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**Topic: Mollusc species: What more is there?**

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### **Abstract**

Where villages nestled near the sea, their lively hood depends on the sea. Ewasse is one of the eight villages of the Maututu area which speak the Maututu dialect of the Nakanai or Lakalai language.

A community with a primary school and five churches, it shares a boundary with the major oil palm industry which is Hargy Oil Palms. With the company near the village, the sea which provides for the villagers is at stake of losing some of the shellfish eaten by the people. From the sand to the reef, shell fish is found.

In yesteryears, one would just swim to the reef spots to collect it. That is not the scenario today as some shellfish consumed by the locals are no longer found. With the scarcity of the shellfish being found, most have turned to another mollusc which is found near the beach.

With the disappearance of some shellfish, the talk of this paper is to document the remaining molluscs with its vernacular names in the Nakanai or Lakalai language before it disappears. Late A.Chowning, in 1962 with other anthropologists found out that Nakanai was actually Lakalai because the 'Lakalai' language does not have the /n/ phoneme. The alveolar nasal [n] was replaced by the [l]. Due to borrowing words from the Tolai language of East New Britain, the name Nakanai was being used till to date.

The pictures of the molluscs and where it is found is important to be recorded as the next generation might not be able to see the molluscs whom their ancestors once consume as protein.

With the copy right of our traditional items being exposed to piracy, valuable shells might lose its value. The upcoming generation who are likely to lose everything in the name of development and money will be even more confused if there's nothing to get back up from, like going back to their roots where raw information is gathered.

Reference:

Chowning, A and Goodenough, H.W., 2014, A dictionary of the Lakalai (Nakanai) Language of New Britain, Papua New Guinea, School of Culture, History and Language, Australia National University.

P.Kuvi, 2022, Personal communication, Ewasse, Bialla, WNB, 18 August

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### **Mollusc species: What more is there?**

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a mollusc is a small creature with a soft body that is divided into different sections and usually has a hard outer shell.

A shell fish is an example of a mollusc. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary also states that shell fish is a creature with a shell that lives in water especially one of the types that can be eaten. Oysters and crabs are examples of shell fish and so are clams which are shells that have two parts which can open and close.






From the swampy areas of the rooted mangroves to the black sand where one walks on at the sea shore, to the plain sand dunes and among the sea weeds, a variety of clams are found.






This paper has its main focus on the vernacular names of the clams consumed by the locals in the Maututu area of the Lakalai tribe of West New Britain Province in Papua New Guinea. It is likely to differ in other parts of the Lakalai and the other tribes within the province or elsewhere.






#### *The type of shellfish consumed by the locals*






Many shellfish are consumed by the locals especially those that live along the coastal areas. The Maututu villages are Mataururu, Matililiu, Ewasse, Gomu, Urumaili, Apupul, Baikakea and Bubu. In some villages, a few shells are found whereas in others it differs.






In Ewasse village alone where much of this research is carried out, the people use to consume thirty different shellfish.

| No | LAKALAI<br>VERNACULAR<br>NAME | ENGLISH NAME | WHERE THE<br>MOLLUSC IS FOUND  | HOW TO FIND THE<br>MOLLUSC   | PICTURE OF MOLLUSC  |
|----|-------------------------------|--------------|--|--|---|
| 1  | <i>e Babali</i>               | Oyster       | It is stuck to rotten woods at the beach.<br>Babali is found with the tilo and pulete.                             | Use a knife to dig out the fleshy meat or the hard shell from the log.<br>Babali can be eaten raw as well. |    |
| 2  | <i>e Tilo</i>                 | Oyster       | It is stuck to rotten woods at the beach.<br>Tilo is found with the babali and pulete.                             | Use a knife to dig out the fleshy meat or the hard shell from the log.                                     |    |
| 3  | <i>e Pulete</i>               | Oyster       | It is stuck to rotten woods at the beach.<br>Pulete is found with the babali and tilo.                             | Use a knife to dig out the fleshy meat or the hard shell from the log.                                     |    |
| 4  | <i>la Kasi Kaskuru</i>        | Clam         | It is found in the swampy areas especially where there are mangroves.<br>Kaskuru is round and smooth.              | Clams can be seen and picked if its low tide or felt with the fingers or legs and picked if its high tide. |   |
| 5  | <i>la Kasi Galebu</i>         | Clam         | It is found in the swampy areas especially where there are mangroves.<br>Galebu is the biggest of the three clams. | Clams can be seen and picked if its low tide or felt with the fingers or legs and picked if its high tide. |  |





