8

RESETTLEMENT, MYTHS AND MEMORIALISATION

Shifting to Saiho

Administration plans for resettling the displaced Orokaiva advanced during March–April following what appeared to have been the last of the large explosive eruptions on 5 March. This did not mean that the area of total devastation would be redeveloped—far from it. Neither the administration nor the Anglican Church favoured the rebuilding of either Higaturu Government Station or Sangara Mission in what had been demonstrated very clearly as sites that were too hazardous for reoccupation. Many of the surviving refugees felt similarly.

Development of new villages and support facilities along the Waseta–Popondetta road was favoured by the administration, although they were aware that they could be accused of taking advantage of the disaster to promulgate a government policy that had been favoured for years. Small settlements or hamlets of less than a hundred people distributed over a wide area may have allowed ready access of the Orokaiva to nearby traditional lands, and separated them from enemies, but in the context of improved postwar community development and the efficient provision of health, educational, agricultural and administrative services, larger centres were needed. A further advantage of developing villages and facilities along the Waseta–Popondetta road was that the road itself could continue to be a ‘lifeline’ in the event of future volcanic eruptions.

Mr Fred Kaad and his staff at Ilimo were heavily involved in the planning for the resettlement work, in association with administration officers in Port Moresby. So too was Sydney Elliott-Smith who was sworn in as acting district commissioner of the Northern Division on 12 March 1951, thus occupying the position left vacant by the death of Cecil Cowley at Higaturu (e.g. *Pacific Islands Monthly* 1951d). Colonel Elliott-Smith had had former work experience in the Northern Division. He was a Territorian 'old hand', his career extending back to 1928 when he came to Papua as a patrol officer (Sinclair 1981). Elliott-Smith had resigned a position in Western Australia to assist with the Lamington recovery. He had primary responsibility in the division for the resettlement work but he had to work with departmental heads based in Port Moresby—notably for health, district services and agriculture—as well as the administrator, his deputy and Bishop David Hand who had his own ideas about resettlement. There were some strong personalities at work and, inevitably, there were at times disagreements if not conflicts.

Elliott-Smith and his staff worked out of Popondetta, which was becoming accepted as the most likely new divisional headquarters, but accommodation was crude and temporary. There was still an emergency medical hospital at Popondetta. All of the officers of the administration were under some pressure to advance the closure of the camps and to resettle the Orokaiva. The costs of continuing to supply and run the camps were growing significantly, although so too was the disaster relief fund (e.g. *Pacific Islands Monthly* 1951d). Further, the Orokaiva themselves were anxious to leave the camps and to restart and redefine their lives in times that had changed from their prewar environment. The disaster and the rapid response of the administration to their needs had brought some benefits in this regard.

Two overseas visitors assisted the administration with their resettlement planning. They were anthropologists Felix M. Keesing and Cyril S. Belshaw. Their investigations were undertaken at different times of the resettlement period and, to a large extent, their findings complemented those already accomplished by Patrol Officer Harry Plant (Plant 1951). The administration here was following in the tradition of using the expertise of academic anthropologists in the application of development policy and, more particularly in this case, post-disaster resettlement.

Keesing was a professor in anthropology at Stanford University in California, the senior United States commissioner on the South Pacific Commission and an authority on Pacific 'races' (*Pacific Islands Monthly*

1951d). However, unlike Belshaw, he had no previous work experience in Papua. Keesing visited the Lamington area in the latter part of March and early April, inspecting the camps and engaging in discussions with administration officials and camp refugees (Keesing 1952). Cyril Belshaw was an anthropological researcher at The Australian National University in Canberra. He visited the area from 25 April to 5 May, providing professional opinions that added further to those of Keesing and Plant (Belshaw 1951a–c). These contributions, together with other reports, provide a valuable historical record of the resettlement phase at Lamington at a time when administration staff were heavily involved in the practical work of trying to implement the resettlement. Anthropologist Marie Reay might well have contributed significantly too, but her experience of the eruption and disaster had been traumatic. Reay never returned to the area to complete her research, but she did publish an informative paper on the social anthropology of the Orokaiva based on the earlier work of F.E. Williams (Reay 1953).

A principal aim in constructing the new villages was to encourage the development of larger communities of up to about 400, such as existed already at Kokoda and at the coast. The ‘Kokoda’-model villages consisted of straight lines of bush-material houses along three sides of an open, grassed, rectangular area for community use. Refugees at the Ilimo camp, for example, were now familiar with this tidy-line arrangement favoured by the administration. They went along with the plan, particularly when they were informed that access to their traditional lands away from the devastated area would not be restricted, and when roads were constructed at right angles to the main Waseta–Popondetta road to assist access. Men left the camps first to start building the new villages under the guidance of administration patrol officers who had to be careful not to be too controlling and prescriptive. Leaving wives and children back in the camps must have been somewhat motivational for the Papuan men in completing the building as effectively and rapidly as possible.

Another important aspect of the resettlement of the populous Wasita–Isivita–Awala area was the provision of new and appropriate health services along the main road. Constructing a hospital close to the western flank of Mount Lamington, where many of the refugees had resided before the January eruption, was also necessary. The hospital site favoured by Dr Gunther was near Awala Plantation at Saiho where a government station had been established. Saiho was much closer to the soon-to-be densely populated area than Popondetta. However, there was

a considerable distance between Saiho and Popondetta and its airstrip, from which supplies would have to be transported by road—at times across flooding creeks such as the irrepressibly threatening Ambogo River.

Shifting the temporary health centre at Ilimo to Saiho and moving the hundreds of refugees to their new villages on the Waseta–Popondetta road was no easy task. The refugees already had to move first to Wairopi, and then on to Ilimo after the Kumusi flooding, and now they—plus those shifted to Ilimo from Oro Bay—were having to move yet again. They had to retrace their steps in April–May eastwards to the Kumusi River where there was now no footbridge across the river, and then on to Saiho and the new villages. The European women of the Ilimo medical staff who were accompanying patients were all carried across the Kumusi:

But the patrol officer carrying Ivane Champion slipped and both ended up in the river. From there it was an hour's walk to the Embara river but first all the breast milk had to be expressed and the premature babies fed. From the Embara river they were ferried by jeep to the new site at Saiho.

The move to Saiho [however] was made before anything there had been established, so it was back to primitive life in a tent and cooking over an open fire in the rain. It was the wet season and as no drains had been dug, they had to work in gum boots. The nurses' tent leaked and the tent used as a milk room collapsed on top of everything. The women and small children, who had already suffered greatly, were to suffer more during the time their new and permanent village was being built. (Kettle 1979, 143)

The closure of the three remaining evacuation camps was well underway by 15 May and the numbers were looking much better: only 530 people still at Ilimo, 227 at Popondetta and 127 at Inonda (Official Secretary 1951). However, 4,503 people who had been rehabilitated to the new villages were still being rationed, as were a further 775 people living in villages but who were not refugees. The Oro Bay and Erero camps had already been closed by this time. Ilimo camp officially closed on 1 June (Elliott-Smith 1951b; see also *Pacific Islands Monthly* 1951e).

