

Chapter One

Order and Confusion

Omos ma bakredi fan-hoin oko ma nadla yisat kat lemokom;

‘The liana or snake that gets in someone’s way, will be cut in two’.

(Nimrod Krimadi, 70, Sasenek, 2 February 1996).

This proverb was explained to me by Nimrod Krimadi when he expressed his worries about my questions about Imyan people’s concerns and my collecting of origin stories and inquiring after information which often turned out to be secret knowledge. *Omos* is a small brown snake as well as a certain liana that looks like the snake. If *omos* coils over a path a passer-by will unquestionably cut it in two. ‘So when you interfere in other peoples’ affairs and they find that you stand in their way then you are in trouble’, Krimadi explained. To curtail their children’s curiosity parents often use the proverb. In practice, this means that one should not be too inquisitive, nor attempt to undermine other people’s power based on knowledge, nor provoke discussion about land rights or feuds, nor reveal secrets. This moral rule is a very important one in Imyan society. It has gained significance recently as younger men feel the need to know the secrets in order to recover lost knowledge in their attempt to authenticate a world that is strongly felt to be beyond their control. It is this concern, as I argue below, that operates like the main trigger for the current dynamics of Imyan cultural traditions.

My intention in this chapter is to draw on theories of culture and practice in order to establish the theoretical framework for my analysis of Imyan society which aims to represent the dynamics of the traditions introduced in the Introduction. I depart from the observation of the occurrence of such different traditions as spheres of meaning and action within Imyan society. These spheres are a variety of cultural worlds shaped by certain traditions of knowledge. They

are rich in symbolic material and offer rules for behaviour that are continuously worked upon by people who come to these traditions with particular concerns.

I am thus concerned with representing these Imyan traditions of knowledge as cultural orientations that relate to people's social positions and the contexts in which they come to the fore as epitomised by recurring terms. In the previous chapter I indicated that the most central of these terms are *adat*, *wuon*, *lait*, *pemerintah*, *gereja*, and *agama*. These Imyan terms evoke meanings and modes of activity and are used to express or counteract the general feeling of confusion. In the next chapters I outline the different traditions of knowledge and describe and explain their locally perceived effects of ensuring a future that is, at least, less uncertain.

This chapter begins with a reflection on some of the main themes in previous studies of some West Kepala Burung societies, followed by a discussion of anthropological theories of human practice and the construction of culture. Then I go on to relate these understandings to the observation that Imyan cultural constructions are ordered in the form of traditions of knowledge. This exploration takes us round central ideas and concepts in Fredrik Barth's works, in particular his generative model developed in *Cosmologies in the Making* (1987) and further elaborated in terms of an 'anthropology of knowledge' in *Balinese Worlds* (1993).

Following Barth's discussion of 'the anthropology of knowledge', I locate the particular Imyan experience and understandings that shape the knowledge traditions. Besides grounded in a particular local view on knowledge and local politics, the cultural reality of the traditions cannot be seen separate from historical influences and local cultural dynamics. Present-day constructions of meanings draw on numerous historical streams. The Imyan cultural traditions such as *adat*, *wuon*, and *lait*, have deep historical roots in the local context, whereas recent traditions of knowledge (*pemerintah*, *gereja*, *agama*) are to a large extent based on outside origins. I also take Barth's generative model as guideline to recognise the role of knowledge and secrecy among Imyan people and to understand how conceptions of effective knowledge meaningfully relate to different traditions of knowledge which shape behaviour which in turn (re)shapes

the traditions of knowledge.

The Anthropology of the Western Kepala Burung

The focus of the anthropology of the Kepala Burung has been the localised community embedded within, and dependent upon, a regional network of similar communities connected through the exchange of cloths, generally glossed as *kain timur* ('cloth') by both Kepala Burung people and their ethnographers. At a time when the discipline was reorienting its focuses and methods, and with theoretical goals that were considered more appropriate to the post-colonial world, the anthropology of the Kepala Burung through the works of Pouwer, Kamma, Miedema, Haenen and J.M. Schoorl, concentrated on matters of kinship and the exchange of cloth in reconstructing pasts and 'traditional' presents. Less detailed, Kamma and Miedema also dealt with religious representations in the Raja Ampat area and the Kebar Valley respectively.

Research particularly focused on the western part of the peninsula including the Ayamaru area, the Kebar Valley and the Moi area. Recently, Pouwer (1998), Haenen (1995, 1997, 1998), and Miedema (1998, in press) have drawn attention to the Eastern Kepala Burung, thereby mainly using the 1950s and early 1960s reports by Pouwer, Bergh, Pans, and Zevenbergen that are published in Miedema and Stokhof (1999), and a collection of stories compiled and edited by Miedema (1997), as well as new material collected during fieldwork by Haenen in 1995 and 1996. In the discussion below, I concentrate on the western Kepala Burung because its themes are expected to relate most significantly to the cultural realities of the Imyan.

In this anthropology, the Tehit speakers, including the Imyan, are known as 'slave hunters', 'cheaters', and 'antagonistic coast dwellers' to the Maybrat people living around the Ayamaru Lakes (Elmberg 1968: 19, 46). In Miedema's (1986, 1988, 1994) regional developmental perspective on trade, migrations, and exchange in the northern (Kebar Valley) and central (Ayamaru Lakes) areas, they feature as part of the south coastal periphery of the so-called *kain timur* exchange

system or *kain timur* complex. The Teminabuan area constituted one of the supply routes of the early arrival of cloths because it was part of eastern Indonesian *sosolot* exchange networks to which I return in the next chapter.¹

Among Imyan, cloths are called *not kohok* (*not* - ‘cloth’, *kohok* - ‘wealth, rich, power’), a category of valuable cloths comprising a variety of classes. They are used to pay for marital rights, for compensation payments and employed to establish relations with ancestral and non-ancestral spirits. In the Ayamaru Lakes region in particular, the introduction of cloths gave rise to an intensification of regional trade with a pronounced establishment of so-called ‘surplus-manipulating big-men’ (see Miedema 1994). In relation to this ‘epicentre’ of cloth exchange, Imyan or south-western coastal people in general played a role as middlemen providing Ayamaru with cloths while themselves being under the thumb of such ‘kings’ (*rajas*) as the Raja of Onin, the Raja of Arguni and the Raja of Kokas, ‘the great slave traders of West New Guinea’ who took coastal people as slaves for whom they bartered cloth and iron and bronze objects (Miedema 1988: 505).

Miedema’s social historical analysis of trade, migration, and exchange calls for more research into oral histories and analyses that are concerned with how norms, values, and meanings are altered to bring about change and how change (such as that triggered by the introduction of exotic cloths) brings about new orientations. In fact, he examines people’s orientations as reflections of social relationships. The analysis shows that warfare and exchange went hand in hand and that the expansion of exchange can take place because of slave and cloth trade, rather than on that of intensified agricultural production as in Feil’s (1987) model for the evolution of Highland Papua New Guinea societies (see Miedema 1994: 122; Healey 1998).

1. For historical overviews and general sketches of the character of these trade monopolies at the coastal areas of the Bird’s Head Peninsula and the Onin Peninsula, and larger parts of Eastern Indonesia, see Bergh (1964a), Andaya (1993), Goodman (1998), Healey (1998), Mansoben (1995: 221-62), and Swadling (1996).

Central to Miedema's explanation is the historical development of an elaborate exchange system in which big-men handled women whom they enslaved and denounced as evil 'witches'. In a regional perspective, he demonstrates a centre-periphery model where peripheral groups, such as the Kebar, the Ayfat, the Moi, and the Tehit (including the Imyan) recently practised restricted exchange before being drawn into the system of affinal payments based on cloth exchanges. Kamma (1970), reporting Daud Salosa's - one of Kamma's informants - theory of the development of marriage systems among the Maybrat of Ayamaru, formulated the initial impetus to this theory.

Daud told Kamma in detail about three periods. During the first term, people practised direct exchange of sisters and only paid valuables such as pigs and birds of paradise to compensate for damage due to vendetta and the like. In a later phase, a system of asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage came to the fore (compare Pouwer 1957: 303). More importance began to be attached to payment for marital rights. The last period began at least four centuries ago and is characterised by increasing involvement in exchange of slaves for cloths. Kamma calls this period the 'capitalist' revolution because it entailed the accumulation of wealth by 'big men'.²

It could be argued, as Kamma does and later Miedema (albeit with more ethnographic evidence), that this indigenous evolutionary theory explains that increasing competition between big-men who wanted to establish a dominating position in the Ayamaru area was a driving force behind transformations of exchange patterns. Such competition, however, cannot simply be taken as a given. In particular in a region where relatively egalitarian political systems prevail, there must be other factors that mediate the acceleration of competition. Long and difficult discussions over who can compete, what may be competed for, in what context and what the privileges and prerogatives of the winners will be, can be expected. 'If competition is allowed to accelerate, its results, such as emerging social inequalities must be mediated' (Wiessner and Tumu 1998: 45).

2. See Liep (1998: 260-62) for a discussion of the use of such terms as 'primitive capitalism' in the ethnography of the Kepala Burung.

In their study of Enga (Highland Papua New Guinea) networks of exchange, ritual, and warfare, Wiessner and Tumu (1998) show the processes and consequences of social action in an analysis of the oral histories based on firsthand and second-hand eyewitness accounts.³ Wiessner and Tumu applied their method to Enga material in order to reconstruct the ecological, social, political, and ideological processes that shaped Enga regional networks before first contact with Europeans. They concentrate on the introduction of the sweet potato (between 250 and 450 years ago) and the development of the *tee* ceremonial exchange cycle, which originated some eight generations ago. Their calling on concepts from practice theory draws out aspects of change that complement materialist models previously applied to the Papua New Guinea Highlands (Watson 1965a, 1965b; Modjeska 1982; Feil 1987).

To fully understand the historical sequence as sketched by Daud Salosa a reconstruction similar to Wiessner and Tumu's is needed in order to know how new parameters are defined in changing contexts, where they come from, and how they become accepted as new norms. It is therefore regrettable that so far the analysis of the emergence of cloth exchange systems in the western Kepala Burung has not been based on oral histories allowing for a reconstruction of the gradual establishment of concepts, rules, and values shared among groups that are culturally rather different.

3. The extraordinary richness of Highland oral traditions describing long historical processes has been fruitfully exploited before. Working among the Enga's western neighbours, for example, Chris Ballard (1995) has combined Huli oral histories with archaeologically established markers in time in order to arrive at structures of regional trade and ritual that relate to landscapes of local belief. Where Ballard arrives at a conclusive understanding of the symbolic landscape of Huli sacred geography, Wiessner and Tumu use local narratives to explore the social processes involved in the formation of broad-reaching networks. They engage in an argument about war and conflict with Meggitt, whose work among the Enga has played a major role in the classical literature on the Highlands. In the 1970s, Meggitt argued that war and conflict among Enga were driven by disputes over land. Wiessner and Tumu argue that it was social boundary maintenance, rather than physical boundary maintenance, that drove Enga into conflict. The resulting disruption of people's relations to social and natural resources necessitated conflict resolution, providing the stimulus for the rise of large systems of exchange.

