Chapter Five

The Return of the Two Sisters: Administration and Mission after World War II

> …everywhere where there are signs made, there is the possibility and the likelihood that the sign-maker and the sign-seer will have a manipulative strategy to effect in someone else some meaning (Dening 1993:81)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers Kamoro engagement and interpretation of the "foreign" following World War II. After an initial period relatively free from of foreign presence marked by a revival of formerly banned ceremonies such as *mirimu-kame* (nose-piercing), the Kamoro were faced with the return of the *Kompeni* (the Dutch Administration) and the Catholic Church. Unlike their previous experience of a gradual escalation in interactions with the Dutch resulting in unbalanced exchange relationships in the foreigner's favour, post-war engagement was radically different; the foreigners seemed to make *kata* increasingly available to the Kamoro. At the same time the Dutch seemed increasingly interested in understanding the internal dynamics of Kamoro culture. Indeed through the concerted efforts of the Dutch mission and administration, the period between 1945 and 1962 became the best-documented era of West New Guinea history and ethnography, and Mimika stands out as exemplary of the wealth of information

generated from this period. The depth of Dutch interest and documentation of Kamoro social organisation, spirituality, and history created a more lively conjunctural space between the Kamoro and the outsiders. While the *amoko-kwere* that I presented in the previous chapters tended to *suggest* various aspects of engagement and incorporation of foreign elements, the *amoko-kwere* collected during this period mark a more comprehensive and explicit incorporation of the foreign. This is due both to increased investment in socio-economic development activities (for the Kamoro this most tangibly meant an increased flow of *kata*) and to explicit attempts of the Dutch to engage with the Kamoro via indigenous means. The church for example actively sought indigenous parallels for Biblical lessons and the administration attempted to use indigenous social organisation in village administration. From Kamoro perspectives, the intensified efforts of the Dutch were easily understood, as one of the *amoko-kwere* presented in this chapter explains. Among Kamoro in the heavily populated Wania River area, the Catholic Mission and the Dutch Administration were perceived as the descendants of two sisters who were Kamoro *amoko-we*.

From the perspective of the Dutch, the focused engagement with the Kamoro was part of a much broader political battle with its former colony, which had become the independent Republic of Indonesia. Together, the administration and the church emphasised *kemajuan*, progress, in Mimika in a combined effort toward the decolonisation of West New Guinea. After a brief introduction to the political agendas and events that shaped Dutch administrative policies in West New Guinea, this chapter analyses how the Kamoro interpreted and reformulated the activities of the two most prominent executors of these policies: the Catholic Mission and the Dutch Administration. The chapter closes with an account of Kamoro expectations of large-scale changes by the end of the period of Dutch decolonisation. Surprisingly, these changes had little to do with the impending transfer to the United Nations then Indonesian administration.

CONTEXTUALISING THE POST-WAR ERA IN WEST NEW GUINEA

On August 17 1945, not long after Japanese capitulation, Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesian independence. For them the end of World War II meant liberation for all of the former Netherlands East Indies, including West New Guinea, from the Dutch. The Dutch however had other ideas and had already by the end of World War II determined that West New Guinea should be held apart from the rest of the Netherlands Indies. At the end of the war the Allied Forces installed the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) which consisted primarily of former Dutch administrators to take at least short term administrative responsibility for the former colony. The establishment of NICA demonstrated Dutch intentions to re-assert administrative control over West New Guinea prior to any post-war resolutions with the newly independent Indonesian state despite the fact that negotiations had indeed begun. In 1949 talks between the two countries had culminated in a United Nations-assisted resolution: Dutch surrender of the former Netherlands East Indies to the newly independent Indonesian State led by President Sukarno. West New Guinea however was not included in the surrender and was to be the subject of further arbitration, beginning a protracted argument regarding the future political status of West New Guinea.[1] Negotiations over West New Guinea's future had had reached a standstill by 1953. The Indonesian argument questioned the legality of Dutch sovereignty; from their perspective nothing less than the complete decolonisation of all of the Netherlands East Indies was acceptable.[2] The Dutch argument on the other hand held that New Guinea was geographically, environmentally, and perhaps most important racially distinct from the rest of the Indonesian archipelago.[3] Further

---

[1] The transfer was the result of what became known as "The Round Table" conference held in The Hague.

[2] The Indonesian inclusion of West New Guinea as a political move mirrors the Dutch inclusion of West New Guinea for similar reasons as discussed in Chapter Three. Although I don't take it up extensively in this thesis, the Dutch argument of the 1950s and 1960s generally resembles current West Papuan arguments in terms of emphasis on racial difference supporting a collective Papuan identity (or identities) as opposed to an "Indonesian" identity.

[3] Admittedly this is an oversimplification of both arguments. The "official rationale" for the Dutch desire not to relinquish West New Guinea was in accordance with Article 73 of the United

talks over West New Guinea's future proved futile, with neither side willing to make concessions.[4] The battle over the future political status of West New Guinea grew increasingly controversial; small-scale tactical skirmishes threatened to escalate into larger scale military engagement with international ramifications.[5]

As talks continued to break down, Dutch financial investment in West New Guinea soared, while the return on the investment remained statistically similar

---

Nations Charter. This meant that West New Guinea was to be administered as a "non-self-governing territory to be developed as soon as possible to some form of self-government by its autochthonous population" (Jaarsma 1991:130). From the perspective of the Dutch populace at home, domestic political considerations, and a desire to maintain status as a colonial power and to retain influence in the Pacific figured prominently. Also Dutch Eurasians who faced persecution in Indonesia wished to resettle in Manokwari (in West New Guinea) as a safe haven outside of Indonesia. The Dutch were also concerned that Papuans had played no role in the negotiations regarding their own territory. Pouwer (1999) provides a general overview of the Dutch perspective on the decolonisation and Indonesian re-colonisation of New Guinea. The issue of Eurasians seeking to resettle in New Guinea is described in Lijphart (1966:89-105) and in van der Kroef (1953). Metzemaekers (1951) provides another good overview of the situation written from a Dutch perspective. In addition to the Report of the New Guinea (Irian) Committee (1950) which outlines extensively both the Dutch and Indonesian perspectives, see Katoppo (1955) for an Indonesian perspective. See van der Kroef (1959, 1960) for a fairly balanced contemporary assessment. Sukarno himself argued before the United Nations for West New Guinea's inclusion in Indonesia (Palmier 1957:108-110).

[4] Although accounts of the 1980s and 1990s tend to suggest that natural resource wealth played a strong role in the debates (e.g. Budiarjo and Liong 1988), in the early 1950s it appears that even if there was knowledge of sizeable resources, this was not publicly realised. In fact, in 1951 the only Dutch resource company operating in West New Guinea was the *Nederlands Nieuw Guinea Peteroleum Maatschappij* (NNGPM), a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell and Standard Vacuum, involved in oil production in the Sorong area. In 1950, total output was just 300,000 tons (Metzemaekers 1951:132).

[5] In Jakarta, a campaign was launched to excite local passions about the West Irian dispute; economic ties with The Netherlands began to be severed. Sukarno vowed "We will use a new way in our struggle which will surprise the nations of the world" (Grant 1966:148). By August of 1957, the American Ambassador to Indonesia, John M. Allison, alerted the US State department about the success of Sukarno and other Indonesian politicians in increasing the passions of the masses regarding the West New Guinea Issue. At the time, he even drafted a proposal outlining a settlement of the dispute based on an eventual hand-over of the territory to Indonesia. That proposal died in the State Department where the initial feelings were that NATO ties to The Netherlands were more important than ties to Sukarno (McMullen 1981:7). In mid-December of that same year, the ramifications of the failed attempts at the United Nations were becoming manifest. President Sukarno announced the "Trikora" also known as the Triple Command for the liberation of West Irian. Soon after, approximately 50,000 Dutch nationals were ordered out of Indonesia, Dutch consulates were closed, and Sukarno's government had issued official decrees initiating the formal process of seizure of all Dutch properties in 1959 (Grant 1966:148). Finally, in February 1959, the "National Front for the Liberation of West Irian was formed" (ibid

over the entire period.[6] Expanded Dutch investment does not appear to have been matched by an increase in expectations regarding productivity of the land or its inhabitants. Perhaps more importantly, in this political climate the Dutch administration (and subsequently the Catholic Mission) launched a campaign to better understand the local communities through ethnographic research in order to expedite de-colonisation.[7] The establishment of the *Kantoor voor Bevlokingszaken* (Bureau of Native Affairs) in 1951 was the formal mechanism through which social research was guided.[8] The Bureau was charged with the coordinating and carrying out social scientific research and advising both the Governor and The Hague on questions concerning the development and welfare of the Papuan population. Ultimately, the Foreign Office at The Hague sent the reports on to the United Nations (Jaarsma 1991:130). As a reaction against Indonesia, after using Malay as the *lingua franca* for over twenty years the administration now promoted the Dutch language for its higher schools.

