fantastic and the carving on the sides of this slit gong recalls the spiral designs on shields of the area (cf. Moore 1968:15, right).

Figure 45. <u>Left</u>: Slit gong at Branda hamlet of Biwat, Mundugumor, middle Yuat River; <u>right</u>: Slit gong prow of 'Abindamari' at Kinakaten hamlet of Biwat; represents *sipi* (prawn) with *wotebek* (rat) behind. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – C28:15, C29:10.

At Kambaramba-on-Sepik, 'Apoi' (**Figure 46**) was plundered as spoils of war from Agrumara, at the mouth of the Yuat River, by Kambol (grandfather of the present owners) in the late 19th century. The similarity with the slit gongs of Kanduanam (**Figures 42, 43**) is apparent.

Figure 46. 'Apoi', at Kambaramba-on-Sepik, was plundered as spoils of war from Agrumara, at the mouth of the Yuat River, by Kambol (grandfather of the present owners) in the late 19th century. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M28:1, 5.

Closer to Angoram, at Magendo, the prow of 'Yambung'gun' (**Figure 47**) is like the finials of many of the Lower Sepik-Ramu gongs: a human figure (*kandimboang* at Murik Lakes) supported by an animal such as a possum or lizard; however, the other end is an animal's head, in this case a pig (possibly a totem animal) **but the trend to bilateral symmetry is evident**.

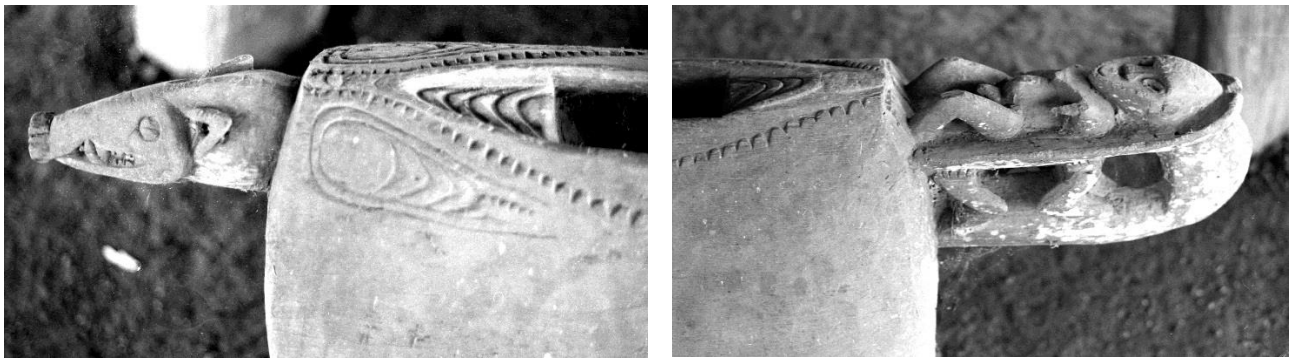


Figure 47. 'Yambung'gun' at Magendo, central Angoram, carved by Wasiki, late 19th C. Stern at left: *yumbal* (pig). Prow at right: *yamen* (possum) supporting a *kandimbang* (human ancestor). B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M28:36, M29:2.

Up the Keram River at Kambot was a slit gong named 'Doe' that featured a human face at each end (**Figure 48**), and 'Mipa' (**Figure 49**) obtained as spoils of war from a group to the east (possibly a settlement on the Pora Pora River), with a human face at one end and a backwards-bending human figure at the other.

Figure 48. 'Doe' at Kambot, Lower Keram River. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – C29:36, C30:1, 2.

Figure 49. 'Mipa' at Kambot, Lower Keram River, 19th C. Obtained as spoils of war from a group to the east (Pora Pora River?). B. Craig Sepik 1981 – C30:10-12.

At Bobten, further up the Keram, was a very old and weathered slit gong named 'Yawot' (**Figure 50**). I was told a long, fascinating story about 'Yawot' that can be recounted only in much abbreviated form here. Another version of this story has been published by Peltier (2002:206-209).

Figure 50. 'Yawot' at Bobten, middle Keram River. Carved 19th C. or much earlier, by Dalumei of Lomu in the foothills to the south. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – M8:5-7.

