

Chapter Two

Teminabuan in Local and Global Streams

Kasali woto na kohok lema tet;

‘The big black frog says, I am the rich one who knows all resources of this habitat’.

(Simon Mejefat, 66, Haha, 10 May 1996).

Simon Mejefat used this proverb to quiet down a discussion about the powers and knowledge of others, such as the Javanese, the Ambonese, the Americans, and the Dutch. Five men, all in the late 1930s and I, had gathered in Simon’s kitchen to discuss details about an upcoming marriage payment. The conversations about the amounts and kinds of cloth that should be paid, quickly switched to the reasons for still keeping up these kind of payments, this kind of *adat*. While the men came to Simon to seek advise on this particular cloth payment, they showed little interest in the details of the positions, names and histories of particular pieces of cloth. One of them began jotting down names of pieces of cloths but soon he lost track of the names and numbers and decided to stop. The others had also already completely lost interest and, irritated, began to light up cigarettes at an increasing pace. Cloth exchange for marriages and for compensations was clearly not their department. Even in those cases that redresses might be favourable to them, they realised that the next time they would do badly and that the general drawback of the whole system is that it takes up time, that it is a tremendous worry, and that it does not bring any progress.

As Yosep Mejefat, Simon’s youngest nephew, asked rhetorically, ‘Will we ever get any richer or brighter by exchanging cloths? Is it through cloths that the Javanese or Dutch people made progress?’ There was no one who argued against Yosep by suggesting that Imyan should hold on to the tradition of cloth payment

for the sake of progress. There was, however, one voice saying that cloth payments are necessary for disciplining the people, an idea cherished by many others (see Chapter 3). As for progress or getting powerful knowledge, marriage payments and compensation payments are generally considered as having an adverse effect, in the sense that it distracts people from learning new things and accessing new forms of knowledge. The five men as well as Simon, deemed modern knowledge (*pengetahuan*) coming through schools, universities, and stories of others, as necessary for change, instead of passively repeating *adat* that has already transpired.

From that moment, the conversations changed tune, the men became more serious. They lowered their voices and began to ask questions about how to get the others' knowledge, why their fathers had never succeeded in getting the Dutch's powerful knowledge, and to what extent the Indonesians know and withhold efficacious knowledge. There was disagreement about the status of all kinds of knowledge; questions were raised about whether *pengetahuan* taught in schools also pertained to *ilmu* and if the church rituals of Dutch missionaries and Ambonese (religious) teachers (*gurus*) are effective. The problem of lost knowledge and the dying out of *na wuon*, regularly came to the fore but nobody seemed to have a clear idea about what precise forms it could take and by what means it can come back to Imyan land. When they were talking at cross purposes, Simon raised his voice, told the above proverb and added,

You people must not always make so much noise, for you do not know a thing and you are perishing of want. The frogs make lots of noise in the marshes but they know what they are talking about. They know where the riches can be found, they are like knowledgeable men, like *na wuon*, *na kohok*, and many clever old men that have already passed away. Some of them, like me, are still alive. We have been around, we have seen the Dutch, the Japanese, and the Indonesians coming and we have seen that they have knowledge [*ilmu*] and that they are rich [*kaya*]. They are powerful and we, deprived of powers, should not shout like frogs but orient ourselves towards those who know things. Like formerly, our kids listened

to men of advanced age in order to amass knowledge. If you say that those whites and straight haired peoples possess the core [*inti*] of *ilmu wuon*, then you should engage with them in order to get it. For all they have is ours, it comes from us, but that does not mean that we can spare effort and sit here wrangling. It is better to be silent and learn from others until you are as knowledgeable as the frog in his marsh.

Simon Mejefat, May 1996, Tape 133A: 134-200

Simon's advice and the unrest of the others mark nicely the history of Imyan in the turmoil of the colonial and post-colonial times. He tells them to believe in life and to put effort in establishing contact with the outside world, where knowledge can be found, so that also Imyan can raise their voices and be as autonomous as the frog. However, towards the end he returns to the unsettling matters of having lost the knowledge and being deceived by outsiders. What remains is thinking, discussing and guessing about the making present of the absent, the powerful kernels of *wuon*, now employed by whites and Indonesians. The switching between raising voices and compliance, and the struggle to define, locate, and obtain the (lost) knowledge among powerful outsiders, are the central themes in Imyans' reflections on the past, and all work around the basic idea that the entire world was in fact situated among the Imyan.

In this chapter I introduce some historical facts of this particular engagement with the outside world that has become increasingly overwhelming over the last few decades. The overview is, however, an impersonal formal listing of present-day situations and historical events, that sketches only parts of the vast range of externalities of past and present Imyan lives. The situations and events are important for understanding the culturally constructed realities portrayed in the later chapters. In that respect, the history presented below provides background information that is linked to persons, communities and traditions at a later stage. It is not a neat chronological listing but a collection of events and situations that are deemed of crucial importance by present-day

Imyans as they construct their lives.¹ Towards the end of the chapter, I detail how in general Imyan reflect on their current national and international economic and social situation. This discussion reveals the ingenuity of Imyan in transforming their encounters with significant outsiders (whites and Indonesians) into forms that do not threaten their integrity.

Local Streams

Travelling by boat to the Teminabuan area, one enters the Kaibus estuary to cover the final thirty kilometres of a fifteen-hour boat trip from the city of Sorong. Since light aircraft flights with the national airline company Merpati are expensive and often cancelled due to airline mismanagement and heavy rains flooding the grass strip at Teminabuan, most transportation is done by wooden boats or with the weekly journeys of the government-operated passenger ship, that is part of the line of hundreds of government ships operating throughout Indonesia's out-of-the-way places under the name Perintis (Pioneer). The Perintis travels in a day and a night from Sorong to Teminabuan.

Even more pioneering are the Buginese-operated diesel-engined shallow-draught wooden ships leaving almost every day from the Pertamina oil drilling location at Klamono.² They sail at night with searchlights at the stems to light the path through a labyrinth of narrow waterways. These waterways cut through the vast coastal stretches of estuarine swampland with vast mangrove and sago groves. Sometimes the boats get stranded in the mud and have to wait for several hours till the tide rises. These difficult connections make Teminabuan a distant place, in particular when, during and after heavy rains, the sixty kilometres of

1. It is supplemented by a selected timeline presented in Appendix B.

2. Klamono is well known as the site where the Netherlands New Guinea Oil Company (NNGPM) found oil in 1936. After the transfer of Netherlands New Guinea to Indonesia, the Indonesian national oil company Pertamina began to operate the drilling at Klamono and further explored the Raja Ampat Islands and the Bintuni Bay for oil deposits. Oil is still pipelined from Klamono to the harbour in Sorong. The NNGPM settlements, then known as Sorong Olie, are presently referred to as Kompleks Remu. This settlement, together with the huge storage tanks and the oil terminal in the harbour, dominates Sorong's

largely unpaved road from the city of Sorong to Klamono turns into a quagmire. Moreover, regular landslides because of extensive logging on both sides of this track make it impassable for long periods.

The journey from Klamono as well as the one taking the sea route ends in the Kaibus estuary, usually at dawn. The Perintis enters the estuary from the sea and the Buginese boats from a creek just opposite the village of Konda at the other side of this mass of water. When entering the Kaibus in the early morning the soft glistening muddy water is covered with haze and begins to reflect the sky that is getting lighter. The air is humid and one feels that it is going to be a hot day. Palm cockatoos and lorikeets scream overhead and hornbills swoop down from the tall trees that tower above the nipa palms and mangrove. This environment is home to a variety of fish, shrimp, crocodiles, and birds. People enter it by sailing with a dugout through a maze of creeks that cut through this mangrove. The creeks lead to patches of tidal land where cultivated sago and a variety of other trees grow. Occasionally, there are large sandbanks where people dwell in houses built on stilts. People also build temporary sheds in the sago groves.

To the north, lush green hills loom above the town of Teminabuan with its 200-meter high mast of the National Indonesian Television Corporation (TVRI). The hilly forests are home to beautiful orchids, numerous species of marsupials (couscous, tree kangaroos, possums and forest wallabies), rodents, bandicoots, bats, reptiles, and a large range of birds.³ Sailing northwards and nearing Teminabuan, one can hear the humming sounds of motors and boats, and the loading and unloading of goods and people arriving or departing from the city of Sorong. When entering the harbour the pleasant sound of the picturesque waterfall of the Kohoin River drowns the bustle of commerce. Here, local people live in modern brick houses with cement foundations and roofs of corrugated iron sheets. Alongside a network of roads, people have nicely arranged gardens with an abundance of colourful flowers and fruit-trees like papaya, banana, and cashew fruit.

cityscape.

3. For an overview of the vertebrate fauna of the Kepala Burung at large, see Aplin (1998).

Teminabuan town has developed around Jalan Satin, the main road, paved with cement that dates back to the 1950s.⁴ In that post-war period, the Dutch built houses and offices for the administration when Teminabuan became the headquarters for the newly established administrative sub-division Teminabuan.⁵ Since then, Teminabuan town has become the main urban centre of the area. The town has the only health centre (*puskesmas*) of the sub-district. Besides the daily commotion at the market, the town holds few attractions to people from the villages. A recently established hotel and restaurant with a karaoke facility has not changed things because it is set up for visiting (largely non-indigenous) government officials and for the entertainment of the elite amongst the immigrant BBM traders.

