

# WILEY



---

Incidents of Travel in Papua-Koviay (New Guinea)

Author(s): M. Mikluko Maklay and W. Feilding

Source: *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 19, No. 7 (1874 - 1875), pp. 517-521

Published by: Wiley on behalf of The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1799702>

Accessed: 17-04-2016 07:03 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*Wiley, The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*

sweet, and, with the exception of the presence of the inevitable pig, bore strong contrast to a Chinese village of the same dimensions. The people are good-natured enough, although we were only two Europeans (myself and Dr. Krauel, German Consul at Amoy), our Chinese being too frightened to accompany us. From certain proposals which were made to us, it would appear that the social condition of the savages of Formosa is not encumbered with those prejudices regarding the moral obligations of married life which belong to some European nations.

One cannot fail to feel interested in these people, whose manners and appearance are so prepossessing; and it is distressing to contemplate that in the course of a few years they may probably be extinct. It is possible that, under different circumstances, these people might become as useful members of society as some of the African races I have seen, of whom these people in some particulars strangely remind me. The antipathy to the Chinese is so strong that warfare between them is constant; and the savage who fell into their hands, from the playful girl with laughing eyes, or boy who carries his light spear so gracefully, to the old man, would assuredly be decapitated if once in their power; and while this policy is pursued towards them the race cannot but yield to so numerous an enemy.

From the appearance of the slate at Kao Siah, I judge that if properly cut it would make capital building material, and the conveyance would not be very difficult, as country roads exist to the foot of the hills by which buffalo-carts bring down sugar-cane, and the rivers from some points would be available for boat navigation.

As to the bearing of travellers among savage people, there is little doubt that a free and even jocular manner is the safest, if we wish to disarm suspicion, always strong in the wild man. Regarding the carriage of water, I should think anything preferable to skin; the Formosa savages sometimes use bladders for this purpose, of which I had very disagreeable experience in the flavour of the water. Nothing, however, could be better than the large bamboo, as the slight evaporation through the pores would tend to keep the water cool.

## 2. *Incidents of Travel in Papua-Koriay (New Guinea).*

By M. MIKLUKO MAKLAY.

[Translated and communicated by Colonel the Hon. W. FEILDING.]

THE following extract from a letter addressed to a lady in Russia by M. Nicholas Mikluko Maklay, has been translated by Colonel the Hon. William Feilding, at the request of that distinguished Russian ethnologist and traveller. The incidents therein narrated occurred during his stay in the south-western portion of New Guinea in the spring of 1873. Mr. Maklay had previously spent fifteen months on the eastern end of the island. More complete accounts of this, as well as of his first travels in New Guinea, have been published by the Imperial Geographical Society of Russia.

"Knowing the nomad habits of the population of Papua-Koriay, I took with me from my starting-place in Ceram Laut (an island south of the Molucca group) nineteen men from that island, as well as my Amboynese servant Joseph.

"To facilitate the construction of a hut, as a place of shelter for my baggage, I took also three hundred 'atapés' (broad palm-leaves sown together with fibre, used in the formation of the roof and sides).

"After visiting several islands on the coast, I selected at last a most picturesque spot on the mainland, called 'Aiva,' situated opposite an archipelago,

called by the natives 'Mavara.' (This archipelago is not yet named or marked on any map.)

"My men built me a capital hut, around which a considerable number of Papuans of different tribes soon collected. Their prahus and mine, drawn up on the neighbouring beach, and a few huts hastily built for shelter, gave it quite the appearance of a native village, and thus offered me favourable opportunities for the pursuit of my ethnological studies, of the forms, customs, and habits of life of the native population. Almost daily I received visits from the three chiefs of the neighbouring tribes, and assurances of their good will, and of the satisfaction they experienced at my presence, which gave them an immunity from the attacks of their enemies. These chiefs were the rajahs of Aidouma, of Nainatoto, and of Mavara. Having made myself acquainted with the greater part of the population in the immediate vicinity of my little colony, I determined on making an excursion to a distant part of the coast.