The site of the hospital built at the Saiho Government Station had been selected by Dr Gunther, director of health, but the hospital itself was designed by the deputy-director, Dr Harold Gilbey-Brown (Kettle 1979). The design was unusual but effective for a Territory hospital, consisting of 11 long wards, each 20 metres long and 6.5 metres wide, that radiated from

a central office hub like the blades of a windmill. Staff could see along the corridors of each ward and monitor any human activity between them. The hospital was built of native bush materials and so had a limited life, although it did last into the 1960s (e.g. Radford 2012). Other challenges included reassuring mothers in the hospital when they panicked during frequent electrical storms that these were not from the volcano breaking out into eruption again. Medical Assistant Bert Speer helped establish the hospital and he stayed on as part of the new staff. Friendships were established between administration and medical staff that would last lifetimes. There was romance too: Sister Win Swift and agricultural officer Alan Boag later married, as did Harry Plant and Ivane Champion.

Bishop Hand, the Wrath of God and Myths

Another high-profile person during the resettlement period at Lamington was Bishop David Hand who, on his return from Australia, had been given the task of rebuilding the work of the Anglican mission in the area. Hand had come back to a devastated mission network after the destruction of Sangara Mission and the Martyrs Secondary School. He had lost many friends and colleagues, both European and Orokaiva, as a result of the eruption, including Reverend Dennis Taylor and his family, Reverend John Rautamara, Miss Margaret de Bibra to whom he had almost proposed marriage, plus many Orokaiva people who had been baptised into the Christian faith. How he coped with this grief is unknown, but certainly he applied himself to the task of rebuilding the mission with great energy and serious determination. Sister Nancy White suffered personal losses too. Like the bishop, she had been in Australia at the time of the 21 January disaster, and she returned to help the mission's rebuilding (White 1991). Veteran missionary Reverend Romney Gill also arrived, from England, at about the same time, returning to his former mission station on the Mambare River so as to contribute what he could to repairing the decimated diocese (Garland 2000).

Bishop Hand worked with administration officers in the resettlement efforts along and adjacent to the Wasita–Popondetta road, but he had an agenda informed by the needs of the Anglican mission and by a strong confidence in the value of his past experience through working with the Orokaiva and mission parishioners. His pastoral duties involved visiting settlements of all kinds in a jeep or on foot. These visits were aimed

at re-establishing some sort of community life, and providing 'for the Church's continuing ministry of word and sacrament and to re-activate primary schools and establish new ones' (Hand 2002, 63). Martyrs Memorial School would be rebuilt, but not at Sangara, and St James' Church, formerly at Sangara, would have to be replaced and relocated.

There had been competition between the administration and mission, particularly concerning educational and agricultural development, that extended back well before World War II (WWII). This adversarial situation continued during the tense atmosphere of the disaster resettlement period. Bishop Hand had his own ideas about how resettlement should proceed, even arguing that the new administration headquarters should be built at Kirewo, or Girua, over towards the Sambogo River that emerges from the Hydrographers Range. The supply and quality of water there were much better than at Popondetta, and there was even some hydro-electric potential (Hand 2002). Tensions between administration and mission authorities rippled like an undercurrent for weeks, but serious conflict emerged in July, long after the resettlement had started and particularly after the government office and hospital had been built by the administration at Saiho.

Fred Kaad, who was now acting assistant district officer at Saiho, reported on 24 July to District Commissioner Elliott-Smith in Popondetta that Bishop Hand had visited Saiho on 4 July and, 'during the course of the conversation, said that the Administration had taken the Church's land' (Kaad 1951, 1). The situation became worse when local hospital staff at Saiho reported that the bishop had said the hospital would be destroyed because the land belonged to God and not to the administration. Dr Gillbee Brown reported that the bishop had ordered young nurses-in-training at Saiho to return to the mission school, even though they were over 14 years of age and entitled to training and employment (Gillbee Brown 1951, 1). Further, the district commissioner reported to Dr Gunther that the bishop had directly approached junior administration officers in a 'surreptitious attempt at an eventual "smear" campaign ... [and that these] attempts were being made to encourage some junior officers to make hasty, rash statements which could be turned against them' (Gunther 1951c, 1). Dr Gunther characterised the bishop's style of Christianity as 'militant'.

Figure 8.1. David Hand and Sydney Elliott-Smith at Saiho hospital

District Commissioner Elliott-Smith, right, and Bishop Hand are seen here in discussion in front of the newly completed hospital at Saiho with some assembled hospital staff (Speer 2005, photograph no. 53).

The rumours about Bishop Hand became extraordinary when he was accused of *causing* the disastrous eruption of 21 January and the deaths of thousands. These arose—as Hand himself wrote later—‘from a sort of Old Testament type interpretation of the eruption as punishment which I arranged with God for the people’s disobedience to God’s word!’ (Hand 2002, 59). Fear of the white man’s Old Testament God, Jehovah, is something that had been noticed elsewhere in the New Guinea area as far back as the late nineteenth century—at Chads Bay by MacGregor in 1888 (Wetherell 1977) and in the Torres Strait Islands (Haddon 1901)—so its appearance after the Lamington disaster of 1951, perhaps, is not so surprising. It cannot, however, have been pleasing for the Christian missionaries who were promoting a god of love and forgiveness based on the life of Jesus Christ rather than a god of retribution, Jehovah. Who started the rumours, who contributed to their growth and whether there were people—European or Papuan—who manipulated and took advantage of the rift between the administration and mission is unknown. However, the bishop, in his memoirs, stated that the accusations have ‘hurt me more than anything else I have ever experienced’ (Hand 2002, 59).

Anthropologist Marie Reay referred briefly to the ‘wrath of god’ explanation in her diary entry of Friday 19 January, and the stories were prevalent when both anthropologists Felix Keesing and Cyril Belshaw undertook their separate investigations (Reay 1951; Belshaw 1951a–c; Keesing 1952). More importantly, however, both Belshaw and Keesing related the ‘wrath of God’ stories to a strong sense of wrongdoing, sinfulness, insecurity and guilt among the camp refugees. The Orokaiva believed they had not supported the mission and administration sufficiently in their work before the eruption; had not built new churches, as requested by the bishop; and/or had not helped the Allies enough during WWII. The disaster was thus, in their minds, a punishment for that non-cooperation. Keesing noted, however, that:

Officials who know the Orokaiva considered that these feelings undoubtedly helped to foster the extraordinary degree of cooperation and orderliness in situations where large numbers of people were necessarily herded together and shifted around without benefit of the traditional niceties and proprieties. (Keesing 1952, 18)

