

Chapter Five

Christianity, the Church, and the Efficacy of Rituals

Narin kirdyon wago sfa saun, nonok tomolo mla smingir mak fobi Imyan;
‘Gathering orchid flowers on top of a hill covered in early morning mist
reminds me of ‘heaven’ in Imyan land’.
(Permenas Kemesrar, Haha, 6 December 1995)

While we were discussing the function of church rituals and the meaning of heaven as referred to in sermons, Permenas Kemesrar (18) told me that people use this proverb to substantiate their belief that heaven is not far away and that, in fact, God’s home is here in Imyan land. He continued by saying, ‘It is our land, not heaven that concerns us. Heaven is here, the dead reside in *mla smingir* [‘the hereafter, a next world’] and what is promised by God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is not that we will go to Heaven as some say, but that the providence of God [*berkat*] will fall to us when Jesus returns’. That heaven can be both here and will come is not contradictory because God’s providence as *berkat* is their own; it is believed to have been among Imyan at Baimla. *Berkat* (‘blessing’) is a central concept in Imyan ideas about the efficacy of Christian and *wuon* rituals and the powers of the spirits. With respect to the lost knowledge theme, Imyans typically consider that the means to get *berkat* are given on loan to others and soon will be returned to the rightful owner.

The difficulty of accessing the lost knowledge is often cast in terms of a radical contrast between the sky and the earth, and allows for meaningful contrasts between the power of pre-Christian *ni mlasa* (as God’s angels) and the earthly power of *lait* and other forms of misconduct as sources of sin. Mission Christianity has brought such new forms of guilt and fear in terms of sin and the fate of sinners, which have become powerful ideas among Imyan. In fact,

mission Christianity was the initial impetus for a tradition of knowledge that Imyan label as *gereja*.

The term *gereja* refers to the institution of the church, the church building, and the Imyan Christian tradition of knowledge. The *gereja* tradition of knowledge is subtly distinguished from another strongly related tradition called *agama* that is coming into vogue. I discuss *agama* in the following chapter and show that it has to do with the local creativity in finding parallels between Christian lore and local myths, history, and ritual practices. The growing important role of *agama* comes from the fact that a blend between local myth and Christianity is perceived and lived by Imyan as a cosmology that positions them in a personal, sacred and secret world.

The central institution belonging to *gereja* tradition is the church, which, through its teachings and rituals, stimulates the vitality of Christianity among Imyan. It is, of course, the people who vividly explore, invent, and use concepts and ideas pertaining to the Christian lore. Therefore, I detail the particular forms that Christian teachings have taken since the introduction of Christian lore among Imyan. In general terms, *gereja* comprises practical liturgical skills, biblical stories, discipline, and concepts of blame and sin. It plays a major role in people's thoughts about the past, present, and future. Therefore, it is perhaps the most intrusive tradition of knowledge in Imyan worlds. I hasten to add that its potential hegemony, however, is challenged by *agama* as I discuss in the next chapter.

Below I show that *gereja* is to a large extent a Bible-based vista and that its appeal comes through the idea that biblical stories tell in fact about local sky deities, ancestor spirits, skills, and highly secret *wuon* ways of getting *berkat*.¹ *Gereja* thus gives in a particular way expression to belief in spiritual beings and mankind's relations with an unseen world from a perspective that is both informed by traditional ideas, the teachings of missionaries, and people's own interpretation of Bible texts. It is a complex theory, albeit not ordered, of the

1. The Bible possessed by almost every Imyan family is the *terjemahan baru* (new translation) of the Indonesian Bible Society (*Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia*), first published in 1974.

universe as a whole and the laws that govern it. As a Bible-based vista, together with schools, *gereja* provides much of the knowledge about the ‘outside’ world to villagers. Schools and travel to Sorong city apart, there is little access to modern secular knowledge, to science, to newspapers, to television, to books or even radio.² Wars that are extensively covered in the media world-wide come to Imyan with much delay and often through the lenses provided by *gereja*. In this situation, news from outside is very easily linked to biblical stories which are, apart perhaps from children stories, the most regularly told and heard narratives.

In line with the character of the other traditions of knowledge, the values, norms, rules, ideas, and imagery, pertaining to *gereja* are strongly shared among the people of Haha. Divisions are apparent where people are concerned with village politics and the differences between men and women. In such instances, Imyan appear to maintain that the knowledge of *gereja*, or in fact, the techniques for performing effective rituals are unevenly distributed among villagers. In the previous chapter it became clear that the loss of popularity of Amos Mejefat is closely linked to village politics which focus around certain individuals who believe and advocate that by way of *pemerintah* and by being good Christians there is a future for Imyan while others argue against the church and promote the benefits of *wuon* and *adat*. The meanings of *gereja* also play a significant role in the conflict between the two factions in Haha. Since God is one of the Imyan sky beings and Christian lore is traditionally Imyan, *gereja* is most easily accepted as similar to *adat* or even *wuon*. However, because the church is in the hands of the new non-*wuon* elite, opposition against them comes in terms of the selfish politics of the church leaders and the good old times when *adat* was still treated with respect by the children and grandchildren of initiators, ritual leaders, and war leaders.