The colonial-style buildings continue to house government officials, medical workers, and schoolteachers. While the nurses and schoolteachers are mostly indigenous or Papuans from elsewhere in Irian Jaya, the government staff and police and military personnel are mainly from Java or the Moluccas. To the north-west of the town, dwellings extend along the paths that lead to the villages of Seribau, and Skendi. There, beyond the Christian Centre for Women's Education (*Pusat Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Wanita*, P3W) and the Telkom telecommunication office that connects about fifty telephones in town and facilitates radio connections with the city of Sorong, is the village of Sefai. Sefai is a relatively new settlement that houses numerous families from Ayamaru and villages in the sub-district of Teminabuan, some of whose members have jobs at the health centre, with the government or at the secondary school (SMA). Just outside town, alongside the road to the northern sub-district of Ayamaru, there is a grass airstrip, the sub-district officer's house, a police station, and a small army headquarters.

4. The name Satin is derived from the Dutch word *steen*, meaning 'stone'.

5. What I call a sub-division is an administrative area that was referred to as a *Onderafde(e)eling* during colonial rule and is presently known as a *Kecamatan* (sub-district). The colonial sub-division was part of an *Afde(e)ling* ('district'). The present-day sub-districts are part of a *Kabupaten* (district).

Another recent change is that Teminabuan's centre of commerce has moved down to the Kaibus River, where BBM groups characteristically engage in commercial activities at the market (*pasar*) that lies alongside the harbour, as an extension of the main jetty. This *pasar* consists of a long street with booths on one side. The trade stores (*toko*) are stocked with a variety of goods like rice, flour, soap, clothing, petrol, and kerosene. Because the immigrant merchants are mostly Muslim, a mosque sits next to the Protestant church. At a separate market place, Papuan women from the villages trade fresh products such as vegetables, fish, honey, sago, medicinal leaves, marsupials, birds, and pork.

The *pendatang* groups are growing in numbers and the houses and shops they build and the activities they undertake make Teminabuan look like just an average Indonesian town. The atmosphere of Teminabuan's quayside is one of impermanence. It seems that everybody is always waiting for the next vessel to arrive or to leave. When a boat arrives, people from every corner of town come down to the harbour. When these crowds drift past the booths and stalls lining the street towards the jetty, there is a feeling of nomadism in the air.

The only real nomadic people come from the Metamani-Inanwatan area. They row in their roofed dugouts all the way to Teminabuan where they moor in the harbour and expose leaf containers filled with sago flour on the embankment. These people sometimes wait more than two weeks for customers. In the meantime they live in their palm-leaf thatched dugouts. A sago container is usually about one to two meters in length, twenty to thirty centimetres thick and weights about ten to twenty kilo. They are sold for prices around the equivalent of US\$ 5. With the little cash gained, the nomadic traders buy items like pots, pans, clothes, torches, batteries, and cooking oil in the market. It will take them more than two weeks to row back to their sago groves over hundred kilometres further south. After a couple of months, they may decide to return to Teminabuan with portions of their sago harvest to collect more modern goods.

Teminabuan is the centre that connects the region with the rest of Indonesia and the world at large. Presently, the Kaibus is the main gateway for travellers and cargo to and from Teminabuan. Besides the main jetty at the town of

Teminabuan and a smaller landing place at the village of Wersar, the Kaibus also has a big concrete jetty that was built with a World Bank subsidy in the 1980s. This impressive jetty lies some fifteen kilometres to the south of Teminabuan and extends over five-hundred meters into the Kaibus, providing a landing place for vessels whose draught would not allow to sail up to Teminabuan town. There are plans to build a road between this jetty and the town of Teminabuan that will then also connect the Beriat forest and the hinterland forests with the sea. In western direction, there are yet also no good roads to Imyan country. The transport of construction material such as corrugated iron sheets, cement, pipes for the construction of churches, offices, and houses to the Imyan villages is restricted to long boat journeys from Teminabuan town. Usually, such a trip takes over seven hours in a dugout driven by an outboard motor.

In their engagement with modern Indonesia, people in the Teminabuan area are first of all oriented towards the city of Sorong. High school students, government officials, teachers, but also people from the villages may spend several months per year or sometimes a whole year or more in the city of Sorong. In Sorong, there are several quarters where increasing numbers of people from Teminabuan make a living.⁶ Early labour migrations, later followed by spontaneous migrations of people expecting life in the city to be more rewarding, have led to substantial pockets of indigenous groups from all over the Kepala Burung.

Some thriving families from the Teminabuan sub-district reside in the backward quarter called Remu Selatan that is located between Remu Pasar and the airport. Recently, these people have been promised large amounts of money for their houses and homeyards because the land will be used for a large airport that is going to replace Sorong's airport on Yefman Island. Most people, however, do not know where to go and those who live with their families and hold few prospects for future jobs plan to return to their home villages.

6. Studies of former and recent urbanisation in the western Kepala Burung are mostly wordy overviews in accordance with policy. They include Antoh, Veplun, and Kareth (1991), Bandiyono (1991), and Kambuaya (1979).

Another settlement in Sorong is the Klademak quarter called Worot ('valley'), a small sandy river-bed behind the city's largest supermarket, Yohan, and the Sahid Mariat Hotel. Worot is home to several Teminabuan families of which fathers or grandfathers were typically employed with the NNGPM, the Netherlands New Guinea Oil Company (*Nederlandsche Nieuw Guinee Petroleum Maatschappij*), which established an oil terminal in Sorong after oil was found near Klamono in 1936. Reaching its peak in the 1950s, numerous people from all over the Western Kepala Burung, but in particular from nearby Moi settlements, Salawati Island, Sausopor, and Teminabuan, were recruited to work for the NNGPM.⁷ In most cases, one or two of the children of the former NNGPM employees have found employment as teachers, nurses, or as clerical staff at one of the lower ranks of the government administration.

Most of them are active in the local Protestant or Catholic Church organisations. Among Protestants from Teminabuan in particular, there is a recent shift towards new denominations of Evangelical or Pentecostal churches. The most popular is the *Gereja Pentekosta*. According to some Teminabuan adherents, the Pentecostal theology is 'true' because it is based on the same foundations as traditional or pre-Christian Papuan beliefs. This point of view is then illustrated by mentioning such things as possession (by the Holy Spirit), public revelation, and dancing and singing in high spirits during services. These features are considered more apt to the Irian way (*cara Irian*) than the sober and strict liturgy of the Protestant church.

More important though seems to be that most Pentecostal Teminabuan people believe that through the Pentecostal church they will obtain a share of the power necessary for success in the modern world and the necessary blessings to prepare for the impending end of the world in the year 2000.⁸ The recent establishment of a Pentecostal church in Teminabuan is attracting many people

7. In the early years of the 1950s, the European staff of about two-hundred men based in Sorong was supported by about 2,600 indigenous workers (Vademecum 1956: 118). Many elder Imyan men who have been employed as drilling assistants can tell in high spirits about their amazement when they first saw the oil terminal in Sorong.

8. As I will show in Chapter 6, these millenarian beliefs are related to traditional beliefs and an extensive

and causes great concerns to the Evangelical *Gereja Kristen Injili di Irian Jaya* (GKI) church organisation.

Almost none of the immigrants from the interior of the Kepala Burung engage in commercial activities. Commercial enterprises solely belong to people from elsewhere in Indonesia. Local people describe the Javanese and Madurese as active in transportation, and the Moluccans as dominant in the services sector. Ayamaru and Teminabuan people in Sorong have a clearly lower economic status. Nowadays, very few Papuans are employed with the oil company. In the wake of the early labour migration family members and other relatives migrated to the oil centres Sorong, Klamono, and Seget. Soon, however, the output from the oil fields began to decline, a symptom of the political malaise afflicting the Dutch colonial presence in the territory (Poulgrain 1999: 207). As a result, many employees were bound to return home, leaving behind their friends who found alternative employment at government offices or in education.

Historical Arena

Both the Kaibus and the Seremuk give entrance to the alluvial flats and karst lowlands of this part of the Southwest Kepala Burung.⁹ The Seremuk is a long meandering river, while the Kaibus is a broad estuary, which includes the Kohoin River that flows through Teminabuan town. The Kohoin flows over a famous waterfall where it meets the Kaibus just beside the present-day market and the main jetty. The Seremuk and Kaibus cut through vast coastal stretches of swampland and are bordered on both sides by mangrove and palms. In addition to their overland connections with northerly inland groups, both rivers were of importance for trade relations and provided important routes through which groups immigrated into the area. The rivers also gave entrance to raiding (*hong*)

history of shifting centres of power.

9. For an overview of the environmental and geological setting of the lowlands of the Southwest Kepala Burung and the Kepala Burung in general, see Dam and Wong (1998) and Ratnam (1998).

parties coming to fetch slaves and to get forest products which then entered trade cycles that connected the western maritime regions of the island of New Guinea with the Moluccan sultanate at Tidore.

In that respect, the traditional Imyan world cannot be characterised as isolated or solitary. On the contrary, Imyan have been connected to the world economy for centuries. At least three hundred years ago they began to play a role in the vast spheres of influence of the sultanate of Tidore in the Moluccas of Eastern Indonesia. The sultans claimed suzerainty over a large area, which at various times also included western parts of New Guinea.¹⁰ Local Papuan leaders along the coast of western New Guinea dominated trade over sometimes great distances which supported the centralised authority of the sultan. These leaders were called *raja* ('kings').