There is a hint of fatalism in the ‘wrath of God’ stories told by the Orokaiva—‘a resignation to one’s fate’, as encapsulated in the words of another researcher writing more generally about disasters and preliterate societies globally:

When catastrophe is thought to be engendered primarily by spiritual forces, man can himself do little to alter the course of events apart from recourse to religious and/or magical practices ... Add to this the meagreness of technological know-how of the sort that would be useful in disaster rehabilitation and we see that mute acceptance of one’s lot is the logical result. (Sjoberg 1962, 363)

The veteran missionary Reverend Romney Gill, ever the pragmatist, was scathing of the Orokaiva ‘wrath of God’ explanations, and of fatalism, when he stressed the need for people to exercise personal responsibility by using their own human attributes:

I always feel we are inclined to bow too much in reverent resignation to the ‘Divine Ordering’. My Hat! I can imagine the Lord God Almighty exclaiming to many new arrivals ‘on the other side’, ‘Now what has brought you here before your time? I never called you away. If only you people would use the brains and develop more of the skill which is potentially yours, yes the BRAINS I have endowed you with’. (Garland 2000, 384, original emphasis)

This, in the context of the Lamington disaster, can be regarded as good disaster prevention advice that could have been applied without discrimination to both Europeans and Papuans in the Territory. The Orokaiva, in any case, were now more motivated to do things differently in a more informed postwar world as they moved forward with their 'new day' or *iji eha*. Perhaps, too, there began some thinking about the nature of volcanoes and their activity. That thinking did not seem to be prevalent at all in the refugee camps such as Ilimo, according to Belshaw, but the education officer there, Percy Jensen, was apparently considering including volcanoes as a topic in school classes. 'It should be a simple matter to make visual aid charts taken from elementary geography textbooks, possibly with the vulcanologist's assistance', wrote Belshaw (1951a, 8).

Cyril Belshaw, in 'Social Consequences of the Mount Lamington Eruption', reproduced, but did not comment on, a myth that he said had been included in a patrol report written by Atkinson in 1948. In fact, the report was written by Patrol Officer H.M. Corderoy, who was based at Higaturu, following a patrol he had made to the Isivita area between 2 April and 1 May:

Long ago a man, a woman and a dog went up into the area which was then flat land with no hills. The man wished to have intercourse with the woman and she consented, thereby doing wrong. They did not return to the village but lived in the area. The people did not see them again but periodically used to ask how they were by shouting into the bush. First they learnt that the dog had died, then the woman, then the man (the man's spirit told them the last fact). The hills appeared, and it was always cold and wet on top. It is not good for the people to go into the area. (Corderoy 1948, 10; see also Belshaw 1951b, 252)

This version of the legend is similar to the one recorded in Mrs Amalya Cowley's radiogram of 19 January 1951. Her version can be recast as follows:

The legend concerns a man called Sumbirita. He is also known as Kamikari which means 'shut in', apparently referring to the imprisonment of his sweetheart Subitita on the mountain. But a dog, presumably Sumbirita's, finds an entrance to a bowl near the summit. Sumbirita has sex with Subitita against her wishes. The mountain in anger closes the entrance with stones, and the bowl slowly rises. The dog looks for the possibility of escape but is thrown over the side of the bowl and is crushed to death.

The trapped Subitita dies a lingering death. Neighbours later visit the mountain and call out to Sumbirita and Subitita seeking an explanation. Sumbirita admits responsibility and his guilt. They call again a month later but there is no answer. (Correspondent 1951)

Bishop Hand also referred briefly to two versions of the same legend that he had heard before the 1951 eruption: the woman in one was the man's wife, whereas the man in the other committed adultery with a woman stolen from another man (Hand 2002). Hand concluded, unequivocally, that both versions referred to earlier volcanic activity at Mount Lamington, which is consistent with the contents of the letter written by Mr O.T. Atkinson after the eruption of January 1951 (Atkinson 1951).

Should anything volcanological be inferred from any of these accounts, and is there anything that might be related to the geomorphological features of the volcano? The case for volcanic activity itself is very weak, but arguably the 'bowl' might refer to the old crater amphitheatre at the top of Lamington volcano. Further, could the mountain closing the 'entrance' with stones in anger, and the bowl slowly rising, refer to avalanches from the crater wall that then partly fill the crater? All such interpretations should be regarded sceptically, as these pre-1951 myths were designed as cultural stories rather than carriers of scientific information. The myths are, however, of considerable interest in that together they represent the starting point of yet more elaborations of the same legend that would be heard and recorded by Europeans in the years ahead. A feature of these later versions is the extensive use of the man's name of 'Sumbiripa', which was mentioned for the first time, as 'Sumbirita', in Mrs Cowley's version of the legend.

Administration and the Changing Political Scene in 1952

Percy Spender, Minister of External Territories, had had to deal with public criticism of the Territory administration following the Lamington disaster. This criticism had focused on Judge Phillips who, at the time of the 21 January eruption, had been acting administrator of the Australian trusteeship of the conjoined New Guinea and Papua territories. The Menzies Government in Canberra in mid-1951 underwent a Cabinet reshuffle and Spender was eventually replaced by Paul Hasluck who was sworn in on 11 May 1951 as minister of a new Department of Territories

that now included the Northern Territory in Australia (Hasluck 1976; see also Downs 1980). Hasluck would remain in this ministerial position until 1963. Ministerial attention now focused on the Territory administrator, Colonel Murray.

Both ministers, Spender and Hasluck, were concerned about Murray's effectiveness and, particularly, his relationship with the central government and bureaucracy in Canberra. Hasluck admired 'this good and devoted man', noting that 'in the [Lamington] emergency Murray had shown up well. He had organised and directed the work of rescue and rehabilitation and had put in promptly all the required resources needed for the task' (Hasluck 1976, 15, 22). This conclusion can hardly be disputed, added to which is the fact that Murray and the administration in Port Moresby had kept Canberra well informed of post-disaster developments in the Lamington area. The minister, however, noted that in 1951 Murray, who was 62, was already 'a tired and disappointed man' (15), which perhaps is not surprising given the considerable challenges of postwar redevelopment and, now, his frontline leadership of the relief and recovery phases of the Lamington disaster. The basic problem for Hasluck, however, was that Murray was 'not only unskilled in the use of the tools of public administration and politics but did not know what some of the tools were' (51). Hasluck also detected in Murray a sense of disengagement from Canberra, an obsession about his own rank and status and aspirations that the role of administrator perhaps should be a vice-regal one. Hasluck expressed some amusement that Murray had designed for himself, and had had made in London, a uniform to be worn on formal occasions (see, for example, Figure 3.8).