1966:149). That same year Australian Prime Minister Menzies visited Indonesia and was assured by Sukarno that force would not be used in West Irian (ibid).

[6] See Djajadiningrat (1958) for a contemporaneous perspective on the talks. In 1950, the Dutch had invested just over forty-seven million guilders into the development of West New Guinea, deriving a “profit” of under twenty-four million guilders (just under half of their investment). The corresponding figures from 1956 are 118 million guilders investment versus a return of less than sixty million guilders (Nieuw-Guinea Instituut 1956:99).

[7] As an example of the level of both formal and informal ethnographic research conducted by the Dutch, consult Jaarsma’s (1990) thesis, *Waarneming en Interpretatie* [*Observation and Interpretation*]. It provides an excellent analysis of the political environment of Dutch research in New Guinea and of the varieties of ethnographic research undertaken in West New Guinea from 1950 to 1962.

[8] Although some mission ethnography of varying quality had been carried out before 1950, West New Guinea had received little anthropological attention (in contrast to its eastern neighbour, Australian-administered Papua New Guinea). Wirz had conducted work among the Marind-anim (see Wirz 1920, 1922, 1924, 1928, and 1929) and Held had worked among the Waropen in the late 1930s (see Held 1942a, 1942b, 1947, 1956). Van Baal’s PhD thesis on the Marind-anim was library-based (van Baal 1934). As Ploeg points out, the lack of anthropological attention may is probably not due to lack of interest, but perhaps more closely related to the fact that until after World War II anthropology remained subordinate to other disciplines in the Netherlands. In particular, Indology was dedicated to training colonial administrators for work elsewhere in the East Indies (Ploeg 2000:10). By the early 1950s, political circumstances had severed access to Holland’s favourite field-site, Indonesia. Of the limited number of students in that Anthropology Department at Leiden, most planned for research or administrative service in New Guinea (see Fox 1989:505-506). Notable among these students for West New Guinea research were van Baal, Held, and Pouwer.

Indonesian Independence and soured relationships between the two countries also necessitated new administrative structures for the Catholic Mission. Because the vicariate of South New Guinea was now fractured, with part of the vicariate administered by Indonesia, the Catholic Church was forced to re-shape its administrative boundaries in the region. Separate vicariates of Amboina (in the Indonesian-administered area) and Merauke (on the south coast of New Guinea) were created.[9] The new political boundaries also meant that mission teachers now needed to be recruited from among the Papuans rather than from elsewhere in Indonesia. The Catholic Mission in Mimika appears to have been supportive of the administration's goals of promoting independence.[10] As Catholic missionaries stepped up their attempts to better understand more populations to expand their work, they experienced new challenges because they were no longer able to draw from the trained cadre of catechists from the Kei Islands. Instead, they were forced to rely on ill-trained Papuan catechists to start schools in recently contacted areas (Zegwaard n.d.b:5).[11]

The mission and administrative changes in West New Guinea had direct impacts on Mimika. After having worked for over thirteen years in Mimika, on June 24, 1950 Father Tillemans was appointed and consecrated the first Vicar

---

[9] The vicariate of Merauke included the entire south coast from Mimika through the Merauke area.

[10] The New Guinea issue formed a split in the leadership of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Some felt that the Netherlands should retain cordial relations with the Indonesian government so missionaries could carry out their work (in Indonesia) without difficulty. Those who subscribed to this perspective also felt that the changed political circumstances could free them from being perceived as representatives of a colonial power. Some other Protestant missionaries held opinions more in line with the government's perspective in terms of moral obligations to the Papuans. In the field, Protestant missionaries were similarly divided; those in Indonesia were almost unanimously opposed to the Dutch government's view while those in New Guinea strongly supported it (Lijphart 1966:152-153). Interestingly, a similar rift occurred between the Catholic missionaries in the Netherlands and in the field, but because the Catholic Church's ties were ultimately to the Vatican (i.e. not to the Netherlands) the issue was not grounded in domestic Dutch politics, but more in the perspectives of missionaries in the field.

[11] According to Lijphart, the Catholic missionaries, in their strong support of Papuan independence and the introduction of the Dutch language, viewed the situation as another opportunity to oppose and compete against the Protestants, whose work depended more strongly on the usage of the Malay language. Catholic Missionaries on the other hand had consistently endeavoured to learn local languages; therefore the administration's decision to promote Dutch as a language of instruction was not difficult for them to implement (Lijphart 1966:153).

Apostolic of Merauke.[12] Father Tillemans' personal and somewhat liberal approach paved the way for a more intimate dialogue between Christianity and indigenous belief systems that dramatically impacted mission work throughout West New Guinea. Tillemans' philosophy is clearly reflected in a statement by Father Zegwaard, one of the first post-war missionaries to work in Mimika:

> I think that the post-war-generation missionaries had a different approach. They had a greater openness toward those aspects of the local culture that one at that time labelled "congenial elements" as a way to open the door for Christianity…(Zegwaard, 29 Sept. 1987, cited in Jaarsma 1990:74, my translation).

Zegwaard and his successor Father Coenen proved to be devoted observers and students of Kamoro culture.[13] In both cases, the underlying goal of documenting and understanding indigenous beliefs was to facilitate Catholicisation, which I will address in more detail below. Another keen researcher, Jan Pouwer, arrived to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in Mimika at the end of 1951. He was one of only two anthropologists employed by the Bureau of Native Affairs to conduct long-term field research in West New Guinea.[14]

The combined research in Mimika led by Father Zegwaard, Father Coenen, and Jan Pouwer provided hitherto unparalleled insight into Kamoro worldviews. Each built on to the work of the others: Zegwaard's particular strength was in the documentation of oral traditions and ritual life; Coenen's understanding of the spiritual world (as described in Chapter One) of the Kamoro was unequalled. Pouwer's research contributed important information on social structure and

---

[12] Northern New Guinea, where Franciscan Fathers had worked since 1937, along with the central highlands became a prefecture apostolic based in Hollandia.

[13] Father Zegwaard was the last MSC missionary to work in Mimika. In 1953, responsibility for work in Mimika was transferred from MSC to OFM responsibility. Father Coenen was among the first OFM missionaries in Mimika.

[14] Jaarsma explains that the only long-term projects carried out on behalf of the Bureau of Native Affairs were by Pouwer and by van der Leeden. The projects began in 1951 and 1952 and resulted in academic theses in 1955 and 1956 respectively. While projects were certainly completed well within the time-parameters for academic theses, that amount of time was too long for administrative purposes and both researches failed to adequately satisfy the Administration's immediate needs for information. As a result, future Bureau research was short-term and focused exclusively on explicit questions directly relevant to administration needs (Jaarsma 1991:132-133).

changes brought about by the Dutch administration.[15] Most importantly for this thesis, the combined trio of researchers provided useful insights into the merging, incorporation and reformulation of elements within indigenous frameworks via the *amoko-kwere*.

TAXONOMY OF THE *TENA-WE*: INDIGENOUS PERCEPTIONS OF THE FOREIGN

In the last chapter, I showed how *amoko-kwere* exhibited a clear differentiation of foreigners from one another. Prior to the war, Chinese merchants, Ambonese civil servants, and Kei Islander mission personnel were the dominant faces of the foreign for the Kamoro; all were classified generically as *Tena-we*, literally China people. By the time the Dutch administration had returned to Mimika after World War II, the moniker *Surabaya-we*, Surabaya people, seems to have fallen out of use, and at that time the Kamoro seem to have classified all of the foreigners at the most basic level as *Tena-we*. This is not to say that the Kamoro assumed that all of the *Tena-we* were the same.[16]

At the most basic level, the Kamoro divided the *Tena-we* into those who were white and those who were not. Perhaps more interesting is that the increased concern on the part of the Dutch with social research was also clearly picked up by the Kamoro. Influenced by Zegwaard's work (and perhaps Tillemans' before him), the Kamoro seem to have interpreted white priests as un-married men who were concerned with narratives and rituals (Pouwer 1973:7). The District Officer, the main figurehead of the administration, seems to have been most closely associated with the short survey trips he took throughout the region in order to take censuses, which he normally collected via an administration-sponsored

---

[15] Although there was certainly an exchange of ideas in the field between Zegwaard and Pouwer, Coenen's fieldwork began around the time that Pouwer's ended. Consequently, Coenen's usage of Pouwer's work and vice versa occurred after both had finished their fieldwork.

