

THE LOST MALAY LANGUAGE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

W. Seiler

Australian National University

During the last one hundred years, Malay was introduced at least twice in central New Guinea. As early as 1870 Malay-speaking traders in search of bird of paradise feathers crossed the border separating Dutch and German New Guinea. These traders penetrated as far east as 142° 30' and with them they brought Malay, which became a trade language in some areas. With the end of the plume trade Malay disappeared as a trade language, although early Australian patrols to remote 'undiscovered' parts of New Guinea frequently were greeted in Malay even as late as the thirties. For a brief period after World War II, part of westernmost Australian New Guinea was administered by the Dutch who, especially through their Ambonese civil servants, reintroduced Malay in the area. In the Waris area, there are still fluent speakers of Malay, though the language is no longer used. Some Malay loans still compete with Tok Pisin loanwords in some of the indigenous languages, Imonda, for example.

1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper I am going to look at the external history of the Malay language in the territory of what is now Papua New Guinea. It is generally assumed that Malay bird of paradise hunters visited the Sepik area, i.e., the North-western part of Papua New Guinea, long before the Europeans arrived there. I have shown elsewhere that this is in fact not the case (Seiler: 1981) and that the Malay traders were attracted to East New Guinea at about the same time as the Dutch began to show interest in their long forgotten colony. But, although the contact between the people of the Sepik area and the Malays did not stretch over a period of centuries, it was still a few decades of more or less intensive intercourse between the two groups and this was enough to leave the legacy of Malay as a trade language in the area.

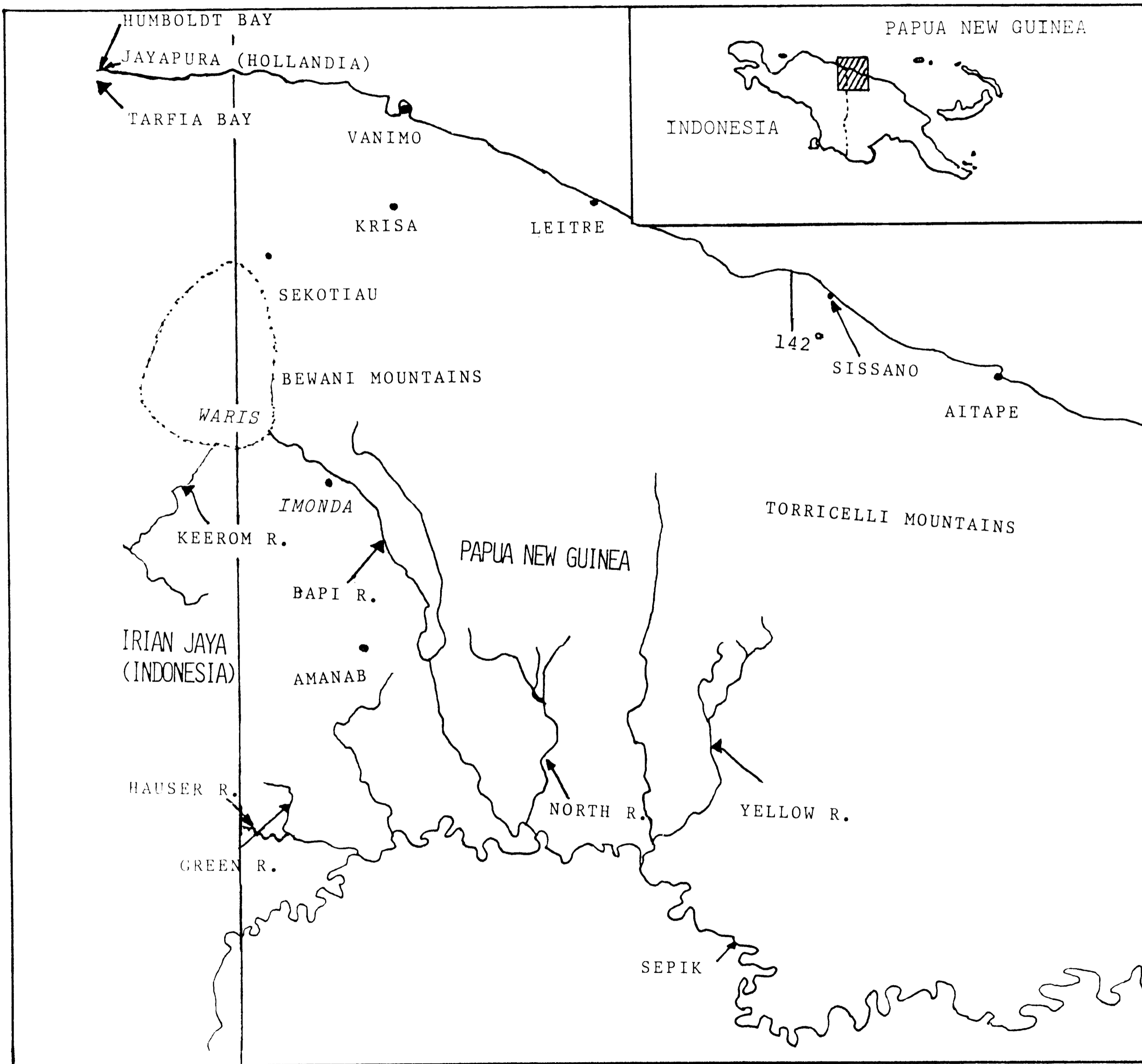
In the article referred to above I came to the conclusion that Malay bird traders started to venture east of Geelvink Bay at around 1850 and that they established a base in Humboldt Bay maybe in the seventies or eighties of the last century. From there the traders went inland in search of the birds and also crossed over the practically non-existent border with then German New Guinea and penetrated quite deeply into the Sepik area. The plume trade thrived for a number of years but declined rather rapidly in the late twenties of this century. During the German period there were hardly any restrictions on the shooting of the bird of paradise; when the Australians assumed control over the territory shooting of the birds was banned but possession was still permitted, later even possession was outlawed. The Dutch were a bit slower

