NOTICE OF ORDINARY MEETING

The next meeting of the Society will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00 p.m. on Monday 28 April, 1975

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Minutes of Meeting held Monday 24 March, 1975 to be confirmed.
   (Copies of these minutes are attached)

3. New members

4. Papers & Journals
   The following papers and journals will be tabled at the meeting.
   Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute - Govt. of West Bengal
   Vol X No. 1 & 2, and No. 3 & 4.
   Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Newsletter No. 3, Jan. 1975
   S.A. Naturalist Vol. 49 No. 3, March, 1975
   Anthropological Society of W.A. Vol. 12 No. 1 March, 1975
   Vol. 12 No. 2 April, 1975
   Royal Society of S.A. - Notice of Meeting 10 April, 1975
   Anthropological Society of Victoria - Newsletter No. 125 April, 1975
   Anthropological Society of N.S.W. - Newsletter No. 68, April, 1975
   Adelaide College of Advanced Education - "Studies in Religion"

5. Field Trip, 1975
   Secretary to report on Field Trip to Port Augusta 28 March, to 31
   March, 1975. An 8mm movie film of 20 minutes duration taken
   during the field trip will be shown at this meeting.

6. Speaker
   Dr. Miroslav Prokopec will give an address to the meeting entitled
   'ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE PAST ROONKA POPULATION'

7. May Meeting.
   The meeting for May will be held on 26 May, 1975

VERN TOLCHER,
Hon. Secretary,
213 Greenhill Road,
EASTWOOD S.A. 5063
THE CULTURE OF THE GOGODALA: A REVIVAL

A.L. CRAWFORD

INTRODUCTION
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INTRODUCTION

The Gogodala Cultural Centre has been established at Balimo in the Western District of Papua New Guinea, to house, preserve, and promote the revived art and cultural activities of the Gogodala who inhabit the flood plain of the Aramia River, north of the Fly River Delta.

Today little is known of the art style of the Gogodala, even though they were contacted as early as 1901 by C.G. Murray. The factors responsible for this would have been the nature of the land the Gogodala inhabit, and Mission influence. The former would have resulted in perhaps fewer Government patrols than that of other Districts. Most of the area is very low-lying and for 9 months of the year is inundated with water. Their villages consisted of a single communal longhouse built on one of the numerous grassy hillocks rising above the surrounding swamp or lagoon. The prolific insects and the crocodile and leech-infested swamps no doubt led to J.H.P. Murray's description in 1917: "they are an interesting and apparently a well-behaved people, and it is to be regretted that they inhabit such an awful country; presumably they were driven into it by some more-powerful tribe long ago. I cannot imagine anyone people voluntarily selecting such a place to live." An unevangelised mission established themselves in the area in the early 1930's and with their teachings it was not long before "we had to burn our carvings as they were evil." In the late 1960's the people of a particular village were told that unless their cultural material was burnt and destroyed completely, a school would not be established in the village. All carvings were destroyed, including basic drums - but today there is still no school in that village. today, there is probably only one old piece of Gogodala material left in the country and that is a DIVAKA, a large ceremonial drum which is kept at Kala Village. There are only two others, and they are in overseas Museums; in the days before contact there would have been one in each village, since they played such a major role in the AIDA MAIYATA, a ceremony to appease an ancestral hero.

Today the Mission claim that they had nothing to do with such destruction and that the Gogodala themselves destroyed their items of culture and it is the people's own wish that the traditional ceremonies should not be performed. This is true, but only because of the Church's strict doctrine. For the Mission to re-educate their church leaders today, it would be "against their policy, to interfere," therefore "nothing can be done," only "the people themselves can bring about such changes." If the Mission is innocent of interference why do they print such statements like the following which is an extract from an editorial of recent publication: "The Bible teaches us that once we were slaves to the powers of darkness, slaves to the spirit world, but that Christ has brought us out of darkness to light. The spirits are Satan's servants and belong to darkness. We are now children of light, and therefore, we should have nothing to do with the things of darkness. We cannot mix spirits and witchcraft with the Lord Jesus. He will have nothing to do with such a mixture."