Minister Hasluck visited the Territory, including the Lamington area, shortly after his appointment in mid-1951 when the future of Murray was still on his mind. He visited Saiho, met Tony Taylor and flew with the volcanologist in a Dragon-Rapide biplane to the Lamington crater, saw its large emissions of vapour and noted that 'a great rock the size of a house was slowly dislodged from the rim and tumbled and rolled in a ponderous way down into the mass of detritus on the hillside' (Hasluck 1976, 21). The walls of the new crater clearly were still unstable. Hasluck added that Taylor 'seemed to have developed a sort of affection for Mt Lamington. "She was a bit uneasy last night." "She seems to be settling down." "She's still got one or two bad symptoms"' (21). This volcanological experience for the new minister was, one imagines, just an interesting side-line to the greater problem of re-organising the administration of the whole territory.

Two positions of deputy administrator whose work would be more closely tied with Canberra's needs had been advertised in Spender's time. These were changed, however, into a new single position of assistant administrator. Donald M. Cleland was selected for the job after an appropriate selection procedure (Hasluck 1976). Cleland was a lawyer and ex-military, having been a brigadier and Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) chief of staff during the war (Nelson 1993; see also Cleland 1984). He also had been director of the federal secretariat of the Liberal Party, helping organise an effective political campaign during the 1949 election. Brigadier Cleland would have to work with the administrator, Colonel Murray, as well as with the government in Canberra who had appointed him, and its bureaucracy.

The world was being dominated by the postwar politics of the Cold War, and there were anti-communist and anti-socialist sentiments both in the Menzies Government and within the Territory (e.g. *Pacific Islands Monthly* 1952). A Legislative Assembly was inaugurated in the Territory in 1951 (Downs 1980). It served like an embryonic but non-democratic 'parliament' and was dominated by white men. District Advisory Councils were appointed for the whole Territory, permitting devolution of greater power to the district commissioners. The Northern Division became the Northern District. An announcement appeared in the July issue of *Pacific Islands Monthly* that the new headquarters for the Northern Division would be at Popondetta, despite its poor climate and unattractive setting compared to the former, ill-fated, government station at Higaturu (*Pacific Islands Monthly* 1951f).

The United Nations (UN) sent several missions to the Territory, starting in 1950 and continuing into the 1970s (Downs 1980). These missions had a desire for global decolonisation and they reported on progress with the UN trusteeship being administered by Australia. Colonialism was being questioned elsewhere and there were signs of violent unrest in some colonies in Africa. An example is Kenya where the Mau Mau uprising or rebellion against the British colonial government began in 1952, lasting up to the time of Kenya's independence in 1963. It had its origins in the sense of deprivation felt by the Kikuyu who, like some Papua New Guineans, had lost much of their land to white settlers. There were some fears of similar unrest and even uprisings in the Territory, although these never eventuated to anywhere near the same extent as in Kenya and other colonies of the former British Empire. There were certainly no signs of such political uprisings among the Orokaiva in the Lamington area at this time.

The acting district commissioner at Popondetta, in his weekly summary for 20–26 May 1951, was highly complimentary of administration staff who had advanced the resettlement of the refugees, noting particularly the work being undertaken by Department of Health staff at Saiho (Elliott-Smith 1951b). There had been disagreements among senior administration staff about the merits of a quick return of the refugees to their traditional lands, and the returned people may not have been receiving the same close attention as in the camps, but ‘they are immeasurably happier and I am glad of it, as should be the far seeing Administrator [Murray] and Director of District Services [Champion] who countenanced the plan’ (Elliott-Smith 1951b, 1). Building of additional facilities was taking place at the new headquarters at Popondetta, including construction of police facilities under the direction of Sub-Inspector George Allen. Telephone lines to Awala and Saiho had been laid, and the power plant at Higaturu had been salvaged. Supplying distant Saiho was being carried out using 3-ton trucks, although flooding of the Ambogo River continued to be problematic. These achievements and several others were set out proudly by the acting district commissioner, leading to a suggestion that his weekly reports could now be replaced by monthly ones.

Another update was provided nine months later in a quarterly report for the Northern District:

Little now remains of the Mt Lamington disaster, except the memory of those who died. The slopes of the mountain [are] again covered in luscious green growth, prodigious quantities of the most extraordinary examples of native food [are] being taken from the area by the people ... the situation is normal, the task is complete. (Elliott-Smith 1952, 1–2)

Admiring words about the Orokaiva were included as advice for future administering officers:

The background of the Orokaiva, as with all independent spirited people has been a tragic one and should be taken into very clear account before passing judgement—I who have served them in so many categories and studied them closely for so long know full well the service or otherwise they may one day be able to render the Crown. (Elliott-Smith 1952, 1)

A visit had been paid to what was called the ‘Sangara settlement’—presumably at Irihambo—where about 400 survivors who ‘probably have suffered the most, both mentally and physically’ had assembled. They offered generous gifts of food to the district commissioner, and a spokesman called Ojarembo said:

Taubada, on this occasion we the Sangara people want this small offering to be a true gift without payment. It is little enough to tell you how much we the Sangara people think of what the white people have done for us during the past many months after the volcano blew up and we would like you to tell the Governor this for us. That is all. (Elliott-Smith 1952, 2)

In fact, the administration’s post-disaster work was not so ‘complete’. There was an admission that rehabilitation of administration affairs based at Popondetta was ‘not so good’ and that reconstruction programs had had only temporary results, as building materials were simply of perishable native materials. Further, the building of a memorial cemetery at Popondetta was still underway—under the unflagging direction of Police Sub-Inspector Allen. Bodies would have to be disinterred and reburied.

The Anglican mission had been achieving some success too. This was not reported by Elliott-Smith, although it was by Reverend Henry T.A. Kendall. Kendall and his wife Ray, a teacher, were in England when they heard about the Lamington disaster and they offered their services to the mission as replacements for the Taylor priest-and-teacher team killed by the eruption at Sangara Mission (Kendall 1988). The Kendalls arrived in Papua in April 1952, and Reverend Kendall was inducted as priest-in-charge of the Popondetta District in September. Kendall noted in his memoirs that Bishop David had set the Sangara people at Irihambo ‘an exercise in occupational therapy: to build a church’ (Kendall 1988, 145). The people insisted that they name their church ‘St James’, after the one destroyed at Sangara Mission, rather than ‘Resurrection’, the name preferred by the bishop. The ‘Church of the Resurrection’ was built in Popondetta where the mission had decided to locate its headquarters not far from those of the administration. Relationships between the administration and mission were clearly still not satisfactory, as Kendall tells the story of villagers, including mission men, attending a Christmas party and being arrested for trespassing on government land. The acting district commissioner later relented, although Kendall wrote pointedly

about the incident and about the officer, who was not named, being 'a bit of a nark anyway' (Kendall 1988, 149). Elliott-Smith was 'on leave' by this time (Sinclair 1981, 100).