Miedema, however, goes some way to suggest possible adaptations made by Ayamaru people to accept the emergence of an elite of determined cloth exchangers (*bobot*). Miedema's (1986, 1988, 1994) analysis includes some of the changing values that allowed big-men to establish powerful positions in Maybrat society. This mostly concerns changes in marriage and gender relations through which women became easy subjects of manipulation by accusing them of using evil powers. Miedema, following Elmberg (1968: 26, 31), pictures attributions and accusations of 'witchcraft (*kapes fane, suangi*) as the denouncement of inconvenient females to minimise their role in the exchange of cloth.

As such, the practice of attributing the possession and use of damaging, even lethal, powers to women is explained as a means of male domination. Whatever the truth of the hypothesis for the reconstruction of historical developments, Miedema's discussion of 'a striking ambiguity concerning the position of women, particularly in the center of the *kain timur* complex, expressed in the occurrence ... accusations of witchcraft' (1994: 136) is but one perspective on witchcraft (evil powers) as a means of male domination. More specifically, it overlooks the practical reality of the beliefs in lethal powers of women as ideas pertaining to sociality, threat, fear, and anxiety as I attempt to show in Chapter 3.

The observations by Elmberg and Miedema were made in the 1950s and 1970s, respectively at a time when the influences of Christian mission and government agencies were, in the case of Elmberg at least recent, and in the case of Miedema, already fundamentally changing Maybrat society and people's ideas. As also observed in other parts of New Guinea, for example by Stürzenhofecker (1995: 289) among the Duna, Christian mission teachings often go hand in hand with the perception of people themselves that they have lost their means of effectively countering the activities of witches. Among the Imyan, the abandonment of their initiation activities, associated with taboos that ideologically reinforce male domination, is often brought to the fore, thereby underpinned by biblical stories denouncing women as evil, as the reason for unbridled attacks of lethal powers, a theme which I detail in Chapter 3.

In a recent elaborations of his model, Miedema (1998, in press) also draws on historical material from the Eastern Kepala Burung and concentrates on stories about trickster and culture heroes. This is not the place to discuss the details of this fine-grained analysis and I merely note that this approach is challenging and could be extended further by taking a practice theory approach. The value of the stories, which Miedema drew from materials collected by patrollers and missionaries in the 1950s, lies in their ability to show how new parameters develop in societies when they become entangled in cloth exchange. Whether this analysis can show convincingly how change was brought about to allow competition to accelerate among the Maybrat remains to be seen. To fully reconstruct these developments more oral histories should be gathered and taken into account, and attention should be paid to changes and variations in people's beliefs that do not relate simply to variations in social organisation and relationships.

During my work in the Teminabuan area, I have not come across oral histories that might enable a more profound analysis of the emergence of cloth exchange cycles. Most informants suggested that Ayamaru people who began to ask for cloths in exchange for their daughters, drew them into cloth payments for marital rights. Imyan had to adapt to this because they were eager to keep up exchange relations with the more powerful Maybrat in order to prevent them from raiding for sago and young women. Apparently, Imyan were subject to intimidation by Maybrat to the north.

However, with reference to the south, there are many recollections about the raiding parties organised by sea-faring groups originating from either the east (Inanwatan) or the west (Raja Ampat). From the Raja Ampat also came traders with whom Imyan exchanged forest products and slaves for cloths. The cloths they got through these trades were, as informants stressed, not enough to meet the Maybrat demands. Paradoxically, the trade relations with representatives of the *rajas* of the Raja Ampat islands and the Onin Peninsula figure prominently in reconstructions of the past that suggest that Imyan were wealthy and enjoyed a powerful status in pre-colonial times (see Chapters 3 and 6).

Significantly, these stories do not concern payments for marital rights or transformation(s) of leadership; they relate instead to the importance of cloths that are used in exchanges for establishing and maintaining relations between people (*na*) and spirits (*ni*), or, in present-day Imyan terms, between the Holy Spirit (*Roh Khudus, Klen Tadyi, Na Ago, Na Ha*) and humankind (*manusia, na*). As I detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6, these stories reflect a concern with ritual and their capacity to successfully engage with ancestral and non-ancestral spirits. They illuminate the experience of changing moral relationships, both between Imyan themselves as well as between Imyan communities and the larger world.

In other respects, however, Imyan stories may be taken to support Miedema's hypothesis that the people of the Teminabuan area functioned as an 'epicentre' of cloth exchange system. For example, the origin story of *wuon* recounted below, tells of a trader named Bauk who took an iron axe with him. Powerful images and the value of this iron object probably increased Bauk's status to such heights that he became a leading figure in the male initiation cult; Bauk in fact first introduced the secret *wuon* lore to the Nasfa people.

While I do not have any information on where Bauk came from, it is likely that he either came from the Raja Ampat Islands or the Onin Peninsula. Other stories tell of local people travelling to Onin in order to get cloths and to learn about the situation there. These ventures were undertaken by people at the Kaibus River, usually Onim and Kondjol people who presently reside in the village of Wersar. They wanted to know when trading parties would come to Teminabuan so that people could prepare slaves and forest products which they could exchange for cloth.

Perhaps one of the most spectacular of these accounts is the one that tells of a man from Wersar who misbehaves in front of a visiting Onin *raja* because he hopes to be enslaved and brought to Onin. He is successful in being captured and being taken to Onin where he is put to work in the gardens of the *raja*. One day he witnesses to his amazement an Islamic funeral at which the body of the deceased is wrapped in cloths before it is committed to the earth. The next night he manages to escape, digs up the buried body, and takes away the cloths. Then he walks to the sea, steals a canoe, and rows to the other side of the MacCluer

Gulf. After a week, he arrives in Wersar where he shows two magnificent cloths. The hero is still talked about with much exaltation and the two cloths are safely stored away in an old man's house and are considered as powerful items (*kain pusaka*).

In contrast to the story that tells of local enterprising people, others picture the vulnerability of the Teminabuan population. I have heard numerous accounts of sneak attacks by raiding parties. In particular families or groups who were out in the coastal mangroves collecting sago and gathering fish and hunting game, were prone to parties collecting people and forest products for the *rajas*. In such instances only at times, valuable objects such as cloths were left behind after the prize was carried off. The parties came at appointed times and met with local traders who presented sago, bird plumes, and slaves and expected the traders to pay with cloths.

Among Imyan, traders established a 'warehouse' at the banks of the Upper Seremuk River. In current recollections this warehouse is referred to as a city (*kota*) and is considered to be a modern settlement with a huge bridge, roads, an airstrip, large buildings including a warehouse in which many cloths and pottery were stored. This warehouse is often compared with the Tehit structure in Teminabuan that was established by a *raja* of Rumbati. Despite the important role these cities play in historical accounts (see Chapter 6), the stories I collected give the impression that trade there played a minor role and that most of the enslavement was performed through the violent capturing of people.

Partly due to the approach I took during fieldwork, my material does not provide enough information to recount the history of the changes through raiding and exchange in detail. As said, I concentrated on the traditions of knowledge that appeared relevant to Imyan; in the process of getting some understanding of the development and uses of these traditions Imyan seldom volunteered stories about the changes in exchange systems in their history. It seems that these changes are less important to them currently than, as indicated above, the idea that cloth exchanges in their own society are important for maintaining good social relations and for getting access to the powers in the unseen world where spirits dwell.

Where most members of the previous generation of Kepala Burung anthropologists were concerned with reconstructing pasts through the lens of ‘traditional’ presents, my approach focuses more on the specific, and not simply diachronic, processes of engagement between Imyan and the outside world. It is from this perspective that it is possible to understand, for example, that Imyan people’s historical involvement in exchanges (also entailing cloths) with outsiders are currently also recounted in terms of the maintenance of boundaries and access to power from *raja* centres as a focus for the recovery of their self-esteem and resistance to outside power (see Chapter 6 and Timmer 1998b, 1999b, 2000). It will become clear that Imyan are not so much concerned with cloth exchange as the other groups that are dealt with in the anthropology of the area, but more with knowledge as both a powerful source and, through its unequal division, as ordering Imyan society, placing Imyan community in the larger environment, and relating Imyan history and future to the changing external world.

Evil Powers in the Kepala Burung

It is a truism to report that unseen evil powers (‘witchcraft, magic’) haunt the minds of Melanesian people and that these powers are often invoked to interpret the behaviour of others.⁴ The peoples of the western Kepala Burung fit into this general picture. When looking at the Kepala Burung from the perspective of Eastern Indonesia or Maluku, we see that witchcraft and magic (generally glossed in Malay as *suangi*) also occupy a prominent place in many Eastern Indonesian societies.⁵ The few eastern Indonesian studies dealing with the subject generally tend to see *suangi* as part of *adat* in the sacred sense (the domain of the ancestors, traditional religion, and religious practices). To see evil

4. See Patterson (1974), Knauff (1985: 339-48), and Stephen (1987) for overviews.

5. See Bubandt (1995) on Central Halmahera, Ellen (1993) on South Central Seram, Forth (1998) on Flores, and Visser (1989a) on Sahu. The reports from this area are scanty though (Ellen 1993: 81).

and damaging powers as part of a sacred, religious, mystical or esoteric domain would be to suggest that they primarily play a role in the organisation of cosmological ideas.

Anthropological studies of Melanesia have also concentrated on the role of evil powers in social and political systems characterised as ‘big-man leaderships’ (Sahlins 1963, Godelier and Strathern 1991). Typically, ‘big-men’ belong to the analytic prototype of Highland Papua New Guinea societies.⁶ Big-men acquire their influence through controlling economic production and exchange and are influential in these domains because of their specialised knowledge of genealogy, myth, and magical powers. This focus is reflected to some extent in the analyses by Miedema (1988: 505; 1994: 136-38, 142) of *suangi* as a resource for maintaining the regime of Maybrat *bobot* in the Ayamaru region, which I discuss below.

In recounting the reality of imputing evil forces to people, both the Eastern Indonesian and Melanesian scholars do not generally pay thorough attention to the reality of people’s beliefs. This can be explained by the fact that to both the local people (except for some experts) and the researcher, evil forces are mysterious because they are hidden from observation. During my stay among Imyan, everybody always denied using evil forces. The unseen evil forces pervade their lives not as something that people do, but as something that is done to people, as something that one fears, as a misfortune that might happen and against which one either can or cannot take precautions.

The term *suangi* is spread throughout most parts of Maluku and western Irian Jaya (Held 1951: 165, 1957: 258). What can be stated with some certainty is that since the advent of Dutch and Moluccan missionary activity in the area since the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries and other travellers had a stake in transmitting the term (Bergh 1964b: 2). Up until the present day, local church and governmental organisations in which Moluccan people occupy positions, at least in many parts of the Kepala Burung, conjure forth specific notions of *suangi*. To give some sense of what these notions are and how they are

6. See Biersack (1995) for a critical reflection on this prototype as contrasted to ‘fringe highland’ New Guinea lowland societies in which ‘great men’ prevail.

represented in scholarly work let me make a limited inventory of the use of the word and the meanings of the concept of *suangi* in the Kepala Burung.

According to Bergh (1964b: 2), the word *suangi* is probably of Maluku-Malay origin and began to spread over large parts of Irian Jaya with the advent of missionisation through Moluccan *gurus* as pioneers and/or assistants of Dutch Protestant and Catholic missionaries. It has also been suggested that the word *suangi* and the belief in its powers to control people originates from Salawati where for centuries tributaries of the sultan of Tidore were located. Besides these sources I have been unable to further trace either the origin of the word *suangi* or its 'authentic' meaning and the contexts in which it was used in the Moluccas.