Imyan lived in an area that belonged to the sphere of influence of the 'kingdom' of Sailolof, of which leaders were appointed as tributaries of the sultan of Tidore. In their mythology, origin stories, and explanation of the unequal division of wealth in the world, Imyan relate to Tidore and Sailolof as centres of wealth and knowledge. The *raja* of Sailolof resided on the island of Salawati, one of the Raja Ampat Islands situated to the west of the Kepala Burung. Since centuries, the Raja Ampat islanders, many of whom are traditional Muslims, recognised the authority of the Moluccan *rajas*. Interestingly, in spite of a historical blending

10. On early power and trade relations between Maluku sultans and their domains at stretches of the west coast of New Guinea, see Leupe (1875: 195), Haga (1884, I: 6-7, 192-8, 208-11), Huizinga (1998), De Clerq (1889: 1350), Van Hille (1906), Rauws (1919: 5), Van Eechoud (1951: 12-17), Kamma (1953a), Bergh (1964a), Miklouho-Maclay (1982: 439), Swadling (1996: 33), and Van Balen (n.d.: 134-47). The historical overviews as they are presented in Kamma's work on the Papuan Islands (1947/8a, 1947/8b, 1948/9a, 1948/9b), Pouwer on the Mimika (1955), Van Logchem (1963) on Arguni Bay, and Miedema on Kebar Valley (1984), show that along the west coast of New Guinea, voyages of trade, kidnapping, and pillage were undertaken by people of Eastern Indonesia, Seram, Goram, Ternate and Tidore from as early as the seventeenth century, later joined by Macassarese, Buginese, Arabs, and Chinese. The Raja Ampat Islands, the western coastal stretches of the Kepala Burung and the Onin Peninsula were important centres of trade where eastern authorities representing the eastern Indonesian sultans appointed local Indonesian and Papuan representatives with titles like *raja* and *kapitan*. These local agents ensured regular production and collection of plumes, slaves, *massoi* bark, *trepang* (sea cucumber) and other things that the representatives of the sultans demanded. In return all kinds of commodities including textiles and beads (*manik-manik*) found their way as far as the interior of the Bird's Head, the Onin Peninsula, and the Mimika area (see Swadling 1996).

with Moluccan institutions, as witnessed by the former existence of a system of principalities modelled after the sultanate of Tidore, many cultural traits on the islands show similarities with what is generally described as belonging to 'Melanesia'. In fact, most of its population is of Biak descent and their cosmological beliefs and related ritual practices show many similarities to those on the island of Biak.¹¹

There were *raja* centres along the northern and north-western coast of the Onin Peninsula. Although continuously under threat by new alliances, each kingdom had its own sphere of influence (Mansoben 1995: 224), including parts of the south coast of the Kepala Burung. As such, the people along the southern and western coastal stretches of the Kepala Burung were for centuries subordinate to *rajas* on the Onin Peninsula and in the Raja Ampat Islands. The kingdoms of Rumbati and Patipi dominated the coastline stretching from the estuary of the Kaibus down to Yahadian and Inanwatan. Further east as far as Bintuni belonged to the kingdoms of Sekar and Arguni (see Van Rhijn's map in the appendix to the volume edited by Miedema 1997).

The south-western coast, from about the Kaibus estuary to Cape Sele was within the sphere of influence of the kingdom of Sailolof seated on the island of Salawati. The *rajas*, together with their strategically positioned subjects holding titles such *kapitan laut*, *orang kaya*, *mayor*, *wornemen*, and other local leaders with lower ranks, operated as vassals of the sultan of Tidore. They held positions as local ceremonial leaders and war leaders (Mansoben 1982: 165) who collected slaves and forest products as tribute payments to the sultan. Places such as Seget, Teminabuan, and Inanwatan figured as locations where forest products and slaves could be extracted and where, in order to get these items, traders from Seram, the Raja Ampat Islands and the Onin coast engaged in *hong*i raids

11. See Kamma (1947/8a, 1947/8b, 1948/9a, 1948/9b), Van der Leeden (1983), and Mansoben (1995: 221-62). People from Biak also founded trading posts on the mainland of the Kepala Burung. Accordingly, in his study of the Moi, Haenen (1991: 1-5) recounts the origin story of the Malibela people coming from Sor on the island of Biak. According to Kamma (cited in Haenen 1991: 5), the Malibela have settled among the Moi about 200 years ago, but the beginning of the Biak-Numfor migrations to the Raja Ampat Islands and the western Kepala Burung are traced back to the end of the 15th century (Kamma 1947/8a: 365). As also observed by Miedema (1995b: 24 n. 1), the event in the Malibela narrative is consistent with the ethno-history as reconstructed by Barnett (1959), Bergh (1964a), Elmberg (1968), and Miedema (1984, 1986, 1994).

(Swadling 1996: 211-12).

Trade, travel, and tribute marked the orientation of the groups along the south-western coast of the Kepala Burung to a 'global' network of external relations. These principalities were linked into larger networks exchange relations between special trade monopolies or settlements (*sosolot*) in western New Guinea. Particularly during the nineteenth century when Europeans began to appreciate the beauty of bird of paradise feathers to decorate their hats, the island of New Guinea became important as source of feathers (Swadling 1996). Teminabuan and Seget became increasingly important posts for those *raja* who were instrumental in the collection and transportation of local products and manpower. The local *raja* presented these goods as tribute to the representatives of the sultan of Tidore on the Onin Peninsula and in the Raja Ampat Islands. The influence of *raja* positioned at the northern and western shores of the Onin Peninsula lasted till the 1920s, when Dutch military personnel and administrators, and traders of different casts became more dominant (Lotgering 1940: 36-37).

In return for the local products, these merchant rulers provided Kepala Burung people with a number of products such as cloth, iron tools, copper and bronze products, glass beads, Chinese porcelain dishes, jars, and ceramics of Portuguese origin. The local people associated these products with the Moluccan centres of wealth and power. Therefore, many of these items were assigned magical powers that they are considered to have even today. Particularly powerful are the cloths of which certain specimens are believed to possess powers to call upon sky deities and the spirits of ancestors, and to ensure the prosperity and fertility of the soil and the people. The less valuable cloths are also important in payments for marital rights and compensation payments.

Forming part of these trade cycles, Imyan and Tehit have for centuries served as a source of manpower, bird plumes, sago, and other forest products. All these products were collected by various *rajas* from the Onin Peninsula and the Raja Ampat islands who were under the notional rule of the sultan of Tidore. The tributary people at the southern coastal stretches of the Kepala Burung brought their products to certain locations at major rivers or estuaries such as the

Seremuk (Imyan territory) and the Kaibus (Tehit territory). Through this trade, iron tools and cloths from Onin and the Raja Ampat islands found their way into the interior of the Teminabuan area. Moreover, ideas about foreign power associated with the sultan became widespread. Good traders were not only clever entrepreneurs but were also considered to be close to the powers of the sultanate which was reflected in the titles they bore. When a *raja* or his representative came, they entered into trade with local agents who carried titles such as *rajamuda*, *kapitan*, and *mayor*.

Neither the Imyan, nor the Tehit figured centrally in the pre-colonial Seram Sea exchange networks; Teminabuan figured only marginally in the *sosolot* trade networks of the Raja Ampat Islands, Onin, East Seram, Halmahera, and the sultanates of Ternate and Tidore. One of the themes that I explore in the following chapters are the reasons that these links of contact and trade with *raja* and, indirectly, with the sultan of Tidore, figure prominently in present-day constructions of the Imyan and ‘the other’.

Modern Marginality

The coastal stretches and islands of West New Guinea were the outer margins of the intensive networks of trade that linked them with the north Moluccan states. Closer to the present-day, this regional trade has assumed global traits in the form of Imyan constructions explaining the spread of mankind and the division of knowledge and wealth amongst its different groups also to encompass America, Australia, Japan, and the Netherlands. The drift of these stories indicates a general feeling of loss of autonomy and a sense of having lost powerful knowledge. Importantly, the stories undermine the current order of the world and react against the denial of their own power through marginalisation that has come with the colonial administration, missionary activity, and the present-day social, economic, and political inequality that puts Imyan on the

outer margins of the Indonesian state.

These reinterpretations of the pre-colonial situation stress that Imyans were never isolated (where in fact they were, as outlined above) but that they were originally at the centre of the world economy, or rather that they were the centre where all people, knowledge, and wealth comes from. Imyan claim that in those days they were autonomous actors and world-wise, in contrast to their current predicament in which they feel dependent and marginalised. For Imyan, this feeling of marginalisation is perhaps stronger than that for Tehit people and others who live in the town of Teminabuan, the main commercial centre of the area.

For Imyan, the Seremuk River has always been the lifeline. In pre-colonial times, Imyan lived in houses scattered over the hills at a safe distance from the coastal river where raiding parties posed a threat to them. They left their homes only occasionally, walking down to take bird plumes to traders or to operate in large groups to process sago, hunt pigs, fish for shrimp, and gather forest products. These undertakings were secured by elaborate rituals and a system of alternating duties and division of work whereby one group always had to be on the watch to alert the others when enemy groups were to launch an attack.