"Leaving seven of my men at Aiva to take charge of my hut and baggage, I took the remainder in my ourembaie (a prahu of Ceram), and cruised eastwards along the coast. After an absence of a fortnight, I returned to Aiva, and, to my surprise, learnt that an attack had been made on the tribe of Aidouma, who had established themselves near my hut, and that my baggage had been pillaged.

"It appears that my allies, the Papuans of Aidouma, trusting in the protection afforded them by my presence at Aiva, had neglected to take the usual precautions against a surprise. One dark, rainy morning, during the temporary absence of the chiefs and a part of the men, the remainder being asleep either on board their prahus or in their huts, a party of their enemies of the tribe of Telok-Bitcharon attacked the little colony. Well-armed, and with their faces painted black, they burst into the hut built for the Rajah Aidouma, which during his absence was occupied only by his wife and little child, a nice girl, of about six years of age. Although pierced by two spears, this unfortunate woman managed to reach my hut, where she expected to find protection. The other Papuans of Aiva following her example, my hut soon became the central object of attack. As, however, they could only muster about a dozen men, indifferently armed and without chiefs, and were encumbered with the presence of the women and children, this forlorn little band soon suffered defeat at the hands of their well-armed assailants, who exceeded one hundred in number. These latter, not content with having wounded ten of the tribe of Aidouma (men and women), first assured themselves that the wounds received by the rajah's wife were mortal, and then cut in pieces the little girl. Her head and one of her arms were afterwards fixed on a lance, and carried in triumph. Afterwards I learnt that the motives of these murders and atrocities arose from a vengeance of long standing against the old rajah. After the slaughter the pillage of my effects commenced, lasting till three in the afternoon. This done, some of the mountaineers retired towards their fastnesses, taking with them as slaves a boy and two young girls, together with as many of my things as they could carry.

"During the attack, in which my men took no part, one of them, who seems to have retained his presence of mind, embarked with two others in one of the prahus, and went on board a padonakan (a large sailing prahu), which had come from Macassar to engage in barter with the natives. He succeeded in persuading the captain to send a boat with some armed men to save some of my baggage. Arrived at Aiva towards evening, they found the natives of the tribes of Nainatoto and Mavara engaged in the distribution of the day's work. Tired, and seeing armed men, they retired, leaving my men and their escort to gather together and to transport to the padonakan the remnant of my effects.

"Although it was nightfall when I learnt this terrible news, I lost no time in shaping my course at once to the island of Nainatoto, near to which the padonakan was lying at anchor. There I found my men, who, having fled from the fight, had taken refuge on board. As the captain was afraid of an attack, he only waited until my arrival and the transhipment to my ourembaïe of my baggage, to hoist his matting sails and be off to the islands of Key and Arou. Personally, I had decided on returning to Aiva. My men, however, fearing a second attack on my return, wished to go back to Ceram, and I failed to induce them to obey my orders to return with me. Although I backed my order with threats of shooting them with my revolver, the most I could prevail on them to do was to land me and my baggage alone on the beach at Aiva. Arrived there, a new difficulty arose from the fact of the spring at Aiva having been poisoned by the enemy. This I fortunately discovered in time, by finding the fish in the little stream dead.

"Determined, however, not to quit this coast, I suggested to my men that we should search for another spot where to build another hut. The promise of a handsome remuneration turned the scale in my favour. I therefore stripped from my hut at Aiva the 'atapés' forming it, and, burning the remainder, I re-embarked with them and set sail. My course lay along the coast, and between it and the archipelago of Mavara. This lovely strait I have called 'The Strait of the Grand Duchess Helena of Russia,' in remembrance of my visit to Oranienbaum in 1870. Here I met the Rajah Aidouma, who had followed me with a few of his men in his prahu. Our meeting was a sad one; the poor old man cried aloud, reproaching me at first with being the cause of the death of his wife and child; but finally telling me that, having now no family, he wished to follow me everywhere.

