

WEST PAPUA, ONLINE OPEN DAY
WEBINAR: SUN 19 APRIL 2020: 2~3pm



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Photo: Tommy Latupeirissa RMS

Welcome everybody to West Papua's first Webinar, brought on by this amazing covid-life we are living, locked up in our homes. I especially welcome our friends in the West Papua Rent Collective. And West Papua's other friends and supporters from around the world. I will talk later about what's going on behind Covid-19 in West Papua, but first I want to tell you about the Spanish Flu pandemic in West Papua after World War One.



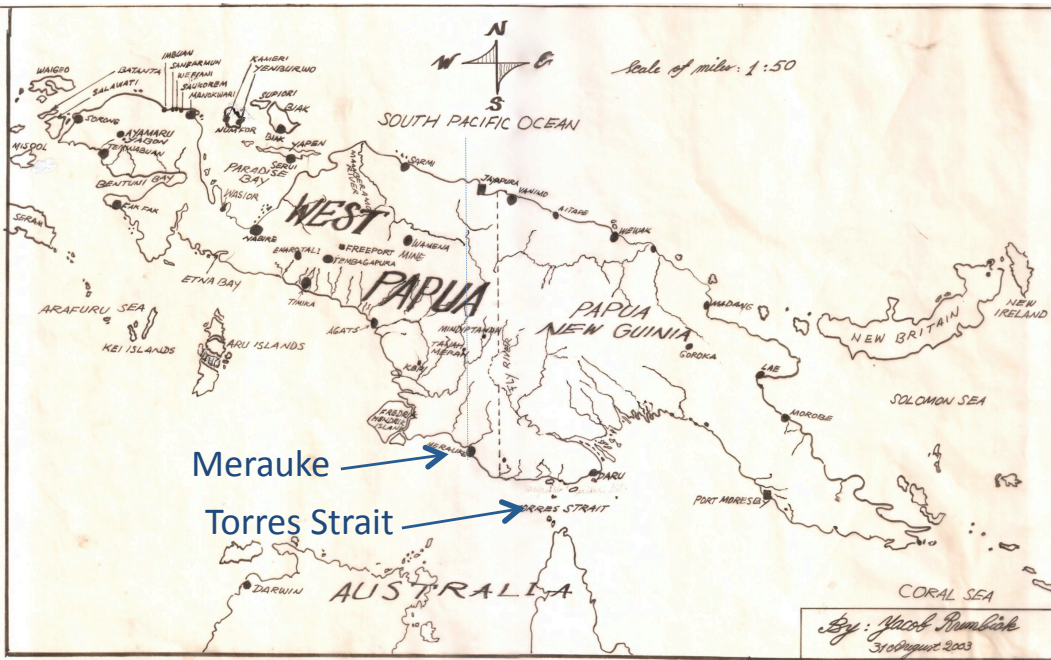


The Spanish Flu pandemic after World War One killed one in five Marind-Papuans.

The Marind are the really tall West Papuans from Merauke, on the south coast, near the Papua New Guinea border.

Marind woman in the southern lowlands of Papua (Leo Eland, circa 1931).





The Marind language is the only Papuan language spoken in Australian territory.

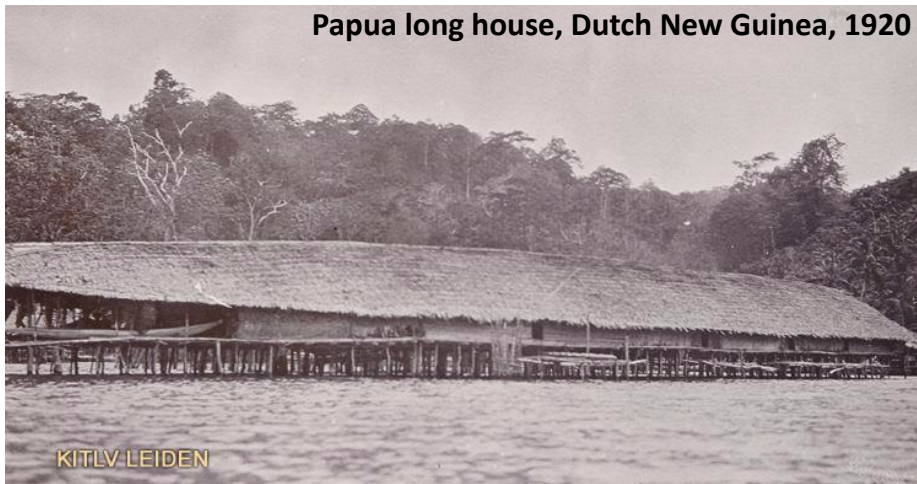
The Marind tribal-god BOMAI is also the most sacred god of the Torres Strait peoples.



Malo-Bomai by Noel Zaro (1999)

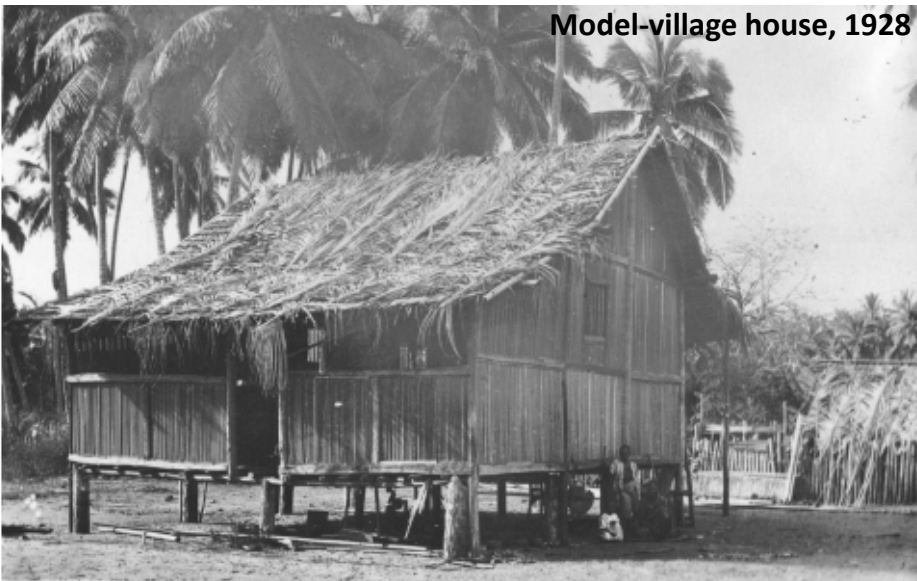


Papua long house, Dutch New Guinea, 1920



The missionaries tried to prevent the extinction of the Marind by replacing their tribal 'long-house' culture with 'model villages'.

Model-village house, 1928



The Marind had lived in their extraordinary long-houses for thousands of years. It was where community matters were discussed, ceremonies were held, wood-carvings were made, boys were taught about the spirits and the ancestors, marriages and head-hunting expeditions were organised.

Model villages were for nuclear families, not extended families. Little wooden huts in straight lines. It made it easier to govern and control the Marind, especially with their children removed to mission boarding schools where they were trained to become more 'civilised'.

Because of the Spanish Flu pandemic, Merauke became the down-sizing capital of the world. Remember this when Prime Minister Morrison says 'This is the end of life as we know it'.