The anthropological literature on the Kepala Burung offers little solace except for the remarks of Bergh and Miedema cited above. What becomes clear in this material is that, for the people of the Kepala Burung, *suangi* denotes more than its common translations in these works suggest. The authors apparently thought that a translation of the concept in a few obvious words like 'witch', 'witchcraft', 'black magic', 'supernatural power', and the like, would suffice to describe its scope. In general, *suangi* appears in the anthropology of the Kepala Burung as a category designating a self-evident domain of the social world. What this domain entails in the practice of people, that is its multifocal variety, is generally left undiscussed.

In 1884, the Reverend Woelders made an intriguing assessment of the phenomenon of *suangi* among the people of Anday in the Doreh Bay. Woelders defines *suangi* as a belief in witches (*'heksengeloof'*) whom he considers to use black magic (*'zwarte magie'*) or an evil power which takes possession of people and makes them kill others. There is no defence against this power, as an informant explained to Woelders (in Kamma 1976: 404). Woelders' informants further explained that when local people fall ill or die after people from the interior had come to the coast and slept in coastal people's houses, it is definitely the malevolent spirit Manwen who did it, because it is Manwen who can control a human being.

Interestingly, the Manwen from the interior are much more powerful than other local Manwen who live in nearby forests. The people from the interior

came to the coast to guide bird hunters through mountains and forests on their lands to collect plumes (see Swadling 1996: 33, 127-9). Before the trade in plumes became important to the local people, the coastal people were not visited by people from the interior. When contacts with these much-feared outsiders increased, explanations of misfortune were also increasingly related to evil powers associated with their Manwen.

After the Second World War, Elmberg (1955) discusses *kabes fané* as a power which devours one's double or *nawián* ('shadow, source of strength, soul') of Maybrat persons: 'usually *kabes fané* takes up the living quarters in the body of a woman, and from there goes out on his disastrous nocturnal expeditions. Such a woman is called *kabes fané*' (1955: 40). In his later major analysis of Maybrat culture, *Balance and Circulation*, Elmberg notes that women who were considered inconvenient in *bobot* marriage strategies to control the exchange of cloth were denounced as witches and killed (1968: 26).

These women are considered to bring misfortune upon society because they are possessed by a 'ghost' called *kapes* that feeds on 'human shadows' (*nawián*). 'She was also characterised as being openly anti-social: she did not share her taro, cloth or land in the way her husband or other affinal men regarded as appropriate' (Elmberg 1968: 202, see also 1965: 10). Elmberg further notes that according to Maybrat women, *kapes fané* is not necessarily feminine but that the term refers to a bad human being, whether male or female (1965: 13).

In his study of fishery, cloth exchange, and cosmology among the Maybrat people, Miedema observed that women, but also men, who catch more fish than others run the risk of being suspected of having used *suangi*, which he labels as 'black magic' (1986: 16).⁷ Miedema's observations remind us that an analysis of *suangi* in the Kepala Burung should also take into account the history of gender relations. This will involve the importance attached to customary ideas and practices associated with reproduction, fertility, pollution, and spirits which reflect ideas underlying concerns felt by males. Beyond these specific cultural

7. That witchcraft operates within the sphere of food-sharing patterns between the sexes is reminiscent of Stürzenhofecker's (1995) recent analysis of female witchcraft and male dominance in Aluni, Papua New Guinea Highlands.

meanings attached to women and reproduction, one should also look at another level of discourse in which gender ideas and values play a role. In a recent study of *kastom* discourse on the Yali movement in Madang District, Papua New Guinea, Hermann (1997) shows how involvement in witchcraft is tied to women's own interests, as it is a commitment to securing their own place, their own sphere of influence, and domain of female power.⁸

As I discuss in Chapter 3, in a society in which men are traditionally engaged in cloth exchange transactions which potentially make them the object of regard of close and distant others, women's traditional garden work remains at the inferior pole in Imyan assessments of value. In today's world, Imyan men do not use cloth anymore to make a name or to pursue prestige, but prefer to engage in church and development activities in order to both get a share of the promised prosperity and because of the social transformations that these institutions entail.

Perhaps of even greater importance in the changing circumstances in which social hierarchies and gender differences are created and maintained is Imyan people's relation to the spirits. Where in the past initiated men could travel up the sky where they contacted the sky deities and the dead, presently they suggest to be closer to the power of God and the Holy Spirit because they can read the Bible and engage seriously in Christian ritual. Women, they claim, disturb the Christian community if they keep engaged in *lait*. Thus where formerly manhood was related to social transformations brought about by *wuon* initiation and gaining prestige in the exchange of cloths, presently such transformations as confirmation in the church (*sidi*) or holding position in the government, the school or the church have become more important.

One of the most intrusive effects of these changes is discussed in Chapter 3 where I deal with men's ideas about increase of *lait*-related misfortunes as reflecting their fear of women who also increasingly express pride of their own individual achievements in the church organisation, development projects, educational programs and who take pleasure in elaborating their personal points

8. Compare Strathern (1982) and Stürzenhofecker (1995). On the role of women in the exchange of cloths in the Kepala Burung, in particular among the Moi people, see Van der Werff (1989: 167-71).

of view. Also in other chapters I regularly return to the effects of the loss of the symbolic functions in the production of difference as the result of the disappearance of male initiation and the deprived status attached to the possession and ceremonial presentation of cloths. This has, in general terms, led to an increase in the symbolic functions of the evil character of *lait*, in particular as it is reflected upon in terms of a female affair and as a diabolical threat to the Christian community.

Miedema further notes that ‘black magic’ among the Maybrat is called *kabes wanè*, and, in line with Elmberg’s observation, is believed to be practised by women, in contrast to *suangi* or *rasé* among the Ayfat people, which is said to be possessed and controlled by men. In a later analysis of cloth exchange among the Maybrat people and the interior (or centre) of the Kepala Burung in general, Miedema (1994) no longer uses the term *suangi* but discusses all matters pertaining to lethal powers that originate from women under the term ‘witchcraft’. In this analysis witchcraft is seen as accusations by influential *bobot* which are part of their manipulation of the exchange of cloths: ‘Women were and have remained the object of manipulation of the Kepala Burung ‘big men’ in their thought and action’ (1994: 142). Witchcraft or *suangi* thus pertains to gender and power relations whereby men dominate women, as Elmberg already indicated in *Balance and Circulation* (1968).

J.M. Schoorl records a similar term for evil among the Ayfat people, namely *kapes* or *kapes fane*, a lethal power that radiates from a deceased person’s body, and accounts for illness, death, a poor harvest, exchange that is not running smoothly, abnormal behaviour of animals, and all other misfortune (J.M. Schoorl 1979: 82). Schoorl also mentions *suangi* which he defines as a ‘mysterious power with an uncontrollable desire to kill’ (1979: 84, my translation). Among the Ayfat this lethal power is associated with women and is the same as *kapes fane* among the Maybrat. From Schoorl’s description of *kapes*, we may infer that Ayfat people use the word *suangi* interchangeably with *kapes*.

Among the Kebar people of the North-eastern Kepala Burung, *suangi* comprises both witchcraft and sorcery (*‘hekserij en toverij’*, Miedema 1984: xix). In line with his analyses of exchange systems Miedema argues, that among the

Kebar, local leaders use belief in *suangi* to exercise power (1984: 186-7). He also suggests that *suangi* originated from the Raja Ampat Islands where leaders like the *raja* of Salawati were considered to have used this power to establish powerful positions amid the people of the Kepala Burung for centuries (1984: 186).

As I have indicated above, discussions of unseen evil powers in Melanesian literature have often centred on the role of ‘big-men’ in Highland New Guinea societies. This focus also echoes in the anthropology of the Kepala Burung, as in the case of the *bobot* of the Ayamaru region, identified as ‘big-men’ by Elmberg (1968: 20) and Miedema (1986: 12-3, 27-35; 1994: 131-2, 138-40, 141-2, 151 n. 8). These *bobot* characteristically dominate the exchange of cloths for their own purposes through the ‘manipulation of common people, through the charge of witchcraft and sorcery’ (Miedema 1986: 28).

By concentrating on the role of entrepreneurs in cloths, Miedema after Elmberg (1968: 26, 31), pictures attributions and accusations of *suangi* (*kapes fane*) as the denunciation of inconvenient females to minimise their role in the exchange of cloths as payments for brides. As such, the practice of attributing women with the possession and use of damaging or even lethal powers is discussed in terms of an effective means of male domination.

This cursory inventory of the meanings of *suangi* shows that a bewildering variety of misdoings and sources of misfortune are glossed under the concept of *suangi*. The many varying images of *suangi* definitely preclude the attempt to define it precisely, as Bergh (1964b) remarks in his discussion of *suangi* in relation to colonial administration in justice in the Teminabuan and Ayamaru regions of the Kepala Burung. Bergh argues that though *suangi* takes on many different meanings in the Kepala Burung area,

the general and most important characteristic of *suangi* is everywhere the same, namely, *suangi* always has to do with evil. *Suangi* is evil itself, evil of the worst kind; it is the constant and inhuman enemy lurking everywhere (1964b: 2, my translation).

I want to add to this that *suangi* often comes to the fore as something mystical. This characterisation is close to how people themselves experience the phenomenon and should make us realise that *suangi* explanations are part of people's common sense assumptions regarding the world. As described in Chapter 3, *suangi* accusations have much to do with ideals and orientations, that is, with normative moral and ethical systems (compare Knauff 1985: 3-4). To explain *suangi* in such a way requires insight into people's orientations; how they interpret the meaning of events and other people's behaviour and how ideas about evil powers operate in various contexts. This practice approach takes seriously the interaction between practical behaviour and subjective orientations.

My elder Imyan informants were very strict in designating local forms of evil powers as *lait* and evil from outside, including the work of Satan, as *suangi*. Among them, the word *suangi* is used in 'modern' contexts like the church (particularly in sermons to refer to challenges of Satan), in conversations with Moluccan and Javanese doctors, with government officials (Ambonese, Keiese, and Javanese), with Moluccan missionaries, and also in conversations with linguists and anthropologists. Due to their decreasing use of the local vernacular younger Imyan readily refer to *suangi* in explaining any kind of misfortune, including *lait*.

Subjectification and Practice

The approach I present in this thesis offers insights into the potential of exchanges of inter alia cloths, but also knowledge and evil powers, which situate the Imyan in a larger historical world (in the light of their position in the present world) and the disciplining role of payments for marital rights and compensation in the maintenance of social order (in the light of present-day ideas about sociality, in particular as related to ideas about Christian charity). The role of cloth exchange among the Imyan will appear as one of the many orientations that serve to link and orient people to the external world, both in its seen as in its unseen reality. In its representation and practice of up-keeping a social

cosmological order, '*kain timur*' fits within the tradition of knowledge called *adat* and, as such, is counterpoised to modern things as church and government and the conceptions about moral relations between people and between people and spirits that these institutions bring along.

In its perceived role as disciplining society's members and providing a cosmological order that is increasingly wished for, the norms and values of cloth exchange are related to the self and arise out of individual creativity. An understanding of this can be of value to projects that attempt to reconstruct historical changes since they provide examples of how values, norms and orientation of a Kepala Burung people actually change. Moreover, the focus on Imyan expression in the practice of their daily lives potentially allows for a regional comparison of cultural dynamics in the Kepala Burung.