in passing legislation designed to stop the bird trade; in fact the shooting of birds of paradise was legal up to 1931 when it was finally outlawed; by that time the trade had already collapsed. So the time span of contact between Malay traders and the Sepik people was roughly 50 years.

Having established the time dimension, several questions arise concerning this trade. First, how far inland did the traders penetrate? Second, what was the basic trade pattern? That is, did the intruders do the shooting themselves or were the locals involved in it as well? And how intensive was the intercourse; for instance, did the Malays stay at a given place for any length of time and, if so, did they mingle with the local population? All of the above have some bearing on the following and, for our purpose, most important question: did this trade leave any knowledge of Malay among the people contacted by them? This last question has already been answered affirmatively above; in the following we will be looking at all of the above questions, i.e., at the depth of penetration, the manner of trading and the amount of Malay left behind.

2 MALAY TRADING ACTIVITIES IN THE SEPIK AREA

First of all I would like to say a few words about the area of penetration of the traders. How far east did the trading activities reach? It appears that the Malays operated along the coast about as far east as Sissano, between Aitape and Vanimo. Along this stretch of the coast they could operate fairly unhindered, for German administration hardly reached fur-



ther west than Aitape. (Vanimo got a patrol post only in 1918; it was specifically set up to prevent the illegal bird trade to Hollandia.)

In the last decade of German administration, however, complaints about Malayan activities by the local people became frequent and as a consequence the Germans sent out various patrols to drive out the Malays. (See for instance *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* 1909:174-176.) Maybe as a result of this pressure, the Malays tended to penetrate further inland. Whether there is in fact such a causal relation or not, it is clear that the traders went inland even before the Germans began to clamp down on this sort of trade. The Dutch-German border expedition found evidence of the Malayan bird trade a good way inland along the Dutch-German border; the following comment from the pen of one of the participants of this expedition is revealing in a number of respects:

"Und doch haben die Waldbewohner dieses Landstrichs mit Menschen fremder Rasse schon Beziehungen geknuepft. Malayische Paradiesvogel-Haendler sind an der Kueste ostwaerts bis Sissano und Leitere, im Binnenland suedwaerts bis Sekotjaho taetig. Unsere Expedition fand in Mossu, Sekofro 1 und Sekotjaho 11 Vorderladergewehre nebst Blechkannen mit Pulver und Schrot vor. Die Malayen betreiben ihren Federhandel auf deutschem Gebiet derart, dass sie nicht oder nur zum Teil selbst jagen, im uebrigen die Schiessgewehre den Schwarzen zur Jagd ueberlassen und die Beute gegen Tauschware oder die Waffe selbst eintauschen. Beschwerden, die von den Eingeborenen schon im Jahre 1907 auf der Station Eitape einliefen, zeigen, dass dabei Gewalttaetigkeiten nicht selten sind." (Schultze-Jena 1914:35)

The places mentioned by Schultze-Jena are to be found to the north of the Bewani Mountains, Sekotjaho (today spelled Sekotchiau or Sekotiau) being at about 3* South Latitude. Whether in fact the Malays had not yet crossed the Bewanis at that time, as suggested in the above remarks, must remain unanswered; at any rate the exploration party, which went some way further south (as far inland as the Keerom River), did not find any further evidence of their presence. Mention may be made here of the fact that, when later the exploration party took the Sepik route up to the border, they never came across any evidence of Malayan trade. There is, in fact, no evidence I know of which would suggest that the bird traders ever reached the Sepik or even ventured south of it.

