

A.F.R. Wollaston and the 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' Skulls

This note describes the results of research into the provenance of a small collection of human remains currently held at the Natural History Museum in London. These remains consist of four skulls, which almost certainly derive from individuals of the Amungme community in what is now the Indonesian province of Papua (Irian Jaya). The precise circumstances of the original collection of these skulls by the Wollaston Expedition to Dutch New Guinea of 1912–13 have not previously been clarified, and evidence is offered here to suggest that the silence on this matter has been deliberate.

The British Ornithologists' Union and Wollaston expeditions to Dutch New Guinea, 1910–13

At the beginning of the 20th century the western half of the island of New Guinea, claimed by the Dutch, remained largely unexplored. A concerted programme of government-funded military exploration was initiated in 1904 and succeeded in mapping the coastline and most of the major rivers for the first time.¹ A number of private expeditions were also launched; while these were concerned ostensibly with the collection of natural history specimens, several of the expeditions to the south coast of Dutch New Guinea were obviously also competing for the honour of the inaugural ascent of the snow-capped peaks of the Central Range, first reported to Europe by Jan Carstensz who saw them from his ship in 1623.²

Two successive British expeditions sought to climb the Central Range at its highest point, amongst the Carstensz Peaks. The first, the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) Expedition of 1910–11, was poorly planned and deliberately misdirected by the Dutch authorities towards the Mimika River, which proved not to lead towards the Carstensz Peaks. After 15 months the BOU expedition team, consisting of more than 300 members, guards and coolies, had failed to reach further than the lower slopes of the mountains, only 40 kilometres from the coast, and was forced to retire. One of the members of the BOU expedition, Alexander Frederick Richmond Wollaston (1875–1930), returned in 1912 at the head of a marginally smaller team, which included the naturalist C. Boden Kloss, the Dutch officer Lieutenant van de Water and a substantial military escort. This time, Wollaston approached the mountains along the Setakwa and Utakwa (or Otakwa) rivers which proved — as the Dutch had already known in 1910 — to lead directly to the Carstensz Peaks (see Map).³

In October 1912, moving up from their Base Camp, just above the junction of the Setakwa and Utakwa rivers, the expedition established an advanced base camp, the 'Canoe Camp', near the foot of the mountains at the highest point of the Setakwa River navigable by canoes. From there, a forward supply camp was established at an altitude of about 2,300 feet, known as 'Observation Camp'. Another supply camp, three days' walk further into the mountain, was named 'Depot Camp'.⁴ During the establishment of these two forward supply camps, the expedition was met and welcomed by Amungme people living in the

¹ J. Pouwer, 'The colonisation, decolonisation and recolonisation of West New Guinea', *Journal of Pacific History*, 34 (1999), 157–79.

² An English translation of Carstensz's report is given in A.F.R. Wollaston, *Pygmies and Papuans: The Stone Age To-day* (New York 1912), 29–30.

³ This map is reproduced from A.F.R. Wollaston, 'An expedition to Dutch New Guinea', *Geographical Journal*, 43 (1914), 248–73.

⁴ Elsewhere Wollaston refers to Observation Camp as the '1st Depôt Camp' and Depot Camp as the '2nd Depôt Camp' (A.F.R. Wollaston, *Letters and Diaries of A.F.R. Wollaston*, selected and ed. M. Wollaston (Cambridge 1933), 137).

Kelangin area of the lower Tsinga Valley. Unable to communicate with the Amungme other than by sign language, Wollaston described them in his diary and subsequent publications as the 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuans'. As the expedition waited for food to be brought up from the coast and stockpiled for the climb up to the mountains, its camps were visited by almost 400 Amungme, gathering from settlements higher in the mountains. Escorted by Amungme guides, Wollaston's party crossed the lower 'Nusula-narong' (Notoloanogong) River and then climbed through the main Tsinga Valley, passing through or within sight of several larger Amungme settlements. In January 1913, with a small party that included three Amungme guides, Wollaston and van de Water then climbed as far as the base of the glacier which falls from the summit of the Carstensz Peaks. Though they used ropes to ascend a series of steep cliffs, the expedition was ill-equipped and insufficiently experienced to tackle the glacier, and turned back for the coast. During February, the expedition retraced its steps towards the base camps and, on 3 April, sailed from New Guinea.