[16] In his thesis, Pouwer notes that white people were also sometimes classified as *Fatema-we* (literally people from Fak-Fak, but often associated with police), *Turabaya-we* (literally Surabaya people), and *we merah-merah*, literally red people, an indication of a white person with sunburn (Pouwer 1955:254).

village chief.[17] The Kamoro clearly did not overlook the significance of the District Officer's notations. As Pouwer noted, for the Kamoro censuses were compulsory and were clearly understood as serving a potentially dangerous foreign power. It also served as the basis for taxation (ibid:6-7). While the activities of the administration and the church differed, the Kamoro clearly understood their activities as related, a point which I will return to later in this chapter.

When Pouwer arrived in the field, he was conscious of these primary divisions. For sake of ethnographic rapport, he actively sought to differentiate himself from mission and administration personnel.[18] Here, according to Pouwer, is the Kamoro interpretation of him, the anthropologist:

> Who is this man? He joins government officers on short trips and assists them in taking a census, an activity typical of a District Officer. After giving his attention to men, women, born and unborn alike, he together with the District Officer turns to the job of vaccinating hens. It is true that after one or two months of co-operation with the District Officer, he now mainly travels on his own. But like a prospective District Officer he visits every village in the district and takes a census everywhere. He even asks for more details than the present District Officer does. He takes down the name of your parents and grandparents. He is anxious to know to which kin group you belong. This is a rather embarrassing question, for you may not be quite sure…(1973:6).

Pouwer seemed to be somewhat of an enigma to the Kamoro. In some respects, his ethnographic inquiries into social structure marked him as a foreigner associated with the administration. However, in other respects, he differed from the District Officer and seemed more similar to the Catholic missionaries:

> …Just like some Roman Catholic missionaries, he seems to be deeply interested in our sacred stories and our rituals. The District Officer is not really. So the prospective District Officer could equally be a priest. But then how to account for a married priest? (ibid:7).

---

[17] It is unclear if these "chiefs" were actually remnants of the Moluccan kingdom system or chosen otherwise. Given that some of my informants continued to reckon village leadership to some degree with Moluccan kingdoms I presume the former.

[18] Jaarsma notes that because Pouwer and van der Leeden were able to carry out intensive long-term research projects, they were capable of differentiating themselves from the Administration and the Mission. Subsequently, workers form the Bureau for Native Affairs who were forced to conduct short-term projects to meet more immediate administration needs were unable clearly differentiate themselves and were strictly interpreted as civil servants (Jaarsma 1991:133).

Their notions of missionaries were certainly shaped in large part by the work of Father Zegwaard. Having arrived in Mimika in 1947, Father Zegwaard was already fluent in the central dialect of the Kamoro language before Pouwer's arrival (Pouwer 1955:261). By Kamoro reckoning, the only possible way that Pouwer could have been a priest was if he was either a married ex-priest or a Protestant (which he was, though not a priest). This of course left unanswered questions and some ambiguity to the perception of the anthropologist in the field. Ultimately, according to Pouwer, the Kamoro reasoned that he was also in some ways unique:

> …he always carried with him a pencil and sheets of paper, piles of paper. Even when he strides behind the mortal remains of one of our beloved singers and drummers he inquires about the names of those who carry the coffin and takes them down in a note-book…He is *Tuan Torati*, that is, Mr. Paper, Mr. Letter…(Pouwer 1973:7)

Kapitan Tai from Keakwa, watching Pouwer earnestly make inscriptions in his notebook, jokingly commented that his writing was a sign of the foreigner's inability to remember basic information:

> You write and you write. We [Kamoro] have no need for paper. We store everything in our heads (in Pouwer 1955:263, my translation).

Kapitan Tai's words however were not the final say on the importance of writing. Just as I have suggested in previous chapters, the Kamoro more explicitly detailed their understanding of the political importance of paper, writing, and language when describing Pouwer's notations:

> His letters, although dangerous [e.g. census data, TH], can be beneficial too. If we want to safeguard the ownership and content of our traditional lore so that a storyteller from another village can no longer steal the show or modify its content, we can have our own stories fixated for ever, by the priest or by the Letter-Man. (Pouwer 1973:7).

Clearly the indigenous interpretation (through Pouwer's representation of it) of the utility of both the missionary and the anthropologist appears to have been connected with paper/writing and power; both were considered as having the potential to be at once dangerous and beneficial. The symbolic importance of this

relationship is intriguing given the data already presented in this thesis. Consistently, foreign power appears to have been linked to language and paper/writing. Those who possessed the paper or the ability to communicate in a foreign language were integral to interactions with the foreigner and accessing his goods or his power. Both the paper and the knowledge appear to share an explicit link within Kamoro interpretation as *kata*. As outlined in Chapter One, *kata* is a multivalent word. In the first place, it can be used to describe foreign goods and ritual secrets, things that are at once both cherished and protected. *Kata* can also be used to describe one's possessions or belongings. Another form of *kata* is the ability to influence natural and supernatural phenomena, a sort of power that Coenen labelled *otepe*. The possibility that the Kamoro explicitly understood paper/writing as a kind of *otepe* or *kata* is consistent with the conscious connection they drew between the inscription onto paper and protection of knowledge from theft. This very same kind of protection of secret or ritual knowledge from theft is remarkably similar to the way that *amoko-we*, as well as the Kamoro themselves, protect their *kata* from theft. Already in this thesis I have presented concrete examples of this sort of protection of *kata*. In 1828, Abrauw seemed to use the written charm given to him by Islamic traders to interact with the foreigners. He protected the paper by concealing it in the cloth wrapping around his head. In the last chapter, Tamatu, an *amoko-we,* explicitly protected his *kata* from theft (*otomo*) before revealing it to the foreigners and teaching them to forge iron (p. 125).

As Pouwer's thesis remains the most comprehensive account of a variety of aspects of Kamoro culture and social organisation, I shall summarise his findings below, emphasising those aspects most important to this thesis. Following a brief review of Pouwer's research, I will analyse some of the impacts of the application of his understandings of Kamoro culture both by the administration and the mission. I do not assess the work of the other major commentators directly here as their contributions are treated elsewhere in this thesis. Coenen's insights into spirituality were discussed in Chapter One, and Zegwaard's primary contributions, namely with regards to mission history and his collections of

amoko-kwere are discussed in various other places in this thesis and his explicit mission activities will be discussed in this chapter.

SUMMATION OF POUWER'S FINDINGS ON SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND RECIPROCITY

Over the course of his career (which continues to this day), Pouwer has consistently engaged with contemporary theoretical concerns. His 1955 thesis is an excellent example, fruitfully adapting a Lévi-Straussian brand of structural analysis that clearly separated his work from that of many of his English-speaking contemporaries (Lévi-Strauss had yet to be translated into English). The most substantial parts of Pouwer's thesis address two main themes: the somewhat complicated issue of Kamoro social structure and the relationship of reciprocity to all aspects of Kamoro culture.[19] Combined, these topics account for four of seven chapters. These chapters and Pouwer's more general commentary on Kamoro engagement with foreigners are the most relevant and important for this thesis, and are accorded more attention in this brief summary than are the other chapters.

In Chapter One of his thesis (1955:1-16), Pouwer outlines the geography of the Kamoro region and the boundaries of the fairly homogenous culture. He then provides a general background of the physical and medical state of the population and its size before briefly describing their semi-nomadic lifestyle. The next chapter (ibid:17-54) describes and catalogues all forms of utilitarian material culture including hunting, fishing, gardening and sago-gathering implements and their use. Included in his description is information regarding the variety of resources that the Kamoro exploit with these implements. Particularly interesting is his month-long survey of household eating habits that included the

---

[19] While Pouwer's thesis was his most comprehensive work, he continues to publish based on his fieldwork in Mimika. In addition to his publications, in this thesis I utilise a wide range of Pouwer's unpublished reports, letters and personal interviews to better understand and present his work. A complete list of Pouwer's reports and publications is included in this thesis as an appendix.

documentation of 559 mealtimes (ibid:48-54). He demonstrated that by volume and by frequency, sago was clearly the staple making up more than fifty percent of the diet and being consumed nearly every day.