In a recent volume that reacts against the traditional view of Papua New Guinea Highland anthropology, Biersack advocates an approach to New Guinea cultures that she calls, after Clifford (1992), 'ex-centric ethnography' (Biersack 1995). This approach aims to situate local investigations in wider regional and political frameworks of the post-colonial state and the world at large. The study and description of cultures should focus on the history and the processes of change in which human creativity is acknowledged. In Biersack's volume this approach is nicely illustrated by some fascinating studies drawn from the Highlands and its so-called fringes in Papua New Guinea. Although Clifford's prose is more assertive and more of a personal exploration, he also succeeds in conveying that anthropology should not be concerned about 'pure traditions and discrete cultural differences' but rather 'people going places', 'hybrid environments', 'travelling cultures'. Clifford sees these dynamics on a global scale; I attempt to highlight the effects of these ex-centric forces in an Imyan village situation, recognising the elements that connect Imyan to a contingent present in a world that extends beyond their village.

Taking a practice-oriented approach to culture and acknowledging the ongoing constructions of meaning, allows me to recognise the relations between an overwhelming amount of cultural expressions, designated as a 'surfeit of culture' by Fredrik Barth (1993: Chapter 20) - and how continuity and change

occur among Imyan. Practice theory attempts to see how cultural orientations guide actors and how actors in turn give new meanings to events and acts. ‘Social action emerges as the interplay between cultural orientation and individual motivation, on the one hand, and the contingencies and constraints of a non-symbolic world, on the other’ (Knauff 1993: 13). Herein lies the cultural pulse of change (Wiessner and Tumu 1998: 43), the ‘spiralling elaboration of local *geists* in interaction with the legacy of their own hard-world actualizations’ (Knauff 1993: 135), and this is what Barth (1987, 1989, 1992, 1993) sees as the major challenge of anthropology.

The practice approach proposes that cultural behaviour should be first considered from the inside, from the variable and changing viewpoints of indigenous actors.⁹ Culture then is always a process and is never reducible to either its object or its subject form, that is, culture has no independent subject, as neither individuals nor societies can be considered as its originators, since both are inseparable from culture itself and are as much constituted by culture as constituting it (Miller 1987). This way of looking at culture is to see it as continuously in the making in a ‘gray zone of subjectification, externalization, and culture-in-the-making’ (Barth 1987: 86) and being the structured and structuring practice of individuals which oscillates between two poles: internalised meanings that operate in social interaction (where cultural behaviour and cultural products are generated) and externalised cultural behaviour and cultural products.¹⁰

9. I understand cultural behaviour as all the things that people do involving representations of cultural meaning, such as story telling, disputes, gift displays, the practice of kinship and political relations and the performance of rituals and rites. People participate in culture by continuously internalising changing cultural meanings, which they, in different and changing contexts externalise in variable ways. From their earliest years human beings are thus seen to grow into a social and cultural context by the process of internalising the modes of activity, and the ways of imagining and symbolising that exist in their society. Through participation in context they externalise cultural meanings as (conscious and unconscious) cultural behaviour. This complex process of internalisation and externalisation happens in practice, where events or behaviours are interpreted, or understood within a cultural framework of meanings. See below and Ortner (1984).

10. See Otto (1991: 8-9, 298-299), Barth (1987: 29, 86f; 1993: 339-40), Ortner (1990) for other researchers who struggle with this process which Bourdieu (1977: 72) describes as

In *Cosmologies in the making* (1987), Barth applies this understanding to ritual traditions of knowledge in the Mountain Ok area of Central New Guinea in order to stay close to the ethnographic reality. He calls the process of subjectification the oscillation between public performance and personal keeping of cultural materials from several sub-traditions that are held among different Ok groups. It is this process that forms the crux that helps to explain inventions, innovations, and creativity. On the one hand there is the individual modality (that of the Ok ritual leader) and on the other the public modality. Every transformation in cultural material on the individual side, as the result of creativity and the exchange of information with other ritual leaders, takes place in direct communication with public symbols.¹¹

The processes of cultural change may take place in a closed circle of communication amongst ritual leaders who guard and use important forms of knowledge in ritual. But in order to be effective, that is, to be accepted as important lore held by this elite, it is crucial that what they do and say is linked with shared ideas, concerns, and practices held by the public.¹² Or, as Tuzin (1992:

the 'dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality'. Obeyesekere sees it as a process of subjectification and objectification (1981: 77-78, 122-23).

11. To attend cultural diversity in analytical forms, and the diversity of lives that they mould (and vice versa), requires not only showing how people interpret events from their diverse points of view but also how they are combined so that they converge on shared cultural meanings - a degree of common reality assuring social communication. These value-orientations, core values, core symbols, key symbols, premises, appear frequently in folk sayings, proverbs, or recurrent expressions. They most typically take an ordering function and achieve a degree of transferability across a variety of social situations (Ortner 1990: 61). It is necessary to describe both these dominant constructs of a society and how actors internalise them and why they consider certain ideas as convincing or correct. Internalised models then are essentially private in the sense of the varying meanings which individuals assign to the dominant, shared ideas of their society. But these internalised meanings are inter-subjectively shared and readily observable by their prototypic instantiations (see Strauss and Quinn 1997).

12. In my understanding of the continuous constructions in organising meaning, I also depart from the theoretical position that cultural meaning is, as pointed out earlier, essentially realised in practice (see below). This observation is supported in cognitive anthropological theories that show a growing sensitivity to the ways in which people, in their social interaction, construct meaningful worlds and (re)produce cultural traditions

252-53) notes: ‘a symbol’s potential to become generalized correlates with the degree to which its form reflects unconscious conflicts and impulses that are comparably occurrent in the population’. If this matching is not accomplished, the credibility of the leaders is at stake and the elite may lose its powerful position in society.

The concept of subjectification thus enables us to see the dialectic of cultural change as it oscillates between individual creativity and shared ideas. For Barth this is central to what he calls the ‘anthropology of knowledge’. This anthropology of knowledge focuses on the connection between the cultural materials in terms of which actors design their acts, and those they use to interpret the acts of others. Basically, Barth wants to acknowledge that people’s experience, as moulded by premises, tacit assumptions, and cultural imagery that are variably shared in a group, plays an essential role in reproducing (and changing) the cultural stock of knowledge, and thereby in turn affects the purpose, plans, and intentions that actors embrace and employ to shape their behaviour.

But this is a very complex connection; and the exploration and modeling of the whole circuit I envisage as an “anthropology of knowledge,” which largely remains to be developed. There is the further important point that such cultural processes, in shaping people’s acts, also profoundly channel the form and occurrence of objective events. They thus generate salient patterns in that world with which people in a society are confronted, i.e., the tasks they will face when struggling to interpret the world. Thus “reality”

(D’Andrade 1992, D’Andrade and Strauss 1992; Strauss and Quinn 1997). It also builds on ‘existential anthropology (Jackson 1996), in particular as it tries to be open to life-worlds by putting more emphasis on the everydayness than conceptual abstraction. In the practice of everyday expressing and exchanging ideas and images, people construct meaning and these meanings in turn inform people’s decision making. As indicated above, not everybody shares the values and images conveyed by others at the same time and in the same context. Conversely, it can also be the case that similar ideas are conveyed in different contexts. In both cases, the principle of the construction of meaning in practice conflicts with the idea of consensual values. To some extent, at least, consensual values cease to exist if processes of culture are seen as individually based and contextual.

has a double set of cultural roots: one through people's interpretation of events, the other through the collective effect of people's activities causing material patterns in these events (Barth 1993: 160).

The importance of the model which Barth proposes then lies not only in that it can account for the complexity of cultural transformation, but that in order to make sense of that complexity the modelling of the traditions that shape people's behaviour should be done naturalistically, in the sense of being reconstructive of the daily unforeseen situations. To unravel the premises for action, it is necessary to analyse the main ideational and organisational features of each of the traditions. This will give insight in the stock of knowledge present in a society, how this knowledge is reproduced and altered, and will allow us to see and acknowledge the general types or the essential ontologies of the different traditions.

Barth is primarily concerned with the sociology of knowledge, which, in *Balinese Worlds* (1993: Chapter 10), he suggests to develop further into an 'anthropology of knowledge'. The shift from sociology to anthropology is a clear one. In his previous works he was much more concerned with sociological hypothesising and the modelling of processes of communication embedded in social organisation. The anthropology of knowledge would also encompass people's struggles to interpret the world, that is, the cultural roots of 'reality'. The anthropology of knowledge explores and models the encompassing circuit that embeds events in their cultural preconditions and consequences. 'The accretions of experience - molded by premises, tacit assumptions, and cultural imagery variably shared in a group - also play an essential role in the reproducing and marginally changing the cultural stock of knowledge' (1993: 160). Consequently, the researcher's concern is with the ways in which knowledge is transmitted and the grounding of current expressions in historical streams.

Barth proposes to do this by modelling cultural reality according to a set of four assertions. His first three items comprise the observations that 'meaning is something conferred on an object or an event by a person', that 'culture is distributed', and that 'actors are positioned'. The fourth assertion says that

‘outcomes of interaction are usually at variance with the intentions of the individual participants, and so we cannot judge people’s interpretations and intents directly from the observable consequences of their acts’ (Barth 1993: 170). While the first three assertions belong to the taken-for-granted knowledge of anthropologists by now, the fourth one still has theoretically ramifying implications that have not yet been widely recognised. In reference to Barth’s fourth item, I want to pursue the contexts and connections that I have come to find crucial for understanding Imyan people’s intentions and meanings.

Researching and Modelling a Surfeit of Culture

During fieldwork, I departed from the view of culture outlined above and found that in Imyan society there are particular forms of knowledge related to contrastive ontologies. These ontologies can be at odds but also in agreement with each other. What I want to show is that these different ontologies resonate with people’s concerns, with their intentions and interpretations, because they provide useful, authoritative, powerful, or sensible meanings for actions and for the interpretation of events. The reasons particular Imyan have for embracing certain traditions and articulating their specific ontological symbols also determine the way the traditions are reproduced and, at a next stage, come to shape the lives of others.

Traditions of knowledge then should be stated in terms of what they have to offer people in order to articulate and support their concerns. People will ‘only embrace a tradition of knowledge - and conversely have the importance of their concerns vindicated - if they find that the tradition resonates with their concerns and that living by it produces experiences that reproduce a sense of importance of such concerns’ (Barth 1993: 347). In this sense the traditions are seen as ‘good to think’ in terms of peoples concerns. It is not that the concerns necessarily arise from the various sets of orientations, but rather that the symbols they embody appear as meaningful to a person in a certain situation.

Like the fieldwork on which it is based, the representation and analyses should address people’s reality in order to highlight their concerns and how these

concerns resonate with the various assertions of the traditions of knowledge embraced by them. This approach will allow me to explain and illustrate the internal dynamics of the traditions as well as how the apparently contrastive ontologies overlap, conflict, dissolve and integrate in certain contexts and not, or less, in others. What it thus points out is that differences and resemblances between traditions of knowledge are linked to social processes whereby they are constructed and reproduced.

Stated like that, the main problem is to represent the behaviour and ideas of Imyan as precisely, accurately, and naturally as possible. This calls for recognition of what people recognise as essential and real, including the commonsensical, taken-for-granted knowledge, and that this knowledge constitutes the practical reality of life (Berger and Luckman 1966: 26-27). Departing from the observation that everyday phrases which people use to speak about their symbolic activities contain insights and embody forms of knowledge, Lattas (1998: xix) sees it as anthropology's task to capture the taken-for-granted phrases that people use about themselves.

