

Name:	Keith Tembure
Date of interview:	Tuesday, 20 May 2014
Location of interview:	Hanau village, Oro Bay Rural LLG, Northern Province
Chief interviewer:	Didymus Gerald
Time interview concluded:	3:38 PM
Duration of interview:	03:40:22
Main language of interview:	Orokaiva
Image:	

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER:

Interview number 5, Hanau Village, May 20 2014. Can you begin by telling us your name, the village you come from, and your father's story during the war.

TEMBURE

My name is Keith Tembure. I am going to tell the story of my father, Dandase Perija. My father was one of many Orokaivan men from villages in the Dobuduru area who were recruited by ANGAU officers to work as carriers and labourers for the Australian soldiers during the fighting along the Kokoda Trail and later for both Australian and American soldiers during the Buna Battle. In fact, my father was one of the 25 men from Hanau, Nahihita, and Garuro Villages who were recruited at Dobuduru in August 1942.

INTERVIEWER

Did ANGAU officers explain to the men and the village people why they were being recruited?

TEMBURE

After my father and other native men were recruited at Dobuduru, one ANGAU officer explained to the men that their work was to support the white soldiers to fight the Japanese and chase them out of Papua by helping to build staging camps and towns, food supplies depots, roads and bridges, airstrips, medical facilities, other things like water supplies, toilets by clearing bushes and grasslands in the Dobuduru-Oro Bay area, and to carry food supplies and ammunition from boats on the coast at Boro, Hariko, and Cape Sudest to staging camps at Siremi, Dobuduru, and Barisari before taking them to Jiropa Plantation.

INTERVIEWER

What were the reactions of the village people to the Japanese landing on the coast?

TEMBURE

My father was an ordinary village man before he was recruited to be one of the carriers and labourers. The native carriers and labourers including my father were recruited after the Japanese landed at Buna, Sanananda, and Gona. Before the Japanese soldiers landed at Buna, Sanananda, and Gona, their warships began firing machine guns at Buna, Sanananda, and Gona. The firing of machine guns shook the ground like thunder and lightning. The people on the coastal villages fled and ran to hide in the bushes and jungle inland. The people were terrified and frightened. They did not know to do, but just ran away for their lives. My father and our village people were amongst those who fled to hide and stay in the bush. They were frightened of the Japanese whom they did not know well. Our people only know Australians who worked with the Papuan people for many years before the war came, but the Japanese were different people whom our people never knew before.

INTERVIEWER

What work did your father's gang do?

TEMBURE

Our people were still living in the jungle or bush homes when ANGAU officers with Papuan policemen went looking for them in order to locate them at care centres for ANGAU to look after them, and to recruit strong men to become carriers and labourers. My father and other men were recruited while the Japanese were fighting Australians and pushing them to fall back to Kumusi River, Gorari, Oivi, Kokoda, Deniki, and Isurava. My father and other men did not see Australian soldiers fighting the Japanese until the Kokoda fighting was over. My father's group of carriers and labourers were not given uniforms, but they worked just like the normal pre-war labourers. They built staging camps, cleared grounds, bushes and grasslands to hoist Australian and American soldiers coming to fight the Japanese. They built shelters and camps, toilets, food stores, and cleared bush tracks from the coast to inland camps. They carried out many jobs without seeing the white soldiers fighting the Japanese.

INTERVIEWER

Did ANGAU officers explain to the people about the war?

TEMBURE

ANGAU officers accompanied by Papuan policemen visited the people in both villages and bush homes to tell them that the war was not started in Papua and New Guinea by Australians and Americans, but by the Japanese who wanted to take land away from the Papuan people. ANGAU officers told our people to support the white soldiers and fight and chase the Japanese out of Papua so that the native people can keep their land. My father told me that this was one of the reasons the native people supported the white soldiers to fight and defeat the Japanese in Papua, but he says that his friends and himself were not compensated for their war services until they passed away. I

am not happy with the Australians for not looking after our wartime carriers and labourers including my father.

INTERVIEWER

What did your father's gang do during Buna Battle?

TEMBURE

When the Buna Battle started, my father and other native carriers and labourers worked hard carrying ammunition and food supplies from Dobuduru and Siremi to Jiropa Plantation to give them to Australian and American soldiers who ate and fought the Japanese. Carrying loads of cargo for government officials, planters, miners, and missionaries before the war came to Papua was an easy work, but during the war, it was the hard and dangerous work because some native men lost their lives. The firing of guns and exploding of bombs was a new thing to the people. It was not a tribal war with spears, shields and clubs. It was a different war. It was a frightening and terrifying war. It was the war of killing thousands and thousands of men, and destroying people's properties, villages, and gardens.

INTERVIEWER

What did your father think of the war?

TEMBURE

My father told me that he did not like the war, but he had to work together with other native men to help the white soldiers. He said the war was very bad and cruel, and did not like to see similar war fought in Papua, but he passed away with lots of bitter memories, some of which he had not shared with his children like me. But I am glad to share a small part of his war memories so that other people will know the roles of our men who took part in the war without wearing uniform. My father told me that he called the native carriers and labourers as "two-legged black horses." I felt very sad for him and his gang when I heard him say these words, but I am very angry with the Australian Army for doing nothing for our men after the war.

INTERVIEWER

Did your father become one of the stretcher-bearers at Buna?

TEMBURE

My father was one of stretcher-bearers of wounded and sick Australian and American soldiers who evacuated them from Buna to hospitals at Siremi and Dobuduru during the Buna Battle. Raphael Oimbari was my father's other brother who worked on Buna-Siremi-Dobuduru track for many weeks. My father did not see Raphael Oimbari being photographed on the track, but he says he knew that Raphael Oimbari guiding George Whittington along the track. My father says Hanau people are feeling happy that Raphael Oimbari became a famous person in the famous war photograph. His photograph had made our people proud and the young generation like me is telling the story of this photo to other people when opportunity arises.

INTERVIEWER

What did your father and other men did after Buna Battle?

TEMBURE

After the Buna Battle, my father and many hundreds of other native carriers and labourers were transported by the Australian Army by boats from Buna to Salamaua to help Australian and American soldiers to fight the Japanese there because there were not enough black men to help. Unfortunately, my father and several other Papuans lost their lives during Salamaua fighting due to

sickness, hunger, and Japanese fire. ANGAU officers who were based at Dobuduru received the news of my father's death and one day visited our family in Hanau Village and broke the sad news. We do not know how our father died and which in place in Salamaua. This happened in July or August 1943.

INTERVIEWER

Did the family feel bad about Dandase Perija's death?

TEMBURE

After the family received the news of the death of my father, my uncle named Amos Perija offered to follow the footsteps of my father to serve in the war by helping Australian soldiers to fight the Japanese. He told the family: "I want to go to war like my brother so I am going to the ANGAU Office in Dobuduru and sign to become a policeman by joining the Papuan Police Force." So Amos Perija joined Police Force at Dobuduru in August 1943 and was flown to Port Moresby with other recruits, and trained for three months at Bisiatabu Police Training Depot near Sogeri. After training he came to Dobuduru and together with other Papuan policemen, they looked after the native people in maintaining law and order in the Northern District until the war came to an end in August 1945. He automatically transferred from ANGAU to the civil administration still in the Police Force and worked until he retired from the Police Force at the end of 1946. He returned home to live with the people of Hanau Village. For his war service, he was awarded the Pacific Star, and 1939- 1945 Australian Service Medal. And I am keeping his medals now.

INTERVIEWER

Thank you very much. Thank you for telling your father's story.