

Name:	Lomas Tonu Ani
Date of interview:	Tuesday, 20 May 2014
Location of interview:	Hanau village, Oro Bay Rural LLG, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Barnabas Orere
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Duration of interview:	13:04:89
Main language of interview:	Orokaiva (translation by Maclaren Hiari, Barnabas Orere, Didymus Gerald)
Image:	

TRANSLATION OF INTERVIEW

I, Lomas Tonu Ani, of Hanau village, grandson of Raphael Oembari, who took part in World War Two when the Japanese landed on the coast of northern province. We are privileged to take part in the oral history project which includes the story of Raphael Oembari and other carriers who took part in carrying the supplies from bases inland to soldiers at Buna and then evacuating the wounded from the battlefield to Dobuduru. We are glad to be given the opportunity to tell the story of the carriers from Hanau village who took part in World War Two by exposing the accounts of individual carriers for the first time so the world could hear the oral accounts of the carriers who participated in World War Two.

Raphael Oembari is from Hanau, and I'm his grandson from Hanau village relating to his experiences for the Australians, and we're doing the recording now.

Our grandparents were village people of Hanau village, were in the village when the war came to Buna. Sebastian Goro, a police constable who comes from Sanananda village, came to recruit carriers at Hanau village.

We were told to carry supplies to Australian and American soldiers at Buna and on our return journey we evacuated the wounded to Dobuduru. We had been performing our task of carrying supplies from Dobuduru to Buna, evacuating the wounded for many days until on Christmas Day George Washington was wounded with other Australian and American soldiers. Our carriers took in turns to guide George Washington from the battlefield along the track when Raphael Oembari's turn came to take over. They were walking along when the photograph was taken. We carried the wounded on the stretchers or litters and walked to Dobuduru where they were treated and sent to Port Moresby, and George Washington died in Port Moresby.

When the war ended our carriers went to Oro Bay where a big celebration took place to mark the end of the war. A big bomb exploded as part of the celebration. This is the story of Ani Kaki.

My father is Osborne Tonu and he was a PIB soldier. He was at Hanau village when recruited as a soldier and taken to Sanananda village where he went to war. When he went to war he saw the way the Americans and Australians fighting the Japanese and he said, 'This is not right, you're all going to die if you continue this way. I will now give you instructions. Don't fight face to face, encircle or go round the back', and he found many of the enemies eating lunch, and that's when the Australians surprised them and killed them. It was lunchtime when my father finished them off [laughter].

The fighting went went went until it came to the Markham River which was infested with crocodiles. When the Australian and American soldiers got to the river they were faced with a dilemma: they couldn't cross the river because of the crocodiles. Osborne Tonu said he would volunteer to cross first and then, if he died, they could decide what to do next. So he tied a bundle of four dry coconuts; two he tied to his legs and the other two on his chest area, and he floated on it to get to the other side of the Markham River and safely landed. So his mates said 'OK, fine, we'll do the same', and as they were crossing, some made it and some didn't; the crocodiles ate them up.

When we got off the river we went to Lae and then to Bougainville. When we went to Bougainville my father was at the bottom of a hill and the Japanese position was on top of the hill and they were able to look down. It cost a lot of casualties. At that point my father and his mate scouted around the escarpment hanging on to bush vines, and with the machine gun they carried, they eliminated the Japanese position.

At the end of the war the Australian or American commander told Osborne Tonu that the next fight would be in an organized duel. The Japanese chose their soldier and the Australians and the Americans chose his father to fight. He fought the Japanese in the duel with bayonets – the Australians and Osborne Tonu against the Japanese, with bayonets and it was my father who bayoneted the Japanese. In the duel, my father shot the Japanese and he fell down. After my father killed the Japanese the war came to an end and then they sent my father home.

Next account of Ruth Ani.

My mother is Ruth Ani. She was recruited and taken to No. 3 camp where she did laundry with other girls. There were 40,000 pieces washed each week [according to official war records between 25000 and 30000 from seven hospitals in the Dobuduru, Oro Bay, Base B area]. She was working at No. 3 camp which is located near Girua airstrip until the war came to an end.

Q: Did your father receive any medals?

A: Yes, my father Osborne Tonu did receive medals. One, it was round. It had a picture of a lion on it. Two, a star. Three had a red stripe, four the same. The medals were given to RO and kept by him for some time until he gave it to my mother who kept them and later gave them to her son, Nathaniel Ani and they got lost [SWALLOWS HARD].

Q: Were there other women beside Ruth Ani, say from Barisari Siremi areas doing laundry?

A: Yes, but my mother did not give me their names except for one, Morica.