Scriptural passages such as 1 Kings 18: 20-46 on Elijah’s provocation of the ‘animistic’ prophets of Baal worship, are now readily appreciated within such

2. An exception was the news about the taking of hostages at Mapnduma that Haha villagers learned about through Radio Australia broadcasts in Indonesian (see Chapter 6). Only two of the few small radios in the village can receive these broadcasts and are tuned irregularly to Radio Australia, mostly in response to rumours.

Imyan understandings of the world. The prophets of Baal are seen as *wuon* ritual leaders who are not able anymore to address their highest deity Baal by means of animal offerings and bloody scarifications.³ Elijah, a believer in God and seen by Imyan as a white descendant of Olinado, is invited by King Ahab to help his people after they have been suffering from starvation due to three years of drought. After he has witnessed the absurd ritual acts of the Baal priests, Elijah prays to God who eventually makes it rain.⁴

In that sense, for Imyan the Bible provides the correct account of the past and the future of humankind. The tradition of *gereja* thus not only accounts for the unitary origins of human beings (at Baimla or Babel as I have indicated in Chapter 3), but also the single origin but uneven distribution of knowledge. This evocative view of the origin and spread of knowledge owes much to the village's relative isolation in the political and economic spheres of power. In this regard, being Christian is also a way to distance oneself from Islamic immigrants from 'Indonesia' to Irian Jaya.

There are thus important reasons for villagers to give significant meanings to the church and its rituals. This holds true in particular when people are concerned with a new eschatology which appears to be largely related to the contents of the Book of Revelation (*Wahyu*) and holds that Jesus Christ will return to invert the existing world order. This eschatology underpins a felt need to prepare for Jesus Christ's Kingdom on Earth and it revolves around trust, or rather lack of trust in the outside forces and the uncertainty that they bring along. In terms of *gereja*, the questions asked are whether white missionaries could be trusted (did they tell the truth?) and whether the present-day Irian Jaya Evangelical Church Organisation (to which all Imyan belong) will be able to provide the certainty and efficacy of rituals in order to become good Christians destined for redemption at the imminent Rapture.

3. The latter act bears resemblance to the reported bleeding of the tongues of *wuon* initiates who are punished by Bitik (see Van Rhijn 1957a).

4. Such associations between the Scripture and Imyan understanding of the world need not be perfect - it is instead the broader theme that counts.

Early Acts of the Mission

Protestant Christian doctrine, as introduced by Dutch and Moluccan missionaries from the late 1920s onwards, has taken on a variety of forms of which some clearly show resemblance to what is sometimes called ‘Melanesian Christianity’ (Trompf 1991). Melanesian Christianity suggests that the Christian lore as brought to New Guinea has been given a Melanesian twist. It has been creatively blended with local ideas to fit local concerns. We can therefore not simply relate it to the ‘original message’ - if such a thing ever existed given the individual variation of missionary attitude toward what to teach potential converts in the mission area.

In any case, Imyan Christian thought is the result of over seven decades of creative struggling with the teachings of missionaries, *gurus*, local preachers, and recently, the influences of other churches in Teminabuan town (Catholic and Pentecostal) and other denominations present in the city of Sorong, in particular Pentecostal churches but also, to a lesser extent, charismatic healers whose credibility is based on their former patients’ accounts and their command of a (secret) lore belonging to one of the many cultural traditions of Indonesia.

In the overview of the history of the area in Chapter 2, I have indicated that two major Christian doctrines were preached in Teminabuan and its surrounding villages from 1927 onwards. The first were Protestant missionaries, followed later by two Mennonite (*Doopsgezinde*) missionaries, Marcus and Koopmans. The Protestant (*Protestantse*) missionaries from the *Utrechtse Zendingsvereniging* (UZV, the co-ordinating society of Dutch Protestant mission) started working in Inanwatan from 1918 onwards. The reason for selecting Inanwatan to become the major missionary station on the south coast of the Kepala Burung was the presence of Islam in Tarof and Negri Besar in what was then called the Berau region.⁵

5. The Berau region comprises the coastal area roughly from Inanwatan to Arandai. The area west of Teminabuan was referred to as Berauer. N. Vinck already reported the presence of Islamic belief among the ‘Berau people’ in 1663. Vinck was one of the first Europeans to travel into the MacCluer Gulf (Haga 1884, I: 81; Kamma 1976: 729). Fak-