On 30 April 1952, the Canberra-based Australian Cabinet decided to terminate Colonel Murray's appointment as administrator of the Territory. His last day would be in two months time on 30 June (Hasluck 1976; Downs 1980). Murray, who was on holiday at the time in Queensland, was informed by a letter dated 2 May from Hasluck, and he returned to Port Moresby with his wife to begin packing and making their final departure. This was an understandably bitter time for Murray after all of his achievements as head of the Territory, but there were powerful political forces at work that were being driven for clearly articulated reasons. They could not be ignored. His departure was controversial, particularly when speculations were aired in the media that the plan was motivated by the Liberal Government who, all along, wanted to replace Murray with Liberal supporter Brigadier Cleland, the new assistant administrator. This was firmly denied by the minister (Hasluck 1976). Support for Murray and arguments against his dismissal came from many Christian missions and Bishop Phillip Strong, in particular, continued to be a loyal ally (Strong 1981). This, perhaps, is a somewhat odd situation, given that senior men lower in the hierarchies of both mission and government were so at odds with each other over the disaster recovery and resettlement plans at Lamington. Ward, the Labor minister who had appointed Murray in the first place, also came to Murray's defence.

Judge Ralph Gore, president of the Mount Lamington Disaster Relief Fund, wrote to the new acting administrator on 23 July 1952 informing him that the fund committee had had its final meeting on 18 July (Gore 1952). He included a report in which he stressed the generosity of the wide range of people who had contributed to the fund that had reached a grand total of £21,300. Most funds had been allocated for the benefit of European dependents and the creation of trusts in the case of orphans, and an amount of £8,000 had been allocated for 'native relief in kind', which was furnished to individuals through the district commissioner (Gore 1952, 2). The dependents of 11 administration employees who had been killed at Higaturu had already been provided with support using the government compensation scheme, once agreement had been reached that the deceased were all actually on duty on the Sunday morning. The Department of the Government Secretary informed the Department of Treasury of the need to proceed with the compensation payments,

enclosing a document that referred to the eruption as ‘an Act of God, of which there was some slight warning’ (Head 1951, 3). A problem that had arisen in relation to one particular employee was that he had two dependent families, one in Victoria and the other in India where a mother and two children were living at St Michael’s Convent in Bangalore.

Memorialisation and Awards

A piece of administration business that would never be completed was the discovery and identification of the remains of all those people killed at Lamington, whether Papuan or European. How many of the dead Papuans were disinterred, identified and reburied in villages is unknown, but likely the number was very small, given the prohibitions on villagers entering the devastated area for body retrieval, the haste with which hundreds of bodies were buried where they were found, and the extreme difficulties in identifying individual people after burial and tropical decay. This, however, would not interfere with the preparation and then unveiling of a Mount Lamington Memorial Cemetery at Popondetta in late November 1952. None of the thousands of dead Orokaiva villagers were buried at the cemetery.

There had been discussions about using the parade ground at Higaturu as the site of a disaster memorial, but Colonel Murray on 19 September 1951 advised the department in Canberra that the administration would:

Exhume, in January, 1952, all the European bodies at Higaturu and re-inter them in a prepared cemetery at Popondetta. It is likely that some of the missing persons will then be identified. You will be kept informed of all developments. (Murray 1951b, 1)

This wording is perhaps indicative that the memorial cemetery was intended only for identifiable Europeans, bearing in mind too that the Department of Territories as late as 10 November 1952 was still issuing the list of ‘names of Europeans who were killed *or are still missing* as a result of the Mount Lamington eruption in January of last year’ (Brack 1952, 1, emphasis added). One example of a deceased European administration officer whose body was not recovered was Dickie Humphries who, Pat Searle suggested, may not have been at Higaturu at the time of the eruption and may have been walking to Awala Plantation that morning for a lunch appointment at the plantation (Searle 1995). The overall

impression from this is that the cemetery was intended to be one for white people only. The reburials at Popondetta, however, also included those of Papuan policemen.

The task of disinterment of the bodies at Higaturu and their reburial at Popondetta was undertaken by Sub-Inspector George B. Allen, members of the Royal Papuan and New Guinea Constabulary and prisoners. They were assisted at times by others, including Albert Speer who recalled some of the difficulties they encountered:

We asked for coffins but were refused. We then asked for body bags, but the Government would not foot the bill for those either. We had to use mechanical post hole drills and put the bones of the bodies into sacks and bury them vertically. (Speer 2015, 109)

Sangara Mission staff killed in the eruption had already been buried at places other than Popondetta, so the disinterments at Higaturu probably were mainly, if not entirely, of people connected with the administration, and their relatives, rather than with the Anglican mission. Reverend Dennis Taylor had been interred at Gona, and Mrs Lesley Taylor, her four children and Margaret de Bibra had all been buried at the Martyrs' Cemetery at the now deserted Sangara Mission. Papuan priest Reverend John Rautamara, mission teachers and members of their families were also buried alongside the graves of the wartime martyrs at Sangara (e.g. White 1991). In practice, the memorial cemetery at Popondetta was, therefore, one for the colonial administration rather than simply a burial place for all those European victims who could be identified. Colonial discipline and organisation indeed were on full display at the opening of the cemetery on Monday 24 November 1952 (Australia Department of Territories 1953).

The memorial cemetery at Popondetta occupied a large, rectangular, park-like space and contained intersecting coral pathways (Figure 8.2). These formed a large white Christian cross within which a smaller central cross was constructed from raised garden beds bordered by stone. The distinctive design was visible for miles around when viewed from the air. An oblique aerial photograph of the memorial cemetery appeared in a small brochure produced as a program for the dedication ceremonies (Memorial Cemetery Popondetta 1952). The brochure included the statement that the 'beautiful little Memorial Cemetery at Popondetta is the last resting place of a number of residents of Higaturu and the surrounding country, who died as a result of the eruption'; exactly how many that 'number' represented was unstated. However, 34 small white

crosses were erected in two parallel lines in the upper two quarters formed by the larger coral cross, each one representing the life of an individual lost in the disaster. Further, the following words formed part of an inscription on a general memorial plaque that was placed at the centre of the cemetery: 'To the memory of those who lost their lives in the eruption of Mt Lamington 21st January, 1951' (Memorial Cemetery Popondetta 1952, cover page). Some ambiguity about these arrangements remained, and questions would be asked later concerning which individuals made up the small number of people actually buried in the cemetery and which people comprised the much larger number of casualties who were being memorialised, but had not been buried there. Even the use and meaning of the word 'cemetery' was questioned.

Figure 8.2. Opening of the Mount Lamington Memorial Cemetery in 1952

Colonial authorities arranged for the ceremonial opening of the Mount Lamington Memorial Cemetery on 24 November 1952 and ensured that everyone knew their place in the official proceedings. The original single panoramic photograph taken from the 'Official Record of the Unveiling of the Mount Lamington Memorial' has been split here into two overlapping parts, the left half above, the right below (Australia Department of Territories 1953; this is the first of nine unnumbered plates from the official record in which the photography is attributed to Papuan Prints, Port Moresby).