This report illustrates that much has been achieved towards rectifying this problem, but only reinforcement of the argument that Gogodala culture has true value and vigorous re-education will achieve unity.
THE EVENTS

The Past

As early as 1910 Government personnel were beginning to appreciate the aesthetic value of the art style. Lyons on visiting Pisi village in 1914 entered the longhouse and recorded the following: "There I saw the carving of a huge iguana - called POSIYA - or an alligator hollowed out as a canoe, and of an alligator swallowing a man - hollowed out on the back as a canoe, and with the heads of four men in the bottom of the hollow. The latter represents a canoe with four oarsmen in it. Everything was pigmented. Indeed, it was the most wonderful piece of carving I have seen anywhere." On patrolling between the Fly and Aramia he found himself confronted by a huge swamp. "At the swamp," he continues in his report "we took canoes. . . . some of us transhipped into a huge new canoe which measured 70 feet in length and three feet nine inches in beam, which had been hollowed out of a cedar log. Along the sides and at the prow, alligators had been carved and them pigmented. These canoes have no outriggers, but this big one was safer than an ordinary canoe with outrigger. . . . For workmanship they surpass any canoe I have seen." In 1916 whilst on another visit to Pisi, and Isago in 1917, numerous carvings were obtained by Lyons for the Government and are now on display at the Australian Museum, Sydney. Haddon in 1916 published the first major paper describing the material culture of the Gogodala. This was based mainly on a collection obtained by Dr. G. Landman of the National Museum of Finland, Helsinki, whilst travelling in 1910 with Rev. B.T. Butcher of the London Missionary Society. The material was presented to the Ethnological Museum, Cambridge with a number of specimens donated to the British Museum. After Lyon's brief, but informative paper in 1926, "Notes on the Gogodala Tribe of Western Papoea," W. Wirz prepared a report in 1934 on his visit to the area which is today the only comprehensive document available. His work was anthropological; his paper included many sketches and photographs of the cultural material which was to be the last published record from the field of such a distinct and unique art form, so unparalleled to any other form in Papua New Guinea. Wirz's collection which included much general ethnic material is now housed in the Museum of Anthropology, Basel, Switzerland, and must be the most comprehensive Gogodala collection in existence.

The Gogodala have a complex social structure. They have a dual organisation with each moiety divided into four clans, and each clan subdivided again into up to perhaps twenty or more sub-clans. Great stress is given to a totemic system and each sub-clan has its own totemic emblem or GAWA TAO. The GAWA TAO in most cases is based on concentric designs incorporating asymmetric appendages and usually one can see schematic forms within the pattern, the resemblance of the totem animal or bird, which the TAO represents. The GAWA TAO plays such an important role that it is applied to all ceremonial paraphernalia and is also painted onto the bodies of those performing in the MAIYATA. It is the dominating theme of the Gogodala art style. The conventional forms of their sculpture are the snake, crocodile and pig heads, with their exaggerated teeth; human heads with long protruding noses and high tapered craniums which represent a conical cap (DIBA), and heads of the eagle, hornbill and cockatoo. The principal item used in a ceremony (MAIYATA) is the IKEWA', a dance mask of very light wood not unlike balsa. These plaques bear the owner's GAWA TAO, with the basic design in black pigment with additions of red, yellow and white, and is fastened to the conical DIBA. They range from six to sixty inches in height but once they are large enough to cover the dancer's face they are called LIGA:LE.
In some cases the sculptural head of the clan father or the primary totem is attached at either the top or lower end of the plaque. The centre or "eye" is usually marked by a small cowrie shell, piece of mother of pearl, or a large seed set in wax and surrounded by red abrus seeds. The perimeter is bound with a stitching of cane and enhanced by a band of white heron feathers, some of which are cut and twisted to unusual patterns. Other items of importance created by the artists were full-scale sculptures of clan figures, the various totems, and in many cases there were numerous combinations of both man and animal, model canoes (GAWA) intricately carved and painted to represent the GI GAWA which was used in the initiation ceremony, and fully decorated house hooks. These superb creations of spiritual importance were displayed in two major rituals, the ALDA and GI MAIYATA. As quoted by Newton "all in all Gogodala art is the gayest and most decorative of the Papuan Gulf." It is a tragedy for all, that during the past four decades so little was recorded, so much has been allowed to disappear and so little incentive given to maintain such a rich intellectual evolution.