In line with this, I aim to represent the ontological frameworks within which Imyan talk, think, and act. Due to the complexity of human behaviour, proper analytical concepts are needed for this task. These concepts should enable us to make fine-grained analyses of individual and group action in relation to a given context.¹³ The representations should reflect the ranges of options from which people can choose to make sense of their world, or, in other words, to construct a meaningful reality.

In this respect, I think that Fredrik Barth's generative model is most promising. Throughout his work, Barth has attempted to develop this model and, perhaps even more inspiring, he has illustrated it with case material from

13. To do this we should realise that as social scientists we talk and think in terms and categories with fuzzy edges and that we too have no way to talk and think other than metaphorically (Keesing 1992: 217-24, compare Quinn 1991: 60). Perhaps taking Imyan terms that stand for or refer to meaningful traditions of knowledge will enable us to show the flexibility and metaphorical richness of cultural meanings and, keep us from a too narrow concern with analytical precision. After all, analytical terms, like all other cultural objects, are resistant to a single stable reading (Blok 1975).

different settings all over the world. All the time his aim was to render useless the totalising view of culture. In particular in his latest book, *Balinese Worlds* (1993), he ambitiously wants to recognise the importance of experience and knowledge which enable people from different North Balinese villages to interpret events and to construct their view of contexts, opportunities, and plans of action.

As indicated above, I see that every human culture is structured and comprises standards but that these standards themselves are historically constituted and are always emerging configurations.

That is, human cultural reality is never a *completed* and bounded phenomenon at every level of structuration. Rather, it is a dynamic system continuously modified and shaped from inside and outside and generates contradictions. Therefore, thinking in terms of simple, causal-derivative relations (e.g. $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$) about any level of reality (not merely human cultural) does disservice to the richness and complexity of reality (Mimica 1988: 139).

Jadran Mimica makes this point in his argument about the Iqwaye (Papua New Guinea) counting system as not being simply a formal system. Not positing any causal-derivative relation allows him to interpret the Iqwaye counting system in the context of a history of objectification and construction. Instead of taking the system as a formal structure reflecting an abstract autonomy - that can only exist in the analyst's mind - Mimica argues that 'the structures constitutive of this counting system were always objectified in concrete symbolic representations of one kind or another (1988: 140). In the particular cultural environment of the Iqwaye, the system developed from a (hypothetical) binary succession of ones and twos to a unified mathematical form in relation to the Iqwaye view of the cosmos, their system of kinship and marriage.

For the Iqwaye the set of all sets is the cosmos and in their terms it is the one in the form of the human body and as such with the base of twenty (all fingers plus all toes). The number has become objectified as the human body

(one, the ontological unity and reality's alpha and omega) in the relation of identity with the digits, and counting as a totalising activity. The highest possible number that can be imputed to the Iqwaye enumeration is a question of the relation between humans and the cosmos (Mimica 1988: Chapter 4). Their relation is that of unity and the oneness. The part-whole relation that constitutes the numerical units also constitutes, as the cosmogenic relation, the identity between the original cosmic totality - Omalyce, the male creator, and his offspring. Likewise, in the kinship system, the father is both the genitor and the progeny. Thus, the counting system historically developed as a mathematical form in relation to the specific Iqwaye view of the cosmos and hence became related to meanings of humanity that the Iqwaye came to express.

Evenly compelling and in a similar effort to take seriously people's cultural reality while refuting anthropologists' assumptions of homogeneity and congruence, Barth, in particular in *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea* (1975) and in *Cosmologies in the Making* (1987) focuses on the way cosmological knowledge is transmitted during initiations and how regional variation results from individual creativity in cultural reproduction and change. Barth takes into account: the variety of ideas it contains, and how they are expressed; the pattern of their distribution, within communities and between communities; the processes of (re)production in this tradition of knowledge, and how they may explain its content and pattern of distribution; thus, the processes of creativity, transmission and change (1987: 1).¹⁴

Barth observed that the recreation of an initiation is to a large extent a task of remembering, allowing for improvisation and guesswork, or conscious innovation and borrowing from neighbouring groups (1987: 27). Important in this respect is that according to Barth the Baktaman have no exegetical tradition (1975: 226). The various stages of initiation are not used to elucidate relations and motives for the novices, but to let them apprehend a vague view of the nature

14. Barth thus arrives at a picture of Baktaman religious concepts whose bluriness is matched nicely by the elaborate picture sketched by Hylkema (1974) of the religious life of the Apmisibil Nalum of Inner West New Guinea. As Van Baal (1981: 210) remarks, the Nalum 'live in a world in which vague apprehensions prevail'. In the

of the world around them. Little is made explicit and everything is embedded in mystery, a mystery confirmed and consolidated by secrecy. Realising this, Barth started to identify some fields about which there appeared to be evidence of creative, culture building work done within the Baktaman religious tradition.

In *Balinese Worlds*, Barth returns to these points in order to further redirect analytical efforts. In line with previous works, he still sets himself the task of discovering and giving an account of how acts are placed in particular contexts, frameworks, or worlds. A major step forward, however, is that he now takes into account **all** the traditions of knowledge that have contributed to the cultural stock found in North Bali. He wants to acknowledge and reconstruct variant interpretations by modelling factors and processes as they relate to the various traditions of knowledge. What Barth does for North Bali is,

trying to model a set of empirical components and processes, observable in the field materials, that will generate the particular range of events that take place and the aggregate forms that characterize the region and its civilization. This generative model thus strives to be at once both compelling and naturalistic. It should be compelling in that any change in any part of such a model should affect the totality of what the model generates: it is no use explaining something by means of elements only loosely connected, a change among which will make no difference. And it should be naturalistic, in the sense of being reconstructive of empirical processes (Barth 1966, 1981, 1987), in that any particular component or process that the model posits, but cannot be empirically identified, should be excised from the model: it makes no sense trying to explain something that is there by means of something that proves not to be there (1993: 164-5).

The meanings for the actors themselves, of their institutions and concepts, that is, the interpretations by which they variously construct their worlds, is the obvious but crucial point of departure (Barth 1993: 97). By virtue of their social positioning people cherish different ideas and yet construct their reality by conferring meaning through making interpretations based on these ideas and this knowledge. Consequently, the incisive methodological step must be to discover the interpretations by which people variously construct their worlds.

Barth suggests that he thereby proposes a model for anthropological analysis of complex civilisations, but it could equally well be applied to other, if not all, societies. Barth tends to classify the societies on North Bali as complex in the sense that they are a 'luminous mosaic of Southeast Asian civilization', being 'both a product and producer of a spate of ideas and imagery that draws on numerous great historical streams - Malayo-Polynesian, Megalithic, Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and Western, as well as its own local innovative genius - and it composes a complex and cosmopolitan society of highly diverse organization' (1993: 9).

Although the Mountain Ok and the Kepala Burung peoples were drawn into other historical streams than the Balinese, I think that Barth's model of the construction of Balinese reality, and his anthropology of knowledge, could be very promising for Melanesian anthropology. Therefore, I bring Barth's model as developed for North Bali back to New Guinea, where he, as indicated above investigated ongoing constructions of cosmologies or knowledge traditions of cults.¹⁵ This implies seeing the applicability of a model for complex civilisations to 'simple societies' as an unproblematic step. This should not be a problem because Melanesian societies are, to say the least, not simple as Barth himself has observed for the Baktaman (1987: 37) and other groups of Inner New Guinea. It is indeed a truism to say that Melanesian societies are complex and ever

15. The point of departure for this study was Barth's earlier fieldwork in 1969 among the Baktaman (Barth 1975) during which he investigated sacred symbols, cult activities, and beliefs with special reference to male initiations. The revisit took place when more material on other Mountain Ok communities became available through the work of a dozen anthropologists. Barth was thus able to draw on these materials and pursue his comparative work *Cosmologies in the Making*.

changing.¹⁶

Imyan society is as complex as any Western, Balinese, Ok, or other society. Like Balinese, Imyan draw on numerous influences from outside - the *raja* kingdoms centred on the Tidore-sultanate, Dutch colonial, Indonesian, as well as neighbouring groups' traditions (in particular from Raja Ampat c.q. Biak), and the local genius. In every sense, as the thesis aims to highlight, Imyan worlds are as complex and creative as Western worlds. Without doubt, Barth's method should be helpful to attend the dynamics of variant cognitive realities among Imyans.

As said before, in Barth's method the concept of traditions of knowledge is of central importance. In fact, the basic thread of Barth's anthropology of knowledge is to see people's worlds as constructed from traditions of knowledge. Each tradition of knowledge is a 'historical conglomerate of materials, held together by the effects of a functioning social organisation and not by the logical coherence of its constituent ideas (Barth 1993: 266). Barth emphasises that what holds a tradition together cannot be assumed a priori but is something that needs to be discovered. Traditions 'may be differently constituted and differently reproduced. The main criterion is that each tradition shows a degree of coherence over time, and remains recognisable in various contexts of coexistence with other streams in different communities and regions' (1989: 131).¹⁷

Barth's analyses of traditions of knowledge therefore focuses on the different processes that reproduce each of these traditions and thereby influence

16. This fact is eloquently put into words by Mimica as part of 'that profound characteristic of Melanesian societies in which cultural configurations seem to be subtended by an inherent creative instability manifesting itself in their transformations. In a myriad of contingent situations through which every structure is daily reproduced, there may occur a slight alternation, say a new element is introduced, and there ensues a global restructuring of the entire configuration. Yet in its essential structure the new configuration may remain within the confines of the same general type as before' (1988: 142).

17. Another theoretical concept which may be fruitfully employed to get grips on cultural complexity and variability is Bourdieu's (1977) 'universe of discourse', denoting a more or less self-contained field of meanings and positions. Also Bourdieu's well-known concept of habitus, understood as an internalised pattern of ideas and attitudes coupled to the concept of tradition of knowledge is relevant in this context.

the way people think about things. The reproduction of a tradition takes place in relation to other traditions. The world as constructed on the bases of the knowledge provided by one tradition can collide or overlap with the ontologies and assertions contained in other traditions of knowledge. Nevertheless, traditions of knowledge constitute contrastive ontologies, 'at odds in the very assertions they contain about the categories and classes of things that are found in the world, and the relative values of these things. ... Each of them will provide a complex paradigm for action and for the interpretation of events ...; and by the use of one or another, their users will construct substantively very different worlds in which to live' (Barth 1993: 266-67).

In this respect it is important to realise that what can be distinguished as different traditions of knowledge are regularly, if not always, embraced by the same person and even often in the same context. In short, 'the culture' of Imyan consists of several traditions of knowledge with their own stakes, positions, forms of coherence and reproduction. These traditions of knowledge may be complementary or may lead to contradictory ideas, ideals and action, providing alternative choices, debate, dispute and tensions as well as alternate cohesions within a society. This situation gives scope for strategic action by individuals, contributing to cultural and social change (Otto in press).¹⁸ It needs to be stressed that to understand and analyse the ideational features of these traditions it is also necessary to be alert to the wider, sometimes global systems in which local people are enmeshed.

18. There is variation in the level of expertise and diversity of received traditions. For instance, some people follow Christian beliefs while other are more inclined to seek truths in traditional lore, some are specialised in ceremonial exchange while others are more concerned with exchange of garden produce, some know how to use sorcery while others reject this practice, etc. There is also variation in local history; it can be used in politics but also taken as objectionable or as an ancestral legacy construction of identity, etc. Moreover, there are differences between people in social position and experience: old and young, male and female, rich and poor, powerful and vulnerable). This variation leads to multiple interpretations and interests, which in turn can lead to change in the (re)production of culture when concerns change.