The official party at the dedication was led by Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck and included Acting Administrator Cleland, Anglican Bishop Phillip Strong and Acting District Commissioner Elliott-Smith (Figure 8.3). Many European guests attended from Port Moresby and Australia, including three widows—Mrs M. Humphries, Mrs A.M. Cowley and Mrs D. Maher-Kelly. The graves of the victims were consecrated by Bishop Strong and Reverend Father Conlen from Port Moresby. Colonel J.K. Murray and Judge F.M. Phillips did not attend. About 1,500 ‘Papuan of the District, in ceremonial headdress and paint’ (Australia Department of Territories 1953, 3) were arranged tidily on three sides of the cemetery—the straight lines of colonialism—while the Europeans were free to move around (Marsh 2005–06).

Figure 8.3. Paul Hasluck speaking at the opening of the memorial cemetery

Australian Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck is seen here addressing the gathering at the Mount Lamington Memorial Cemetery, Popondetta, on 24 November 1952, just before his unveiling of the memorial plaque. D.M. Cleland, acting administrator of the Territory, is second from the left and District Commissioner S. Elliott-Smith is third from the left (Australia Department of Territories 1953; this is the second of nine unnumbered plates; photograph attributed to Papuan Prints, Port Moresby).

The program for 24 November at Popondetta also included a ceremony for the investiture by the acting administrator of awards to five people (Figure 8.4). A total of 14 awards in recognition of services rendered following the eruption of Mount Lamington had been approved by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, who that year had taken the throne following the death of her father King George VI. The 14 awards were announced by the Central Chancery of Orders of Knighthood at St James's Palace, London, on 22 April 1952 and published in a supplement to the *London Gazette*. Tony Taylor was awarded the George Cross for 'conspicuous courage in the face of great danger' (*London Gazette* 1952, 2165). His Tolai volcanological assistant, Leslie Topue, received the British Empire Medal, and Bill Schleusener was awarded the George Medal. The other awardees—missionaries, pilots and administration staff—received either OBEs or MBEs. Colonel Murray did not receive an award that might have acknowledged his leadership as administrator during the difficult but successful relief and recovery phases of the Lamington disaster. This was something that surprised at least some people in administration circles, but one historian of the Trusteeship quoted a view from within the new Australian Government that 'the Administrator and his officers had been doing no more than their duty in the Lamington emergency' (Downs 1980, 83).

There is a sense in recalling the unveiling of the Mount Lamington Memorial and the investiture of awards for courageous people that the period of disaster response and resettlement had come to an end. Perhaps 1953 would bring a sense of fresh opportunity and a new start for the people of the Northern District, the administration and the Anglican mission? When, however, do the effects of a major disaster end? Grieving for personal loss continues, and ongoing trauma and disturbed memories persist, and there is an accepted need for communities to remember and commemorate disasters. This applies in the case of the Lamington disaster to both the Orokaiva and the Europeans. Memories are retained into old age, memoirs are written, articles published and stories are told to children.

Figure 8.4. Tony Taylor being presented with the George Cross

Acting Administrator Donald Cleland presents Tony Taylor with his George Cross medal at Popondetta on 24 November 1952. Four other people who were given their awards that day are sitting in the front row: Barbara Lane, Rodd Hart, Robert Porter and Leslie Topue. This photograph was supplied by Albert Speer. The remaining nine awardees had received their medals at an investiture held at Government House in Port Moresby on 25 October (Australia Department of Territories 1953).

After disasters such as at Mount Lamington, a persistent challenge for governing authorities, whether colonial or not, is to remember and learn from the achievements and failures of the experience. This certainly applied to the aftermath of the Lamington disaster, not only during the following 23 years of Australian colonialism, but also beyond 1975, the year of Papua New Guinea's independence. What lessons were learnt? What could be done better next time? Can prevention and preparedness plans be improved by disaster experiences from the past? What new disaster-risk reduction policies should be approved? Can the next catastrophic eruption at Lamington be predicted scientifically?

**Awards for services following the Lamington disaster of 21 January 1951
(London Gazette, 1952)**

George Cross:

Mr G.A. Taylor, Government Volcanologist

OBE (Civil):

Mr T.J.S. Arthur, Regional Director, Department of Civil Aviation

Miss P.M. Durdin, Anglican Missionary, Isivita, Papua

Mr L.J. Hart, Anglican Missionary, Sangara, Papua

Mr F.H.A. Kleckham, Agricultural Officer, Department of Agriculture,
Stock and Fisheries

Mrs Barbara Lane, Anglican Missionary, Isivita, Papua

Reverend R.G. Porter, Anglican Missionary, Isivita, Papua

MBE (Civil):

Mr J.J. McKee, First Officer, Qantas Empire Airlines Ltd

Mr J.R. Rose, Pilot, Qantas Empire Airlines Ltd

Mr C.E. Searle, Planter, Awala, Papua

Mr I.C. Taylor, First Officer, Qantas Empire Airlines Ltd

Mr Tomnavadila Iabwau (Elliott Elijah), Native Co-operative Adviser,
Department of District Services

George Medal:

Mr B. Schleusener, Sangara Rubber Plantations, Sangara, Papua

BEM (Civil):

Mr Leslie Topue, Assistant to the Government Volcanologist, Rabaul

Disaster Management Reviewed

Prevention and preparedness

The four vulnerability factors identified previously from the earlier review of the pre-1951 European history of the Lamington are as follows:

1. Too many people had settled on the rich volcanic soils of a volcanically hazardous place, although WWII may have temporarily reduced population growth.
2. Postwar colonial development in the area mainly for agricultural and missionary purposes represented investment of what was at least planned to be a growing economy.
3. There existed still the situation of a strong colonial power in charge of, and controlling, a largely preliterate people through the immediate triple presence of representatives of State, Church and the commercialised white planter community.

4. No one in January 1951 in the Lamington area itself appears to have had sufficient information and knowledge that Mount Lamington was a potentially active volcano, even though mysterious ‘roars’ had been heard on the mountain in the 1930s by missionaries; that a Dutch geologist in 1939 had specifically identified, although perhaps mistakenly, the volcano as an ‘active’ one; that a Higaturu-based patrol officer had identified a youthful volcanic crater on Lamington in 1948; and that youthful lava domes, coulées and a geothermal area were visible on aerial photographs taken in 1947. Even the Orokaiva seemed to have no knowledge of previous volcanic activity. As Keesing (1952, 16) concluded following his admittedly short visit: ‘No tradition exists showing familiarity with vulcanism in the area, apart from one or two dubious hints in myth incident’.

This fourth point is perhaps the most crucial in reviewing the nature of the decision-making that took place in the week before the catastrophic eruption of 21 January 1951. Such a review can be made with regard to six questions that appeared on the front page of the *South Pacific Post* on 2 February 1951 (Figure 5.9c(ii)) and are as relevant today as they were 69 years ago.