On his return to London, Wollaston was rewarded for this trip and for his part in previous expeditions with the Gill Memorial of the Royal Geographical Society.⁵ Though he planned to return once more to New Guinea for a final attempt on the summit of the Carstensz Peaks, Wollaston was killed by a student at Cambridge in 1930.⁶ In 1936, following the Wa Valley to the west of Wollaston's route, a much smaller Dutch climbing party led by Anton H. Colijn finally achieved the first successful ascent of the Carstensz Peaks.⁷

Papuan skulls in the Natural History Museum collection

None of the members of the BOU or Wollaston expeditions possessed training or experience in either ethnology or anthropology, but the broad sweep of their collecting activities swiftly extended to encompass both artefacts and anthropological records or human remains. Most of Wollaston's ethnological collection from his two Dutch New Guinea expeditions was deposited at various stages with the Natural History Museum (NHM), but appears to have been transferred in its entirety to the British Museum Ethnography Department in 1939. A minor portion of Wollaston's collection was deposited directly at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. The NHM continues to hold the bulk, if not all, of the natural history material collected by both the BOU and Wollaston expeditions. Included amongst these natural history collections at the NHM are a series of skulls collected in the course of the expeditions.

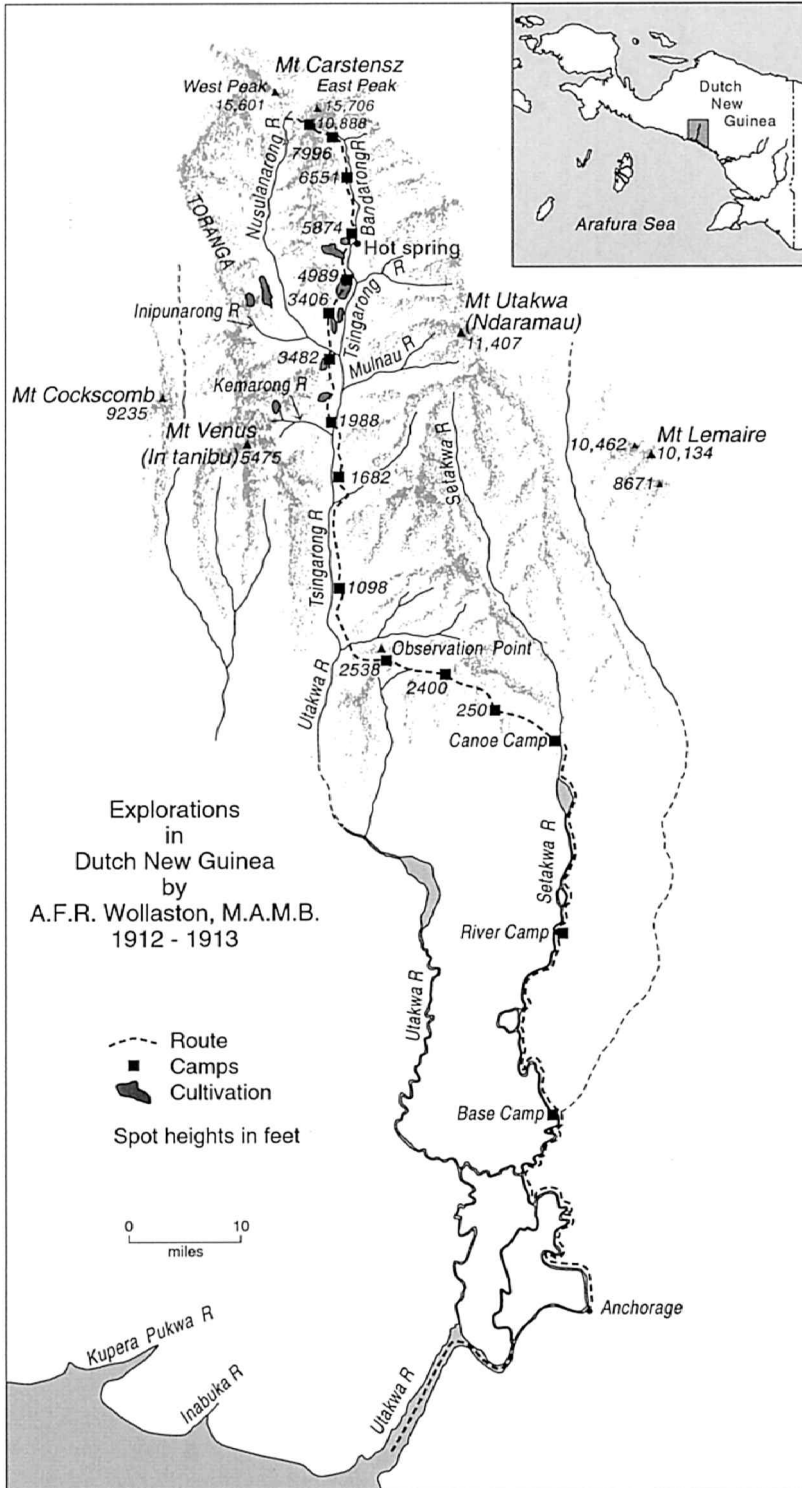
The BOU expedition had acquired a significant quantity of human skulls from the Kamoro communities of the coast and coastal plain, and there are several accounts of the process of their collection.⁸ The Kamoro custom of exposing corpses and then retaining

⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁷ A.H. Colijn, *Naar de eeuwige sneeuw van tropisch Nederland. De bestijging van het Carstenszgebergte in Nederlandsch Nieuw Guinee* (Amsterdam 1937).

⁸ W.P. Pycraft ('Report on the Human Crania Collected by the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition and the Wollaston Expedition in Dutch New Guinea', in *Reports on the Collections Made by the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition and the Wollaston Expedition in Dutch New Guinea, 1910-13* (London 1916), Vol. I, Pt 1, Section 2) lists 10 skulls collected from Kamoro-speaking communities on the Mimika and Kapare rivers. However, it seems probable that this list represents only a portion of the total number of Kamoro skulls collected by the BOU expedition. In his diary, one of the BOU expedition members, Eric Marshall, reports collecting five skulls in a single encounter, 'for a pocket-knife and a handkerchief each. Could have had more if I wanted them' (London, Royal Geographical Society Archives, Marshall, Eric, Special Collection — EMA 4, 10 April 1910). On another occasion, 'Two of us went one day to Obota, a village a few miles from Wakatimi, in the hopes [sic] of buying some bananas. In one of the huts we saw a skull and offered to buy it, not at all expecting that the owner would be willing to sell, but the offer of (I think) a piece of cloth was gladly accepted and the skull was ours. In a few minutes, when it became known that we had given good



The route of the 1912-13 Wollaston Expedition to Dutch New Guinea

skulls which were 'preserved in the family hut and then carried about from place to place'⁹ presented a ready supply of material to members of the expedition: 'Husbands and fathers, though attaching some value to these relics, are always ready to barter the skull of wife or child [*sic*] for a piece of cloth'.¹⁰ While I am in no position to judge the validity of this claim from a Kamoro perspective, it is evident that the expedition was 'in the market' for human remains.

The BOU expedition was unable, however, to secure any skeletal remains during its fleeting encounters with the highland 'Tapiro', western neighbours of the Amungme of the Tsinga Valley. In the course of an otherwise disappointing expedition, the 'discovery' of the Tapiro was hailed as a major scientific find; the diminutive stature of these highlanders was deemed sufficient for them to be pronounced a relict population of a former global race of pygmies.¹¹ In the absence of skeletal remains, photographs and measurements of the Tapiro were the most important form of evidence for this discovery. As Reader in Ethnology at Cambridge and one of the leading ethnologists in Britain at the time, Alfred Cort Haddon played a critical role in cementing the scientific reputation of the Tapiro as the 'type' New Guinea pygmies, contributing an appendix on the 'Pygmy Question' to Wollaston's account of the BOU expedition. Haddon almost certainly encouraged Wollaston (as he did other explorers in New Guinea of the period) to secure some more convincing material evidence for pygmies, in the form of skulls or other skeletal material, on his second expedition.¹² In common with most other scientists of the period, Haddon was not particularly concerned about the means or methods of acquisition of such material; Haddon had himself robbed graves in Ireland in the 1890s, and as late as 1914 he was encouraging Bronislaw Malinowski to collect human remains during his fieldwork in the Territory of Papua.¹³

Wollaston's published accounts and diary of his 1912–13 expedition make no mention at any point of the collection of skulls or other human remains amongst the Amungme, though he observed and described Amungme burial practices.¹⁴ The achievement of collecting skulls from the presumed 'pygmy' communities of the highlands would certainly have featured prominently in accounts of the previous BOU expedition to the neighbouring Tapiro had it been attained there. It is thus surprising to find 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' skulls described and illustrated with line drawings in the report on physical anthropology prepared by W.P. Pycraft for the *Reports on the Collections made by the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition and the Wollaston Expedition in Dutch New Guinea, 1910–13*, which were published in 1916.