From the report by Schultze-Jena we can also learn that the local people took an active part in the shooting of birds and that there must have been quite intensive intercourse between the two groups; this is also confirmed by other observers. As early as 1889, de Clercq reported about the people in the hinterland of Tarfia Bay (slightly west of Humboldt Bay) that:

"aan jagers, die het binnenland intrekken om vogelhuiden te verzamelen, verleenen zij gaarne hulp door met hun pijlen den gelen paradijsvogel (die echter weinig voorkomt), kroonduiven, parkietjes en kasuarissen te schieten." (de Clercq 1889:1259).

Sometimes the locals also used the Malay presence in their villages to get powerful help in their tribal quarrels. (A case in point was discussed by Neuhauss 1911:67.) Unfortunately we have very little evidence of the early stages of the bird trade; Schultze-Jena's report gives some of the earliest impressions.

It is not really until after World War I that we get a better picture and in fact we have to wait even longer until the Europeans ventured beyond the Torricelli Mountains and so could determine how far the Malay trading activities had reached. It happened again and again that Europeans who thought they were setting their feet on supposedly 'untrodden territory' found themselves being offered bird plumes or addressed in pidgin Malay. From what I have found in terms of observations and remarks on the bird trade by the European Explorers in the twenties and thirties, it would appear that the Malays traded about as far east as 142* 30'. Some hunting parties probably reached the Maprik area but this trade was minimal compared with the one further west.

At this stage one might ask why the Malays had to go across the border in order to do their shooting; the answer is probably simply that, as there was quite a sizable number of these traders, they had to spread out a little. The border was at that time of no practical significance and so the traders just went wherever they could find the best shooting opportunities. The reason why they did not do the shooting from a base in German New Guinea is of a financial nature. Prices were appreciably higher in Dutch New Guinea or in the Moluccas than in German New Guinea. (For a discussion of this see Friederici 1910: 332.) Because of these differences in price the big focal point of the bird trade was at Humboldt Bay, to be more precise at Hollandia after its foundation in 1909. From there the traders would go eastward along the coast and then at a convenient point they would penetrate inland. It would appear that the main trading route crossed the Bewanis and then ran in an easterly direction along the southern slopes of the Torricelli Mountains.

So far I have given a few indications about the time and space dimensions associated with the Malayan bird of paradise traders. I will now go on and discuss what the Europeans actually found in terms of evidence of earlier Malayan visits. This I will do by way of giving in parts rather extensive quotations, taken from the reports (mainly patrol reports) in question. I think it is worthwhile rendering here a few first hand impressions, so

as to give the reader a chance of forming his own opinions. As it happens all of following impressions stem from the 1930's.

It has been mentioned above that one of the main trading routes crossed the Bewani Mountains. This is what the English traveller Cheesman found when she stayed at Krisa in 1938:

"I was passing the house of one of the elders when I noticed that he was wearing a king shell, a large cowrie shell bleached white. I stopped to ask, through Sorn as interpreter, whether he remembered Malay traders visiting their village, because these cowries were currency. He was delighted to talk of them; only his generation remembers their regular visits to trade in bird-plume. ... I learnt that the village was on a trading route that passed over the Bewani Mountains and beyond Those old trading routes are very interesting, most of them untraceable nowadays except by the Malay words still in current use. That old man could tell me the Malay for different species of paradise birds and also the words for large, small, high, far; and he could count up to ten in that language." (Cheesman 1957:267)

It is exceedingly rare to get some specific information about the extent of the knowledge of Malay on part of the New Guineans. It is unlikely that the words mentioned by Cheesman exhausted the vocabulary of this particular man; presumably some verbs at least were also known. Unfortunately we are not told how widespread knowledge of Malay actually was in this particular village, whether he was one of very few people who knew some Malay, or whether many people did so.