Knowledge as a Major Concern

One of the main threads that kept rising to the surface during the research and the ordering and analysis of notes and transcriptions is Imyan people's concern with effective knowledge. This concern with knowledge is a recurrent part of Imyan lives and determines to a large extent the choices people make to opt for one tradition of knowledge or another, seek parallels between traditions, and create novel traditions. In other words, every tradition is deemed important based on what kind of effective knowledge it has to offer and new traditions appear to result from searches of effective knowledge.

Consequently, giving priority to the knowledge people use to make sense of their world helps us to recover the critical contexts of existence where knowledge is not a matter of how to know but a matter of life and death. Crucially, among Imyan there is a concern with the order of a world in which they feel they have lost the knowledge that would enable them to equally participate in the present-day politics of power. In order to understand this idea we need to examine the Imyan view of knowledge and the importance attached to knowledge in their concern to counteract the confusion of the present world.

Every culture has its own view on knowledge. In Imyan there is no term for knowledge: people know (*tnok* - 'I know, remember, understand, think') or do not know (*tnok ndait* - 'I do not remember, I forgot, I do not know') and speak of what is known: *tnok ni* - I know a story, information, matter, problem, event'. One who does not know anything is dumb (*morait*). When they speak Indonesian Imyan use the term *pengetahuan* ('knowledge') to designate modern knowledge as taught in schools and to distinguish that knowledge from esoteric knowledge or *ilmu* ('wisdom'), a term that is used for their own traditional knowledge and magic. Imyan distinguish the domain of *ilmu* into *ilmu lait* ('the knowledge of evil powers'), *ilmu wuon*, *ilmu* for healing, *ilmu* to make gardens fertile or to improve the yield of a sago palm, and *ilmu Barat* ('Western knowledge', the secrets held by whites).

According to Imyan, the individual acquires knowledge. When the acquired knowledge is valuable the possessor can show it off and control and manipulate

others. People that possess important (ritual) knowledge usually have a higher social status than those with common practical knowledge of things do. Knowledge is distributed unevenly: people make distinctions on the basis of gender (*dli* - 'female', *dla* - 'male'), age (*kaisi* - 'young', *trar* - 'old'), initiates (*na wuon*), non-initiates who assisted at initiations (*sibosi*), and those undistinguished by *wuon* grades. Also leaders of descent groups possess knowledge that others, except for *na wuon* of the same initiation house, are not allowed to know. Consequently, there are qualitative and quantitative differences in what people know, but because people recognise that knowledge of the world is infinite, they do not mark anybody as omniscient. They think though that white adult men know most if not everything and in any case are more knowledgeable than any Imyan individual. Local people who approach this level are the *na wuon*.

The basic esoteric knowledge of *wuon* has come to Imyan people through a process of revelation. According to a commonly shared idea, the acquaintance with the world, its origin, and its destiny was revealed to a male member of the Bauk descent group of Wehali when he fell asleep under a tree after several attempts to trap birds (see below). The birds turned out to belong to a ghost bird and during the man's sleep the bird revealed the secret of *wuon* and the practice of male initiation to him. When he woke up the bird gave him the directions for staging initiation rituals.

Bauk was the first to teach novices the *wuon* lore and from there it spread out over the Teminabuan area. Until the 1940s, when Protestant (*Protestantse*) and Mennonite (*Doopsgezinde*)¹⁹ missionaries and the Dutch administration began to act forcefully against initiation practices, the teaching of novices in

19. Though their origin had not been in the mainline Protestant Reformation, the Mennonites that worked in Teminabuan were not extremists in the sense of the reputation of the spiritualist or chiliastic Anabaptists in North America (see Jensma 1968 and Schlabach 1980). As I will discuss in Chapter 5, as followers of Menno Simons the Mennonite missionaries differed in opinion from the other missionaries and Dutch government officials in that they rejected not only infant baptism but also what infant baptism implied: that the church embraced entire populations without much regard to personal commitment, and consequently that church and state were logically to be in union.

wuon-houses (*bolo wuon*) had been an important way of making men, shaping ethnic identity and gaining control over the world. Although people usually gather all kinds of information in their dreams, revelation or the handing down of secrets by spirits or ghosts is not a usual way to acquire esoteric knowledge.

Wuon is shrouded in mystery and inaccessible to uninitiated people. Knowledge about initiation, the rituals performed by *na tmak* and the *wuon* lore can be acquired only by means of initiation. Increasing one's knowledge about powerful agents and magic pertaining to *wuon* is dangerous. The uninitiated know about *wuon* and are told about the main spirits of *wuon* and their occurrence, but are kept wondering without ever getting to know any particulars. The *wuon* lore is thus secret and the connotations pertaining to this secrecy agree with peoples' attitude towards the secrets of *lait* and the secrets of origin stories and migration histories, as well as the secrets of white man's material prosperity.

The secret of *wuon*, however, has an extra dimension because its practice and lore has fundamental existential value: the apprehension that the universe has an intentional meaning. This can be compared to what Van Baal writes about the secrets of the great Marind-anim cults conveyed by the word *kuma*, which he defines as,

the apprehension that the world, one's universe, has a meaning, a hidden intention which must be deferred to or else avoided as dangerous. It is imperative that all people should know about it, but the powers involved are as dangerous as apprehension itself and it belongs to the nature of their mystery and menace that one is not admitted to their presence unless one has undergone previous trial, initiation and revelation (1966: 932).

Revelation is not part of people's usual ways of acquiring knowledge. In general, people acquire traditional knowledge through informal contact with others and through experience. Traditional education in Haha is often less formal than in Western schools, but both formal and informal patterns occur (compare Borofsky 1987: 76-7). Children learn things by participating in their parents' activities:

they acquire knowledge and skills largely by observation and subsequent imitation. Children participate in most, if not all, adult activities. Learning is mostly linked to daily contexts and actions. For example, names of waters, waterside plants, frogs, snakes, crocodiles, and spirits living in water or in trees are taught through repetition by parents of the names of the fish caught, the trees seen, passing bats, and spirits encountered, etc.

Information passed on in this way concerns knowledge about daily tasks such as harvesting sago, hollowing out tree trunks to make canoes, felling trees to make gardens, but also what to give to which spirit, which taboos apply to babies, bathing, food, etc. Other information, on the other hand, is less closely tied to specific needs or activities. Telling stories in the evening or during breaks when harvesting sago, for example, are ways to entertain children with the effect of making them familiar with the origin of things, histories of migrations and conflicts, the supernatural world and God's Word.²⁰

Besides knowledge that is widely shared and taught in the context of daily activities and story telling, there are two bodies of esoteric knowledge or magical practice, *wuon* and *lait*. Although Imyan designate both these bodies knowledge as *ilmu*, it is hard to speak of knowledge, because to exercise them one does not need to learn the tricks of the trade. *Lait* is transferred from mother to daughter by jabbing a cassowary bone into the girl's vagina. In an origin story this is also the way in which the first woman got to know *lait*. During initiation, men learned to communicate with supernatural things through Bitik, the most significant spirit in the initiation houses. Without Bitik a *na wuon* can teach his son how to address spirits and how to fight with Klen Tadyi, but the ability to see supernatural things and to be in their presence can only come through initiation rituals in which Bitik plays a central role.

Therefore, the ability to engage in the supernatural world is thus not only based on knowledge, but also stems from a certain talent allotted by ritual means.

20. Because Imyan people consider the Scriptures as originally theirs (see Chapters 5 and 6), I lump it together with other traditional knowledge. Everyone in Haha believes that the Bible was long ago taken to the West, together with the essential secrets of *wuon*.

This talent is reserved to certain people: *na wuon* and their sons, and women (*nadli lait*) who are chosen to participate in the circle of witches. Knowledge of origins and other histories with the accompanying sacred places and certain powers is also reserved to *na wuon*. The secrets of *lait* and *wuon* are the greatest secrets in Imyan society and are kept under tight cover.

Imyan believe that because of a disastrous event the crucial core of *wuon* knowledge was taken to the West, where white people still use it to feather their nests, and on which Indonesians, after independence, successfully built their own nation and economy. Imyan lost key parts of that power as the result of a disaster that happened during the second initiation organised by Bauk. It forced the departure of Olinado, a manifestation of a sky deity, Klen Tadyi, taking the *kahan*, the essence of *wuon* to the centres that thereof became powerful - America, the Netherlands, Australia, Jakarta, and the like.²¹ The loss of knowledge through Olinado's departure appears to structure all subsequent events. Olinado's journey to the West produced a cultural order in the world in which Imyan is the aggrieved party (see Chapter 3).²²

According to an Imyan myth, Klen Tadyi visited once upon a time Bogelit, a man from the Bauk descent group who had just finished placing bird traps in a tree near Seorion close to the village of Wehali.²³ While sound asleep he received instructions on how to do *wuon* (*wuon wtifi* - 'first time *wuon*'). That teaching was subsequently carried out and thereupon spread over the whole Toror culture area: Moi, Karon, Meyax, Hatam, and Manikion. Actually, from the beginning *wuon* teaching was an experiment conducted for men and women. Apparently, those who succeeded were only men. Thus, women were prohibited from joining the *wuon* teachings.

21. Klen Tadyi is seen as a big bird and the Garuda bird, an important symbol of the Indonesian State (see Chapter 6).

22. This world order, however, was only to be discovered when Imyan encountered the 'other', as I will explain in Chapter 3.

23. In the literature on the area, different spellings of Bauk occur due to different pronunciations: Imyan say Bauk while Tehit speakers say Bak.

The *wuon* lore was revealed to Bogelit Bauk, often referred to as Bauk. I collected several accounts of the story about Bauk. A former ritual leader, Lourens Kemesrar (68), in the village of Haha told the following account to me.

Bauk came from the coast. In the hills, he met with a man who was felling trees by burning their trunks. Bauk showed him that by using an iron axe (*tamak besi*) the job was much easier. In exchange for the axe, Bauk married one of the man's daughters. Bauk and his wife settled in a place somewhere between the villages of Eles and Wehali. They bore two children, a son and a daughter.

One morning Bauk went into the forest to catch birds. He spotted many birds (*klen skabuk*) feeding on the red fruits of a large tree (*dyangan*).²⁴ Bauk decided to place traps in the tree. After he had placed the traps, Bauk fell asleep under the tree. While sound asleep Klen Tadyi shat on Bauk's breast and revealed the *wuon* lore to him. When he woke up, Bauk was surprised to see a white mark on his breast. He washed himself in a river and went home. He told nobody about what he had dreamt. ...

The next day, Bauk went into the forest to build an initiation house (*bolo wuon*) near the Seorion Creek. When it was ready for use, Bauk walked around the people's gardens and settlements to look for young boys and girls to whom he could teach the *wuon* lore. Bauk was the first *na tamak* ['ritual leader']. His first teaching at the Seorion Creek was experimental: boys as well as girls participated in the initiatory rituals. The initiatory rituals did not succeed because of the presence of girls. A spirit, called

24. Informants identified *klen skabuk* as the Wompoo Fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus magnificus*) on plate 17 in Beehler, Pratt, and Zimmerman (1986). The Wompoo Fruit-Dove is a large, long-tailed fruit-dove with a maroon-purple breast, pale grey head, and a band of yellow spots on the shoulder. It forages at a variety of fruiting trees in the interior lowland and hill forests (Beehler, Pratt, and Zimmerman 1986: 105). The *dyangan* or *dianggan* tree is identified by Vink (1961: 5) as belonging to the *Myristicaceae* or nutmeg family. Its fruits look like nutmegs and split open lengthwise giving way to one seed (the nutmeg) which is covered with a bright red arillus (mace) (Marcel Polak, personal communication 1997).