1) ‘Was the Administration aware that for many weeks before the eruption earth tremors were continually being experienced in the area?’

The answer to this first question is a qualified ‘no’, assuming that ‘administration’ refers to central headquarters in Port Moresby. Earth tremors may well have been experienced, however, by administration staff at Higaturu and particularly by people living closer to the volcano. Further, a technical question that arises necessarily is: what sort of ‘earth tremors’ were being considered? Were they earthquakes taking place beneath the volcano in which rising deep-seated magma breaks through surrounding rocks, or were they nearby earthquakes of tectonic origin that were not related directly to the volcano? A network of seismographs on the mountain could have answered these questions, but instrumental monitoring was unlikely to have been on the minds of administration officers in the weeks before the catastrophic eruption.

2) 'What were the factors that led Mr Justice Phillips into making a decision not to evacuate Higaturu?'

Judge F. 'Monte' Phillips, acting administrator, flew down to Higaturu on Friday 19 January out of personal interest and almost nonchalantly, bearing in mind that he also hired a second aircraft so that his wife could also witness the volcanic cloud emerging from Mount Lamington. His trip was not a formal or 'official' visit such as a trained government volcanologist might have been instructed to make. Phillips did not send a radiogram to the administrator, the district commissioner in East New Britain or the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory advising of his intentions, something that would have not only alerted the observatory to the volcanic unrest but also provided file-copy evidence that he was following an appropriate government protocol.

The volcanic cloud that Phillips saw from the air and at Popondetta airstrip on Friday 19 January was vapour-laden, although it did contain ash. It was rising slowly and non-threateningly and seemed like the later explosive eruptions the judge had witnessed himself at Vulcan and Tavurvur volcanoes at Rabaul in 1937. Volcanic pressure was being relieved quite satisfactorily, he thought. Phillips, in fact, had neither the knowledge nor the intuition to support an alternative opinion that the volcano was in the later stages of developing a major vulcanian eruption cloud that would become so ash laden and dense that it would collapse, forming widespread and deadly hot pyroclastic flows. At the airstrip, Judge Phillips provided his opinion to District Commissioner Cecil Cowley, who had no volcanological experience himself, and then flew back to Port Moresby with his wife for the weekend. Paul Quinlivan worked as a law assistant for Judge Phillips in Port Moresby and he later wrote a summary of Phillips's successful life of public service. Quinlivan (1988, 2) concluded that 'his advice, given two days before the Mount Lamington eruption, that the volcano posed no immediate danger, was misguided'. No records appear to exist of how Judge Phillips coped with his error and probable guilt in what otherwise had been an outstandingly successful career.

- 3) 'Had any action been taken before the first eruption to advise the Government Vulcanologist, Mr G.A. Taylor, that earth tremors were being felt around Higaturu?'; and
 4) 'What prevented the vulcanologist from arriving at the scene until after 4000 [sic] people had been killed?'

Questions 3 and 4 can be addressed concurrently but not answered confidently. Taylor wrote that he heard about the Lamington eruptive activity by listening to a radio broadcast in Rabaul, East New Britain, on Friday 19 January. The fact that he did not write that this was the *first* time he had heard about the Lamington unrest is perhaps a simple and unintended omission on his part. It contrasts quite strongly, however, with the detailed summary of events provided by volcanologist J.G. Best who arrived in Rabaul after the disaster to run the volcanological observatory in Taylor's absence and for years thereafter, working closely with him on volcanological matters in the Territory. John Best stated, writing assertively but 37 years after the events, that Taylor was aware of the Lamington unrest from radio broadcasts as early as Monday 15 January (Best 1988). This assertion at face value is questionable as the early changes to the mountain on that day were perhaps not all that newsworthy, unless a European correspondent in the Higaturu–Sangara area was keeping the radio station informed of events from the first day of the week. This is nothing less than historical speculation, however. What is known is that the district commissioner's wife, Mrs Amalya Cowley, contacted the radio station on Friday 19 January after Judge Phillips' peremptory departure from Popondetta.

Taylor was unable to reach Popondetta before Sunday 21 January because of a delay in decision-making by the district commissioner in Rabaul, J.K. McCarthy, during the working week of 15–19 January—at least according to John Best (1988). Taylor would have had very little time in which to arrange immediate aircraft flights to Popondetta, if indeed, as he wrote himself, he did not hear about the volcanic eruptions at Lamington until Friday 19 January. District Commissioner Cecil Cowley at Higaturu had expected the arrival of a volcanologist on the Friday, as stated quite clearly by Judge Phillips himself. Taylor was able to join the same flight that was taking the administrator back to Port Moresby on the Monday morning, but that was far too late. A further point is that Taylor would have had very little time to make a proper assessment of the volcanic conditions on the mountain if he arrived at Popondetta as late as the

Friday or Saturday. Indeed, he would probably have been killed had he decided to use Higaturu as his base for fieldwork on the flanks of Mount Lamington to the south.

5) 'Had any members of the Higaturu–Sangara community, before the disastrous eruption, communicated their personal views and fears to any member of the Administration?'

The answer to this question is certainly 'yes' given the written records of the fear and concern expressed to Judge Phillips by Mrs Cowley and by other European women at the Popondetta airstrip. Evacuation was very much on Mrs Cowley's mind. She and daughter Pam stayed overnight at Sangara Rubber Plantation on Saturday 20 January partly because of this fear and uncertainty of what might happen. Cecil Cowley himself was concerned and certainly discussed the situation with administration officers by radio on Thursday 18 January, although the nature of the conversation, what was said and how it was said remain unclear because of the radio interference caused by the eruptions.

6) 'Did any of the native population who had previously had experience of volcanoes communicate their opinions and then flee the district?'

There are two parts to this question. First, the only certain evidence of local people having experienced previous volcanic eruptions, and having communicated this to Europeans, is the case of the young Tufi cook at Sangara Plantation who had witnessed the eruptive activity at Goropu volcano in 1943–44. Other examples told by local Orokaiva in the form of 'myths' are too uncertain to have had any concrete value by, say, the end of 1952, as are the speculations that some of them may have been aware through their ancestors of the eruptive activity at Victory volcano in the late nineteenth century.

The second part of the question, dealing with local people fleeing the district, is an important one in assessing the 'preparedness' phase of the disaster management spectrum at Mount Lamington. Villagers self-evacuated from their homes high on the north-western flanks of the mountain, but they went only as far as Isivita Mission, because of the supporting presence there of trusted European missionaries. Cadet Patrol Officer Athol J. Earl had written from Higaturu to his parents on Thursday 18 January that: 'The native[s] from all around here deserted with all their belongings, however, I notice they had started to come back tonight' (Earl 1951, 2).