Footnote continued

cloth for a common skull, everybody was anxious to sell his family remains, and outside every doorway were placed one or two or even three grinning skulls. They do not treat the skulls very carefully, and a good many were damaged, so we only bought about half a dozen that were perfect' (Wollaston, *Pygmies and Papuans*, 140).

⁹ C.G. Rawling, 'Explorations in Dutch New Guinea', *The Geographical Journal*, 38 (1911), 247.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ C. Ballard, 'Collecting Pygmies: the ' Tapiro' and the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea, 1910–1911', in M. O'Hanlon and R.L. Welsch (eds), *Hunting the Gatherers: Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia* (Oxford 2000), 127–54.

¹² A.C. Haddon, 'The Pygmy Question', App. B in Wollaston, *Pygmies and Papuans*, 303–21. For further discussion of the origins of this scientific interest in human remains in the region see T. Griffiths, 'On Reflective History: Victorian Skullduggery, Past and Present', in D. Merwick (ed.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Essays in Honour of Greg Denning* (Melbourne 1994), 397–412, and P. Turnbull, 'Enlightenment Anthropology and the Ancestral Remains of Australian Aboriginal People', in A. Calder, J. Lamb and B. Orr (eds), *Voyages and Beaches: Pacific Encounters, 1769–1840* (Honolulu 1999), 202–25.

¹³ J. Urry, 'Headhunters and body-snatchers', *Anthropology Today*, 5 (1989), 12–13. In 1916, C.G. Seligman also wrote to Malinowski, urging him to collect skulls on Kiriwina, an instruction which the young Polish anthropologist evidently observed (M.W. Young, 'The Careless Collector: Malinowski and the Antiquarians', in O'Hanlon and Welsch (eds), *Hunting the Gatherers*, 188).

¹⁴ Wollaston, 'An expedition to Dutch New Guinea'; Wollaston, 'Introduction', in *Reports on the Collections Made by the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition and the Wollaston Expedition in Dutch New Guinea, 1910–13* (London 1916), Vol. I, 1–22; Wollaston, *Letters and Diaries*.

These 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' skulls are currently held in the Anthropology Collection of the NHM, in London, where they were deposited in 1913 and accessioned in 1914. Pycraft described a total of 16 skulls collected by the BOU and Wollaston, of which:

- '2 were from the Kapare River [actually 3, accessioned as 1912.IX.22.7–9, all from the Kamoro settlement of Wakatimi],
- 8 from the Mimika River [accessioned as 1912.IX.22.1–6,10 and 1912.X.15.1, all from the Kamoro settlement of Parimau],
- 5 from the Utakwa River [actually 4, accessioned as 1914.V.10.1–4, all presumed to be Amungme from the Tsinga Valley], and
- 1 (Figure 1) from the Digul River [accessioned as 1914.V.11.1, presumably from an Asmat settlement]'.¹⁵

Of the 16 skulls, three were evidently of juveniles, and were thus considered of little value for Pycraft's analysis. For Pycraft, the Utakwa River (Amungme) skulls were of significance in so far as they represented 'a relatively pure strain of the original, ancestral, Dravidian stock',¹⁶ a 'standard of comparison in estimating the extent of the transformation effected by the alien elements' introduced through contact with Melanesians and Malays.¹⁷

Details available in the NHM register for the individual Amungme skulls are as follows:

- 1914.V.10.1 — Juvenile skull [described by Pycraft (1916: 9)];
- 1914.V.10.2 — Adult female skull [described by Pycraft (1916: 3–4) and illustrated as Plate I.1.];
- 1914.V.10.3 — Adult male skull [described by Pycraft (1916: 2) as the 'type' specimen for Dravidian (Utakwa River) skulls, and illustrated as Plate II.5.];
- 1914.V.10.4 — Adolescent female cranium [described by Pycraft (1916: 3) as male, and illustrated as Plate II.6.].