"In New Guinea, as in many other parts of the Eastern Archipelago, it is the custom, after a murder, that the relatives of the murdered person should kill either the murderer, some of his tribe, or failing either of the former, then the first convenient person without any discrimination. This custom is founded on the idea that the person so killed will awake in their future state as the slave of their murdered friend or relative. My Ceram men, aware of this custom, made up their minds that this offer on the part of the rajah arose from his intention to kill me at a favourable opportunity if he should fail in killing some of the tribe who had murdered his family. They therefore begged me to beware; and I frequently remarked that they watched very narrowly every movement of the old man whenever he came near me. I was, however, very particular to avoid all appearance of uneasiness, and in no way changed my manner towards him.

"As I found no suitable place for my hut in or near the archipelago, which, moreover, belonged to my enemy, I decided at last on a spot beyond it, where was a hut formerly occupied by a rajah of Aidouma, to whom my present companion had succeeded as rajah. Near this hut was another, better built and ornamented. This I learnt was the grave of the former rajah, and the place was called 'Oumbourineta.' As there was a lovely view from it, with good water in some neighbouring tanks, and healthy from being well exposed to the sea breezes, I decided on building my hut here. On giving the orders to my men to land the 'atapés,' they all declared that not one of them would stay on shore, for fear of another attack. 'Very well,' said I, 'I will live by myself in the hut, and you may live on board the ourembaïe, or, if you like better, return to Ceram.' It ended by their constructing for me on the top of the cliff a hut of one small room with a verandah, whilst they worked on shore during the day, returning each night to sleep on board the ourembaïe. In a short time, as before, men of the tribe of Aidouma settled themselves round my hut; but the men of Mavara and Nainatoto, fearing my vengeance for their cowardly behaviour, did not show themselves.

"I soon found that the fears of my men were well founded; for I received information that the men of Nainatoto were preparing a fresh expedition. Hardly a night passed without some fresh alarm, and several Nainatoto men were on different occasions caught prowling at night round my new settlement. Although I was assured that they were spies, and was begged to kill them, I always ordered their release, declaring that when they brought the chiefs I would see justice done. Although the bad season was coming on, and my men were impatient to return to Ceram, I waited a whole month, intent on exacting punishment for the outrage done to my house by the murder of the wife and daughter of my ally under its very roof. This state of uncertainty was, however, brought to a climax on the 24th of April.

"It was daybreak, and my servant Joseph was getting ready my cup of coffee, whilst I was enjoying the lovely view spread out before me, the beauty of the varied outlines and foliage of Lammansieri vying with that of the other countless islands which closed in this grand tropical panorama. In the foreground were some of my men preparing their breakfast, whilst others were still asleep on the deck of the ourembaie. A good many Papuans, recently arrived, were clustered in my more immediate neighbourhood. As Joseph poured out my coffee, he whispered mysteriously in my ear that he fancied that he had just espied the rajah of Mavara hidden in one of the prahus which had arrived during the night. I told him to go on board at once, and, on the pretext of buying some cocoa-nuts, assure himself whether or not Capitan\* Mavara was there or not. After a short absence he returned with the information that his suspicion was correct.