Bitik, was very angry with Bauk and from then on Klen Tadyi, present during the initiation, prohibited women from joining the *wuon* teachings.

After some time Bauk tried to build an initiation house again, this time on top of a hill named Baukolo or Kmahri. He went to look for young boys among his own people. He also wanted to initiate his son into the *wuon* lore. Thereafter, Bauk began to introduce *wuon* initiation in other places. After he had spread the lore among the Nasfa people, Bauk died. Everywhere he left behind a piece of chalk (*dlele*) with which the new *na tmak* could chalk the marks of *wuon* on the breasts of the novices. Before, the people did not know about this. The marks are like the one that was shat on Bauk's breast by Klen Tadyi. Only when these marks are applied correctly, are the initiatory rituals effective.

Within the scope of the present discussion let me discuss three themes that come to the fore in this story. The first is that Bauk came from the coast and introduced an iron axe (*tmak besi*) in the area, hence the expression *na tmak* (*na* - 'man, person', *tmak* - 'axe'). In a story which Elmberg collected, Bauk is said to be 'bent on trade' (1965: 166), an expression which refers to the idea that Bauk was a trader coming from the coast. Trading this iron object entailed more than merely introducing a new material. After having shown the power of this object, he improved on this performance by presenting the *wuon* lore to the Nasfa people.

Secondly, it is important to note that Klen Tadyi and Bitik are deities who dwell in the sky (*dyi*); Klen Tadyi is identified as the morning-star (*sloi*) and Bitik is recognised as the evening-star (*dinggein*). In a version of the Bauk story recorded by Van Rhijn (1995[1957]: 33-34, 66), the *wuon* lore was entrusted to Bauk by Bidik (Bitik). My informants refuted this. They explained that Bitik punishes novices who do not obey the rules of *wuon*. This punishment consists of drawing blood from the offender's nose and tongue. Bitik is also believed to transport the souls of the dead in a flying canoe. In contrast, Klen Tadyi is known to be very graceful and is believed to bring prosperity to the people. Klen Tadyi actually initiates the novices in the qualities of the sky beings.

Both Klen Tadyi and Bitik appear at several places and carry names after the places where they usually show up and where they are called upon by *na wuon*. There are thus many manifestations of Klen Tadyi and Bitik and during every single initiatory ritual the novices are visited by specific manifestations of the two deities. During some of the initiatory rituals, Klen Tadyi takes the novices in a flying canoe (*kma sene*) to the other world where spirits, deities, and ancestors dwell. To make sure that they will return, the canoe is tied to a large tree with a rope. During these travels, the novices learn to communicate with the sky beings and how to propitiate them. In between initiatory rituals, the young boys also occasionally leave the initiation house to join Klen Tadyi on a flight through the forest in search of game.²⁵

The third theme concerns Bauk's son. The above story does not elaborate on what happened during the initiatory rituals at Baukolo (*olo* - 'foot-hill'), the foot-hill where Bauk built the second initiation house. In further conversations with Lourens Kemesrar, who told the story of Bauk, as well as with other knowledgeable Imyan men, it transpired that Bauk's son was light-skinned and carried the name Olinado. Others said that Olinado is a manifestation of Klen Tadyi. In any case, during Bauk's son's initiation, a conflict arose.

The conflict was an act of revenge of the relatives of a girl who died during the first initiation. Because of the presence of girls in the initiation house, Bitik punished them and caused the death of one girl. To avenge this, her relatives entered the initiation house at the moment Olinado and many other novices were in the flying canoe with Klen Tadyi. In their anger, the intruders cut the rope which tied the canoe to a tree. Thereupon the canoe with Olinado and Klen Tadyi flew away. The name assigned to the place where this happened is Kmahri (*kma* - 'canoe', *hri* - 'to go up, to fly'). Other informants maintained that only Klen Tadyi, named Olinado during this particular initiation, went away.

By the time he flew away, Olinado took the core powers of *wuon* to the

25. In fact, as I discuss in Chapter 6, the *wuon* ritual sky travels recreate the historical connection of Imyan with the sultanate of Tidore, through magical journeys to Tidore on flying boats. I argue that 'game' stands in fact for wealth, power, the riches of the sultanate and, presently, such powerful and wealthy centres and Jakarta and Jerusalem.

West. Therefore, those who stayed behind remained ignorant, poor, and illiterate. Most informants suggested that Bauk was in possession of a book, the Bible, which Olinado took to the West.²⁶ They argued that after the book was lost did Imyan people lose their writing skills. From then on, they could only write (draw) marks on the breasts of the novices with chalk.²⁷ Following the story recounted above, Lourens Kemesrar explained that,

The only reason why *wuon* initiatory rituals were successful is because of us. You already know that Bauk got this motif on his breast when he was sleeping under the tree. Before we came here, the Nasfa people did not know how to draw these motifs on the breasts of the novices. Therefore Klen Tadyi was not satisfied and during initiatory rituals, Bitik regularly killed some of the novices. From Baimla we brought along a piece of white chalk (*dlele*), like the chalk the Dutch teachers used to chalk on blackboards. We already knew how to write and we had a book (*buk*).²⁸ We used the chalk to draw the marks on the breasts of the novices. From then on *wuon* initiatory rituals were effective. But the book was taken to the West.

During their talks about Bauk and *wuon*, many *na wuon* often told me that there is more to the story of Bauk, the men's cult, the initiatory practices, and the esoteric knowledge, than they had revealed to me. Much of this information is secret, I was told, and if I wanted to know the very secret core of *wuon*, I would

26. The claim of having been in possession of books before the arrival of Europeans is widespread in New Guinea. Recently, Laba (1996) has reported that Trans-Fly people also hold this claim. Swadling (1996: 158-60) argues that this could be explained by the Indonesian practice of giving documents to appointed headman in the villages where they traded. The possibility that the books were copies of the Koran may also be considered (Wagner 1996: 294).

27. This theme is also highlighted in the stories about Bauk which Kamma collected in Teminabuan in the 1950s (see Kamma 1995[n.d.c], 1995[n.d.d], 1995[n.d.e]) and in the origin story of the Kemesrar people as discussed below.

28. Most likely, *buk* is derived from the Malay word *buku* meaning book.

have to ask elder men in my own country.²⁹ Correspondingly, the Dutch government officials and missionaries who worked in the area were also thought to know the secrets of *wuon*.

Imyan recall the arrival of these white outsiders (*na welek*) as an event of great importance: they expected that they had come to return the lost secrets to them. To many, it was clear that these whites were in possession of ancestral Imyan powers that had made them wealthy and powerful. The association of the missionaries with European items of wealth and their apparent success in treating sick people with modern medicine contributed to people's early enthusiasm for the teachings of these newcomers.

When the first missionaries began to work in Imyan country, the *na wuon* were afraid that these newcomers were going to reveal the secrets of Christianity, the lost secrets of *wuon*, to the public. The services by Moluccan and Tehit teachers who were working for the Dutch mission were not attended by *na wuon*. Terrified that maybe the teacher was going to reveal *wuon* secrets, they stayed at a safe distance from the church building to wait what would happen during the services.

They were afraid that when the secret lore was revealed, Klen Tadyi or Bitik might manifest in the church building. They feared that women, non-initiated men, and children would not be able to cope with the greatness of these beings and that, therefore, disaster would result. Moreover, they feared that many villagers would pay serious attention to the new ritual leaders causing the *na wuon* elite to fall from power. Consequently, they tried to persuade the villagers not to attend services, which seriously hampered the work of the missionaries (Marcus, personal communication 1997).

29. Some suggested that I visit the (late) Reverend Kamma, because he already knew everything. They claimed that he participated in *wuon* initiation when he visited the area in the 1950s. The status and knowledge ascribed to Kamma are closely related to the theme discussed in this dissertation (see Chapter 6). In his fieldnotes, Kamma recorded that after having been told the origin of cloths and male initiation, the informant told him that Kamma could now become a Teminabuan man because he already knew everything (Kamma 1995[n.d.c]: 30-1, 62-3).

When they observed, after a couple of services, that nothing extraordinary had happened, the *na wuon* began to tell people that the Dutch missionaries had been very careful not to disclose the secrets of *wuon* to their Moluccan and Tehit assistants. They claimed that the key secrets of the *wuon* (and Christian) lore were still under Dutch control and that the church services were merely intended to tell stories. By spreading this theory, the *na wuon* tried to reinforce the value of their knowledge, even though depleted, and thus their status. These politics of knowledge of *na wuon* has, I suggest, contributed to the general belief that *wuon* or the secrets of Christianity which are withheld by the missionaries are needed to become prosperous. As, Nimrod Krimadi (70), a *na wuon* from the village of Sasenek explained to me:

Everything that is told in the church is to confuse the people so that their thoughts stray in all directions. Only when some of the leading people of this village are initiated in the truths of the world, can this village be kept from digression. ... It is good that people try to become good Christians, but to become powerful and prosperous we need to recover the lost powers of *wuon*.

Nimrod Krimadi, May 1995, Tape 45B: 310-312

Ideas about the dramatic event and the lost powers of *wuon* are very much alive among the Imyan. Present-day stories about *wuon* invoke images of powerful and magical relics. It is in the ideas about the cult that the importance attached to knowledge plays a major role in current Imyan reflections on their situation in the world. In particular in relation to the outside world Imyan feel deprived of the knowledge that would enable them to be equal to Westerners and Indonesians whom they both consider to have achieved power and wealth on the basis of *wuon* knowledge. The idea that the most important knowledge or secrets are lost or concealed to them sets the stage for a variety of narratives that combine the experience of inferiority, and the hope for a radical change in the impending

Millennium.³⁰

A recurring theme in Imyan millenarian ideas is that once the old order is re-established and knowledge has become complete and true, and thus effective again, they will be able to bridge the current gap between the seen and the unseen world, between the living and the dead. In people's own words the radical change will bring something different, the end of Indonesian rule, 'freedom', an easy and luxurious way of living, with electricity in their houses, houses built with concrete, outboard motors, plenty of cigarettes, television, etc.³¹ The change that people really applaud is a radical one (compare Kulick 1992: 160-3). Only then will things return to the right order, the order that was already there in the old days.

The ideas about loss in the story about Olinado resemble the themes about original fault or transgression in well-known Melanesian messianic or cargo cult stories (Burridge 1960; Kamma 1972; Lattas 1992, 1998; Lawrence 1964; Lindstrom 1990, 1993; McDowell 1988; Otto 1992d; Worsley 1957). Just as the Biak ancestors rejected Manarmakeri (Manseren Koreri), the itchy old man who departed to the West to teach white people how to become rich (Kamma 1972: 37-49), Imyan hold their ancestors responsible for letting Olinado go away.