Pouwer's discussion of social structure stresses horizontal relationships. Descent is shallow, with an emphasis on the matriline. Kinship terminology is bilateral, and distinguishes generation levels, though there is no distinction between parallel and cross cousins. The preferred marriage pattern is balanced exchange (e.g. brother-sister/sister brother).[20] Within the descent groups, the two most important elements are *peraeko* and *taparu*. Most generally, the *peraeko* consists of people from the same generation comprised of children and grandchildren descended from a common female ancestor after whom the group is customarily named. Female members form the core of the *peraeko*, though the group includes both sexes. There is a direct correlation between the matri-focus of the *peraeko* and traditional residence patterns, land tenure, and work groups.

There exist no clans among the Kamoro, and genealogical reckoning is usually limited to just two generations, with informants often unable to recall the names of their paternal grandparents or their paternal grandparent's siblings (1955:60-61). In contrast, Pouwer's informants consistently found little difficulty responding to questions about the name of their mother's mother. Often siblings and parallel cousins were terminologically equated. Thus one would refer to the children of the mother's mother, whether siblings or cousins, are all referred to as mother's brother or mother's sister (ibid:61). In terms of naming the *peraeko* within this system, the group most commonly used the name of the eldest among a woman and her sisters. Allied or related *peraeko* form the kernel of larger social units called *taparu*. *Taparu* literally is derived from the word *tapare*, which means land and usually connotes land upon which a group lives. According to Pouwer, the ways *peraeko* form a *taparu* differ slightly depending on geographic region. In West and Central Mimika (where he conducted most of his research),

---

[20] Although Pouwer's informants claimed that in the easternmost Mimika villages, there was a preference for marriage with mother's brother's daughter, Pouwer's genealogical research failed to support the claims.

groups of *peraeko* claiming common descent through related female lines (e.g. from a single woman or a woman and/or her sisters) and living in a common territory form a *taparu*. In this sort of social organisation, marriage is generally *taparu*-exogamous. In contrast, Pouwer describes that in East Mimika (where I conducted my research), unrelated *peraeko* frequently join together to form a *taparu*. In these circumstances, marriage tended to be *taparu*-endogamous (ibid:76-80, 99-100).

Two *taparu* or two groups of *taparu* living along a common river effectively form a "tribe" in Pouwer's terminology, with what he describes as "diffuse leadership". Elsewhere in the thesis he describes settlements as "multi-headed", an indication of the fact that Kamoro social organisation does not favour a singular political figurehead as a leader, but instead relies more on numerous functionaries and ritual specialists (1955:240). Association between two tribes is also quite common. Each *taparu* has one or more *taparu* elders, though the position is non-hereditary and carries few privileges. After the arrival of the colonial administration, collective villages were formed consisting of entire tribes and in some cases more than one tribe (ibid:96-107). In Pouwer's research he discerned 160 different *taparu* in fifty tribes; though three tribes had "died out" during his research, leaving forty-seven tribes.

Pouwer describes how indigenous regional organisation is loosely related to dialect boundaries. In general, the six dialects (excluding Western Sempan) can be broken down into interior and coastal-oriented Kamoro. These dialect differences are closely associated with different lifestyle orientation (inland vs. coastal) as well as with specific traditional feasts (*Emakame* vs. *Kaware*) and inhabitants utilising adjacent lands on the upper courses of neighbouring rivers or river mouths often form a loose regional group for feasts and ritual practices (points which Pouwer makes even more explicit in Pouwer 1973).

The final element of Pouwer's extensive account of social structure deals with ownership rights and terminology (ibid:137-160). Both in his thesis and in his more detailed reports published in the *Adatrechtsbundels* (see appendix for complete references to these reports), collections of traditional *adat* laws to assist

in administration, he maintains that there are no clear-cut rules whereby collective and individual ownership among the Kamoro can be accurately and comprehensively expressed. Thus, Pouwer details what he describes as a "variegation" or "gradation" of ownership forms ranging from individual to collective possession of property (physical and intellectual) and resources (ibid:137). Central to ownership are the terms *amako* and *ta*. The former literally means owner and is often associated by the Kamoro with the term *amoko*, which, as discussed throughout this thesis, refers to the time of the ancestral culture heroes. Some *amoko-we* are described as *amako* over certain abilities, goods, land or animals. *Amoko* can also be used as an adverb meaning eternal, effectively making the *amoko-we* both the ancestral and the eternal people (ibid:137-138).

Pouwer's thesis then describes the nature of the linkages between Mimika and the Dutch administration during the time of his fieldwork. Initially an unofficial advice council for the Mimika Sub-Division was established in mid-1952. It consisted of representatives from all of those responsible for implementing development activities among the Kamoro: administration, police, teachers, mission, health service, and the *Bureau of Native Affairs* (ibid:240).[21] Initially they attempted to "modernise" the indigenous cycle by alternating periods of work into the traditional feast cycle, a practice that according to Pouwer met with some success (ibid). Also in 1952, this unofficial council made inroads toward the establishment of village councils aimed at inspiring locally-driven development initiatives. These trial village councils consisted of influential members of the community (*taparu* elders), an administration-chosen village headman, and a representative of the youth community. Although his thesis tends to present a third-person perspective, Pouwer drew on his research to take an active part in advising the larger council and assisting in the formulation of the village councils. He says that at the time, although village councils were little more than an extension of the administration, they still showed promise for responsible, locally-driven development (Pouwer 1955:240-241). *Taparu* elders

---

[21] Although his thesis does not explicitly say it, Pouwer presumably occupied the seat on behalf of the Bureau of Native Affairs.

were included in the village councils as a means of balancing the powerful influence of the village teachers who served as council advisors (Pouwer interviewed by author, 25 February 1999).[22] Overall the activities of the council were geared towards carrying out the administration's aims of rapid economic, social, and religious "development" (Pouwer 1955:241).

Importantly, Pouwer points out that the installation of an indigenous administration representative was a novel idea in a society that had had numerous "heads" or specialists rather than a single political leader (ibid:240).

Aopao

In terms of understanding Kamoro sociality, the longest and perhaps most important chapter of Pouwer's thesis discusses the role of reciprocity in Kamoro culture. Most commonly expressed as *aopao*, reciprocity is seen by Pouwer as something that underlies all aspects of Kamoro life. During his field research, his Kamoro informants used *aopao* to describe the concepts of counter-gift, counter-prestation, counter-service, counter-part, the exchange of marriage candidates (sister exchange), retaliation, and satisfaction (1955:161).[23] Throughout the chapter, Pouwer emphasises that *aopao* is best described as a process of countering or response.

In the Kamoro system of prestations and counter-prestations the paired concepts of labour-food, food-food, labour-labour, and wife-food, labour-goods come to the fore (ibid:192-194). Although there is no inter-group competitive exchange system as found elsewhere in Melanesia, reciprocity strongly influences social and economic relationships. When personal relationships predominate, material gains in economic transactions are of less importance. For instance, one's offerings to spirits in the woods prior to a hunt appear to characterise the

---

[22] Then *Controleur* (District Head) Lagerberg outlined the composition of the village councils in Mimika in an eight-page report to Governor van Baal dated 25 April 1955 (Lagerberg 1955a).

most personal of exchange relations (e.g. between the Kamoro and spirits), and therefore explicit economic values of the offerings and the bounty of the hunt are not compared. If businesslike considerations predominate, Pouwer reports that prestations and counter-prestations are carefully compared, and personal connections are forced into the background. Pouwer classifies work for strangers as most exemplary of this sort of exchange. Of course not all exchanges fall into either of the categories. Relationships with one's wife's relatives mark a blend of personal and businesslike features. Pouwer noted that through western contacts and transactions in commodities, the pattern of prestations and counter-prestations showed an increasing predominance of businesslike relationships, which he claims were especially pronounced in dealings with one's wife's relatives (1955:204-211).

Pouwer's argument regarding Kamoro engagement with the foreign

Both in his chapter on reciprocity and throughout the thesis, Pouwer maintains a clear distinction between indigenous and foreign settings and relationships. He argued that the Kamoro conceive of two distinct worlds—foreign and indigenous—and that there is little mixing between the two. As support for this argument, he shows that the role of money was insignificant in the system of indigenous prestations and counter-prestations, while it played a primary role in exchange with foreigners. Pouwer also outlined the "two-world" concept with regards to feast and ceremonial activities. According to him, foreign feasts (e.g. the Dutch *Oranje*--Queen's Birthday--Feast, Christmas, etc.) are celebrated with separate profane rituals and songs, while indigenous rituals have sacred elements.