On Arrival

In January, 1972, I set out and visited each of the Gogodala villages only to find suppression, confusion, despair, self-pity and even tears. What was needed was confidence and reassurance. My greatest asset was a photographic inventory of over 100 black and white half-plate prints of all known published photographs of Gogodala cultural material. Many hours were spent, endeavouring to document the material, in most cases this was achieved, a photograph would be identified, but in other cases there were blank memories. When asked of the whereabouts of such pieces, in most cases the stereotype answer was given "mission... fire". The only piece left in the whole area is the DIWAKA already mentioned. When asked if similar pieces could be re-created I was promptly informed that they were not permitted to do so as it meant they would be associating themselves with an evil spirit, and this would be contravening the Christian belief. They now believe that their GAWA TAO is nothing other than an evil spirit. To talk of ALDA was near forbidden and the ceremony a threatening influence to the new belief if ever performed. To be a Christian the past was not to be allied to the present. After many weeks in the villages listening to the old men and the former SAKENA (Skilled carvers) I endeavoured to explain the purpose of having a culture and the meaning of history, and pointed out the already visible signs of a sterile people. As one man said "we are like a TIM (post)." They wanted individuality. The history theme took hold after many months, when the basic fact was pointed out that one does not have to revert from Christianity to have a living record of bygone days. They soon realised that such a record was not only going to give them greater identification but the younger men could be taught, thereby to generate the art style, songs, legends and ceremony amongst their children. At first there had to be a reconciliation with their own conscience but only a few recolled and these were mainly a number of the older church deacons and pastors.

Before long the simpler forms of the IKENA or dance mask were being carved by the elders, but the quality was poor. However after many months of stimulation, and teaching of the style and the method of preparing and applying pigments, the younger men were producing pieces of high quality. Within 18 months of being in the field the Gogodala had realised that their culture was being revived and had to be sustained. Numerous meetings were held to discuss a system whereby this could be achieved.
We talked of the Angoram haus tamboran and again photographs were used to illustrate its existence and achievements. It was therefore decided that a Gogodala longhouse should be constructed, on strict traditional lines and it in itself would become not only one aspect of their culture, but at the same time it would envelop all other aspects. Immediate plans were prepared, land and assistance were provided by the Local Government Council and the collecting of bush materials commenced. Between the months of May and September of 1973, up to fifty men at a time made as many as three trips a week into the bush with the help of the Council tractor and trailer to collect materials, and this was on a completely voluntary basis without any cash remuneration. In the meantime the National Cultural Council was established and a submission made for the allocation of funds to assist in the construction costs, and this was received. In October construction started, and at one stage there were eighty men working on the site. By Christmas the basic structure was complete awaiting walls and roofing. The collection of the sago leaf for the roof thatch was a slow and major process. Three work teams each divided in two were established and would spend alternate weeks on the site thatching, or living in the sago swamp collecting leaf. In the meantime, with the aid of a large Gama canoe fitted with a 25 h.p. outboard, another team made up to four trips a day collecting the stock-pile of leaf. During construction the men were paid fifty cents a day in lieu of the labour rate of one dollar eighteen cents a day which contributed a self-help component of sixty eight cents per day per man; this, together with the value of materials collected by the community represented a total self-help component of over four thousand dollars. By June of this year the longhouse was complete and on 29th August the Chief Minister, Mr. Michael Somare, opened the Gogodala Cultural Centre. (See photograph).

The Present

Today, with the implementation of the Centre the Gogodala may perhaps one day be as rich in cultural material as were their fathers. The longhouse reveals a determination to regain what was nearly lost. Within the central chamber (KOMO) of the longhouse (SAEDA GENAMA) a display of almost the complete range of tangible cultural material can be observed, including general ethnic pieces. The KOMO acts not only as a "showcase" but the stage for the once forbidden ceremonies such as the AIDA MAIYATA; the actors - men from as far as the most eastern and western Gogodala villages. It is a focal point for teaching and regular visits are made by schoolchildren and men who want to gain knowledge. It is also a convergence for the selling of their craftsmanship which is now gaining recognition from Museums and art dealers afar. Accusations are often heard, condemning the carvers for their association with the longhouse and claiming "the Centre should be pulled down" or even "burnt". In Certain villages prayers are offered for the "reverted" souls who now "must surely descent to hell," in particular those of the dancers. Only further education in the years ahead can rectify such conditions.