'Yawot' was carved by Dalumei at Lomu, a Banaro settlement in the foothills of the upper Keram. While he was cutting the log, his stone adze slipped and cut his lower leg. It swelled up, like a pregnancy, and eventually it burst and a baby girl was born. Dalumei fed her on the juice of unripe coconuts and she grew miraculously quickly to maturity. He named her Gonpen.

A man from Membrankuru near the foothills (probably also a Banaro) was hunting birds and shot a hornbill. When he went to retrieve it he came across Gonpen who insisted he stay

with her and although this man was afraid that Gonpen's father might disapprove, in fact Dalumei urged the man to stay and marry his daughter.

In due course the man realised that Gonpen had been born not of a woman, but of Dalumei's injured leg, and he told Gonpen of this. This caused embarrassment to Dalumei who got into the slit gong and travelled down the Keram to the Sepik and further down to Murik Lakes where he terrorised the people, killing and eating their children.

He travelled back up the Keram to Kambot and terrorised the people of that village, killing and eating their children. The Kambot men sent a message asking the men of Bobten to relay their complaint to the children of Gonpen at Lomu. 'Yes, he is our ancestor' they acknowledged. 'We will come and help you'.

So the men of Lomu and Bobten, as well as of Korogopa, came down to Kambot. They built barriers across the channel that ran between the river and the lagoon behind Kambot where Dalumei lurked; they set children to play nearby to lure Dalumei into the channel but he broke through the first barrier built by Lomu, the second one built by Kambot and the third one built by Korogopa. The men of Bobten, however, had built a sloping barrier and when the slit gong rushed forward, instead of breaking through, it slid up, enabling the Bobten men to secure a length of rattan to it and haul it onto the bank. All the men cheered: 'Bobten has won!' they cried.

The men built a platform on a couple of canoes and ferried the slit gong up to Bobten. It was named 'Yawot' after the Bobten man who had courageously fastened the rattan rope to the slit gong. It has been there ever since and the spirit of Dalumei was beseeched to assist the men in their activities. It was kept hidden from uninitiated men, women and children or it could cause sickness and death. But a Catholic missionary-priest washed it with holy water and rendered it powerless. It is now used as a church gong.

At a fringe settlement of Madang in 1983, I came across several Kambot storyboards, familiar as tourist carvings. One of these, carved by Noah Nemesong, depicted the capture of 'Yawot' (**Figure 51**) and I purchased it for the PNG National Museum. This was before my visit to the Keram River later that year when I was told the story of 'Yawot'.

Figure 51. Storyboard carved by Noah Nemesong of Kambot, Keram River, c. 1983, depicting the capture of the slit gong 'Yawot'. Photo: B. Craig, Madang, February 1983.

At Bien, the most eastern of the Angoram-speaking villages, the form of the slit gong changes radically (Figure 52) and is consistent with slit gongs of the Kopar speakers from Singarin (**Figure 53**) down to Kopar at the Sepik mouth, and speakers of Watam (**Figures 54-58**), of the Ottilien language family to the east on the lower Ramu, and of Murik speakers to the west (**Figures 59-62**). These gongs are characterised by **bilateral symmetry**: the finials at each end of the gong are carved the same – either as faces resembling *brag* masks, or *kandimboang* figures (often male at one end and female at the other), usually supported by an animal such as a lizard or possum. The lavishly carved sides of the gong are also of bilateral symmetrical design depicting several motifs that refer to spirits, or to features or creatures of the natural world.