The only documentary evidence that might assist us in understanding how and where these skulls were collected is contained in the NHM register entry for the skulls, which reads: 'Papuan Skulls, Utakwa River, Dutch New Guinea, Collected A.F.R. Wollaston'. They were all taken during March 1913, and were 'Natives of the Mountains'. The 'Natives of the Mountains' are clearly Amungme, but the date of March 1913 is intriguing, for Wollaston had by then left the highlands, and was back at his Canoe and Base camps in the lowlands.

The circumstances of collection of the 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' skulls

In mid-February of 1913, as Wollaston was returning from the glacier towards the Depot Camp, he found 'two recently dead bodies on the track'.¹⁸ At the Depot Camp, he learned that there were still more bodies below. During the next two days spent walking down to the Observation Camp, he passed 'the dead bodies of between thirty and forty people', Amungme who had been returning from visiting the Canoe and Base camps in the lowlands.¹⁹ Wollaston's diary entry for this period, as published posthumously by his widow, is given here:²⁰

February 8–10. Travelled down to Dépôt Camp, and half-way down a very steep ridge we came upon the body of a man who had died apparently four or five days earlier. Half a mile further was the body of an oldish woman lying in a small stream, her bag and belongings lying on the

¹⁵ Pycraft, 'Report on the Human Crania', 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸ Wollaston, 'An expedition to Dutch New Guinea', 263.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁰ Wollaston, *Letters and Diaries*, 147–8.

track a few yards away. The natives who were walking with me made me understand that they had died of hunger, and when we got to Depôt Camp we heard that a number more of these poor natives had died in the same way further down.

From No.6 Camp down to No.3 Camp was a walk that I shall remember as long as I live. Soon after starting we came on the body of a man not long dead, then the bodies of two women, one child and another man. On further, many more bodies lying in ones and twos — some dead on the track — some in rock shelters, and some in roughly made huts of leaves; one or two had been buried, but most were left just where they lay. All this had happened in the last three weeks, for these bodies were along the same ground we had passed three weeks earlier. In a leaf hut Kloss found a little girl of about two years, alive; a man, woman and child lay dead beside her. Perhaps the poor little creature did not belong to them, but had been left there by people who had not wanted or had not the strength to carry her further. Kloss was alone at the time and he carried the child for six hours in one of the net bags he found lying in the hut. We fed her on milk and cornflour and though she was very feeble she was talkative, and I did not think that she was in a desperate state; however she died in the night. The whole business is very distressing and very hard to explain ... Altogether we reckon that not less than forty people have died of those who have come down from the mountains to see us, and the only cause that I can see for their deaths is starvation. It is very puzzling, for they are not greatly emaciated. I believe they just give up and die as natives can do. Those that were buried were tied with pieces of pandanus leaf into a sitting position and lowered into a round hole, 3 to 4 feet deep. The hole is filled up, a few tall sticks stuck into the ground about it, and one or two of the dead person's possessions hang from the sticks.

February 11–March 2. We are resting our weary bodies, filling our empty bellies, sleeping, reading newspapers, taking photographs. Am also improving my map; altogether quite a pleasant time ...

The probable cause of the death of so many people remains uncertain; as a doctor Wollaston was familiar with malaria and other tropical diseases and would presumably have identified and noted symptoms. Yet Amungme were not unfamiliar with the lowland environment in the vicinity of the foothills, and mass mortality due to starvation seems implausible to Carolyn Cook, an agricultural anthropologist who has done extensive research among Tsinga Valley Amungme.²¹ However, Wollaston describes a situation which developed at the lowland camps in his absence that may have created the conditions for this disaster:

Many of them came down to visit us at our camp at Observation point and at the Canoe camp, and some even went as far as our base camp far down the river. They arrived at these places with their wives and children and a few pigs and sweet potatoes enough to last them for several days. When their food came to an end they begged food from the soldiers and coolies in the camps, but our provisions were not calculated for an unlimited number of visitors, and soon it became necessary for the people in charge of these camps to refuse to give them any more food and to tell them to return to their homes in the hills.²²

Wollaston could not have known that his expedition had been welcomed by the communities of the Tsinga Valley as spirits returning from a paradise to which they were then expected to lead their Amungme followers. Beliefs about this paradise, known to Amungme as *hai jogon*, had animated millenarian movements amongst the Amungme long before this first encounter with Europeans. Amungme recall a number of similar mass migrations inspired by prophets preaching the 'talk of *hai*' (*hai kal*), several of which had resulted in multiple deaths.²³

On 9 March, as Wollaston was heading down-river towards Base Camp in a canoe, it struck a submerged tree. Though he narrowly escaped drowning, Wollaston lost most of his

²¹ C.D.T. Cook, 'The Amung Way: the subsistence strategies, the knowledge and the dilemma of the Tsinga Valley people in Irian Jaya, Indonesia', PhD thesis, University of Hawai'i (Honolulu 1995), sub-chapter 4.1.

