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**Innovation and Interpretation of Spiritual Imagery**  
**Children's Art in the Wabag Diocese of the Catholic Church,**  
**Enga Province, Papua New Guinea**

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## Abstract

There is a problem with children's art in Western culture as it is not seen outside the school classroom as art. This thesis challenges this perception of art and examines the evolution of a collection of children's biblical drawings during the 1970s in Catholic mission churches based in Enga, a province of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The mission village children absorbed the imagery of unknown Western artists and interpreted it within their own experience, and in so doing, they created a new school of Christian art. The first chapters of the thesis concentrate on literary research, defining the character of children's art within the complex milieu of Western art aesthetics. Research was completed during a two week field trip to the Wabag Catholic Diocese of Enga, and forms the foundation of this thesis. My research documents and analyses the iconography of the art and the importance this art holds in Enga mission culture. A vital component of this research was the information supplied by artists and field workers interviewed at the time. My research has revealed the power of children's art as a visual language in a (then) illiterate society. This thesis proves that the narrative quality of the children's art inspires Christian devotion and it establishes the originality of the work and its unique position in traditional Christian art especially in a cross-cultural context.

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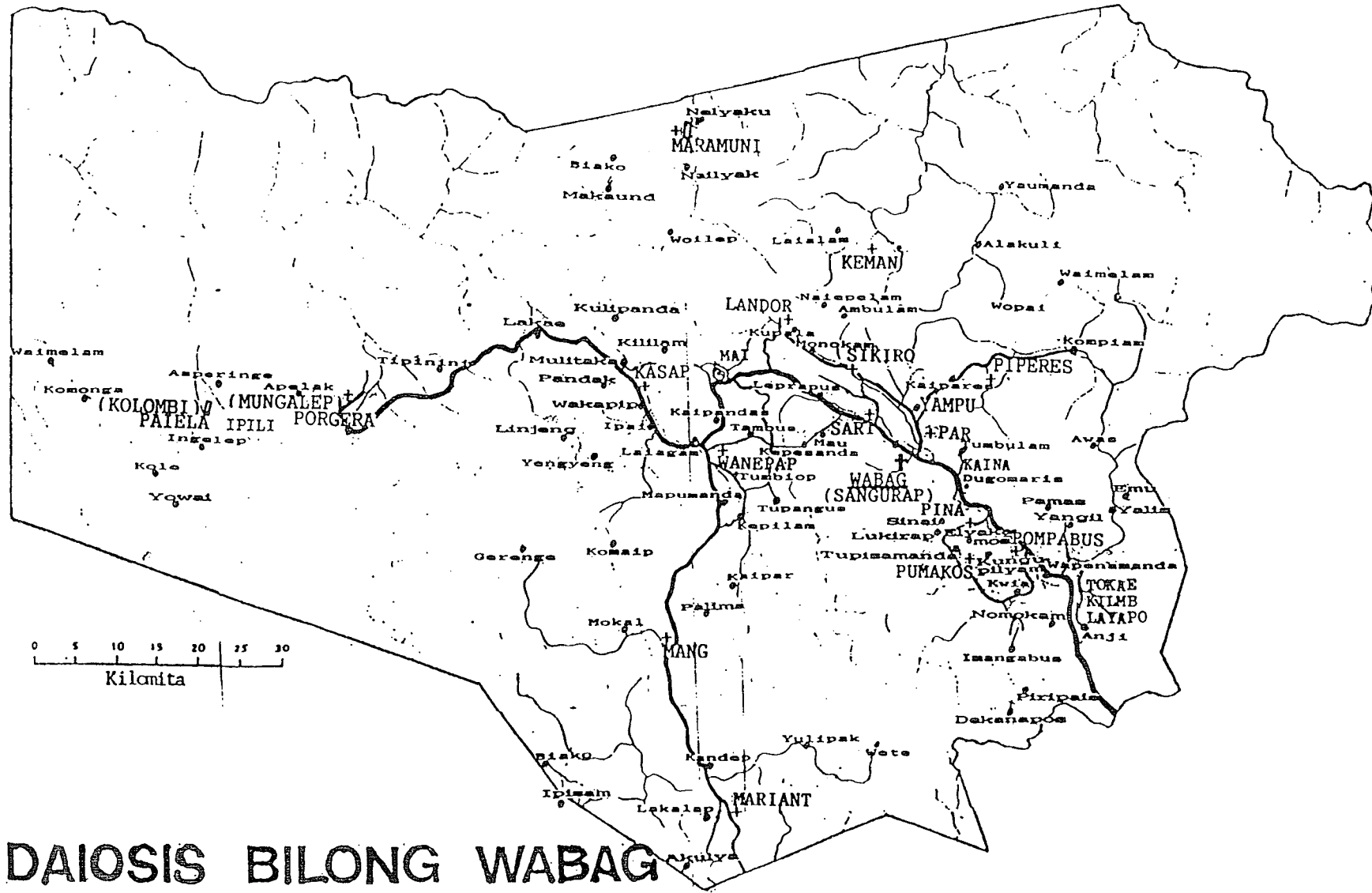
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The map, *Daisos Bilong Wabag* has been included courtesy of the Diocese of Wabag Administrative Office, Enga Province, Papua New Guinea.

### **Abbreviations of organisations cited**

CSMA	Comgregatio Sancti Michaelis Archangeli, the Congregation of St. Michael the Archangel, (The Michaelites).
OED	Osterreichischer Entwicklungsdienst, The Austrian Service for Development Cooperation.
RSM	The Religious Sisters of Merci.
SVD	Societas Verbi Divini, The Society of the Divine Word.



**DAIOSIS BILONG WABAG**