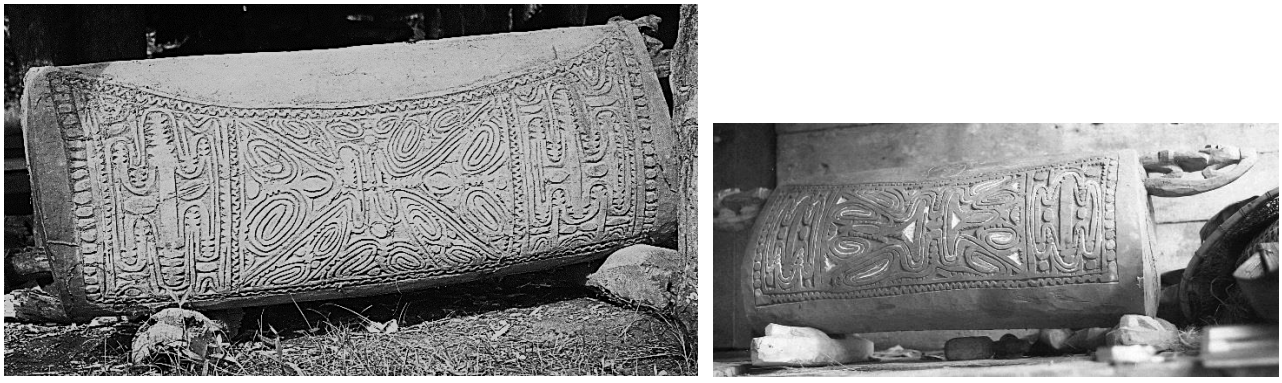


Figure 52. Left: 'Eimora' at Bien, east Angoram, carved 19th C; finials lost. Right: recent, smaller copy (as at 1981). B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M35:24, 25.

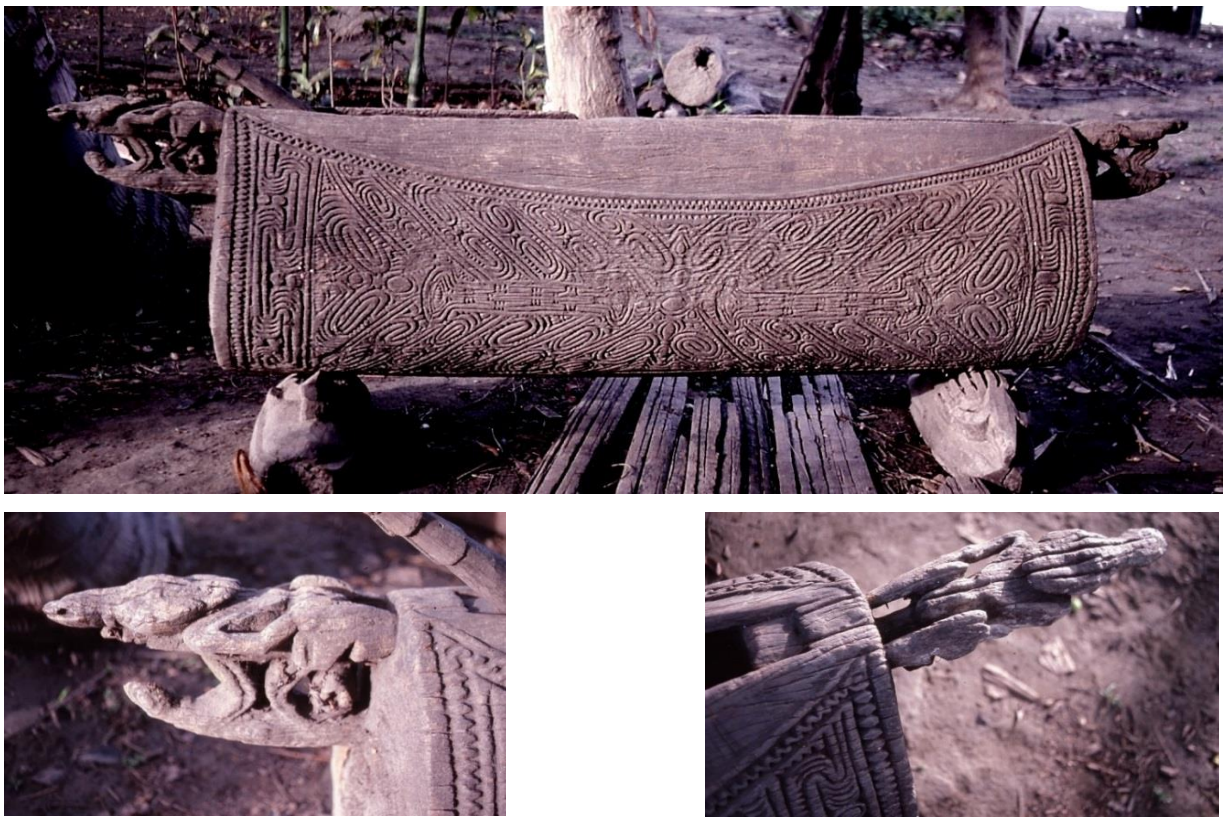


Figure 53. 'Gom' carved by Asuwarei at Singarin, Kopar speakers, 19th C. Finials represent *kandimboang* supported by *san'greb* (lizard). Said to be heard at Angoram, c.40 km away. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – C7:10-12.