²² Wollaston, 'An expedition to Dutch New Guinea', 263.

²³ J.D. Ellenberger, 'A Century of "Hai" Movements among the Damal of Irian Jaya', in W. Flannery (ed.), *Religious Movements in Melanesia: A Selection of Case Studies and Reports* (Goroka 1983), 104–10.

personal effects, including his diary for the entire period in the mountains, which he then had to reconstruct from memory.²⁴ Although they are nowhere mentioned, the skulls in the NHM collection were evidently in another canoe.

Amungme accounts of the Wollaston Expedition

With no assistance forthcoming from Wollaston in answering the question of how the Amungme skulls were acquired, we must turn to the testimony of Amungme themselves. In the course of research into Amungme history, I have found that communities recall the past in considerable detail. The events of the 1912–13 Wollaston expedition are certainly vividly recounted in narratives still told today by older Amungme. Indeed the events of 1912–13 are not so distant in the past; the last surviving Amungme eyewitness of the Wollaston expedition, Munyak Jabame of Dolainningokin hamlet, died as recently as 1997 aged about 85 or 86 (he was an infant in 1912). Many living older Amungme heard eyewitness accounts of Wollaston's expedition from their parents or people of their parents' generation. At least 40 photographs of Amungme people were taken by members of the Wollaston expedition in 1912–13.²⁵ Copies of some of these images were distributed amongst communities of the Tsinga and Wa valleys during the course of my interviews, where they became the stimulus for much recollection of the 1912–13 events. The names of expedition members are recalled, and Wollaston is possibly identified by the Amungme name 'Koat Woret'. As the next European expedition to enter the Tsinga Valley did not arrive till 1950,²⁶ passing from east to west and not from the coast, there is little scope for confusion with the events of other contacts.

One Amungme account of the Wollaston expedition gives a sense of the quality of detail recalled:

They came to Atuagama [in the Tsinga Valley] and built a square house there. They killed pigs. In making their house, they cut wood pieces and strung them up on a string in the house the way we string pigs' jaws together. They went to Em Ponabak and built another house where the church now is. After two to three days, they went up the valley to look at the mountains. They then went up to En Nalat King [in the Upper Beana Valley], and built their house. Then they went further up to Wi Kare Bugin and built another house. This was a big long house, and they slept there. Pun Naigin Me [van de Water?] and Koat Woret [Wollaston?] left the others to cook food and went up [to the glacier]. One of them fixed a path and the other climbed up with a rope to the top, and took rocks from this place and that place and tied them up to take away.²⁷ They used chisels to chip off hunks of rock. When they were up on the rock they looked around at the whole area, wrote on paper, and left a mark ['tanda'] up there that they had been there. Then the one descended and pulled the rope back after him. This all happened when my father had just finished brideprice payments for my mother and had waited until she had her first period and was just ready to take her as his wife.²⁸

²⁴ Wollaston, *Letters and Diaries*, 149–50.

²⁵ Although the photographic collection, held at the Royal Geographical Society, is composed predominantly of conventional 'type' portraits and profiles of individuals, it does also include more relaxed scenes of groups of Amungme cooking and preparing a formal reception, and images of women and children in addition to the men, reinforcing both expedition and Amungme perceptions of the very cordial nature of their encounter.

²⁶ J.D. Veurman, 'Rondom het Carstensz-gebergte', *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, 68 (1951), 276–96.

²⁷ 'A sudden wall of rock appeared to block our way, but one of the natives managed to get up it followed by a Dayak carrying the Alpine rope (the same piece I took to N.G. in 1910 and never used). The rope was fastened to a rock about 100 feet up, and without it this place would have been really difficult and dangerous' (Wollaston, *Letters and Diaries*, 144).

