My name is Joel Enda Taira Sanata. I am going to tell the story of my father Taira Sarua Sanata. My father’s real name is Sanoto as given to him by the Japanese. Back in 1950 when the colonial Government came to do census and called for him he came and gave the name Sanoto: and they asked him ‘how did you get that name? When he replied and said I was given that name by the Japanese, so they changed it to Sanata. I do not want the Australians to get me wrong. Everybody knows me by that name. In Popondetta and the whole of PNG. I want to make my stand clear from the beginning that my father was not a Japanese spy! He was just an ordinary village man at the time of war. My father carried me from bush to bush mountain to mountain and from rivers to rivers to escape from the horrors of war. We thought that the war had already passed our village but no. One day between June and July of 1942 when we came to our villages from our hideouts from the bush a group of Japanese soldiers came to our village. This was the last group comprising mainly children-the so-called child soldiers. Their ages ranged from 12 to 18 years.
One morning they came and said: *sleep, sleep, sleep*, we all fell on the ground filled with great fear and panic and they said: Australia where? Australia where? Australia where? We all lay still on the ground not knowing what would become of us if we did not satisfy their request. In order to have us cooperate with them to fight against the Australians, their commander pointed his pistol on two young boys to fall out and come forward.

He then ordered them to climb onto a betel nut palm tree. After they reached a certain height he ordered them to stop. As we watched in curiosity but fearing them being shot dead, the Japanese commander instructed his soldiers (30 in all) to aim at the betel nut tree just above the boys heads and when ordered fired on the trees cutting a big hole on the trees above the boys heads. Then he ordered the boys who were already at the point of freezing to climb down. The boys actually jumped down. Then the Japanese commander said, if you don’t obey us by cooperating to attack the Australians we are going to make big holes in your heads just like what we’ve done to those betel nut trees!

At that point my father jumped out and said:

*Nao meni ta zoo*

*Nao meni ta zoo*

Don’t kill my son!

Don’t kill my son!

He pleaded with the Japanese to let the two boys go free. His cousin Kerega and him took over from there as the official Japanese guides throughout the war.

By then the War had already build up towards Port Moresby. Any way they went with the Japanese to Kokoda.

At Kokoda Captain Hito, said to another young officer---- you won’t go to Kokoda Track. He got a map and saw Chirima, Goilala and Kairuku [Delena] and said you will go to Delena and take Moresby from the rear [silence…… sobbing] so he got all the gear and rations and set out.

One Captain, corporal, and my father, were tasked to lead a group of 15 Japanese child soldiers to take a route north west of Port Moresby to Delena in the Kairuku District of Central Province. This plan proved a failure as we shall see. The group went past Mamba, taking that track as instructed. They arrived at a Rest House when it was almost late afternoon in the Chirima territory.

The three officers including my father went further to do a reconnaissance of the area while the troops remained. In their absence the local people slaughtered the whole party with their clubs, spears and stone axes. The three of the officers returned from their short patrol to learn that there were no sign of any of their soldiers. The corporal went to the rest house to investigate when he was attacked.

*Apio ol kilim mi nao yupela* escape. Apio I’m being attacked you have to escape. It was already night; Sanata headed for Mamba as it was his place. The Japanese captain went his own way up the river. They both got separated. Early in the morning they met again.

They were both saved and returned to Kokoda. At Kokoda everybody was busy. No one took notice of them. The Captain himself approached the high command and related the tale of the 15 child soldiers massacred by the carnivores of the Chirima Territory. The captain instructed them to help retrieve the dead and wounded as the Allied offensive gained momentum. In the process Apio was killed in action around Kokoda. The commanders of the Japanese had no choice but to decorate my father, with his mate’s peak cap, samurai sword, pistol and the rest of the uniform.

The Japanese officer said:
Sanato you take this cap, sword, gun, map and *beng- beng- beng* to go to Buna, Sananada and all the way to Tokyo. At that time the Australians were pursuing the Japanese, and one bullet just missed him by an inch. As the dead and wounded were being evacuated after they crossed the Kumusi River. Sanata was standing at the back of a vehicle. One thought came to him that he should escape. While they were busy he jumped out and escaped. He came to his village of Awala village all dressed in the Japanese military uniform. I kept my father’s sword and the uniform. Until 1951 when there was a volcanic eruption in Mt Lamingon.

We were escaping from the volcanic lava. Myself and my sister. It was God’s leading and ruling in my life that I was saved. The sword, the bag and the badge got lost. I left at the age of 14 years to live at Sogeri, it was not a new story. In 2008 the Post Courier went and I gave them this story. And where is the benefit out of this story?

My father was scared of the Japanese so he had to obey their orders. He served them out of fear. My father died in 1965.

*Japanese need to compensate my people. Japanese must come and see me.*

Japanese took women and raped, killed pig, took food; but Australia made a mistake/ they cut Oro people’s neck: 26 people at were beheaded at Higaturu. If I have money I will take Australia to court.

My brother was executed because there was no proper court case held to truthfully punish the offenders. As he was led up to the gallows: his last word was: men and brethren when a man faces death, it is because of his own wrong deeds; as for me I am about to die for someone else’s crimes.