Pouwer outlines an escapist attitude among the Kamoro manifested in an indigenous indifference (or resignation) to the presence of foreigners and their world after World War II. He explains that although the Kamoro outwardly

---

[23] These usages closely resemble ones that Drabbe recorded in his collection of narratives (1947, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1950) recorded in the 1930s. I used some of these as explicit illustrations in Chapters Three and Four.

Image 17: Village Council of Yaraya, 1954. Pouwer's main informant, Constans is seated on the far left (photo by Jan Pouwer, published in *de Drietand* 5(1):7. Original held at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden).

expressed their desire to "follow orders" to appease the administration and the other foreigners, they also often escaped into their own world (e.g. the sago *dusun* or the fishing grounds). In Pouwer's interpretation, the "Kamoro world" was quite distinct from the "western world" characterised by concerns of the church and the administration (1955:250-255).[24]

A few comments on Pouwer's Thesis

While Pouwer's discussions of social structure, resource ownership/land tenure, and reciprocity are detailed and convincing, I question his interpretations of Kamoro engagements with the foreign, which appear fraught with contradictions. On the one hand, he was of the impression that the Kamoro clearly maintained a complete separation between the "western" world and the indigenous one. Elsewhere, however, he claims that since the arrival of "western culture" business-like exchange has become prevalent within the indigenous exchange system.

While Pouwer's raw-data and observations are in many ways consistent with what I saw in the late 1990s, I disagree with some of his interpretations on which his "two-world" argument is based. He described at length how profane songs and practices accompanied the celebrations of the foreigners, while the internal festivities had sacred rituals, songs and other activities. I disagree that this is evidence for the Kamoro living in two worlds; I think this has more to do with Pouwer's own perspective on the classification of sacred and profane than with Kamoro categorisations. Clearly things "sacred" to westerners may or may not be classified by the Kamoro as such. Elsewhere Pouwer points out that while

---

[24] Elsewhere in West New Guinea, Schoorl suggests a similar ideological divide among the Muyu who though prepared to construct village housing, were not willing to live in them for a variety of social, political, and economic reasons (1993:187-190). In another case, Kouwenhoven notes distinct differentiation in Nimboran notions of time for doing western-style work (i.e. administration) and that for indigenous work (i.e. food gathering) (1956:145-146). Quite possibly these interpretations could have been in part influenced by broader theoretical frameworks popular in Holland at the time, in particular the Leiden school. Particular aspects of Pouwer's

narratives adapt to the time, place, and narrator perspective (e.g. what I have been pointing out throughout this thesis as a primary mechanism of Kamoro engagements with the foreign), ritual remains constant and relatively unchanged. Both Pouwer and Zegwaard seem to downplay the significance of the incorporated elements as something spurious, and therefor less authentic. My analysis over a longer period demonstrates that incorporation of the foreign ideas, experiences and things via *amoko-kwere* is a consistent indigenous mechanism for Kamoro social engagement. He argues that the impermeability of ritual supports a two-world argument. Here again, I see no reason why ritual necessarily needs to reflect or incorporate the foreign when the narratives clearly serve that function. In the next section I explore the outcomes of the application of the social research conducted in Mimika during this period to mission and administrative work.

MARIA AND WILHELMINA: A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

Frequently the church attempted to draw analogies between biblical themes and Kamoro narratives to find “congenial elements” to facilitate Christianisation. In Mimika in the 1950s, The Flood, Adam and Eve, God’s creative powers, and Maria were all deemed as sharing commonalities with *amoko-kwere*, and therefore useful as “doors” through which the Kamoro may be reached for conversion. As it turns out, for the Kamoro, the “doors” of the *amoko-kwere* swung both ways, and it was the church and the administration who were “converted” to fit within indigenous schemes of understanding.

Missionaries often used mission journals to compare experiences of their work in some of the remotest parts of the world. Some of them are indeed revealing about the nature of mission work of various religious organisations. An article in Sint Antonius for example attempted to describe the relationship between Kamoro oral tradition and the stories of the Bible. According to Father

---

thesis and other articles of his also sharply differentiated the Kamoro as Papuans from Moluccans who were Indonesians.

Groen (OFM), as in the Bible, Kamoro storytellers use an antiquated language to explain the histories of their particular tribes (in Pouwer's sense of "tribe" described above). It follows that all of the tribes, like the lost tribes of Israel, have their own unique stories. Groen claims that "here and there" there are stories that remind one of the Old Testament (Groen 1961:65). The most obvious example is a story of a great flood in Mimika.

Just as the missionaries used Biblical narratives to explain and investigate the relationship between Christianity and indigenous belief systems, the Kamoro made sense of the relationships between themselves and the foreigners (and their religious beliefs, material culture, etc.) and of the relationships among the foreigners themselves. Through the use of *amoko-kwere* Akwèripia, the village head of Mupuruka, explained the story of The Flood to Jan Pouwer and how it related to the foreigners in 1952:

> An elder sister Mumorekàparé and a younger sister Mumarepa lived in Kaogàremané [literally two women, TH]. They were *Waoka-gàpere-mané*, two Waoka women.

> The Waoka-wé, Umuruka-wé, Kana-wé, Pomohé, Timba-wé, Wakapikipa lived on the Uraya river, the women lived on their own a little further downstream. All of them, except for the two women, went to the beach, speared fish, and collected crabs and shellfish. They put the fish in their canoes and returned to the upper reaches of the river and passed by the two women. They pretended not to have caught any fish and only gave them a few crabs and snails. Then they continued to the village. Just before they had arrived some of them shouted on the river bank that they had caught a lot of fish. Towards evening the fish were placed on the fire and roasted. Then they went to sleep.

Presumably not sharing the fish with the two women is a violation of etiquette. The villager's deception of the two women also fuels the next chain of events in the narrative:

> In the night a *pètako*, an osprey which belonged to the two women downstream, came without being noticed to steal remains of the fish. The bird took the fish to its mistresses. It appeared above the village again.

Here it is important to point out that the *pètako* "belonged" to the two women in the same sense that a child "belongs" to his parents. As in other

amoko-kwere, the distinction between animals and humans is often blurred. The fact that the bird was able to obtain remnants of fish would suggest that "he" intended to let "his owners" know that the people upstream had indeed deceived them earlier. Of course the bird's "theft" could be considered another wrongdoing, deserving of retaliatory action (*naware*); fuelling further action in the story:

> A *ko-apoka* (adult man) Bitiipia, who was lame, saw the bird drop a fish. He shot the osprey to the ground with an arrow. Bitiipia was not such a nice fellow. The others in the village slept and did not notice anything. Next morning they saw the bird lying there dead and asked Pitiipia: "Why did you kill that animal? Do you not know that this osprey belongs to the two sisters?" They were angry at Bitiipia. The bird's feathers drifted down the river.

> Early in the morning Mumorekàparé was shitting in the river and saw the feathers of her pet bird floating on the water. She told her younger sister.

> 'Oh, they have killed our bird!' screamed Mumarepa. They took the feathers out of the water, took them home and cried. Then they collected wood for a big *sèro*.

A *sèro* is one of the most effective ways for catching smaller fish. The *sèro* is a mat used to close up small creeks to trap fish as the tide goes out (see Figure 18, page 175).

> They said to one another, 'Oh, there is heavy rain coming, there is high water coming.'

> The water could not flow into the sea because of the *sèro* and flowed back to the mountains. The people who lived upstream fled to Wèselmor (from the Dutch *Wisselmeren*, Wissel Lakes) because the water rose very high. They were the first Kapaokus (mountain people). They carried a shoulder bag on their head (a typical way of carrying a bag). Others fled to the coast. The *sèro* broke and the two women fled downriver to the coast, following the other people. But the water surged, canoes capsized, and trees crashed down. The people fled further until they reached the mouth of the Makemao River. They slept on the beach.

The narrator marks the first explicit incorporation of the "foreign" when he intentionally uses the Dutch name for the interior lakes as if it had always been the name (now known as the Paniai Lakes, home of the Me people). At the same

Image 18: Fisherman climbing over a *séro* preparing to spear fish trapped in the changing tide. (Photo by Jan Pouwer, image held at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden).