About the area south of the Bewani Mountains we have practically no information prior to World War II; this area remained virtually unknown to Europeans until after the war. Green River had been reached (not for the first time) by a party led by the oil surveyor H.D. Eve and J. Hodgkiss in the thirties and there again they found indications of earlier Malayan visits, as we shall see shortly. But the territory between the Bewanis and Green River remained unknown for about another decade. The remainder of the reports to be discussed all stem from the Torricelli Mountains area. Patrol Officer McCarthy was in the Yellow River area in the mid-thirties; the patrol report of this trip is highly interesting with respect to the dealings of the Malays there. The following is a lengthy extract from this report:

"The foregoing [should read: following] notes on the introduction of the Malay pidgin to the Yuan [i.e. people along the Yellow River] are highly conjectural. The Yuan speak a Papuan language but yet have a working knowledge of Malay pidgin. Like most new Guinea peoples they have been touched by a "foreign" culture (other than

European), but they are distinctive in being the only inland people who adopted the tongue of the foreigners as a trade "talk". It is true that this "talk" is a simple version of pidgin Malay - nevertheless the Malayan or trading intrusion must have [been] definite and constant for the language to be adopted by these primitive Papuans. The people of Kelnon and Aidawok villages speak the Malay dialect. Their Malay is identical except for trivial differences. Pabwei, Yuani and the Maurom people also know it but Mariyami, a village on the Yellow River near the junction of the Sepik do not speak it. Thus there is an area of country extending from the foothills of the Sepik Basin on the north to within a few miles of the Sepik River whose inhabitants speak the Malay pidgin as a trade language. The Yellow River seems to be the limit of the language to the east but as the trade route runs to the west to Hollandia, it may safely be presumed that the people of the North River and of the country west of the Yellow River use the same tongue." (McCarthy 1936:12)

After this McCarthy goes on to discuss the bird trade and says that the route of the Malays followed

"the valley of the Sepik River, the north side being entered from behind the coastal ranges of Vanimo near the international boundary." (ibid.).

He also notes that some trace of Malay can be found east of the Yellow River; for instance the word *yuan* was found to be in use among people in inland areas south of Wewak, having the same meaning as the Malay *tuan*, from which it is most probably derived. As McCarthy states himself, this could have easily come from the coast; this is all the more likely as this was practically the only Malay word they knew. McCarthy was thoroughly impressed by the knowledge of Malay among the people along the Yellow River as he thought that it was unlikely that it could be accounted for only by the fairly recent bird trade; he offers in fact some speculations as to the likely source of the people's competence in Malay, but this we can safely omit here. Also it would appear that McCarthy's grasp of Malay must have been fairly good, as he commented about 'dialectic differences':

"The Malay of the Yuan is slightly different from that of the coastal villages near Vanimo, the changes are dialectic - the rest is the same." (ibid.)

So given his apparent knowledge of Malay, there is little reason to doubt McCarthy's opinion that Malay was used fairly extensively along the Yellow River (but see below). This is in fact also confirmed by other observers. McCarthy was, however, not quite right in thinking that the Yellow River was the eastern

limit of Malay activities; as mentioned before the Malays penetrated about as far east as 142° 30'. In 1933 a patrol led by Oakley touched on the village Yeriwi on the southern slopes of the Torricelli Mountains, about 142° 10'; there they talked to the local people and

"the two police constables from Vanimo recognised a few words of Malay pidgin and inquiries revealed we had encountered natives formerly in touch with Malay bird hunters. The hamlet adjacent to our camp, known as Yeriwi, and a village further down the river known as Yabatinka, had prior to 1921 been occupied by Malays from Hollandia, who had lived there for months whilst engaged in shooting Birds of Paradise." (Oakley 1933:5).

In the same area Marshall found more evidence of earlier Malay presence (Marshall 1938:49-50). In his discussion of Malay McCarthy assumed that the people between the Yellow River and the border with Dutch New Guinea also spoke Malay, as the trade routes passed through that area to Hollandia; this is in fact so. The earlier mentioned oil surveyor Eve found knowledge of Malay all along the left tributaries of the Sepik from Yellow River to Green River:

"Eve visited many villages in northwest Sepik district during 1935 to 1936 which, so far as is known, had never before seen a white man. Here he was greeted by these unknown primitives in Malay expressions." (Reed 1943:91).