Because of the long distance (about ten to fifteen kilometres) to their homes in the hills, people often hid in caves or rock shelters set in the fringe of the karst hills to return to the swamps when the situation was safe again. Due to the concerted efforts of missionaries and government agencies the situation became peaceful and in the 1940s, groups of Imyan people began to establish villages near the Seremuk River. According to informants, large numbers of people came down to the river to be closer to the sago and the food in the rivers and closer to Teminabuan.¹²

12. In his Memorandum of Transfer, Cappetti (1961: 52) notes that in the Teminabuan area, people tend to move towards the lowlands for economic reasons, and warns that the government should be prepared to take health measures because of the increase of malaria due to this migration. The Imyan population that still lives in the northern villages of Sasenek and Sdrofoyo argue that they are better off than their kinsfolk at the Seremuk because of malaria.

In the course of recent history, the Seremuk has lost much of its value due to the establishment of the administration, mission and new communities of traders in and around the town of Teminabuan, conferring an important economic role on the Kaibus estuary. As said before, for access to resources and trade Imyan now orient themselves towards Teminabuan town, and the recently built road from this town to the villages of Woloin and Haha is correspondingly seen as the road to development and prosperity.

In 1996, a caterpillar tractor cleared a path through to the villages of Seribau, Tofot, Haha, and Woloin. After four months' work, a track that local people called *jalan doser* ('bulldozer road') was completed and the government in Teminabuan then expected that it would provide the necessary transportation for immigrants from other Indonesian islands to start coconut oil plantations along the Seremuk River.¹³ This project has not got off the ground yet. That the road would also enable foreign settlers to encroach on their land was initially not a widely held concern among the Imyan. For what Imyan wanted was a share of the great promises for the future that Teminabuan as a centre of development (*pembangunan*) might introduce.

Over the last few decades Teminabuan has been opened up by modern air and sea transportation - even though suffering from inefficiency -, the availability of television - even though limited to offerings such as documentaries on development or culture, Indonesian language dramas and coverage of sport events -, the recent construction of telephone exchange with satellite connection - even though financially prohibitive for most villagers -, and increasing administrative responsibility - Teminabuan is scheduled to become the headquarters of a new district (*kabupaten*) that would comprise the surrounding 'A3' sub-districts of Aitinyo, Ayamaru and Ayfat, together with Teminabuan. Despite such developments that bring Teminabuan closer to the centre of the nation-state and the rest of the world, it still plays a minor part in these new worlds.

13. Some government officials in Teminabuan rather straightforwardly told Imyan people that the road would allow Javanese transmigrants to settle in Imyan country in order to 'assist' the local people with the construction and operation of a large coconut oil plantation (see Chapter 4).

The economic activities of Imyan villagers are largely confined to obtaining life's necessities. Any surplus is sold for cash to pay for children's schooling. Villagers usually work as a household, sometimes assisted by other relatives. Depending on one's obligations and social needs, relatively small quantities of food are bartered with relatives, friends, and neighbours. In the coastal villages, sago is the staple. Sago flour is obtained from the pith of mature palms, which is pounded with a blunt tool. The fibrous starch is then washed in fresh water and squeezed. After a few days, sediments of starch are placed in containers made of sago leaves from the same tree. The containers are taken back to the village in a dugout or carried on a woman's back. A full-size sago palm can supply sago flour for an ordinary family for a month or more. Every day a portion of this sago supply is used to make sago paste. The boring taste of sago paste is usually improved by adding leaves, fish, and occasionally pork. It should be stressed, however, that the consumption of animal protein is very limited in the villages.

Children are often hungry which makes them apathetic and prone to malaria, colds and other illnesses. In particular young children are malnourished, leaving them at risk of contracting infectious diseases and dying. Some have swollen stomachs, probably due to either chronic malaria (which can enlarge the spleen), undernourishment, or worms. Their round tummies contrast starkly with their spindly arms and legs. Malnourished school-age children do poorly at school. Even worse, many children die at an early age, most often before the age of one (see Lautenbach 1999: 106-7).

Imyan villages have a poor appearance. People usually dress in ragged clothing unless attending Sunday's service for which they have one set of tidy clothes. They have little money. Their houses are basic: plank walls with a roof made of sheets of corrugated iron. Every family possesses a bush-knife, an axe, a hammer, one or two flashlights, some basic kitchen utensils and sometimes a radio. This relative poverty is the result of a lack of diversification in the village's economy as people depend on sago and gardening and only earn some money by selling sago and vegetables in Teminabuan. There is absence of commercial enterprises and limited availability of paid work in Teminabuan town and the city of Sorong. Furthermore, poor infrastructure and lack of means

of transportation impedes local trade, investments from outside, and successful implementation of development programs. Moreover, there is general apathy as a result of the feeling of being intentionally kept without prospects by the Indonesian government.

Also important to note is that, due mainly to both subtle and harsh pacification efforts, the Imyan have become a rather docile people. Particularly significant in this regard have been the activities of the Indonesian armed forces in exercising power over real and alleged groups of people who fought for an independent West Papua after Indonesia began to rule the territory. In fact, since the mid-1960s, Indonesian armed forces have gone to great lengths to interrogate Imyan villagers and sentence to death those whom they found guilty of adhering to any form of Papuan nationalism.¹⁴

Soon after Indonesia appropriated West New Guinea, its government aimed at a Western-type economic development, and social and religious harmony throughout the archipelago. With the emergence of New Order politics under the state's second president, Suharto, these objectives turned out to have a major impact on certain urban centres. Jakarta is presently a prototypical Southeast Asian capital characterised by over-population and increasing inequality in wealth, status, and labour opportunities. Eastern Indonesian cities like Ujung Pandang (Makassar), Manado, and Sorong, are also growing into big cities where the lives of the inhabitants are affected by European, Chinese, and Japanese cultural images of modernity that focus on consumer goods.

14. I have heard a variety of accounts of these events. Because of the sensitive nature of who was involved, who got killed and who is responsible, but also because these kind of investigations could put me in a vulnerable situation, I have not made further attempts to reconstruct these events. As a result, the materials used in this dissertation are examples of the many forms of talk and thinking that people feel would not lead to harsh reprisals or trigger the oppressing forces that are ever present in such Indonesian centres as Sorong, Biak, Fak-fak, and Ambon. It can be concluded, however, that the killings and intimidations have inspired fear in people. I believe that a series of such displays of power by the Indonesian military have made Imyan a docile people.

Sitting in a Toyota mini-bus in Sorong you may find yourself listening to Japanese and Chinese pop songs, and Javanese *dangdut* hits or other mainstream Indonesian pop music. In the rare case that the driver is Papuan or Ambonese you will be assaulted with music from such bands like Rio Grime, U Brothers, Sorong Band, vocal groups such as Karerin, Waena, Pawela, Paniai Group, or recent *yospan* hits from the Biakese Masayori Group or blends of Moluccan and Irianese lyrics with cha-cha rhythms by Ian Ulukyanan, or older hard-rock songs from the Black Brothers or Black Sweet.

Shopping centres consist of large Chinese-owned supermarkets, trade stores, and garages, Indonesian restaurants, hardware, and interior stores. The most prestigious products include kitchen utensils made in China, radios, televisions, and watches made in Korea, and cars and motorcycles of Japanese origin. Clothing, food, and hardware are mostly from Indonesia and have less appeal. Only at markets can local garden products and little Papuan handicrafts be bought. At night, Sorong remains alive in the night-clubs, dance halls and at the food stalls along the Tembok Berlin ('Berlin Wall'), a small concrete wall stemming the tide of the Pacific Ocean. While the food market is stocked with a variety of food from all over Indonesia, the night-clubs and dancings provide Indonesian pop music, while in back rooms one can enjoy karaoke shows with Chinese, Japanese, and European hit numbers.

In contrast to these modern developments and the increasing awareness of the outside world, the state's policy makers still see the Papuans in town and, in particular in the surrounding villages, as backward and primitive folks. The main concern of the planning bureau in Sorong is to get these villages 'developed'. While in colonial times, civil servants, missionaries, teachers, and doctors portrayed the villagers of the Teminabuan area as people who were engaged in processes of cultural destruction, christianisation, and Westernisation without possessing their own ideas about such development, the present-day administration tends to suggest that because these villagers cherish different or no ideas about development they remain underdeveloped and economically isolated. It perceives this isolation and backwardness often as pre-determined, as a course of progress that has never been different, thus suggesting that

backwardness is a historical fact, an authentic feature of these people, and therefore impossible to change.¹⁵

The Advent of Christianity and Administration

In the recent history of Imyan people the impact of Christianity has been of particular importance. Christianity was introduced in Southwest Kepala Burung in the early twentieth century, by Dutch and Moluccan Protestant and Mennonite missionaries, followed by Dutch Catholics, and only recently by American and Australian missions of smaller denominations. The first missionaries were Moluccan Protestants who arrived at Teminabuan in 1927. Their work during the first decades was confined to the settlements along the headwaters of the Kaibus River and the banks of the wide estuary of this river. In the interior and along the Seremuk River and the Klabra River, village formation and the building of schools and churches was still in its infancy when the Second World War broke out.

The first missionaries and government officials were concerned with spreading the faith, the abolishment of what they saw as pagan practices, and the introduction of modern government, schools and infrastructure. The first Dutch colonial officials came to Sorong in 1925, and between 1933 and 1945 the Assistant-Resident of Sorong administered all of the Kepala Burung, including the Raja Ampat islands and the Onin Peninsula. Until then economic development was very slow because West New Guinea remained one of the backwaters in the vast territory of the Netherlands East Indies.