These slit gongs were carved at several places that had access to trees large enough for the purpose. Murik Lakes is not blessed with many suitable large trees so most of their slit gongs were purchased from elsewhere. Centres for manufacture of slit gongs were Bien on the Sepik, bush villages south of Murik Lakes, Watam, Wanang south of Watam Lagoon, locations between the lower Sepik and the lower Ramu, including Bosman, and to the east of the lower Ramu at least as far as Nubia. East of Nubia, by reference to images taken by Marsha Berman, it seems that the finials at each end of slit gongs differ from one another.

Figure 54. 'Dengwar' at Watam, east of the Sepik mouth, carved 19th C. by forgotten ancestor soon after Watam was established. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – C5:34.

Figure 55. 'Jungil' at Watam, carved by an unknown Watam ancestor late 19th C. For more Watam slit gongs, see Kelm 1968, Plates 374-383. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – C6:25, 27.

Figure 56. Slit gong at Watam bought from Wangan c.1930 but much older than that. Finials represent *brag* masks. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – C6:29.

Figure 57. 'Silokla', carved by Agrana Ouka c.1979 at Wangan, Watam speakers. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – C7:1.

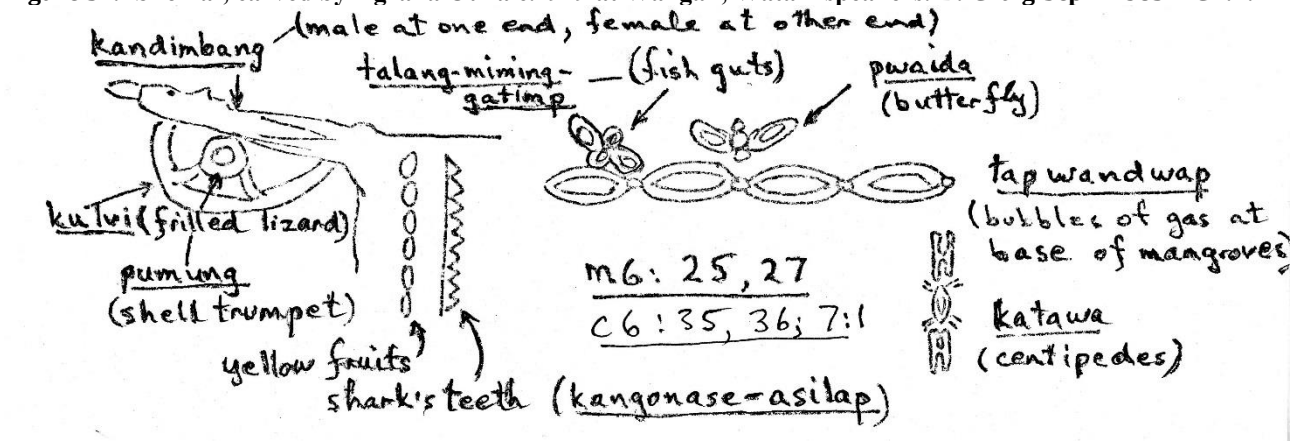


Figure 58. Names for design elements on 'Silokla' at Wangan. B. Craig 1983 field notes.

Figure 59. 'Dikandamot' (a water spirit). Carved by Ginau of Darapap, Murik Lakes, c.1960. Finials are *brag* masks. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M30:18, 19.

Figure 60. 'Pandum' at Karau, Murik Lakes, but bought from Kabuk, Ottilien Family, west bank of lower Ramu c. 1955. B. Craig Sepik 1983 – C3:14, 15.

Figure 61. 'Tobenang' at Karau, carved by Abi of Kayan, 19th C. Given to Sana (grandfather of Sir Michael Somare) and cared for by Michael Maia, Sir Michael's cousin. B. Craig Sepik 1982 – C14:33.

Figure 62. 'Punso' at Wagamot, Murik Lakes. Carved c. 1958 at Waskurin (Buna speakers), 13 km SW of Wagamot. B. Craig Sepik 1981 – M31:19.