²⁸ Noragame Beanal, 21 July 1997, taped interview with Chris Ballard, transcribed and translated by John D. Ellenberger.

Amungme recollections of the Wollaston expedition are dominated by the horror of the deaths of so many kin, held to be the consequence of attacks by spirits who are responsible for malaria and other diseases associated with the lowlands. Dutch missionaries establishing the first churches in the Tsinga Valley during the 1950s were shown some of the graves of those who died at lowland sites known to Amungme as Ki Oagam-ki Ningok-in (possibly corresponding to Wollaston's Observation Point Camp), Obi Arama and Jime (both at the base of the mountains, in the vicinity of Canoe Camp). According to Amungme accounts, the number of their dead was much greater than the 40-odd bodies counted by Wollaston; they describe how whole families were wiped out, and entire settlements were rendered unviable and abandoned as a result.

In the course of recounting one such narrative, Nigak-ki, a Natkime clan elder of the Wa Valley whose uncle had been amongst those who died, concluded by pulling his forefinger across his throat. I asked him to elaborate, and he told me how people who had been down to the expedition's Canoe Camp to search for the bodies of kin had found that the heads had been cut from a number of the corpses. There was no attempt to rationalise this strange occurrence, which was simply recalled as another remarkable detail from an extraordinary sequence of events. Subsequent enquiries have revealed that the loss of heads from several corpses is widely remembered, as are the identities of many of those who died.

Amungme hold recent ancestors in particular reverence and older Amungme continue to observe name-avoidance tabus in referring to deceased relatives of their parents' and grandparents' generations. As Wollaston noted, apparently at the Base Camp, corpses are buried by Amungme, with no part of the skeleton being retained. Amungme now, as then, react with horror and disgust to the suggestion that they might ever have traded or given away the skulls of dead relatives, or even those of unrelated Amungme.

'Unspeakable temptation' and the grounds for restitution

The date of acquisition described for Wollaston's collection of Amungme skulls, in March 1913, suggests that the loss of heads from some of the Amungme who died around the expedition's Canoe Camp can be attributed directly to the expedition. It appears likely that the heads were 'collected' during the first week of March, as the camp was being dismantled and the expedition prepared to descend the Setakwa River. By this time, the surviving Amungme visitors were also departing for their highland settlements. As a trained medical doctor, it is most likely that Wollaston himself either removed or supervised the removal of heads from at least four Amungme corpses.

Were these corpses found along the walking trails, or excavated from the graves around the base camps? If Nigak-ki's account is accurate, the headless corpses were found at the site of one of the camps, and Wollaston himself inadvertently directs us to one probable group of victims: 'A man and a woman died at one of the camps, leaving two children, one of whom also died, and nothing would induce any of the others to take away the remaining child, whom we eventually brought with us to Amboina'.²⁹ No more is heard of the survivor, but there is a chilling correspondence between the three corpses, including an adult man and woman and a child, and the genders and ages attributed to the skulls in the NHM collection.

In either case, it is extremely unlikely that the removal of skulls was performed with Amungme permission. The communities that descended to the base camps were all from a few closely related sub-clans, and no Amungme would have assented to the removal or trade of the head of a relative.³⁰ Wollaston must have known that his actions would not meet with Amungme approval, and I suggest that this is sufficient to explain his silence

²⁹ Wollaston, 'An expedition to Dutch New Guinea', 264.

³⁰ Inspection of the people in the expedition photographs, combined with local knowledge of the identity of the clans in the region and the individual victims of this event, suggests that the dead were probably drawn from the Anggaibak, Alomang, Bukaleng, Kilangan, Tingigilat, Tsungomol and Wanmang clans.

about the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of his collection of 'Utakwa River Mountain Papuan' skulls. A quiet and complex individual, not given to demonstrations of affection but intensely loyal to his friends, Wollaston evidently experienced a transformation in his views about Papuans during his two lengthy expeditions.³¹ Commenting in 1920 on an address to the Royal Geographical Society by the Government Anthropologist of the Territory of Papua, E.W. Pearson Chinnery, Wollaston defended the rights of Papuans to a form of self-determination, and declared his personal friendship for them:

You call them 'savages'. Many of these people ... are personal friends of mine. I have always found them to be a happy and cheerful people, sufficiently fed and suitably clad. So far as I know they are as truthful as most of us, and in many months I have spent with them, though they have had endless opportunities and unspeakable temptation, I have never known one of them to steal.³²

Wollaston's personal tragedy, perhaps, was that his sense of duty to science, and to colleagues in Cambridge such as Haddon, could so easily override any sense of obligation to the 'Mountain Papuans' who had brought him within reach of his own personal Eden, at the edge of the Carstensz glacier.