Further, missionary Rodd Hart said afterwards in an exchange with Reverend Romney Gill that the Sangara people would have self-evacuated were it not for the European's decision to stay (Garland 2000). Many Orokaiva may have had a natural inclination to flee, bearing in mind their traditional, although not necessarily volcanic, fears of the mountain. The Europeans—both administration and mission—who were carrying and displaying superior technical and religious knowledge were not fleeing, so many Orokaiva must have felt that this was a good enough reason for them to remain where they were. The Orokaiva unfortunately suffered from a lack of information and knowledge, as did the Europeans on whom they depended. Colonial policies for disaster prevention and preparedness did not exist in the Lamington area before the catastrophic eruption of 21 January 1951.

Relief, recovery, and trauma

There is little doubt that the Territory administration undertook the relief and recovery phases of the Lamington disaster under difficult circumstances yet with remarkable success. A key element of the achievement was the strong leadership provided by people such as Colonel Murray, Dr Gunther, Ivan Champion and Fred Kaad. Many of these leaders had had wartime experience, including with ANGAU, and this organisational ability shone through during the military-like, rapid deployment of aircraft and resources to the stricken area. Even the potentially disastrous flooding of the Wairopi evacuation camp was dealt with effectively once the potential threat had been identified. Then there were those people whose 'backroom' coordination role in Port Moresby was just as important. Acting Government Secretary Steve Lonergan is an outstanding example, of whom Dr Gunther said on the occasion of Lonergan's retirement in 1959: 'In getting the tools and the needs of the field party to them Mr Lonergan probably contributed more than any one other individual towards that great achievement' (Legislative Council Debates 1959, 577). Another attribute of the administration was its openness to outside advice, such as that offered by anthropologists Keesing and Belshaw.

The administration and the Anglican mission also provided outstanding medical service. Burns were treated for those victims who were not evacuated, serious outbreaks of epidemics were controlled through inoculation programs, and treatment was provided for people who were

scalded after venturing through the hot waters of streams draining off the volcano. The treatment of physical injuries was, therefore, done well in what were stressful circumstances. Post-recovery mental health issues were dealt with less obviously. Post-traumatic stress disorder was not an expression that was used in the early 1950s. Its partial equivalent, 'shell-shock', was seen by military authorities in the two world wars but not always sympathetically, particularly in World War I when some strong military men may have equated it with mental weakness. Post-traumatic stress disorder must be assumed to have been prevalent among both the Orokaiva and Europeans in the years after the 1951 eruption, at least based on a few known examples.

Keesing, in 'The Papuan Orokaiva vs Mt Lamington: Cultural Shock and its Aftermath', wrote that the Lamington disaster produced 'cultural trauma of the first magnitude'. He witnessed the overt emotional stress in the Ilimo camp and asked whether this type of response was something culturally innate or an effect of the constrained, controlled environment of the refugee camps plus grief and uncertainty about future. His concluding impression was that, 'subject to inevitable factors of shock and disorganization, the Orokaiva were culturally predisposed to respond to the traumatic experience here described with something approaching maximum adaptability' (Keesing 1952, 18). That broad, positive cultural response, however, almost certainly hid individual cases of trauma.

Struggles of coping with loss, grief and trauma continued long after the closure of the refugee camps. Mission teacher Mrs Ray Kendall referred to boys in her class who had been playing cricket in one of the villages that was destroyed by the eruption. They managed to escape, but in Mrs Kendall's class a year later:

They were angry they were difficult (LOST—everything). I knew nothing about Helen Kubler Ross's stages of grief—I wouldn't let them talk about it because it upset them. If only I had known better. (Kendall 2006, 3; Kübler-Ross [1969])

Mrs Kendall also wrote about a local woman, Rebecca, whom she knew. Rebecca was down at a stream collecting water at the time of the eruption and she returned to find her husband and all six children dead. Rebecca committed suicide about a year later. The number of suicides among the Orokaiva that can be attributed to the disaster is unknown but should be born in mind in considering any final, exact, death toll.

The Anglican Church must have played an important role in its use of prayer, ceremonies and church building as a de facto 'grief counselling' service. The building of the new and impressive St James Church is an example of how 'therapy' (Kendall 1988) may have helped not only the surviving parishioners but also Bishop Hand—his authoritarian and combative conflicts with the administration being another possible example of grief-related anger and unresolved frustration. Other Europeans were notably affected by trauma and loss too. The example given of patrol officers Des Martin and Bob Blaikie and their exhausting and emotionally demanding work—and their transfer out of the disaster area—is but one (Blaikie 2007; Martin 2007–15, 2013). Two other cases relate to Marie Reay and Pam Virtue.

Marie Reay, after her evacuation from Wasita and aborted fieldwork in the Territory, suffered a nervous breakdown on her return to Sydney (Glick and Beckett 2005). Her former colleague at the Australian School of Pacific Administration, Australian lawyer and later judge Hal Wooten, recalled 'visiting her in hospital with other colleagues, when she did not recognise us' (Wooten quoted in Glick and Beckett 2005, 395). Dr Reay, however, did return to the Territory—in 1953, beginning new fieldwork and a long association with the peoples of the Highlands region (e.g. Reay 1992), but not to the Northern District.

A story of grief, trauma and some later catharsis is seen in the post-disaster lives of Amalya Cowley and daughter Pamela who returned to a new life in Sydney without husband and father Cecil and son and brother Erl. Amalya Cowley died in 1999 but her memoirs formed the basis of a book *The Volcano's Wife*, which was compiled and expanded by Pamela, now Mrs Virtue. Amalya Cowley began writing her memoirs in 1995 at the age of 90: 'she took out her trusty Remington typewriter, which had somehow survived being buried in volcanic ash, and began typing' (Cowley and Virtue 2015, 9). The book ends with descriptions of the emotional return in 2003 and 2004 of Pam and her late husband, Gerry, to Popondetta and the site of old Higaturu. They could not find the burial places of Cecil and Erl Cowley in the neglected and overgrown memorial cemetery as all of the white marker crosses had been removed from individual graves.

Tony Taylor's important account of the 1951 eruption was published in 1958. By this time, and after the award of his George Cross for courage, Taylor had been acclaimed publicly as a scientist hero, and his work had an international impact volcanologically. His account was very much

a scientifically clinical report. Taylor acknowledged particularly the strong practical support provided to him by Colonel Murray, and also the help of His Honour Brigadier D.M. Cleland CBE. No mention was made of the Judge Phillips controversy, nor of the public comments surrounding Taylor's perceived late arrival from Rabaul to the disaster area. Dr N.H. Fisher wrote the foreword, extolling the value of Taylor's account and his talent in narrative writing, but also producing the following statement:

Mt Lamington was not merely regarded as extinct—it was not even considered as a volcano at all. The presence of a crater had not been recognized—it had not been examined by a geologist—and, being completely open on the northern side, it appeared only as one of the heads of the stream system of the Ambogo river, which rises in a series of rugged hills. (Fisher in Taylor 1958, foreword)

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