The misery of the Imyan people is the result of the stupidity of their ancestors. The past is depicted as a space of male power and *wuon* knowledge destroyed by the barbarous practices of women who brought *lait* into the initiation house. Only *wuon* can restore order. Just like the need to curtail *lait* it is

30. Imyan millennial beliefs will be detailed in Chapter 6, see also Timmer (1998b, 1999b 2000). Millenarianism among Imyan show similarities with cargo cult movements which are also are rooted in local myth, Christian doctrine and imported ideological constructs (see, for example, Lattas 1992, 1998, Schmid 1999, and Stewart and Strathern 2000).

31. Using the term *merdeka*, 'freedom' comes to the fore in speeches in particular when people discuss the Indonesian government. This government is the main structure that Imyan seek to undermine. Most typically, they see it as the force that keeps Imyan (and all West Papuans) in a situation of disempowerment and poverty, with threats of violence, the transmigration policy, bad education, little job opportunities, and Islamisation. The desire for political self-determination is strong among the Imyan but many think that the hold of the Indonesian State on their area is not negotiable due to an observed persistence of the government and its armed forces (see Chapter 4).

essential for people to have control over this supernatural world. This control consists of (secret) formulae and specific rituals. How people amass this vital knowledge is an individual problem. It is obvious that those people who have a good acquaintance with supernatural things and possess the proper (mostly secret) knowledge to have control over them are in a comfortable situation.

When explaining their ‘original’ traditions to me, Haha villagers often emphasised that their traditional world was inhabited and defined by supernatural things and powers. This characterisation does not hold for today’s world in which God has the final say. Nevertheless, questions as to whether today’s world is still determined by spirits and supernatural powers were never answered with an unhesitating ‘yes’. In explaining their concerns to me, but also when people amongst themselves are interchanging accounts for the problems they are facing, they generally depict belief in spirits, ghosts and magic as wicked (*wbot ndait* - ‘not right, not ethical, misdoing’, or in Indonesian, *dosa* - ‘sin’) and from the old times (*kamwolo* - ‘long ago, in the past’, or in Indonesian, *jaman gelap* - ‘dark times’).³²

In the same context though, people often invoke explanations based on the perceptions of the harsh economic reality of modern Indonesia and supposed conscious politics of marginalisation of Papuans by Javanese. Yet supernatural agency is never ruled out when people explain events: both ways of explanation are may be juxtaposed. In any case, most actions and decisions in life are made under conditions of uncertainty about what are the facts. An important aspect that has come to the fore in my research is that Imyan people weigh different explanations of events against each other in a serious quest for meaning and a search for salvation or a new order in the world. This quest for order is not only about finding clear-cut explications but is also a central aspect of peoples’ talk about daily concerns and has to do with social positioning both on the level of village life and on a more global level.

32. Interestingly, the Indonesian words which Imyan generally use for ‘wicked’ and ‘the past’ are derived from Christian discourse.

As a result of more than five decades of Dutch and Indonesian schooling, combined with the intrusive effects of other outside influences on the thinking and acting of people, many Imyans seriously attempt to view the world in a Western and Indonesian manner. After lengthy weighing of the truth-value of these foreign explanations, they may bring to the fore explanations in terms of local supernatural agencies that then indicate the origin of misfortune, illness, and death. Also economic backwardness, a theme, as I have described in the previous chapter, which people are regularly made to understand by government officials that come to their village as being a result of their dumbness and laziness, is typically explained in terms of the supernatural.

However, according to these government officials and also according to what children learn in school, any change in the predicable situation of the people in Haha and other villages can only be brought about by communal co-operation, diligence, and practical know-how, that is, good command of modern knowledge (*pengetahuan*). But most Imyan people do not expect any good to come of these measures. For them modern knowledge is part of the forces of domination to keep Papuans from getting prosperous. They see that *pengetahuan* is used to keep them away from their powerful *ilmu* (*wuon*). The core secrets of the *wuon* lore provide a solution to the situation of feeling marginalised. Applying it is no easy task though, because the keepers of this tradition are already dead or very old and the rituals are long defunct.

This loss of knowledge has come on top of the initial loss brought about by Olinado's departure and intrusively shapes peoples' concerns and hence their interpretations of events. As a result, people who are willing to change in terms of development and prosperity now hope for a radical change: the second coming of Christ (see Chapters 5 and 6). We will see that all generations share the expectation that prosperity will become part of their lives after the return of Jesus. This is the most significant expression of an aspiration for prosperity and good social relations which are associated with the contemporary riches of Indonesians and whites, and a realisation that it is hard for villagers to get access to this because they are not granted good schooling and labour opportunities. Although this reality is often related to interpretations of the past and

mythologically grounded reasons for why Imyan have become powerless and what the reasons are for whites and Indonesian not to allow them to exploit these powers anymore, it is important to stress that increasingly, Imyan, in particular youngsters, come up with explanations that relate to discriminating policies of the Indonesian government.

Searching for Knowledge and Order

Changes that have taken place in Haha during the last couple of decades have brought about a more individualistic society. At least that is how people see it themselves. I can indeed affirm that many people do not often help others. This particularly applies to a situation where someone is ill, and others are afraid to get involved in accusations of witchcraft and poisoning. The tight world of Haha villagers makes people cautious about interfering in someone else's business.

With regard to more practical matters like gardening, making canoes, people tend to say that they are already too busy themselves with taking care of their own family, appearing at almost daily religious services at people's houses, having responsibility for a religious service at one's house, attending Sunday services in the church, appearing at lengthy government information sessions, taking children to the hospital in Teminabuan for vaccinations, selling crops at the market in Teminabuan to gain cash to buy tobacco, batteries for torches, kerosene for lamps, to pay school fees, or to donate to the church. In the meantime all household members, except for small children, must work in the gardens, harvest sago, and go fishing and hunting to collect food.

Everyone in Haha agrees that in comparison to the past, people nowadays only look after themselves, their families and at best help kinsfolk. Moreover, as the result of a recently constructed unpaved road through the forest from Teminabuan to Haha, people have started to discuss the commercial value of their land, which might in the future be sold to in-migrants or to the government.

The idea that land has commercial value renders knowledge about origins, descent, and migration increasingly significant. Formerly, knowledge of the land and waters that one legitimately owned and respect for the ownership of others was important concerning gardening, fishing and hunting. When borders were not respected, quarrels resulted. But according to elder informants amongst the four major descent groups, fights never broke out in Haha, because land was in plentiful supply. In recent times, the idea of scarcity has begun to take hold and many unsolved feuds about land allocation, heritage, and loan are being revived. The principles of how and why land belongs to a certain group are now under serious scrutiny. In order to take part in this game of securing ownership one needs access to detailed knowledge of the past, which is the reserve of *na wuon*.

This inequality leads to tensions: younger men often attempt to elicit secrets from *na wuon*. This is not approved behaviour, and it is often condemned and taken as a sign of an increasing deterioration of moral standards. To understand why the relevant knowledge is reserved to *na wuon*, one has to realise that with knowledge of a descent group's history and its former members' misdoings one can kill all its present members by performing a certain ritual. These misdoings generally concern incidents of bringing *lait* into initiation houses and the subsequent death of novices during initiation. Arguing that they can only disclose the secrets to a select few during initiation rituals, *na wuon* still keep their important knowledge under tight control and leave younger men busy speculating about histories. This game frequently leads to quarrels and conflicts.

The quest for knowledge generates a game that is part of everyday life. Most players use rhetorical strategies and bluff to persuade others. Those who feel threatened later correct some individuals, who appear very certain of their descent groups' migrations, settlements, and former actions. There is a delicate balance between knowledge that is used to bluff and the bits of knowledge that one needs to reveal to remain credible (compare Goodale 1995: 61). Some appear close to being exposed while others are regarded as reliable knowledgeable men.

As a result, there is a continuous shift in alliances: those who cannot persuade others of their veracity will be regarded as impossible persons while at the same time they gain approval from others. Generally, there is a common sense perception that one should not meddle in other people's histories and affairs. If someone does and starts to blurt out secrets, he or she will be accused of being *yomon* ('one who reveals *kahan*'). If people start blaming someone as a *yomon*, the chances are that he or she will be put to trial. A frequently used punitive measure consists of handing in ceremonial cloths or paying a sum of money. In due course one can be harassed with poison (*lilin*).

In Haha, knowledge about origin, descent, migration, and stories involves much controversy because knowledge is power. I discuss these village politics in Chapter 3. For now it is important to realise that Imyans' attitude towards knowledge appears to be changing. Formerly, a hierarchy existed that determined access to knowledge. In particular knowledge of how to deal with the unseen world of ancestral and non-ancestral spirits and information that cannot freely be revealed but involves much power was reserved to a select few. If everyone had access to this knowledge, the world would become a mess: people would be at each other's throats and spirits of ancestors would arouse their wrath. Young and old know this credo that I have repeatedly heard from *na wuon* during village courts. Nevertheless, as often expressed by older men in particular, times have changed and people have become headstrong. Though the generally observed deterioration of morals seldom leads to bloody fights let alone wars, social tensions can become worse.

In any case, the traditional hierarchy is continuously under challenge and threatened. Most *na wuon* have already taken many secrets to their graves and the remaining few are afraid to entrust their knowledge to wild youths. I have often seen youths uttering insulting and disgraceful secrets of other people's histories to lay claims on land and waters. Most of them do not respect the tenacity of their elders. Accordingly, they think that *na wuon* belong to and still live in the past. They envy them because of their knowledge and feel left behind without knowing the significant *wuon* lore and the accompanied power.

In conclusion, I want to stress again that secrecy and the idea that basic aspects of powerful knowledge are concealed from them are integral to the everyday life of the Imyan people. Need, hope and ambiguity arise from the Imyan belief that they cannot access the knowledge needed to acquire and demonstrate one's power, self-respect, identity, and self-determination in an increasingly unsettled world. Besides matters of control over resources, fertility, reproduction and fear of witchcraft, and loss of the lore of the defunct initiation cult, is in this regard a matter of great concern.

The people's backwardness is generally thought of as a result of key aspects of *wuon* knowledge having been taken away by Olinado and until the present-day used by his white descendants in the West. *Lait*, sin, immorality, and Indonesian repression prevent people from becoming wealthy and prosperous. Through *wuon* and Jesus Christ, who in His second coming will bring back the stolen secrets that have made Westerners wealthy and powerful, things will change for the better. This makes people concerned about the future of the *wuon*, which runs the risk of being carried to the graves of the few surviving initiated old men.

One can say that Imyan are pre-occupied with placing their current predicament in a historical context. It is in their history that they find an order, which is contrasted with the present-day confusion and an explanation of the current predicament in terms of the loss of *wuon* knowledge, and the order that this lore provided. What will come to the fore in the following chapters is that these themes relate to a concern for controlling the world and result from a way of thinking that is the result of the hidden workings of the world as held in the *wuon* lore. Being secret, this lore provides a magical view that can provide tools to work against the unsystematic, disorienting reality that Imyan presently encounter. However, more essentially, *wuon* as a tradition of knowledge serves in combination with other traditions of knowledge to make the disordered and unknown 'reality' appear to be determined by the known.

As will be my major concern in the following chapters, the traditions of knowledge in terms of which Imyan give meaning to acts and events, work to superimpose an order on an increasingly unsettled world. It is particularly in their reflection on the perceived crisis or predicament of their society, that Imyan tend

to assert notions that relate to a past situation in which *wuon* practices and knowledge ensured stability, wealth, and order. Future scenarios relate *wuon* and historical knowledge to Christian doctrine. Being perceived as existentially true, Christian lore, just as *wuon*, is a much-discussed topic of the possibility that it might help Imyan to regain effective control over their lives.