The slit gongs of the north coast, such as those near Aitape, are similar to those of the lower Sepik and lower Ramu except the finials are not the same at each end and the motifs on the carved sides are also not entirely symmetrical (**Figure 63**).

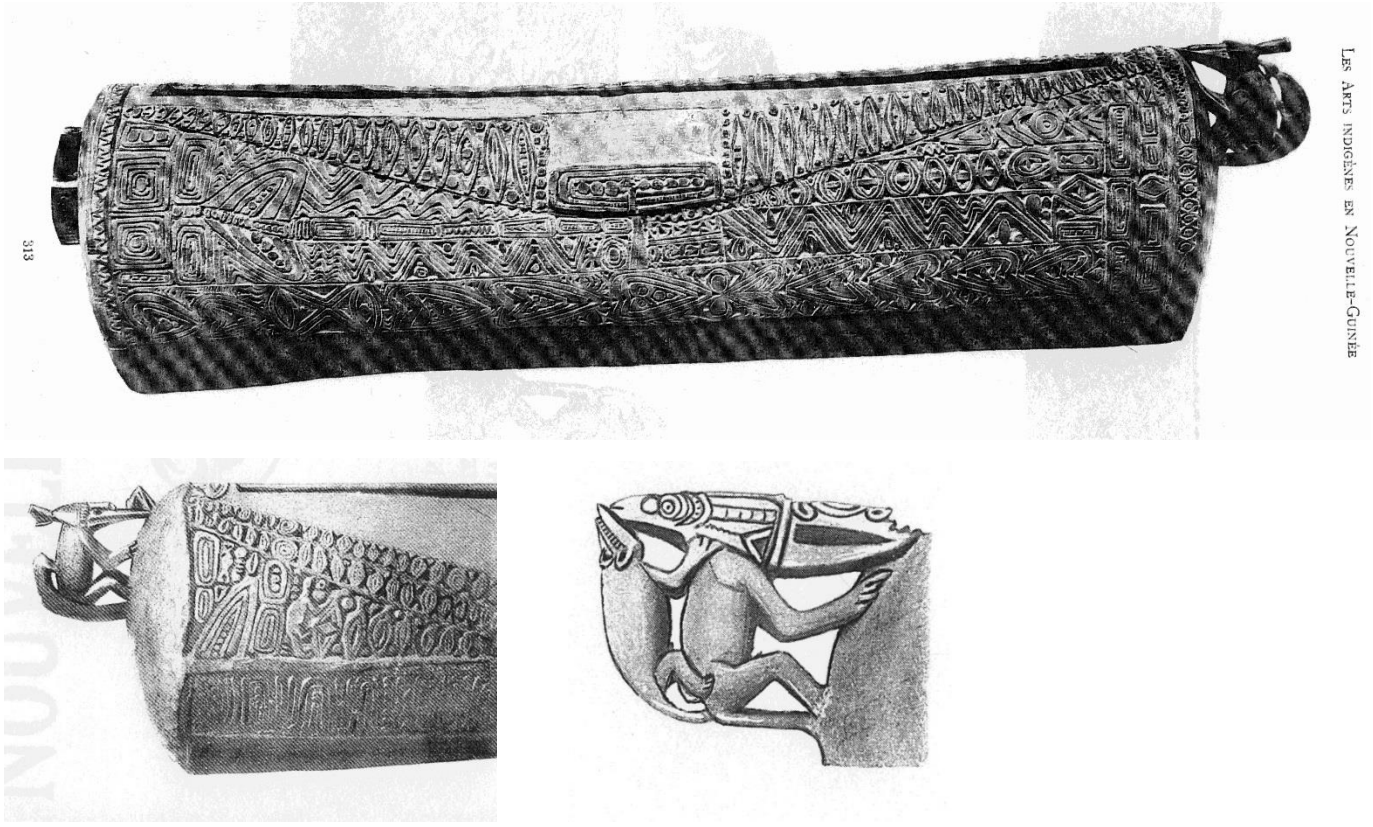


Figure 63. Slit gongs, Aitape area. S. Chauvet *Les Arts indigenes en Nouvelle-Guinee* 1930:79, 80. Note reduced symmetry compared to Lower Sepik-Ramu slit gongs.