"I determined at once to seize this traitor, and knowing well that I could not trust to the courage of my men of Ceram, I said nothing to them of the discovery I had made; but I took into my confidence one of the Papuans, Moï Birit by name, whom I had noticed as being more brave than the rest, and on my asking him if he would accompany me whilst making the arrest, he replied, 'Yes, if you go first.' Armed with my revolver, and accompanied by Moï Birit, to whom I had given a piece of strong cord, I told Joseph to remain in the hut, and to load my guns. Passing quietly amongst the groups of Papuans and men of Ceram scattered between my hut and the sea-beach, I reached at last the place where was drawn up the prahu in which Capitan Mavara was said to be concealed. Having summoned him three times by name to come out, but without any effect, I commenced to pull off the atapes with which the living part of the prahu was covered. I then discovered the rajah sitting on the deck, grasping his lance, evidently greatly astonished at seeing me. In an instant I was upon him, and seizing him by the throat with my left hand, placed the muzzle of my revolver against his teeth. At first he held out his arms as if to resist, but overcome by terror, his hands fell down along his side, and he trembled as if in a fit of ague. Leading him into the open, I called aloud to the crowd now assembled round the prahu, 'This is the Rajah Mavara, who caused murder to be committed in my hut at Aiva, and it is I now who take him as my prisoner.' The sight, however, of this man, now so abject and helpless in my hands, made me hesitate to press the trigger, and so to launch him into eternity. I contented myself, therefore, by desiring Moï Birit to secure him with the cord. Seeing this, my own men from Ceram rushed towards me, begging me to make haste, and to lose no time in embarking in my ourembaie, pointing to the numbers of Papuans as compared to their own. 'We shall see,' I replied; 'but in the mean time I must be obeyed, and I order you to carry this man on board my ourembaie.' Whilst they were thus occupied

---

\* The term "Capitan" means "Chief," and has evidently been borrowed either from the Portuguese or from the Dutch. It is also used by the Malays.

I turned towards the Papuans, who, although they held their arms ready for use, had remained silent spectators hitherto. As I approached them some slunk away and hid behind the bushes, whilst others remained standing where they were. Putting my revolvers back into my belt, I went towards them, saying, 'Have no fear, I do not mean to do any harm to *you*.' These words had an astonishing effect on the faces of my auditors, which became less anxious, some of them even welcoming me with a smile. I then addressed them as follows:—'I am not angry with *you*, but with the two rajahs of Mavara and of Nainatoto; and it is for this reason that I have made Capitan Mavara my prisoner. You must now lay down your weapons at my feet.' Some did so at once, whilst others only followed their example after having exchanged uneasy glances amongst themselves. 'Now, then,' said I, 'if you will help my people to embark my baggage on board the *ourembaïe*, I will give you some tobacco.' The natives complied readily with this request, as if glad to be relieved of my presence so easily. As, however, I did not know the number of the natives, nor what might be their intentions, I desired my two Amboynese to keep an eye on the prahus, and to have the guns in readiness. Above all, dispatch was necessary, lest my enemies should transmit to others the news of the arrest of the Rajah Mavara. In less than two hours, all my baggage being on board, I called the Papuans towards me, gave them the promised present of tobacco, and said to them: 'Go tell the wife and children of Capitan Mavara that I will not kill him, nor do him any injury. Seeing that they did not believe me, I added, raising my voice, 'Maklay says this, and furthermore, I give my hut and the atapes to the wife and children of Capitan Mavara. As to Rajah Nainatoto, I will come back another year and seize him.' I then took my departure towards my boat, escorted by two natives, to the astonishment of my crew, who, having begun to show signs of impatience, by no means expected so friendly a conclusion to so hazardous an adventure.

"Fearing that too long a delay might enable the natives to recover from their state of obedience and astonishment, I hoisted my matting sails, and towards mid-day was already at a considerable distance from the coast. Capitan Mavara was then untied, and food set before him, which he ate, and tried to make friends with some of my crew. I discovered afterwards that he promised that if they would assist him to escape he would give them plenty of the fruits and other products of New Guinea. To lessen the chances of escape, I shaped my course for Kilvaron. During the eight days occupied by this cruise, the water became bad, and I had on several occasions to draw my revolver in order to preserve discipline and to ensure obedience.

"Arrived at Kilvaron, I handed over my prisoner to the native Rajah of Kilvaron, to keep till the return of the Dutch Resident of Ambon, to whom on his arrival I gave full details of the attack by the prisoner as well as of his arrest. Sassi, Rajah or Capitan of Mavara, was first taken to Amboyna, and thence to Tidore, where he was confined in November, 1874."