Future

What does the future bring for these people? Today men recreate their culture, but do they do so free from a fear of spiritual retribution? Perhaps for the generations to come this will not be so, however in the meantime much time is to be spent in reassuring and giving confidence so that the Gogodala can live his own life yet remain a Christian.

This year the AIDA MAIYATA was performed, a celebration for an ancestral hero. It was achieved through many discussions, negotiations,
learning and practice for those interested; it was an attainment for all and was performed on the day of the Opening. As a result it has been decided by the majority of artists that next year the initiation ceremonies (GI MAIYATA) will be activated. Work has already commenced with the men working daily in the long house bringing into being many of the GI LOPALA - the elaborate combination of canoe, totem and man which were once created for the "spiritual transmissions" necessary for novice to become man.

With the establishment of the Centre, many traditional beliefs will surely come to light and be recorded both through the re-telling of legends and the fashioning of tangible objects not yet attempted. In the recreated environment of the past, and at the desire of the Gogodala, this will surely come about in the years ahead.

THE CENTRE

Construction

The Centre as already mentioned, takes the form of a traditional Gogodala longhouse (SAEDA GENAMA) and is constructed entirely of bush materials, but where necessary certain timbers have been treated with preservatives. Being only 120 feet by 90 feet it is small compared with some of the original village houses, some of which measured up to 600 feet. Architecturally it is a raised platform 5 feet above ground level, which overhangs the platform or floor extending nearly to ground level on each side. The floor is of split black palm laid transversely across intermediate rows of larger split black palm which in turn are also laid transversely across halved black palm trunks which run the full width of the KOMO. The latter are tied down transversely to 5 rows of parallel tree trunk joists (MUSILLI) which are supported on a number of parallel rows of posts (TIMI). The centre row of joists of which there are 4,30 feet each in length are fully painted and carved to represent the various totems and clan fathers. Only the central end posts are also carved and painted, to resemble a standing figure.

There are 4 outside walls, one on each side and at each end. They are of dried midribs of the sago palm tied horizontally between the floor and roof. Internally there are 2 further walls, one down each side and of similar material but tied vertically; these form a central chamber or KOMO. The partitioned area on each side of the central chamber is divided into 5 small two-storey cubicles. Traditionally these were used by the women and children, the lower level (GENAMA GOBA) for cooking etc., the upper level for sleeping. Access to the various cubicles is by means of knotted logs between ground level and doors in the external side walls. The KOMO which is reserved exclusively for the men only, is entered at either end through an arched doorway via a massive knotted log leading to a verandah. Each end of the knotted step (WAKALI) has a detailed curved head, that of a man's at the top whilst at the lower end, that of a pig. Midway in the KOMO is a raised platform on which the men would sleep if the mosquitoes were annoying; normally the platform at night would be in a cloud of smoke rising from the fires in the KOMO. In the dry season, the men would sleep on the KOMO floor adjacent to their own fireplace. A series of WAKALI lead from the KOMO to the ceiling level (SASASIKILI) of the women's quarters and were used only by the men to gain access to their
wives and young children. Closer to the roof above the central hall and 
at one end there is another platform which was used to store dance 
paraphernalia and the various carved totems for the AIDA and GI MAIYATA. 
The women were only permitted to enter the KOMO on the occasions when 
certain ceremonies were performed.

The roof thatching is of sago leaf threaded on very thin 10 feet 
length of split black palm which are tied down to arched rafters, 
further tied with cane to horizontal joists. These are supported 
on a number of parallel rows of high posts, and in such a manner that in 
the KOMO there is only one row and that is in the centre, supporting 
AIDA - the joists at the apex, and these also have carved ends and are 
painted.