|    |                     |                 |   |   |   |
|----|---------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|
| 6  | <i>la kasi Iili</i> | Clam            | It is found in the swampy areas especially where there are mangroves. Ilive has a sharp edge. | Clams can be seen and picked if its low tide or felt with the fingers or legs and picked if its high tide |    |
| 7  | <i>e Pukoko</i>     | Bean clam       | The smallest of the bean clams. It is found on the sandy beach.                               | By digging the sand.  |    |
| 8  | <i>e Sesege</i>     | Small bean clam | Much bigger then the bean clams. It is found on the sandy beach.                              | By digging the sand.  |    |
| 9  | <i>e Vialo</i>      | Soft white clam | This clam has a sharp edge with a tongue shape tail which stretches in when touched.          | Use a spade or knife to dig the area where the vialo is found.  |   |
| 10 | <i>e Tumo</i>       | Shiny Clam      | With a very smooth skin, tumo is found in the sand.   | Digging the sand to get it.   |  |

|    |                      |                    |  |   |   |
|----|----------------------|--------------------|--|---|---|
| 11 | <i>e Keme</i>        | Clam               | Found in the sand along with other clams.  | Digging the sand to get it.   |    |
| 12 | <i>e Kakea</i>       | White hard clam    | Found in the sand along with other clams.  | Digging the sand to get it.   |    |
| 13 | <i>e Tomtomsuba</i>  | Smooth white clam  | Found in the sand along with other clams.  | Digging the sand to get it.   |    |
| 14 | <i>e Kukule visu</i> | Razor clam         | Found in the sand along with other clams.  | Digging the sand to get it.   |   |
| 15 | <i>e Suba</i>        | Soft skin and tail | Found in the sand along with other clams. Suba has a flat hole. The tails known as laga can be eaten raw with coconuts or other root vegetables. | Collectors have to feel the flat hole with their fingers then use a digging stick known as <i>la toh</i> to dig and pull out the suba. During low tides, spades are used to dig the sand. |  |



|    |                   |               |  |  |   |
|----|-------------------|---------------|--|--|---|
| 16 | <i>e</i> Sumsumu  | Brown Mussel  | Found in the sand along with other clams.                                | Digging the sand to get it.  |    |
| 17 | <i>la</i> Tire    | Flat Clam     | Found in the sand along with other clams.                                | Digging the sand to get it.  |    |
| 18 | <i>e</i> Kumuru   | Hard clam     | Found in the sand along with other clams.                                | Digging the sand to get it.  |    |
| 19 | <i>e</i> Buru     | Alphabet cone | Found in the sand along with other clams.                                | Digging the sand to get it.  |   |
| 20 | <i>e</i> Margurai | Bivalve       | Margurai is found with seuselu at Patrol Post near the Biialla Airstrip. | Collectors will have to dig through little stones, overturn it to find this clams. |  |

|    |                   |                     |   |   |   |
|----|-------------------|---------------------|---|---|---|
| 21 | <i>la Gegeru</i>  | Brown mussel        | Found in the sand along with other clams.   | Digging the sand to get it. Collectors have to be careful when pulling out gegeru.                                  |    |
| 22 | <i>e Veuve</i>    | Sea snail           | Found in the sand along with other clams.   | Digging the sand to get it.   |    |
| 23 | <i>e Pogo</i>     | Hard Clam           | Only a few pogo are found with the masalo when stuck on the stones. Most of the pogo is found on the coral reefs. | Digging the sand to get it.   |    |
| 24 | <i>la Goh</i>     | Sharp tail          | Where the three types of kasi is found, goh can also be found in the mangroves.                                   | The sharp tail can be seen and picked if its low tide or felt with the fingers or legs and picked if its high tide. |   |
| 25 | <i>e Mata kea</i> | White eye sea snail | Found in the sand along with other clams.   | Digging the sand to get it.   |  |



|    |                  |                       |  |  |   |
|----|------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| 26 | <i>e</i> Seuselu | Purple Mussel         | Seuselu is found with margurai at Patrol Post near the Bialla Airstrip.  | Collectors will have to dig through little rocks, overturn it to find this clam. |    |
| 27 | <i>e</i> Artoto  | Design clam           | Artoto is easily found with tumo, keme, kakea, mata kea and kumuru.  | Digging the sand to get it.  |    |
| 28 | <i>e</i> Mata    | Black eye             | E mata is found when stuck on rotten logs at the beach or on stones.   | Can be easily picked if seen on the logs or the stones.                          |    |
| 29 | <i>e</i> Vue     | Small brown soft clam | Not many vue is found. A collector can have less than five of it. It was previously gone but is back in the sea now. Vue is much smaller than lakasi lamago. | Digging the sand to get it.  |  |



|    |                        |                     |  |   |   |
|----|------------------------|---------------------|--|---|---|
| 30 | <i>la</i> Kasi la mago | Big brown soft clam | Just like the vue not many lakasi lamago is found. While the other | Digging the sand to get it.                             |  |
| 31 | <i>e</i> Masalo        | Blood clam          | Just like mata, masalo is stuck on to big stones.                  | To get masalo, stones must be overturned to collect it. |  |

The list of shellfish consumed by the locals will increase as the research continues. Thirty of the sorted is from Ewasse village when this research was conducted. The shellfish *la* goh only have shell remains in Ewasse but is in abundance in the Maututu neighbouring villages like Mauturu, Baikakea and Bubu.