Things improved for the local people in the Teminabuan area after the Japanese occupation in the Second World War, when it transpired that Indonesia would become independent and West New Guinea was to remain a colony of the Netherlands. With a rather paternalistic attitude and high investments in material and personnel, the Dutch administration was rapidly extended to more remote areas. Serious efforts were made at social development, education, health, and

15. The paradox that this creates for the developers will be discussed in Chapter 4.

community organisation to prepare the country for independence scheduled for 1975. Imyan have adapted and shaped the Christian teachings, together with economic, administrative, and other changes, to their own cultural forms and values relatively quickly and without much resistance.

Despite some isolated expeditions since the sixteenth century, West New Guinea attracted the interest of missionaries, prospectors, and colonial governments at a relatively late moment in time. At a time when New Guinea still featured as an outlying district (*buitengewest*) in colonial policies of the East Indies, Dutch adventurers put Teminabuan on the colonial map in the first years of the twentieth century. As a backwater, although close to Cape Sele and the entrance to the MacCluer Gulf, the swampy south-western coastal stretches of mangrove around the Seremuk and Kaibus Rivers had long been out of view.

The MacCluer Gulf (Teluk Berau) was first discovered by Europeans in 1662, when Vinck landed on the north coast of the Onin Peninsula at a place called Roemakai and heard that people there maintained trade relations with an area called 'Berau' at the north coast of the MacCluer Gulf (see Robidé van der Aa 1879: 32).¹⁶ Berau was the name for the south coastal stretch of the Kepala Burung except for the easternmost part called Bintuni or Steenkool, and generally also excluding the Teminabuan area (which was then referred to as Beraur). In fact, Berau was the name by which *rajas* designated the south coastal stretches of the Kepala Burung where they had trade relations. Along the trade routes of the *rajas* and with the help of the 'petty Onin kings' (*Oninse vorstjes*, as they are often called in reports), the Dutch explored this area.

'Teminabuan' is first referred to in a 1905 report, probably by Van Dissel, who noticed during a fourth trip through the hills of West New Guinea that a government post was needed in 'Taminaboewan (Kaiboës)' (see Overweel 1995a: 35). Around the same time, Van Hille (1906: 454f) identifies the Seremuk

16. Vinck is therefore called the first European discoverer of the MacCluer Gulf (Bergh 1964a: 27)

River in his report of the exploration of the north coast of the MacCluer Gulf.¹⁷ A few years later, Teminabuan features in the reports of the Dutch military exploration of the Kepala Burung during which Müller, Ilgen and Canter Cremers travelled from Teminabuan to the Ayamaru Lakes, from 20 May till 26 June 1913 (Militaire Exploratie 1920).

Since 1855, the Dutch colonial government ruled over West New Guinea only indirectly, through the political economy of the so-called Residency of Ternate and its Dependencies. In 1898, the Dutch established the first two permanent posts in West New Guinea. Dutch colonial rule in Teminabuan began in the late 1920s. In 1911, the then highest governmental authority, the Assistant-Resident of the West Nieuw-Guinea division, Dumas, reports that the northern shore of the MacCluer Gulf was more populated than the southern shore, and had promising natural resources like *damar*, *rotan*, and birds of paradise, and that exploration of the interior could be profitable (Dumas 1992[1911]: 9).

Dumas was able to report this on the basis of information gathered during three military expeditions in 1910 and 1911. These expeditions were, on the one hand, organised to explore natural resources and to find suitable places for military and government posts. On the other hand, they sought to restrict murder due to disputes and raids. As already mentioned, these raids were organised by traders from the Raja Ampat islands and Onin who wanted to capture slaves and carry off forest products. Fearing these attacks, the people of the Berau area soon learned that if they informed the Dutch about the leaders of *hong*i parties, the government officials with their Moluccan assistants and some loyal *raja* would severely punish the raiders.

When Dumas first visited Bira (now the town of Inanwatan) on the Kais River, local people handed over several *hong*i leaders. Following the establishment of a military detachment in this area in 1910, the people returned to the coast from the dense sago forests where they retreated for fear of *hong*i

17. For an overview of early travels and explorations of the MacCluer Gulf area, see the timeline (Appendix B).

raids (Dumas 1992[1911]: 3). F.A. Tanasale, a Corporal from Moluccan origin, took the initiative to establish an administrative post in Inanwatan at the Kais River. A year later, Tamangila who came from Rumbati and was probably on a mission for the Raja of Rumbati to look after his interests, was sent to the upper Kais to convince people to built houses in the vicinity of the new post.

As for the Teminabuan area, the policeman H. Nanlohy was posted in the village of Konda in 1924 (Merkelij n 1951b: 1). Nanlohy was a low ranking police officer who had served in Inanwatan. He was sent to the Kaibus area where he soon became head of the district of Konda that he had himself established. The district head resided at Konda and did not travel much further up the Kaibus. Only in 1927 did the first Moluccan (religious) teachers (*gurus*) arrive in the villages of Wersar and Teminabuan along the upper reaches of the Kaibus.

The *gurus* for the southern Kepala Burung were mainly recruited from Ambonese Protestant mission schools and came from highly stratified societies and were usually strictly orthodox. From the outset, Ambonese aided the government as office assistants, police, carpenters, and as ordinary workers. Most of all, they assisted the church as *gurus*. Their influence on the local people was great because they stayed for long periods in out-of-the-way settlements (see Hogerwaard 1953). As Sowada notes for the role of *gurus* working for the Catholic mission in south New Guinea, ‘their influence was most effective in changing and stereotyping the attitudes of the people in their relationship to the newly-arrived outside peoples’ (1984[1971]: 61).¹⁸

18. That South West New Guinea has more missions that are Catholic is the result of a government concern with conflicts that would arise from double missionisation. A gentlemen’s agreement of 1912 limited the sphere of influence of the Protestant missions to North New Guinea and that of the Catholic missions to South New Guinea. When this dividing line was discontinued in 1928, soon Catholic posts were established in Fak-fak and Babo. Despite initial objection from the government, the Catholic mission posted *gurus* to the Kepala Burung in 1936 (Vademecum 1956: 69). In 1949, the Order of the Friars Minor in the person of Father Rombouts entered the Ayfat region to the northwest of Teminabuan (see Thoonen 1998). This raised concern among the Protestant and Mennonite missionaries in Ayamaru and Teminabuan (see Chapter 5). In contrast to the Protestants using Ambonese, the Roman Catholic missions in West New Guinea used religious teachers from the Kei Islands (see Sowada 1984[1971]).

In the Teminabuan area, the Ambonese have done much to shape the idea of outsiders as those who come to turn Papuans to orderly lives, school discipline, and attending religious services. They tended to look down upon the Papuans and classified them as primitive and dumb and often used harsh disciplining methods in carrying out the dirty work for their Dutch and Ambonese priors at the offices in Teminabuan. Imyan accounts of the work of *gurus* in the 1950s and the 1960s in their villages indicate that the everyday experiences of Imyan with these eastern Indonesians were not all favourable.¹⁹

Although Imyan, recounting this period, often stressed that the *gurus* were hard workers and that they did much for the Papuans, most hasten to add that the *gurus* were much too rigid. The beating up of women and the punishment of schoolchildren with strokes of the cane, mostly illustrate these claims. As for their sermons and biblical teaching, Imyan villagers find that the *gurus* too much shouted fire and brimstone instead of putting effort in clear exegesis of biblical stories. This is the basis of present-day frustration over the Dutch who withheld information about Christian rituals and consequently of the current mistrust about the value and power of Christian rituals as I have noted among Imyan villagers. Furthermore, the most significant impact of mission activities for Imyan is the abandonment of initiation and the associated powers that can recreate life power, reinforce male domination, and re-establish cultural autonomy.

On the part of the colonial administration, development of the region started in constructive way in the period immediately after 1920 (Lagerberg 1962: 17). Then knowledge about local situations had just become available through the 1907-1915 Military Exploration and the government of the Netherlands and of the Netherlands East Indies put more emphasis on 'ethical' colonial policies. Actual development was, however, hard because of the global economic crisis of the 1930s. However difficult their work was, the colonial authorities and missionaries worked together to at least abolish 'pagan' practices by introducing Christianity, church, and schools. Efforts were also made to extend the

administrative organisation, but this did not seriously affect such places as Teminabuan.

It was not until after the Second World War that the colonial government began to give priority to both economic and social development of the Papuans.²⁰ During the term of Netherlands New Guinea's first governor, Van Waardenburg, from 1950 until 1953, a working administration was set up in response to the increased need for personnel that could implement, co-ordinate and evaluate the new ambitious tasks. Governor Van Waardenburg had his policies guided by suggestions from a newly appointed Education Council (*Raad voor de Volksopvoeding*) and the Bureau of Native Affairs (*Kantoor voor Bevolkingszaken*) of which Van Baal was the first head (see Lagerberg 1962: 56-60). The first institution promoted the use of the Dutch language among Papuans and the second should become a consultancy bureau with the aim of carrying out anthropological, demographic, linguistic and economic research for the recommendation of development plans (Vademecum 1956: 27). Due to a shortage of government personnel, a concern with the influx of Indo-Europeans from Indonesia, lack of knowledge of the territory and its people, the colonial government remained more engaged in setting up its own organisation, collecting ethnographic, demographic, ecological, and geological data, than with effective building of infrastructure and the setting up of development programs.