Image 19: Masked dancers perform in the *Mbiikawane* (literally spirit platform) ceremony in Kokonao in 1954. For a published account of this ceremony see Pouwer 1956 (Photo by Jan Pouwer, image held at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden).

time, he explains the origin of the interior highland people. This area was increasingly regularly visited after the war as it lay at the headwaters of the river that leads to Uta and Mupuruka, the narrator's home village. Missionaries increased the contact between the Kamoro and the highlanders by using Uta as a base for launching expeditions to the interior. Kamoro rowers were used to travel upstream as far as the river was navigable, before highland carriers assisted the missionaries overland. The fact that the people fled indicates that they were aware that the flood was a retaliatory act for the murder of the osprey, which in turn demonstrated again how a counter-attack (*aopao*) continues to drive the story:

> Next morning Bitiipia was the first to see the raging sea and the people were shocked and crying. "Those waves spell trouble for us!" And in anger they struck Bitiipia down dead. A man fetched his *imikik* [I am uncertain as to what this is, TH] and went to the East in his river canoe. Others followed him and became the Karuutya-wé (the people of the East) and the Mano-wé (the Asmat). The ones with a sea-going canoe headed for Kaimana.

Before the arrival of the Dutch administration, evidence suggests that the river canoe was used throughout Mimika (see image from Uta, West Mimika from 1828 in Chapter Three). After the arrival of the administration, West Mimika became increasingly associated with the *torepa* (ocean-going canoe) while the *ku*, the riverine canoe, became more strongly associated with the East. Symbolically, the introduced *torepa* came from (and in this case left toward) the West, the source of all that is foreign. Kaimana was symbolically "the West" as it was the location of one of the first administration posts in the region.[25]

> In the meantime the two women were on the river Yapèrema, near Mupuruka downstream. They went to the beach. Two other women, *Omawkagàparè* (two women from Omawka) came from the East. They saw the two Waoka women near Cape Yapèrema. The elder and the younger sister chopped wood with sharp shells and made canoes in the same way. They

[25] An administration report details how "medicines" for healing sickness, attracting women, and softening iron so that it can be more easily worked had originated in Kaimana. Presumably, they were considered to be efficacious because of their origins in the west (Matray 1956:1-3).

> saw that the two *karuukaoka*, women from the East, had *parangs*[26] and axes with them, as they went to chop wood on the cape.

> The two sisters arranged to steal them from the women of the East at night. They loaded the axes and *parangs* in their canoe, and also stole the *akwère*, the language from their mouth (the present-day language of Mupurupa). They also stole the Malay language that the two women from the East used so that no one would understand what they said. They also stole the rifle and the fire. (The narrator glances at the Pouwer's travelling things and continues.) They also took a gas lamp, a primus stove, hiking boots and tin cans. The two sisters took all these goods to Kaimana.

Here it is significant that the Omawka women from the East (an area that forms the easternmost cultural and linguistic border of Mimika) had the more modern tools, which are stolen *kata* taken to the West.

> In the morning the two women from the East awoke and were horrified to discover that everything had been stolen. They returned to the East, crying in dismay. The two Waoka women came to the Mapar River and called, "There will not be any sago here."

> They unloaded only a little sago in Poraoka. In Umari they shouted, "There will be plenty of sago here!"

> And they unloaded a lot here. They had brought all this sago from the Waoka. They unloaded a lot of sago at Aindua, Potoway, Omba and Sarera (Tarera), Wanete (Nanesa), Kipa, Sernata (Ternate). They spent the night in Tapruka, where they made houses, airplanes, mirrors and spectacles. They also made writing (*torati*). They put all these goods in the airplane and agreed that the younger sister would go to *Negeri Belanda* (lit. Malay for Holland), the land of the whites, while the elder sister would fly to Opè, the heaven.

Having stolen the western goods, the *kata*, from eastern Kamoro people, the sisters went to Holland and to Heaven, the places of origin of the administration and the church respectively. The implication is that the Europeans had indeed stolen the goods from the most backward of Kamoro.

> And that is what they did.

---

26 *Parang* is the Malay/Indonesian term for machete.

> "So," continued the *kepala*, "white and blacks are the same."

> The informant related this very enthusiastically. Later he added, "Mumorekàparé who went to heaven has the Christian name Maria. Her son is called Jesus." (The young people present give this name; the *kepala* no longer remembers it properly.) The younger sister Mumarepa has the Christian name Wirèremina (Wilhelmina, the name is spoken by the young people; she was the queen of Holland at the time). She made the Kompeni [the Dutch administration, TH]--it was not there before. This story is from the *wé-airogeta*, the ancestors of the *amoko-wé*. (Pouwer personal communication; for summary versions of the same story see Pouwer 1957-1958 and Groen 1961).

Thus Mumorekàparé and Wirèremina, Mary and Wilhelmina, the church and the administration are not only directly related, but also originate from Mimika during the *amoko*.

The church also used their understandings of the activities of Kamoro cultural heroes and indigenous feasts as vehicles to explain Christianity. The puberty feast *Taori*, for example, was likened to baptism. In another example, Father Coenen tells of the application of this knowledge along the Wania River where Father Zegwaard attempted to express God's creative abilities as analogous to those of the *amoko-we* Mapurupiu's.[27] In most versions of the Mapurupiu story a violation of the rule of reciprocity brings death to human beings. Pouwer succinctly tells the story as he heard it in the 1950s:

> Mapurupiu is stung to death by bees because he violates a taboo. He then finds out that his wife remarried too quickly with his younger brother. This lack of respect for the dead has to be revenged (*aopao*) Mapurupiu has his wife and children killed by ghosts. The ghosts are paid for their services with secret goods (*kata puri*, a term that also denotes Western commodities). Mapurupiu, the 'stinker', the dirty old man seduces women on his way upstream. Their relatives give chase. Mapurupiu removes a tree and disappears into the underworld (the Mimika equivalent for heaven) through a hole under the tree. The people find the hole but are unable to proceed to the underworld. Mapurupiu will not come back (in Pouwer 1973:89).

Thus, a sacred ancestor of the Wania people is living in the underworld where he has access to *kata puri*, which Pouwer defines as "western

---

[27] The story of Mapurupiu, also known as Mapuru and Mapuru-wow, although known throughout Mimika is generally associated with the Kamora and Wania River communities, particularly with the latter.

commodities" or "secret goods".[28] For the Wania River communities, Mapurupiu is more than a mythical figure; he is at once the original and eternal owner associated with the region. In a short paper on the standpoint of Catholicism in East Mimika in 1956, Father Coenen described the role of the church in relation to Mapurupiu and the Wania River Kamoro:

> In our catechism lessons we used a culture hero to make the concept of divinity (*gods-begrip*) clear to the people. This is how the culture hero Mapurupiu came to be used as an example to explain the power of God. According to the story, Mapurupiu was responsible for planting sago and other trees; he gave birds their colours, and so forth. The community interpreter—the old man of the kampong—translated this sermon (from Father Zegwaard) as follows: the God of the Pastor is from a later date. Mapurupiu is the real God, the God that was over the people before Adam and Eve, and that they are his only descendants. He took the "soul of his daughter and gave her the name of his wife Maimari," she was the Virgin Mary. When the teacher in the school gave an explanation of God, the children promptly confronted him, and they gave him the lesson according to what the old men had told them.[29] Mapurupiu comes from Pigapu and his wife is from Mware [sic Moare, TH], the Wania-people are his descendants (Coenen 1956a:3).

Elsewhere, Pouwer reports another Mimikan interpretation of Catholicism that held that Mapurupiu was the "Mimikan Adam" because he, like Adam, brought death to the world by indulging in forbidden (taboo) foods (Pouwer 1973:89).

The rapid increase in access to western/foreign material goods during the post-war Dutch administration also fuelled a rumour that someone in Pigapu may have been successful in pulling Mapurupiu from the underworld! According to accounts told to Father Coenen, Mapurupiu himself had recently given "western goods" including a washing pail, a plate, and a sarong to someone from Moare (Coenen 1963:105). Zegwaard and some of the administrative officials in Mimika at the time commented that such interpretations were an outgrowth of the rapid process of acculturation (vis-a-vis Cargo beliefs) which was a constant source of

---

[28] As explained in Chapter One, *kata* literally refers secret or ritual secrets or goods/possessions. I propose that Kamoro consistently use the word in a manner implying both meanings. Pouwer defines *puri* in his thesis as "taboo" (1955:307). Earlier Drabbe had elaborated that *poeri* is a degeneration of the Malay term *pemali* (1937:123). Echols and Schadily define *pemali* as "sacred, forbidden, or taboo" (1994:418).