For Amungme, the tragedy of the 1913 deaths and the horror of the missing heads have been compounded by subsequent events. The next European expedition to Amungme territory, the Colijn expedition of 1936, which passed through the adjacent Wa Valley, also attracted crowds of Amungme to their lowland base camps in a reprise of the *hai* movement of 1913. Again, Amungme died in large numbers, probably of malaria on this occasion. Even these losses are overshadowed, however, by the establishment of the Freeport mine in the Wa Valley in 1967 (following reports of the discovery of copper and gold by the 1936 expedition), and the massive human rights abuses which have followed as a consequence of Amungme protest against their loss of land and other rights.³³ More than 200 Amungme have been killed by the Indonesian army garrison defending Freeport, which is now the world's single richest mine. Many more have been tortured, raped or imprisoned; hundreds have died of malnutrition and disease as refugees in the forest. The communities of the Tsinga Valley, literally decimated by the losses of 1913, have been repeatedly assaulted by aerial bombardment and ground troops since 1977. In a cruel if unconscious echo of Wollaston's theft of the Tsinga skulls in 1913, a critical strategy of the campaign of terror waged by the Indonesian security forces against the Amungme has been the removal and public display of body parts, and the withholding of these remains of the dead from the community.³⁴

³¹ An impression evidently gained by the President of the RGS, who closed the meeting at which Wollaston described his Utakwa River expedition with the following words: 'it is always with special pleasure that we listen to the narrative of a man representing our race, who in his work, under difficult circumstances and among strange peoples, has the art of ingratiating himself with the natives and showing kindness and warmth of sentiment towards them. It is quite clear that Mr. Wollaston is such a man, and from his narrative it was evident to us how much his heart was touched by the sad spectacle presented by the mortality among these poor people. However, the main point of view that affects us, meeting here, is that not of sentiment, but of addition to human knowledge ...'. Wollaston, 'An expedition to Dutch New Guinea', 272. The notice of Wollaston's death published in *The Geographical Journal*, 76 (1930), 64–6, attests to some of his personal qualities.

³² *The Geographical Journal* (1920), 457–8. Ironically, this statement by Wollaston has been reprinted in a volume devoted to tribal peoples, in which his stand is presented as a precursor to the modern movement for indigenous rights (J.H. Bodley (ed.), *Tribal Peoples and Development Issues: A Global Overview* (Mountain View, California 1988), 359–60).

³³ Details of some of these events are contained in H. Munninghoff, *Laporan Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Terhadap Penduduk Lokal, di Wilayah Sekitar Timika, Kabupaten Fakfak, Irian Jaya, Tahun 1994/1995* (Jayapura 1995); and Indonesian Evangelical Church (GKI) Mimika, Catholic Church, Three Kings Parish, Timika, Christian Evangelical Church, Mimika, *Report on Human Rights Violations and Disaster in Bela, Alama, Jila, and Mapnduma, Irian Jaya* (Timika 1998).

³⁴ Chris Ballard, 'The Signature of Terror: Violence, Memory and Landscape at Freeport', in B. David and M. Wilson (eds), *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Places* (Honolulu, in press).

A summary of these findings has been communicated to the Amungme community's peak representative body, the Traditional Amungme Council (the Lembaga Musyawarah Adat Suku Amungme, or LEMASA), and to its chair, Tom Beanal. Mr Beanal has called for restitution of the skulls and any other human material from the Amungme community, in order to allow for proper burial. The Natural History Museum has been advised to approach the Amungme community, through its representatives in LEMASA, in order to open discussion on this matter.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Amungme community, and in particular Tom Beanal as Chair of the Traditional Amungme Council (LEMASA), for their support for the broader project of which this note forms a part. Staff at the Natural History Museum, including Rob Kruszynski and Sam Collenette, generously assisted me in locating the skulls and furnished additional archival information. Michael Young and Meredith Wilson kindly offered comments on a draft, and Emily Brissenden re-drew the map.