The second governor, Van Baal (1953-1958), building on the foundations of his predecessor and his own knowledge of the area gained during his work as Assistant District Officer (*controleur*) in Merauke in the late 1930s and as head of the Bureau of Native Affairs, made some remarkable improvements in education and public health service (see Lagerberg 1962: 91-140). Van Baal's efforts were, however, frustrated by the increasing concern of the Dutch government with its relations with the Republic of Indonesia. The government

19. See also Pouwer (1999: 163).

20. In most Dutch accounts, personal or official, of the post-war period in West New Guinea, there is much emphasis on the magnificent development work done by the administration, and the miraculous work of conversion performed by the missions. The collection of reminiscences by former officers in Pim Schoorl (1996) contains some shining examples of pride derived from the achievements, or at least the objectives of the Dutch administration in the post-war period. Kamma's *Dit Wonderlijke Werk* ('This Miraculous Work', 1976) on the development of Protestant missionary work depicts a similar attitude of

refused to discuss the sovereignty of West New Guinea with the Indonesians any longer and the latter began to mobilise international political pressure on the Dutch. On the ground, minor Indonesian infiltrations took place in 1954 and therefore the Netherlands sought military support from Australia. When P.J. Platteel replaced Van Baal in 1958, the political struggle for New Guinea intensified and one of the main goals of the administration became a further development of democratisation.

What begun as an experiment on the islands of Biak and Numfor became the foundation for other regional councils and later the New Guinea Council (*Nieuw-Guinea Raad*). The regional councils consisted of directly elected members who were commissioned to draw up regional rules and regulations (Lagerberg 1962: 118-21). As a central representative body, the New Guinea Council consisted of a majority of Papuans and held the right of petition, initiative, interpellation (the seeking of explanations) and joint legislation (Lagerberg 1962: 166-76; Pouwer 1999: 168). Aiming at full integration of Papuans in all sectors of government in preparation for independence, the New Guinea Council triggered national consciousness that already was becoming stronger owing to the insistent demands of Indonesia for a transfer of sovereignty. Significantly, the Council decided to adopt the name Papuan as the official name for the native population, and West Papua as the name of their country, and the 'Morning Star' (*Bintang Kejora*) as their flag and *Hai Tanahku Papua* ('Hey, My Papua Land') as their anthem, later becoming symbols of resistance.

Besides increased economic and infrastructural developments such as the construction of the seventy kilometres road from Teminabuan to Ayamaru and more intensive forestry and plantation activity in and around Teminabuan the rapid 'Papuanisation' during the final years had the effect of the spread, popularisation, and politicisation of Papuan nationalism and the proclamation that 'the Papuan' is different from 'the Indonesian' (Cappetti 1961: 18-20, 82-111). In her review of late colonialism in New Guinea, Rutherford (1997: 477-565) indicates that the activities of Netherlands government in West New Guinea

Dutch missionaries as loving parents for defenceless or naughty native children.

and the success of the missions rested on the recognition of the Papuans. Rutherford concludes that 'The Papuans' recognition was conceived as requiring the birth of a docile colonial self. Pacification entailed a battle between officialdom and the Papuans from the right to wield lethal violence' (1997: 559).

Rutherford shows the extent to which Biaks turned aside the identity assigned to them in Dutch colonial discourse, and the roots of Papuan nationalism in Biak's colonial experience. The colonial experience of people in Teminabuan, let alone the Imyan living in relatively isolated settlements towards the middle of the 1950s, is much less. Not only have Biaks a much longer history of contact with outsiders, representatives from the local population also figured prominently in the Biak-Numfor regional council which was the model for the later New Guinea Council. In this period, the development of a national consciousness among Papuans of the Teminabuan area was still very weak. In contrast to the rather late attempts by the Dutch government to create an indigenous elite that could be employed in the administrative machinery, the missions contributed far more to the creation of a cultural identity and Papuan nationalism.

To complete this brief review of colonial and post-colonial politics towards New Guinea, let me stress that in the post-war period the missions were successful at indigenising their local personnel and provide career opportunities for Papuans through schooling in local mission centres but also in the Netherlands. The fact that anti-Indonesian sentiments triggered this mission policy explains that Ambonese *gurus* who were considered not loyal to the Dutch case, that is, pro-Indonesia, were replaced by Papuan *gurus*, and where educated Papuans were not available by lay-preachers. In some instances this led to difficulties at the local level because these Papuan officials were sometimes not taken seriously as local people did not identify them with the (magical) powers of colonial structures or did not expect them to be loyal to the colonial government.

In the Teminabuan area, the Dutch missionaries made sure not to send teachers back to their home villages but rather post them in places where they had the least possible relatives and which were ideally more than two days walk

from their families.²¹ Important however for the present discussion is that through active participation on the part of the indigenous population and the quick spread of the ideological contrast between Indonesia and Irian Jaya in terms of Islam versus Christianity helped build one of the main characteristics of Papuan nationalism, namely ‘being Christian in a country whose majority is Islamic’.

The *Kain Timur* Question

When colonial involvement in West New Guinea increased in the post-war period, it was no surprise that local ways came to the administration’s attentions and that they were valued in terms of being good or bad for the envisioned goals of the colonial government. In the Teminabuan area, it was during this period that missionary and government agents began to act upon a multiple and often heard theme that caused much concern among government officials and missionaries since the late 1940s, namely the ‘*kain timur* question’. Cloth exchange became a matter of concern in a context in which the colonial government wanted to see growth in spread and quality of the administration in New Guinea and considered that developments were hampered by such practices as (cargo) cults, headhunting, and ‘primitive exchange’.

In particular when Van Baal acted as governor, the awareness grew that social and economic development should build upon insights gained by government anthropologists and reports by sub-division and district officers who were also urged to provide the Bureau for Native Affairs in Hollandia with anthropological, medical, and demographic data.²² The data needed by the government were to provide insights into the causes of the problems that the administration encountered. From Teminabuan and Ayamaru, both missionaries and government officials reported extensively on the *kain timur* question and the

21. Amos Mejefat’s career discussed in Chapter 6, might serve as an example.

22. See, for example, Pim Schoorl’s (1993) list of tasks he was expected to carry out among the Muyu of South New Guinea, and his 1996 essay on ‘the colonial district commissioner as agent of development’.

anthropologists Pouwer and Elmberg were posted in the region to carry out thorough research on the possibilities of breaking the dominant role of cloth among the local peoples.²³

From the studies by Elmberg and Pouwer, we know that a major part of the cloth exchange transactions were performed as part of the *wuon* ritual cycles and their associated feast houses.²⁴ Particularly in the Ayamaru region, these cycles moved between two poles: a skull house (*sachéfra*) situated on a hill and a ceremonial long-house (*sebiach*) at the foot of a hill. In the skull house the skulls and bones of deceased were kept and the spirits of these ancestors were called upon during the unfolding of sacred cloths. These cloths, glossed in Malay as *kain pusaka*, were usually not traded but rather used in rituals in which they were offered to spirits, to ensure a large harvest from a sago garden or a swift and prosperous exchange of less sacred cloths (*kain jalan* - the cloths that travel or fly).

During certain stages of the cycles, guests or trading partners from near and far were invited to come to a newly-built long-house. The guests were given food and presents to induce them to trade cloth. According to Pouwer, these gatherings functioned as an exchange: ‘it is here where the heart of the *kain timur* exchange pounds’ (1993: 122, my translation). Before the long-house ritual exchanges took place, several platforms or stands were raised on which specific skulls of ancestors of the organisers of the feasts were displayed. ‘Death, illness, accident, suspicion of black magic, poor harvest of taro, drought - all considered as visitations ascribed to dissatisfied deceased - get the process of feasts and collective transactions going or might serve as the excuse for it’ (Pouwer 1993: 122, my translation).

23. Pouwer was a government anthropologist and Elmberg was attached to the Ethnographical Museum in Stockholm. The latter planned to carry out ethnographic fieldwork in the Mamberamo-Baliem area but a few days before his departure from Sweden in 1953, his visa was countermanded. When he arrived in Hollandia, Van Baal advised him to work in the Ayamaru region (Elmberg 1968: 7).

24. These are *bobot* feast houses as described by Elmberg (1965; 1968: 30, 185).

In the exchange of cloth in the Ayamaru region *bobot* play a key role. They assume the exchange liabilities of their kinsfolk in a system where one in theory pays a hundred percent interest for a loan of cloths. Before the Dutch began to influence the whereabouts of the people of Ayamaru in ways that seriously affected their cosmology, the *bobot* was, as Elmberg (1968: 20) suggests, prototypically a ‘big-man’, a *primus inter pares* of small kin groups, a leader of ceremonies, and a pivot for the ritual cycle. During that time the amounts of cloth in the area were of limited quantity but high quality, consisting only of the inherited sacred cloths.

Women took care of these cloths. They repaired them, stored them, and transported them. ‘Women wanted primarily to use cloth as *po charát* [exchanges of gifts at the occasion of a deceased; also fines were paid at this occasion], i.e. in the exchanges of the life cycle, but the lacustrine men busied themselves arranging *po feják* [loans or initial gifts to entice exchanges of cloths] feasts, where they had a chance to acquire cloth’ (Elmberg 1968: 174). According to Elmberg traditionally men did not possess cloths, but they preferred short-term loans of cloths to dependants as the way to gain influence in matters pertaining to cloth exchange and labour for the swiddens (1968: 174).