Outside the area is decorated with gardens of the many totemic plants 
and trees. At the front and back a number of black and betel nut 
palms flourish, as in the old days the men would sit on the front 
verandah of the KOMO chewing betel nut with other gingers etc., which 
are also grown. Normally there would be a quadrangle of clean swept 
earth for outside dancing, however in this instance the surrounding 
grounds are of lawn.

Function

Today the central hall is one of many things besides having its 
traditional use. The side walls resemble those of an art gallery 
giving a display of over 1,000 colourful dance masks (IKEWA AND LIGA:LE) 
ranging from 6 inches to well over 6 feet and each bearing the artist's 
insignia or clan pattern. Suspended from the roof structure are many of the 
GI and AIDA LOPALA, carved replicas of crocodiles, snakes, iguana etc., 
with heads of either the clan father or of another totem protruding 
from the jaws, and the GI GAWA or ceremonial canoes, ancestral figures, 
and father figures (KUKU) resembling the dead which were once placed 
in the gardens to mark the resting places of wandering spirits. Also 
there are house hooks (TONAGA), carved heads(GANABI) drums, (WALUMA), 
masks resembling faces (KOSAEYA), elaborate gourd rattles(KIHEKEKABUSA) 
mourning veils (ATIMA) house posts (TIMI), floor joists (MUSILI) and many 
other pieces including ethnic material. A vast number of these pieces 
have been donated to the Centre to form part of a permanent display 
but at the same time a large quantity of the material has been 
purchased by the Centre for resale.

Here a Museum has been created and both schoolchildren and men spend 
many hours observing the material and tracing down their clan pattern. 
It is surprising to note that a number of men are unaware of either their 
clan or GAWA TAO and that the children generally, do not know the 
meaning of words like "IKEWA" or "DIBA". The latter is understandable 
but at the Centre all are given the opportunity to learn.

A number of men are constantly at the Centre carving and painting 
and it is these who guide and teach the visitors. Many hours are 
spent amongst the men, who in the KOMO and the environment of the 
past, sit and talk of legends and past activities such as warfare 
etc.

The side cubicles of the longhouse now have two uses. The upper level 
is a store for both dance costumes and material for sale, while the lower 
level acts as living quarters for men who come from distant villages to 
participate in cultural activities and sell their carvings.
The KOMO is also used for men to perform their elaborate and colourful dances. Here, elders have spent many hours teaching and regenerating enthusiasm amongst the younger generations who before the Centre establishment did not have the incentive nor opportunity to participate in traditional ceremonies. In fact, the BAINALE dance performed during the Opening was observed by many for the first time.

As a further medium in cultural development films are shown in the KOMO of not only life in Papua New Guinea but ethnic groups from a variety of countries. These give a vivid illustration to the Gogodala that traditional life rich in colour, song and dance, still exists all around and that intellectual development continues to give ethnic identification.

The 4 end cubicles which have adequate natural light will be used as cultural workshops for silk screening, ceramic art, pottery and handicrafts such as basket and bag making, small fish traps, and mats etc.

A full-time gardener/caretaker lives at the Centre.

Aims

The immediate aims of the Centre are:-

1. Display an indexed collection of all aspects of the Gogodala art style including general ethnic material.

2. Development and teaching of the art style.

3. Teaching and recording of legends, music, songs.

4. Development, teaching and recording of traditional dance, including the initiation ceremony.

5. Spreading of information relating to the culture of Papua New Guinea through publications and visual aids.

6. Educational patrols to various villages in particular to those with schools to implant a cultural awareness and the meaning of history.

7. Provision of workshops for courses in creative art, relating to silkscreening, ceramics, and copperwork.

8. Maintain a dance group for cultural festivals.

9. Select talented artists for further training and development at the Creative Arts Centre or other worthy institutions.

10. To make aware to the public the existence of a revived art style, by means of art exhibitions and publications.

To achieve these aims Board of Management has been formed and together with discussions at Local Government level much has been gained.
THE GOGODALA CULTURAL CENTRE:
A TRADITIONAL LONGHOUSE

CEREMONIAL HOUSE HOOK
TONAGA  120.5 cm
DANCE MASK
LIGA:LE CLAN PATTERN
59 cm

GILOPALA - DISPLAYED DURING THE INITIATION CEREMONY - CLAN PATTERN - DIBISALA - 149 cm