### **The use of *e* and *la* in the terms for the shellfish**

The use of *e* and *la* varies as how scholar linguists, anthropologist and other researchers have understood it. More readings on the use of this can be found in the Nakanai language written by Ray Johnston in 1980 and Ann Chowning in the Dictionary of the Lakalai of 2014. From the area to which this research is carried out, the letter *e* is distinctive of use as a prefix like *e* mata will refer to the ‘small white eye sea snail’ but if one has to refer to it as *la* mata it would mean the ‘eye’ which could mean a different thing together. The Lakalai speakers use *e* in front of names of plants and animals as well as names of people. The two letter word *la* is used as a prefix in the names of plants and animals and not people. The use of *la* on the other hand serves as a prefix as in the word ‘la haro’ for ‘midday’ or as in the prefix and suffix ‘la harola’ for ‘a good day’.

### **How to prepare clams for eating**

1. The clams are washed properly in the sea after being collected. It is left overnight in a bowl or pot of sea water so that the sand is removed. It is then boiled or creamed with coconut milk to be served with other vegetables.
2. It can also be boiled with the hard shells removed and the meat fried with greens or other ingredients.
3. On special occasions, the shells are wrapped in banana leaves after being creamed with the coconut cream then put in the hot earth oven or mumu to be served with other root vegetables.
4. When the clams are boiled and removed, it can also be put in broom sticks then fried or out on the open fire.
5. The clams can also be cooked on open fire which is crunchy and very delicious as the clams get stuck to its shells when roasted.

### **How to prepare oysters for eating**

1. Oysters are found on logs lying along the beach or on the sand. In some areas it is stuck to the stones. Remove the oysters using a knife.
2. The small oysters called babali can be eaten raw when extracted. Tilo can be cooked on open fire or boiled. Babali is also cooked.

### **Shellfish collection: A source of income**

Although many people in the village collect shellfish as a substitute to protein, others also earn income from it. They would collect a dish full of the clams to sell to people who are interested in purchasing it.

### **A belief about shellfish collection**

When a lady craves for shellfish and goes to collect shellfish, most ladies are likely to crave for that particular shellfish as well. When many ladies and girls go to collect a particular clam, they would be querying among themselves about the new pregnancy. Previously when most ladies crave to eat a particular clam, it would be later known that there is a new pregnancy from a new mother. This belief is no longer effective for what reason is not known.

### **Why do a research on the shellfish consumed by the community?**




When the sea was crystal blue in the past with the sandy beach stretching out to the sea and low tide went as far as the shallow reefs, many shellfish were consumed. As the years toiled on, so do the disappearance of some of this type of protein which was consumed by the locals. Moreover, the old folks have passed on especially the women taking with them some vernacular names of the shellfish. The women are known to providing this type of shellfish for the family's meal. Even when there is a big feast, the clams in rich coconut milk was a light protein consumed with a dry mumu tapiok, kaukau, taro or singapore.

Kids who find dead shells along the beach thought it was washed ashore from elsewhere without realising that their sea was once full of such shells.

**Better preserve then prolong before extinction creeps in**

This research have drawn an interest in the younger generation as not many of them know the vernacular names. As the clams were collected to be stored safely, the kids use to give different names but have to be corrected.

**Random shots of the mollusc collection**

| Mollusc collection shots  | Activity done   | Mollusc collection shots  | Activity done  |
|---|---|---|--|
|    | <p>Pauline looking for babali, tilo and pulete.</p>                   |    | <p>May looking for sesege.</p>   |
|   | <p>At Patrol Post, Heni looking for margurai, seuselu and masalo.</p> |   | <p>Elma and Mayleen eating the raw tail of the suba known as laga.</p> |
|  | <p>Giao digging suba using a spade during low tide.</p>               |  | <p>Little Lyne and Mololoa with their collection of clams.</p>         |

## **Reference and bibliography**

Chowning, A and Goodenough, H.W., 2014, A dictionary of the Lakalai (Nakanai) Language of New Britain, Papua New Guinea, School of Culture, History and Language, Australia National University.

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