Due to increased trade with areas to the south of the Kepala Burung in the first stages of Dutch colonisation the stock of cloth in the Ayamaru area began to swell. Moreover, informants suggested to Elmberg (1968: 174-5) that earlier only bark-cloth (made by women) was exchanged and that when these cloths returned to their first donors they were buried in caves or in the ground where they rotted away. When factory-made *ikat* cloths became more numerous and were saved in houses, ‘hoarding started and the number of cloths that were demanded in exchanges rose. Now men apparently wanted something more out of the transactions: access to the pile of cloths’ (Elmberg 1968: 175). More feasts in order to gain more cloth became important. Below I argue that this could be viewed as an attempt by the people to bring about economic prosperity through this trade in cloth. Van Baal (1960) sees it as an illustration of what he glossed as ‘erring acculturation’, that is, counterproductive transformations in people’s

attitudes to life due to their confrontation with the Western world.²⁵

The first head of the Teminabuan sub-division to be concerned with cloth exchange and elite control of it, was Merkelijn. In his Memorandum of Transfer he reports that *bobot* in the Ayamaru region strongly opposed development because these men were more concerned with maintaining their own position. He suggested to comply with the increasing demands of his assistants to abandon the exchange of cloths, while at the same time expressing fear for the resulting disruption of society (Merkelijn 1951b: 24). During Merkelijn's period no decisive measure was taken against cloth exchange. Three years later, in 1953, the Assistant District Officer Jan Massink began to show great concern about the rapid rise in the price for cloths and the interest of local men in collecting large amounts of cloth. Where they at first bribed influential men with material items including cloth (and thus entering into the local value system that cloth exchange brings along), now the colonial leaders wanted to outlaw the exchange of cloth by ordering the same leaders to hand over all the cloths to the police.

Being concerned with creating a society where regular labour, punctuality and order reign, the government in Ayamaru planned to abolish cloth exchange and therewith the prestige economy planned and controlled by *bobot*. Because of their role as leaders, these big-men were needed by the Dutch to persuade the people to comply with colonial policies. But due to their concern with cloths these men and others were continually travelling and villages and houses were often left unattended, as we read in colonial reports (see, for example, Massink 1954b, 1955a, 1955b, and 1996).

The accumulation of cloth by only a few 'big-men' led to 'social abuses: particularly dangerous, for example, was the tendency of *bobot* to build around him a group of debtors who then had to work for him, sometimes for the rest of their lives when they did not manage to release themselves from the debt. Definitely the situation was a matter of disguised slavery' (Massink 1996: 493, my translation). Moreover, the production of crops in new gardens was not intended to supply the teachers, missionaries, or government officials but to

25. See also Van Baal (1948/9: 104) and compare Jaarsma (1990: 57, 60; 1993: 69).

maintain and extend relations with others through the exchanges of cloths. Girls were kept from going to school because their fathers were afraid that as eventual school leavers they would not agree with marriages that would fit with their father's cloth exchange concerns (Pouwer 1993: 123).

The distrust of the presence and activities of the colonial government and mission can explain the increasing concern with cloth exchange among the local people. In a case study, Pouwer notes how one of the *rajas* of the Ayamaru region, Raja Abraham Kambuaya, saw himself presented with his two conflicting functions: 'on the hand he was a 'cloth grabber' in a prestige economy and on the other he was head of a village in the context of a welfare economy', (1993: 117, my translation) in the late 1950s. This conflict arose because Kambuaya found himself in a '*kantelend tijdperk*' (toppling era, altering epoch), a period characterised by many turn-overs and moral conflicts due to contradicting concerns.

Concerns diverged as a result of the meddling of government and mission with local affairs and the local people's understanding of the changes that these two institutions and the presence of white people brought about. In this confusing period Kambuaya did his utmost to cover his bets by, on the one hand, assisting the colonial administration in their efforts to bring about economic development in Western terms while, on the other hand, he tried to meet the requirements in terms of kinship and payments of cloth expected from a *bobot* ('big-man') in his play with cloths. In both contexts, the stake was prestige, participation, and equality.

Together with the availability and attractiveness of European goods such as rice, clothing, torches, etc., the growing demand for food made men to seek control over cloth exchange in order to gain access to money and new goods. As Elmberg has pointed out, traditionally women were most concerned about cloths to assure fertility or life power by presenting gifts, including bark-cloth, to the ancestral and non-ancestral spirits. Men, according to Barnett (1959), were mostly concerned with proving themselves to be outstanding killers as well as wealthy *bobot*. They were thus concerned with prestige and lived in a state of distress. Their violence was discouraged by the Dutch bribing them with items of

wealth such as beads, fish, and hooks. In particular government officials wanted them to declare a general amnesty and abolish the system of ‘warrior capitalism’ (Barnett 1959) and to settle peacefully with their families and relatives in villages. Afraid of punitive measures by the police, the *bobot* found themselves deprived of the violent means necessary to maintain their reputation. Because of the resulting relatively peaceful situation, people were able to travel longer distances and enter relations with people one formerly did not dare to approach (Massink 1996: 496).

This situation laid the ground for a ‘rapacious pursuit’ (Barnett 1959: 1016) of cloth which entangled all people in the area in a complex system of give and take. As a result, the prices for marital rights and fines went up, the marriage rate went down and domestic quarrels became the order of the day because arranged marriages were not fulfilled (Massink 1996: 493). This, of course, was of great concern to the administration and missionaries who required an orderly and peaceful situation to control and teach.

In April 1954, all the *bobot* and *na kohok* of the Ayamaru and Teminabuan regions gathered for a meeting during which Massink urged them to do away with cloths and lift the rule that brides and fines should be paid with these cloths. In his review of the situation some four decades later, Massink (1996: 493) writes that people’s entanglement in the cloth exchange is more complex and that there is a lot more to cloth exchange than the officials suspected in the 1950s. To them, the situation was one of marriage payments going wrong, which brought all kinds of social wrongs, including the problem of people not staying in their villages but always moving in search of cloths. That cloths were also important to life cycles, fertility, and favourable relations with the dead was not considered by the officials who proposed the radical abolition in 1954.

Support for their actions came from the many young men who were supposed to meet expectations of huge amounts of cloths for a marriage but who feared their subsequent subordinate position to *bobot* leaders who financed the marriages. These young men readily supported the proposed abolition of cloth exchange (Pouwer 1993: 123; Massink 1996: 497), as did some of the *bobot* who acknowledged that modern development and the road to prosperity in terms of

Western wealth and health was blocked by the unbridled exchange in cloth.

Raja Kambuaya decided then that cloths destined for exchange (*kain jalan* or wandering cloths) were to be handed over to the government and that, as urged by all *bobot*, sacred cloths (*kain pusaka*) - being important for ritual - would be branded and given back to their owners. Many village leaders and *bobot* followed Kambuaya. When, during one of the collection sessions, Massink playfully remarked that the cloths should be burned people took this seriously and actually burned their cloths. But it never came to an autodafe (Pouwer 1993: 123). Though the immediate results were clear to Beemsterboer (cited by Pouwer 1993: 123), who writes that people started building houses in the villages, that people returned to the villages and that the birth rate went up, the importance of cloths to the people of the Ayamaru and Teminabuan regions did not diminish.

When looking at the impact of the often paradoxical stance that the colonial administration took towards cloth exchange, I think that it motivated people to distinguish between the cloth and the modern economy. '*Kain timur*' became part of the *adat* tradition of knowledge, while economic development became associated with *pemerintah*. Interestingly, in this regard, Abraham Kambuaya is presently widely held to be the example of an early progressive person who understood that in order to become wealthy in terms of making money out of raising chickens and selling sago, one needs to put aside the exchange of cloths. Many admire Kambuaya's achievements that include his success in getting three of his children to study at secondary schools and universities.

In addition, government officials regularly explain to the people in Haha that Raja Kambuaya should be taken as an example of a progressive person who uses both the modern economy and his status among the local people accorded by *adat*. While they would like to see people to abandon cloth exchange, Imyan consider total abolishment of the use of cloths unwise because it would disrupt the moral order. In order to fully understand these reflections it is necessary to detail the impact of the post-colonial government which lay in wait for shortly

after Massink and Marcus went to great lengths to alter the social and economic situation in the area.

Indonesian Rule

Teminabuan is the first place where the Indonesian red and white flag was raised during the military infiltrations which began with the *Trikora* command to free the territory from its colonial government, announced by Sukarno on 19 December 1961.²⁶ From then on Indonesian troops began to infiltrate West New Guinea. The most successful were paratroops dropped from Hercules aircrafts. At Teminabuan, paratroops of the *Operasi Serigala* landed on 8, 17, and 18 May. On 23 May, for the first time, they flew the Indonesian red and white flag (*Sang Merah Putih*) on West New Guinea, and Teminabuan was announced as the residency of the Indonesian governor of Irian Barat (Sejarah Perjuangan 1989: 154-55).

In response, the Dutch Royal Airforce dropped paratroopers in the area on 19 and 21 May, together with the local Papuan Voluntary Army (PVK) or Papuan battalion, to combat the Indonesian invaders. Four days later, Dutch marines and PVK soldiers killed around 40 Indonesian paratroopers in the forest between Wersar, Beriat, and Konda, and two Indonesian soldiers in Teminabuan town on 27 May. In the course of June, after many more deaths, the Netherlands' control over Teminabuan was re-established.²⁷

26. *Trikora (Tri Komando Rakyat)*, a threefold command, comprised: (1) preventive action against the mock or puppet Papuan state (*negara boneka Papua*) as fabricated by the Dutch; (2) the intention to hoist the red and white flag (*Sang Merah Putih*) in Irian Barat; and (3) a call upon the people of Indonesia to be prepared for total mobilisation to defend the free unity of People and Fatherland (*kemerdekaan dan kesatuan Tanah Air dan Bangsa*) (Gie and Istanto 1968: 26-27).