[29] The original read (D) "…*werd hi op de vingers getikt*" which has the connotation that he was "slapped on the wrist" as a parent or teacher would scold a child.

difficulty (Zegwaard n.d.b:3). In some ways, perhaps Zegwaard was right, but I think that he and his contemporaries had acknowledged but not understood the significance of the Kamoro mechanism for engaging with and interpreting the world around them via the *amoko-we* and the *amoko-kwere*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Looking toward the Future: Natalis Nokoryao's Solemn Prediction

By the 1960s, East Mimika already had had over thirty years of direct mission and administration influence. The years since the end of World War II witnessed increasingly intensive contact and related social and economic investment in the lead up to decolonisation. Despite the fact that the region was on the verge of seemingly momentous political change, the Kamoro remained most concerned with local politics which proved to have direct connections with the *amoko-kwere* and other aspects of the spiritual world. The ramifications of local disputes are particularly relevant because they not only superseded the importance of the international political events for the Kamoro, but also seemed to demonstrate an indigenous concern for and knowledge of remarkable changes, including access to wealth, that were about to occur. According to the last administrative Memorandums of Transfer for the region, unrequited exchange marriages and land/resource disputes continued to be the most pressing concerns in Mimika. These issues were prominent in disputes within and between Mioko and Iwaka-Temare, Moare and Hiripao, and Neikeripi and Waoneripi (Mampioper 1961:18).[30]

Underlying threads of several of the disputes were access to the spiritual world (and thence *kata*) and ownership of *amoko-kwere*. In this case, the land in

---

[30] Of course an argument could certainly be made that women, as part of politically motivated exchange marriages organised by parents, could be in some ways objectified and considered as resources.

dispute was Maraoka, a beach location just east of the mouth of the Wania River.[31] While details of the dispute are unclear, evidence of Moraoka's spiritual significance is mentioned in the final Dutch Administration report. According to informants from Hiripao:

> Under the ground at Maraoka beach, resting quietly and motionless, are people of great importance.[32] In the near future, they will open a secret door, revealing a city of affluence (I: *kota kelimpahan*) to the inhabitants [e.g. the Kamoro] (Mampioper 1961:10).[33]

One land dispute in East Mimika, which appears to have been even more serious judging from the fact that it merited its own appendix in the administration report, was between the villagers of Keakwa and Timika over the land linking their settlements.[34] When Japanese marines arrived in November of 1942, the area was the site of a settlement of two of the *taparu* of Timika: Iraowirepiimara and Nimae (Pouwer 1955:238; Mampioper 1961:a3). During the Japanese occupation, the settlement was moved to a nearby location closer to the coast so the Japanese could broaden the former settlement clearing into a road and an airfield.[35] In 1960, both Keakwa and Timika invoked *amoko-kwere* which explained settlement histories linked to the migrations caused by the Utakae War to support their cases to the administrative officer, but no resolution was reached. Finally, the government officer, A. Mampioper, proposed that to promote better

---

[31] Mware and Hiripao had both begun to request relocation to the coast as far back as 1954. Investigating a report by his predecessor Paliama that both villages wished to relocated primarily for reasons of health, Lagerberg established that one of the main reasons that Mware wanted to relocate was to return to "the ground of their ancestors" where according to this report, they used to hold the nose-piercing feast (Lagerberg 1955b:5). This suggests that there has been an ongoing conflict over the location and both communities not only rationalised their access through "ancestors" but also utilised government development concerns to their advantage in attempts to meet their own political needs.

[32] The actual words are (I)"*berpangkat tinggi-tinggi*" which could also feasibly be translated as "very tall people".

[33] An administration report describes how Laurentius Towaho, also of Hiripao had made the same proclamation in 1956 (Lamers 1956:1).

[34] I cite this section of the report by attaching an "a" for appendix to the page reference.

[35] It is unclear as to whether or not the Japanese compensated the people of Keakwa and Timuka for their land and troubles. Given the rather brutal accounts of their occupation, compensation

relationships, the village councils in each settlement might settle the dispute the way a similar one had been handled in Inanwatan (on the southern part of the Bird's Head peninsula). In that case it was determined that the land for the airstrip was to be publicly used for the good of both sides (Mampioper 1961:a4). The story failed to inspire a similar solution between Keakwa and Timika.

On the surface, reasons for the land dispute in this case were somewhat unclear. The land had no sago, it was pockmarked by allied bombings, and it was subject to flooding (see Wilson 1981:166). Indeed, in recent memory the entire settlement of Timika had been inundated by a spring tide (Pouwer 1955:6). Nor had any gardens been planted on the barren landing strip and road. In recent years, the landing strip had seen only limited, non-commercial use for mission aircraft. While I certainly can make no definitive claim to the underlying reason for the strife between Keakwa and Timika over the land of the airfield, I can offer at least one possibility.

Throughout Mimika, it was commonly held that one could interact with ancestral spirits and spirit people; these were ideas set out in the *Amoko*. At the same time, during the period immediately preceding the United Nations interregnum, the Netherlands New Guinea Petroleum Company had employed numerous young Kamoro men during their aggressive exploration campaign.[36] During their travels to urban areas like Sorong and Hollandia, the young and impressionable men had learned of various "cargo" beliefs. While Pouwer mentions that a few of these beliefs surfaced in Mimika when the workers returned home, he strongly asserts that they were always imported and rarely held any credence among older Kamoro who still held the strongest influence over community affairs (Pouwer interviewed by author, 25 February 1999).

---

seems unlikely. If so, it is possible that the Timukans may have continued to seek compensation for their move.

[36] Pouwer explained to me that the oil drilling installations of the *Nederlands Nieuw Guinea Petroleum Maatschappij*, the Netherlands New Guinea Petroleum Company (or NNGPM) in the Inanwatan area of the Bird's Head were also explained as having Mimikan origins. Apparently the oil wells and textiles and tools were created when the *amoko-we* Mapurupiu's head was severed (at his request) then rolled away and bored into the ground. (Pouwer interviewed by author, 25 February 1999).

Notwithstanding Pouwer's observations with regards to the lack of support for "cargo-style" beliefs at the time of his fieldwork, by the early 1960s a number of circumstances may have contributed to an atmosphere of expected change among many of the communities in West New Guinea including the Kamoro. Since the post-war return of the Dutch administration, the amount of attention afforded to the indigenous communities in terms of funding, education, economic investment, and ultimately empowerment was on the rise. As mentioned previously, Dutch reports generated in the early 1950s indicate that financial investment in the future of West New Guinea had grown exponentially between 1950 and 1956, though the return remained statistically similar. Indeed, my informants in the late 1990s tended to look at the end of the Dutch Administration as a period of benevolence, whereby they were given access to a myriad of *kata*. The land disputes described above which involved potential access to such wealth seem to be concrete evidence of Kamoro expectations by the end of the post-war Dutch decolonisation.

Within this atmosphere, Natalis Nokoryao made a prediction. From his hospital bed in 1960, the same year as the fights between Keakwa and Timuka and coincidentally the same year that Freeport Sulphur had conducted its initial exploration activities with the East Borneo Company (OBM)[37], Nokoryao claimed that he had prepared roads for cars at Timika in order to receive goods that would arrive on large boats. He went on to say that the goods and the boats were already present, but not always visible. Here I should say that although the Dutch administrative officer who recorded this story tended to characterise it as a sort of a delusional vision of a dying man, all of the characteristics support another more meaningful explanation—that his statements were *imakatiri*.

