

The "Platform" Phenomenon along the Northern Coast of New Guinea

By LEO MEISER S. V. D.

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1. Introduction

Rev. W. TRANEL, in his article on the Moando people¹ (southeast of Bogia, Territory of New Guinea), uses the well-known term "Platform", and he states that this term applies, in that particular area and in the Bogia district in general, to a social unit of men with a definite name and clearly defined social duties. Whether the word originally indicated a real object, as it suggests, is according to TRANEL an unsolved problem.

But it seems quite evident, from the literature on New Guinea and Papuan cultures, that the term as applied to the social unit did indeed originate from a wooden platform in the literal sense². B. Z. SELIGMAN shows photographs of various kinds of such platforms from several villages along the Papuan coast, from the Central District of Koita all the way eastward to Milne Bay.

For about five years, prior to 1943, I was a missionary among the Kaeen people, who live northwest of Bogia, i. e., between Bogia and the Ramu River, and during that time I gathered material concerning certain features of their social culture, including data about the platforms.

¹ Völkerkundliche und sprachliche Aufzeichnungen aus dem moándo-Sprachgebiet in Nordost-Neuguinea. *Anthropos* 47, 1952. pp. 460 ff.

² B. Z. SELIGMAN, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*. Cambridge 1910. pp. 17-23, 60-65, 139, 463, 560 f., 633-635, 637. — A. C. HADDEN, *Headhunters, Black, White and Brown*. London 1901. pp. 208, 232. — R. E. GUISE, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* (London) 28, 1899. pp. 205-215.