27. In his heroic account of his marine years in Sorong and Teminabuan, Ruurd Eisinga (1982) recounts the fights between the Dutch and the Indonesians. It tells of how difficult it was for him to forget his wife (who stayed at home), his fantasies about making love to his commander's wife (in Sorong), just before, during and after having sex with a woman from Teminabuan. This and other accounts of how Dutch marines behaved towards local people were not volunteered by my informants when they narrated the violent events of the early 1960s.

People in Teminabuan remember these events as heroic deeds of Dutch marines. While not stressing the active role of local people in the killings of Indonesian soldiers in apparent fear of retaliation and accusation of opposing Indonesia, informants told me in length about the way Dutch marines shot at parachutes from the hill where now the office of the church organisation stands. From this strategic spot, the paratroopers were shot dead before they landed. Those who survived the machine gun volleys landed in the swampy forests where local people let them hang in the trees till they starved or found parts of their bodies and clothing indicating that they were devoured by crocodiles.

In 1962, after several years of political and minor military conflict between Indonesia and the Netherlands, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided that the Dutch should quit New Guinea. The international political powers forced the Dutch to hand over West New Guinea to the UNTEA, whereupon in March 1963 West New Guinea became a part of the Republic of Indonesia.²⁸ It was agreed, however, that a plebiscite would be held to decide whether the people wanted independence or union with Indonesia (see Saltford 2000). The plebiscite or ‘Act of Self-Determination’ (*Pepera*) was held but created much discontent among local groups because instead of one-man-one-vote they were represented by people who were forced to vote in favour of inclusion in the Indonesian nation-state.²⁹ Even more unsettling was that from then on the Indonesian army began to rule the area hard-handedly suppressing any form of protest or deviant political persuasion. The flag that had been designed in the late 1950s in view of the independence of West New Guinea became *the* symbol of resistance.

28. See Bone (1958), Koster (1991), and Gase (1984).

29. See Huydecoper van Nigtevecht (1990), Markin (1996), McMullen (1981), Saltford (2000), and Pigay (2000: 276-85). This event remains the source of much discontent among Papuans, in particular now that Jakarta scrupulously aims to practice democracy. In the resulting situation of heightened political and historical awareness and more openness to discuss events deemed crucial in obtaining justice and ventilating anger, many Papuans want the United Nations to critically review the decisions made in 1960s.

After Indonesia assumed administrative control over the territory, the new authorities moved towards 'development' and Westernisation only by the mid-1970s. The harsh measures taken against any alleged form of resistance of Papuan nationalism were slowly replaced by negligence of the Papuans, virtual lack of attempts to take account of indigenous interests, and an increased effort at exploiting the territory's natural resources. Furthermore, the new province, renamed to Irian Jaya ('Victorious Irian'), increasingly became one of the main Indonesian outer territories for the resettlement of people from the overpopulated central islands. As described in the Introduction, this strategy of ensuring cultural homogeneity (under the guise of the Pancasila State ideology 'unity in diversity') is one of the most dominant ideological aspects of Indonesia's development policy.

This is not to say that nothing has been done to improve the lives of the autochthonous population. It should be stressed that with the gradual expansion of communications and transportation technology during the Dutch period and the Indonesian efforts to develop the territory, the isolation of once-remote villages has diminished and the standard of living of most Imyan has significantly increased. But where under the Dutch Papuans had been able to assure positions in the government apparatus, education, and the oil industry, with the increase of Indonesian workers, most of their positions were taken over by Indonesian officials and military. In most instances, people see the church as the one institution belonging to Papuans themselves and as bridging the widened gap between the Papuans and 'the whites', who increasingly have become icons of 'good colonial development' and 'the great times', but also, as I show later, as the knowledgeable and powerful pupils of Imyan now in possession of forceful kernels of *wuon* knowledge that once belonged to the Papuans.

The representations used in the design, implementation, and evaluation of Indonesian development plans in Irian Jaya shows a paternalistic attitude that is reminiscent of the Dutch colonial ideology. Out of fear for Papuan nationalism and in line with the general policy towards small ethnic groups throughout the archipelago, a main concern of the Indonesians was to integrate the Papuans into

the social and cultural mainstream. The Papuans came to be characterised as *masyarakat terasing* ('isolated communities') and as such fell under the programs of the Department of Social Affairs (*Departemen Sosial*), the Department of Forestry (*Departemen Kehutanan*) and the Department of Religion (*Departemen Agama*). As Persoon (1998: 289-94) points out, the concerted efforts of these three departments were aimed at changing the life, culture, and prospects of tribal peoples.

Departemen Sosial was concerned with the isolation of *terasing* groups that kept them away from social change or progress. Only by moving these groups into villages and getting them to learn about the Pancasila state ideology would they be able to meet the standards of modern Indonesia. The policies of *Departemen Sosial* were supported by *Departemen Kehutanan* officials who saw shifting cultivation (practised by most *terasing* groups) as a threat to forest and so-called protected areas. In line with this ideology, groups like the Imyan were discouraged to continue shifting cultivation and advised to replace it with various forms of permanent agriculture. More recently, Imyan are encouraged to give up large parts of their sago forest land for the cultivation of palm oil, also one of the typical *Kehutanan* policies aimed at uprooting nomadic ways of life and providing favourable circumstances for economic development and ensuring quick and quiet integration into mainstream Indonesian life.

Departemen Agama officials were concerned with bridging yet another gap. In line with the New Order's pairing of religion with state ideology, they promoted a double conversion. As laid down in the first principle of the Pancasila, all citizens are expected to believe in a singular God (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*). If people convert to one of five recognised religions - Islam, Buddhism, Hindu-Bali, Catholicism, Protestantism - they fulfil one of the main duties of every Indonesian citizen (Kipp and Rodgers 1987, Hitchcock and King 1997). This policy is especially designed for 'underdeveloped primitive peoples' who have yet to accept 'religion' (*belum beragama*). Not surprisingly, most indigenous people in Indonesia's easternmost province of Irian Jaya are considered *belum beragama*.

The above mentioned policies are presented and evaluated in terms that reveal the general Indonesian representations and ideology relating to Irian Jaya. Largely under the banner of *pembangunan*, the process of national development promotes economic and national unity, in which natural resources are considered a national treasure. In this ideology, we find variants of the Dutch themes discussed above. Pouwer (1999: 158) has enumerated the main traits of this ideology as follows:

The Papuans must abandon the dark age (*waktu gelap*) of paganism and the absence of law and order (*aturan*) and turn to the age of enlightenment (*waktu terang*), progress (*kemajuan*), and order. They should follow the hard or soft orders (*perintah keras* and *perintah halus*) of the authorities. As for their own custom or *adat*, they must retain what is good and cast away what is bad (i.e. most of it). In this way they will gradually be transformed from ignorant and stupid individuals (*orang bodoh*) to educated and intelligent ones (*orang pintar*). They must relinquish uncivilised hunting and shifting cultivation and replace them with intensive market gardening. Rice is superior staple, the civilised food. Eating root tubers and wearing penis-sheaths is uncivilised.

The variety of forms of cultural attack under the guise of *pembangunan* and civilisation will come to the fore in the following chapters in which I outline the structures that most Imyan seek to undermine. I then show that marginalisation, discrimination and neglect of Papuans in a situation where (violent) resistance is discouraged through the presence of a strong military, leads to frustration, apathy and attempts at reconciliation to a future that is rooted in local myth and Christian doctrine.

To conclude this chapter let me restate briefly that the pre-colonial geographical ordering of power, in which Tidore was the centre, became particularly meaningful when Imyan encountered whites and Moluccan *gurus*. With the emergence of these ‘others’, the extra-local space to which Imyan *kahan* were

brought by Olinado, shifted from Tidore to the Netherlands (*Belanda*). *Belanda* later came to stand for a variety of localities including Jakarta, Jerusalem, America, Australia, and Japan; that is, locations where power is situated. The whites and Moluccan material riches offered much allure and were seen as related to Tidore and thus potentially accessible by Imyan.

The disaster of Olinado's departure prevented Imyan from being able to get these riches. In this respect, the traditional scheme of loss provided the explanation for the whites' riches and cogently explained the devastating results of the failure to make successful contact with the ancestral and non-ancestral spirits in the unseen world. Moreover, the foreign newcomers did not want to engage in cloth exchange and thus share their wealth and knowledge with Imyans. The new Christian rituals promised a solution but in fact, as Imyan now increasingly realise, entailed further estrangement from the unseen world where power is deposited. Where in pre-colonial times, the sky journeys headed for Tidore, and Olinado were believed to have gone to this extra-local centre, in recent times the lands of the whites (Holland, Jerusalem, Japan, America, Australia) have come to fill this space. The whites have become the new celestial outsiders.

The analysis in the following chapter will explain the widespread explanation of society's predicament as discussed in the Introduction. It takes into account the variety of expressions and contexts in which reference is made to an order that existed in bygone times. This past essentialises the knowledge and power that is lost and reflects present-day concern with how to turn the tide, unveiling the variant strategies contained in this continuum are all employed to protect Imyan people's integrity or to (re)create identity. In that respect the expressions of the concerns can be read, in line with what Rutherford (1997: 617) has found for Biak, as Imyan ways of transforming 'whatever threatens their world's integrity into a source of power and value'.