Eve's observations are also almost certainly the source for the following statement, found in a terrain study of the Allied Forces during World War II:

"Natives along both the Green and Hauser Rivers have been subjected to Malay influence, and understand Malay pidgin." (Allied Forces 1943:140)

The same remarks are also made with respect to North and Horden Rivers (*ibid.*). What has been said above should be quite sufficient to get a fairly good picture of the intrusion of Malay bird of paradise hunters into the west Sepik area. The Malays began their activities in the last quarter of the 19th century and ceased to visit the Sepik area after the collapse of the plume trade in the twenties of this century. During these fifty years they intruded into an area that can be roughly delimited by the Sepik to the south, the coast to the north and Aitape to the east. In this area some Malay was apparently widely understood by the people.

So much for the external history of the Malay language within the territory of Papua New Guinea; we have got a reasonable idea of the area penetrated by the

Malays, the time span of their visits and also some idea of the grasp of Malay on the part of the local people. But what can we say about the language itself? Unfortunately there is almost nothing we know about this aspect; who were these Malays and where did they come from? What sort of Malay did they speak? Unless further evidence can be unearthed somewhere, and I doubt it, these questions will probably have to be left unanswered. There is the occasional word which has found its way into one of the local languages but these provide hardly any clues at all. The word *tuan* is found in many languages but often we are not sure whether it was introduced by way of the bird traders or maybe through the Malay labourers who worked on the German plantations (Seiler 1981). In the remainder of this paper I am going to look at one particular area in the Sepik region which came in contact with the Malays and which is of some interest as Malay is 'still' spoken there.

3 THE IMPACT OF THE BIRD TRADE ON THE WARIS AREA OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Waris is a Papuan language spoken on the headwaters of the Pai and Bapi rivers, south of the Bewani Mountains. It is surrounded by languages which belong to the same language family, namely the Waris family. This language family does not quite reach as far south as the Sepik river, Amanab being the southernmost member. In all of this area the people are well aware that the Europeans were not the first outsiders to intrude into their territory. During fieldwork carried out in the Waris area the writer did not come across anyone who actually remembered seeing the traders and it is presumed that the people who came in contact with the Malays have now (1982), sixty years later, all died. However they passed on stories about their dealings with the Malays to their children.

From what could be learnt from these stories it would appear that contact between the Malays and the Waris could not have been very intensive because this contact did not leave many linguistic traces behind, certainly nothing resembling what McCarthy found in an area considerably further east. (See above.) In fact people seem to be completely unaware of the origin of these early intruders nor do they have any idea what language they spoke and this despite the fact that Malay is now widely spoken in the area (see below), which would give them the opportunity for comparison. In some places the Malays are remembered as the 'fire people' or maybe rather 'red people' (*suenin*; *sue*=fire, red). Unfortunately it is very difficult

to find out what (if any) linguistic legacy was left behind by the Malays; this is due to the fact that the Waris people were again exposed to the Malay language after World War II when the Dutch moved into the area. They established schools and the pattern familiar from other parts of West New Guinea was repeated here, i.e., the Dutch brought in teachers from the Eastern Indonesian Islands, mainly (exclusively?) Ambonese.

With this establishment of schools and aid posts and the like a vast number of Malay words found their way into the Waris language. Some of these words might have been known to the Waris people before the arrival of the Dutch, due to their contact with the bird traders. In fact I could ascertain only one item which can be traced back to the earlier period of contact with Malay and this is the word /*(i)duag/* = [*(i)nduang*]; this item is obviously the Malay *tuan* and it is used to refer to anyone in authority or anyone seen to be superior in some way. There are three things to be noted here: first, the initial vowel alternation (presence vs. absence of *i* has parallels in indigenous words such as *(i)duo* 'and then'; this may be due to the fact that initial *d* is ill-integrated in the system and occurs exceedingly rarely. Second and more important, it seems, is the voicing of the dental plosive; this could possibly narrow down the area of origin of the traders. Third, the final prenasalized voiced or voiceless velar plosive gives a small clue to the sort of Malay spoken by the bird traders. I am referring to the substitution of *n* by *ŋ*. (That the velar nasal turns out as prenasalized velar plosive in Waris is due to the non-existence of the former in the language.) But this feature is very wide-spread in 'Pidgin Malay' and so does not really tell us much. Incidentally, the word *tuan* was re-borrowed during the Dutch presence but this time as [*tuan*].