I have not discovered many examples of this kind of slit gong but A.B. Lewis photographed one from Tumleo, one of the small islands off the Aitape coast, which he collected for the Field Museum, Chicago (Welsch 1998, I, Fig. 2.24).[9] He photographed another on the nearby island of Angel (ibid., Fig. 2.37). Lewis wrote in his diary that on Angel Island, October 23, 1909: 'Saw two big drums here (from Dallmannhafen [Wewak]) and one made in Angel by man from Sup (Mushu [Island, near Wewak]), after style of Sup' (ibid:103).

Maritime trade and relocation of craftsmen along the north coast has made it difficult to identify the origin of many artefacts, including slit gongs, in this region. It remains to be confirmed whether slit gongs on the offshore islands were traded from the mainland. This seems most likely (see Friede et al. 2005, Nr.77; Smidt 1975:57-59) and that it was the Murik, not the Manam Islanders as stated by Penney (1980:350), who were the maritime middle-men (Lipset 1997:10, 23, 47).

As stated at the beginning of this survey, I have sought only **to demonstrate 'slit gong variations and their repertoire of sculptural form'**. To avoid a dull focus on mere form, I have added the names of carvers, estimates of when the gongs were carved (based on events such as the arrival of German colonists and the apparent age of my informants), and the 'meanings' of design elements. I have recounted some of the stories told to me about the gongs but I have not included all the slit gongs I saw and photographed, nor have I reported their dimensions, the vernacular terms for the gongs, or commented about the presence or absence of a lug or 'tongue' inside the gong where it is struck with the beater (eg. see **Figure 50**), the beaters themselves, or discussed the different striking techniques. This paper is offered as a baseline study, a reference point for further work.

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[1] Most of the photographs and data used in this paper were obtained during cultural property surveys of the Sepik River region in 1981, 1982 and 1983 while I was Curator of Anthropology at the PNG National Museum & Art Gallery. The information was obtained during short interviews and must be treated as provisional. Researchers who were long-term residents in the region may have collected more reliable and valid data and corrections are welcome. The index numbers of my photographs are given in the captions to the Figures in this paper. Note that researchers with different linguistic skills and with different first languages (English, German, French, etc) will inevitably hear and spell indigenous words differently and, with regard to place names, these spellings may differ from the spellings in Gazetteers and on maps. I am grateful to Don Niles for comments on a draft of this MS.

[2] There are early accounts of slit gongs in this region, eg. Gräbner 1902, but these rely on a relatively small number of examples in a relatively restricted region.

[3] Many New Guinea slit gongs have differently carved 'front' and 'rear' ends. Using the analogy of a canoe, I will refer to the 'front' end as the 'prow' and the rear end as the 'stern'. Although sometimes the prows of canoes and slit gongs are quite similar, I am not implying that is always the indigenous perception. Nevertheless, sometimes the slit gong is explicitly stated to be like a canoe (eg. see Newton 1971). Where the slit gong has projections at each end that are alike, such as in the lower Sepik-Ramu region, it is useful to call them 'finials' but a relationship to house finials is not necessarily implied.

[4] Meander Mtn is on the south side of the junction of the Sepik and Yellow rivers; the village referred to may have been a settlement of the Namie (Lujere) speakers, most of whom populate the lower and middle Yellow and Sand Rivers.

[5] There are two settlements named Washkuk. One is the Wogamusin settlement about 45 km west of Ambunti and the other is this Kwoma settlement about 8 km WNW of Ambunti.

[6] This appendage was said to represent a *kina* pearl shell ornament. These are traded from Papua, possibly sourced in Torres Strait, north to the Highlands and then down to the Sepik (Swadling 2010:149). The direction of this trade was reported incorrectly by me in Craig 2010:185.
[7] The divisions between lower, middle and upper Sepik are marked a little differently by various writers. I have located the border between the lower and middle Sepik to be immediately downstream of the most eastern Iatmul village, Tambanum, and the border between the middle and upper Sepik to be between Ambunti and the most western Manambu village, Malu.
[8] 'Inaramba' is not on maps or in the Gazetteer. Most likely 'Maramba' is meant, 7 km south of Kanduanam Nr 2, on the old course of the Yuat River. A handwritten 'M' may have been read as 'In'.
[9] This same slit gong is illustrated in Neuhauss 1911, I, Plate 216.