In many of the *amoko-kwere*, culture heroes make what is described as *imakatiri*. According to Pouwer, *imakatiri* is a pronouncement of something in a solemn voice and is used for the institution of *adat* practices, behavioural rules, and sometimes in the creation of new things or beings as a result of the migration of

---

[37] OBM is the abbreviation for *Oost Borneo Maatschapij*, the Dutch company which held the concession to the interior area around what later became the PT Freeport Indonesia Mine.

souls (Pouwer interviewed by author, 12 February 1999). In one *amoko-kwere*, Paotajao, an *amoko-we*, permanently ascends a tall tree in order to hold up the moon. When the people on the ground ask what they should do in his absence he uses an *imakatiri* to change them into various animals. He said: “From now on, you shall be pigs, snakes, cuscuses, rats, mice create animals such as pigs” (Zegwaard 1952:55). It seems to be a combination of a performative act of creation and a prediction.[38] The fact that numerous Kamoro from Timika came to his bedside lends further credence to the expectation of an *imakatiri*. [39]

Thanks to the intensified research of the era, there was a well-documented understanding that various spirit beings sometimes manifested themselves to Kamoro people (see esp. Coenen 1963). The spirit people (*mbii-we*), who once lived on the surface of the Earth with the real people (*we-nata*), continued to frequently interact with them. Spirits of the dead were also often present, though rarely visible except during the *Amoko* or in the corporeal form of a newborn. Natalis Nokoryao’s *imakatiri* held that at some point the goods would become visible and very quickly be spread throughout Mimika by one their ancestors, Naitemi, and “be very influential” (Mampioper 1961:a11).[40] He did not describe precisely when or under what circumstances or in what manner “Naitemi” would manifest himself. Seen in this light, the final reports of the Dutch era could have been a documentation of a deeper dispute over ownership to access to *kata* between Keakwa and Timika.

Around the time of Natalis Nokoryao’s *imakatiri* talks between Indonesia and Holland had broken down. The political skirmishes had now escalated into

---

[38] My own informants describe how a person able to do *imakatiri* can do such things as forecast weather and predict a carving before it is begun (e.g. all of its styles, motifs, shapes, etc.).

[39] Other examples of *imakatiri* include prescribing actions and consequences of a woman’s death during childbirth (Zegwaard 1952:43-45); predicting torment of the humans from the spirits (ibid:88); and as a means of recognising the signs that a particular cultural hero has been killed and thus the people must wage war (ibid:26-28).

[40] Another government report from around the same time claims that “naitimi” [sic] is a generic name for “ancestors” (Jong 1959:34). Since it is mentioned in connection with certain people’s ability to create “medicine,” (I) *obat*, that allows access to the spiritual world it is likely that the word may actually be a general term for ancestor. In my notes I documented the word “*naiti*” as

small-scale military operations. From bases in Aru and the Kei islands, the Indonesian military sought to evade the Dutch Marines who were patrolling the south-west coast of New Guinea. On the 24th of March 1961 Kamoro communities discovered an abandoned bivouac which was not one of their own. Situated near the mouth of the Jera River in West Mimika, it was evidence that the Indonesian forces had indeed landed. Immediately, the Kamoro reported the find to the Dutch Marines (Holst Pellekaan et al. 1989:141). Within three days, along with the Dutch Marines, they discovered and captured between thirty and forty Indonesian infiltrators some ten kilometres upstream. But this incident was not isolated. Indonesian infiltrators repeatedly landed on the Mimika coast.

Just a few days after the initial find, on the thirteenth of March Kamoro at Aindua reported infiltrators landing on their soil (ibid:142). Under the leadership of a Papuan Corporal, Octavianus Marani, a group of Kamoro set out along with Dutch Marines on an expedition into the jungle in order to capture the infiltrators. The process occurred many times over the next several weeks. Between 24 March and 6 April 1961 thanks to Kamoro assistance, the Dutch Marines captured around sixty-five Indonesian infiltrators (ibid:141-143).

During this period, Kamoro political allegiance was unquestionably with the Dutch, the most visible authority who were rapidly pushing the region towards decolonisation and independence. This stood in opposition to the Kei Island teachers, who according to a 1956 government report were more inclined to sympathise with Indonesia. The report points out, however, that this likely had to do with the fact that they had been all but cut off from their relatives in the Kei islands by the political separation of West New Guinea from Indonesia (Lagerberg 1956:76). By this time, a clear pattern was becoming noticeable with regards to Kamoro political and economic allegiances. In previous chapters I described how the Kamoro forged political and economic allegiances with the Moluccan Kingdoms, the *Tena-we* (the Chinese traders), the *Turabaya* (the initial Dutch administration), and even initially with the Japanese. Based on their active

---

meaning "our parents" but perhaps it was meant in a more figurative way. Drabbe's dictionary contains a similar definition (1937:85). The word is not in Pouwer's glossary.

assistance in tracking down and capturing Indonesian infiltrators in the post-war Dutch era, it appears that during that time they were decidedly supportive of the Dutch administration. Within the next two years, however, due to intense international pressure, West New Guinea was handed over to the United Nations, effectively granting immediate political authority over the region to the Republic of Indonesia.[41]

Though it is difficult for me to comment on the interim rule under the auspices of the United Nations between 1963 and 1969 due to lack of information, I'd like to briefly comment on Kamoro participation in the determination of the future of West New Guinea. During the July and August 1969 *Pepera* (the acronym for *Penentuan Pendapat Rakjat*, commonly translated as the Act of Free Choice), four Kamoro men chose in favour of becoming part of

---

[41] By 1962 the Dutch were prepared to protect the new state with three frigates, an anti-submarine boat, a squadron of Neptune aircraft, Hawker Hunter fighter aircraft, light artillery and 4800 troops positioned in and around New Guinea (Rijs 1999:1). Unknown to even the Dutch officers stationed in New Guinea however (van der Schoot interviewed by author, 23 February 1999; Pouwer interviewed by author, 12 February 1999). Soviet support for Indonesia had grown. By the end of 1961, six submarines, a hospital-ship, and a supply ship set to sea from Vladivostok. According to one of the Russian Officers, he thought that they would be simply delivering the vessels to Indonesia. Only after arrival in Surabaya was he presented with an Indonesian Uniform and Indonesian credentials which outlined that he and his fellow Soviets had *chosen* to fight for Indonesia (Rijs 1999:5). In addition to the submarines and the economic aid, Moscow also sent over between two and three thousand troops and thirty Tupolev bombers, placed on stand-by in Sulawesi (Rijs 1999:1). At the height of the Cold War, these events pushed the New Guinea question into the limelight. Khruschev knew that the only possible way for the Netherlands to challenge a combined Soviet and Indonesian force was with the support of the United States. Further, what were the chances that the United States would risk a Third World War on the western half of New Guinea?

The US envoy in Jakarta reported on July 26 the following to President Kennedy:

"I recognize that the Indonesian position is unreasonable…since Indonesia's own miscalculations and Sukarno's bluster have put them into a position where they cannot readily back down short of full victory. It is not my purpose to rationalize or defend, but only to call attention to the alternatives which now exist and the very short time span remaining to the Dutch for a choice best supporting their national interest. Where our own interest lies seems now hardly open to debate" (McMullen 1981:61).

President Kennedy quickly expressed the position of the United States in a secret letter to Dutch Premier De Quay stating that although the Dutch and the West could realistically win the battle, only the communists could profit from such a conflict (Rijs 1999:5). On August 15, with Soviet submarines poised to attack, waiting until the prescribed time to open their envelopes with their orders, a deal was struck in New York ending the standoff. According to the Soviet marines, which by then had taken positions near the coast of Manokwari, the news came within hours of their expected attack on New Guinea—abort the mission (Rijs 1999:5).

Indonesia (YBKKBP 1995:292).[42] Taking into account the reports that have claimed that the Act of Free Choice was a farce and that Papuans were coerced into selecting Indonesia, at risk of being politically incorrect, historical evidence may suggest that the Kamoro men may well have selected Indonesia without coercion. In the absence of the Dutch Administration it is plausible that the Kamoro men who chose to become part of Indonesia did so out of an indigenous strategy to ally themselves with whomever was most politically/economically/militarily powerful.

Consistent with the information presented in previous chapters, the Kamoro appear to have formulated understandings of the Dutch administration and mission as outgrowths of *amoko-kwere*. At the same time, the Dutch made a concerted effort to increase their investment and dedication to the decolonisation of West New Guinea. Under the circumstances the Kamoro appear to have formulated the Dutch activities as a confirmation of their *amoko-kwere*, that the foreigners and their *kata* had indeed derived from Mimika. This understanding seemed to underlie a general Kamoro attitude that the foreigners had previously stolen the *kata*. In this sense, the foreigners owed *naware*, retaliatory or economic compensation to the Kamoro. Perhaps Natalis Nokoryao's *imakatiri* was a reflection of indigenous expectations of the realisation of that compensation. The next chapter looks at how this perceived "compensation" may have played out in the field with the arrival of Freeport and ultimately fuelled a series of activities that allowed lived experience and *amoko-kwere* to mirror one another just as the underworld is a mirror reflection of the upperworld.

---

[42] For a fairly balanced account of the Act of Free Choice written soon after the event see Chapter Six in Hastings (1973[1969]).