It is clear that this lone item does not give us many clues as to the sort of Malay spoken by the bird traders. It is possible though that a detailed study of the Malay now spoken by the Waris would turn up a few more items which could be traced back to the traders. I would like to end this section with a word of warning; we have seen above that McCarthy attributed to the people of the Yellow River area quite an extensive knowledge of Malay. This area lies considerably further to the east of the former bird trading centre Hollandia (Jayapura) than the Waris area. In view of the small impact the traders had on the Waris people it seems to me slightly suspect that people further east could have adopted Malay as a trade language and it could well be that McCarthy overstated his case somewhat. On the other hand, the Waris area may not have provided ideal shooting opportunities and so the traders would have just passed through the area on their way to richer

hunting grounds, which would explain the far greater knowledge of Malay further east. In the remaining section I will have a brief look at the Malay language spoken in the Waris area and especially at its impact on Waris.

4 THE INFLUENCE OF MALAY ON WARIS

It has been mentioned above that the Dutch moved into the Waris speaking area shortly after World War II and stayed there until the Australians moved in just prior to the Indonesian take-over in West New Guinea. So the Waris people were exposed to Malay for roughly fifteen years. (Needless to say, contact with Malay has never stopped for the people just on the border.) The kind of Malay spoken differs in no way from the one on the other side of the border; the same people (Ambonese teachers, Dutch military personnel) diffused Malay on either side. As the time of the Dutch presence on the then Australian side of the border was fairly short and as it was mainly confined to a monolingual area, Malay never made it as a means of intertribal communication to any great extent. (There was another pocket of Dutch presence further south but this need not concern us here.) There is the occasional case of someone from further within Papua New Guinea who came to the Waris area to help build the airstrip at Waris and in the process acquired some knowledge of Malay. But these were isolated cases with no big impact. Once the Australians established themselves in the Waris area the significance of Malay declined rapidly and Tok Pisin took over.

Today, roughly twenty years after the withdrawal of the Dutch, Malay is of no importance any more, although many people still speak it rather fluently. For instance, speakers of the closely related languages Waris and Imonda (which, in fact, have been classified as dialects by Laycock (1973:46)) use Tok Pisin rather than Malay as a means of communication and this applies equally if both have a fair command of Malay. (Many Imondans speak Waris and so the latter is used.) As happened with many other peoples the Waris had to accommodate a vast amount of new vocabulary when they came in contact with European culture. As the first language of contact was Malay, it was only natural that it was the Malay words which they acquired; later Malay acquired a rival in the form of Tok Pisin.

I will conclude this paper with a few remarks on the influence of Malay on the Imonda language. The same remarks apply to the rest of the Waris area, Imonda having been chosen because of the writer's familiarity with it. Imonda has adopted

a large number of Malay nouns into the language, which is hardly a surprise given the many new concepts the people were confronted with. But this is about as far as the influence of Malay goes. There are hardly any borrowed verbs or adjectives and there can be no question of Malay influence on Imonda syntax. Malay presence just was not long enough to have a deeper impact.

The many borrowed nouns can be divided into three categories. First, there are those which seem to have established themselves in the language and which are unlikely to be replaced by the corresponding Tok Pisin term, e.g. 'kapul' 'plane', 'silmi' 'mirror'. Then there is a second category of items which are currently rivalled by Tok Pisin; for instance *selana* and *trausis* are equally current for 'trousers' at the present stage of the language. As Tok Pisin is now the dominant influence in the area it can be assumed that most of the items in this category will eventually be replaced. Then the third category of loan words consists of items which have already been replaced or which are still used, but only by the older generation, e.g. *toko* 'store'. This item has now been replaced by the Tok Pisin *stua*; it is, however, still in use in villages closer to the border. As a concluding note, I may mention that usually the Malay words are still recognized as loans although younger speakers are sometimes uncertain and for them some items may now be regarded as fully integrated in the system.

5 SUMMARY

In this paper I have tried to shed some light on the history of the Malay language within the territory of what is now Papua New Guinea, where it was spread by bird of paradise hunters. It is hoped that the preceding remarks have provided some indication of the extent of the traders' activities and also of the extent of the knowledge of Malay on the part of the local people. Unfortunately hardly anything could be said about the language itself, about the sort of Malay left behind by the traders; this is because no one seems to have bothered to comment on this aspect. It was also mentioned that Malay was again introduced into some areas of Papua New Guinea after World War II and that this time it was spread by the Dutch colonial administration. It was said, without actually demonstrating it, that this type of Malay was just the same as the one spoken on the other side of the border; this is to be expected because the external conditions of the spread were the same on either side. The exposure to Malay led to a large influx of Malay words

into the Waris and Imonda languages. However, with the arrival of the Australians, Tok Pisin took over as the contact language and the significance of Malay decreased rather rapidly.

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