The UZV was following in Heldring's footsteps (Rauws 1919: 66; Reenders 1991: 327, 368, 371). Already in 1859, Heldring advised the UZV to start 'preaching the cross of our Saviour' in pagan New Guinea 'where it is still night' (Heldring quoted in Reenders 1991: 245, my translation), not only because of the need to save this land from polygamy, slavery, despotism, superstition, idolatry, and the spread of Islam, but also because of the political danger of leaving this rich and promising, though difficult area to German and English missionaries. Moreover, according to Heldring, the government would be willing to support such missionary effort because of their interest in an 'island that contains all the treasures of Australia' (Heldring quoted in Reenders 1991: 243-6, 320 n. 11, my translation).

During their initial exploration of the situation in Fak-fak, the UZV missionaries Starrenburg and Jens found that through trade relations of *rajas* at the north coast of the Onin Peninsula, Islam had spread to the Berau area at the other side of the MacCluer Gulf or Berau Bay (Wetstein 1953: 101, Slump 1953: 110). The UZV sent the missionaries Starrenburg and Jens on a 350 kilometre hiking and canoe trip from Windesi to Fak-fak in 1911. From there, Starrenburg travelled across the MacCluer Gulf to Inanwatan where he was surprised to see thousands of Papuans living together in one settlement (Wetstein 1953: 99).⁶

The missionaries travelled in the wake of existing trade routes from Kokas to the south coast of the Kepala Burung, again confronting the local people with novel others from the outside, bringing a new religion and new material culture. For it was along these routes that sago, bird feathers, pottery, cloths, and slaves

fak is the first station of the Jesuit Cross of the Apostolic Vicariate of Batavia in West New Guinea, established in 1894 (Mertens 1997[1902]: 147) and, together with Manokwari, one of the two places where the Dutch administration had established a permanent administrative centre from 1898 onwards (Van Baal, Galis, and Koentjaraningrat 1984: 123; Overweel 1994: 115; Pim Schoorl 1996: 8; Swadling 1996: 149-50). Fak-fak became the base from which missionisation of the south coast of the Kepala Burung was organised.

6. For detailed and anecdotal overviews of these early Protestant mission efforts on the south coast of the Kepala Burung, see Van Muijlwijk (1913), Rauws (1919: 159-69), Van Hasselt (1926) Wetstein (1925, 1953), Slump (1933, 1934, 1953, n.d.), and the overview of missionisation in West New Guinea in Kamma (1976).

were traded for centuries as part of larger trade relations between *rajas* at the west coast (Onin, Misool Island, and the Raja Ampat Islands) and Tidore where sultans ruled (see Chapter 2). Missionaries and later government officials, worked their way into the area through the existing trade relations by using the appointed local representatives of the sultan as their guides and brokers.

These power relations and the interference of government officials and missionaries undermined the resistance of individual leaders to extend their ranges of influence. To illustrate this let me describe the case of the ambitious but unfortunate Jensé from Bintuni (east of Berau) as reported by Reverend Slump (in Kamma 1976: 724-5). When he was still a child, the neighbouring Kanauru kidnapped Jensé in revenge for an earlier raid. Thereupon Jensé called upon the assistance of Islamic Arguni people from across the MacCluer Gulf whom he plied with gifts.

People from Arguni were able to buy Jensé but did not immediately give the child back to his father. They named him Roro ('the one paid for in cash') and sent him back to his place of birth after he was grown up. Though he was expected to promote the interests of the Arguni people in the area, Jensé did not bother about his task and instead joined his relatives in raiding activities. He managed to become a leader and organised seven successful raids, which gave him enough prestige to assume the title of *mayor*.

Moreover, during his stay among the Arguni people, Jensé had become fluent in Malay. This quality, together with his powerful position as *mayor*, made him the obvious person to assist the colonial government in their attempts to pacify the fierce Berau people. Government officials operating from Fak-fak had heard of Mayor Jensé and approached him. But things did not work out as Jensé had planned. In about 1905, he felt that his double role would have a fatal effect, and demanded a *guru* from the government to assist him with his work among the people of the Bintuni area. After that request was declined, Jensé, filled with anger, turned his back on the government, and returned to Islam to become an imam.

In his role as a Moslem leader, he put pressure on other local Bintuni people to convert to Islam. When they, influenced by their relatives of Windesi (who had already been in contact with Christian missionaries operating from Mansinam and Manokwari) asked for a religious teacher in 1909, Jense imposed fines on them and threatened them in every possible way (Rauws 1919: 166). He went so far with this that the government, who only had acknowledged his *mayor* title, deported him with the aid of some supporters to a region west of Bintuni.

When he also started to confront people there, he was again banished, this time to one of the outposts of the territory, namely Babo at the north coast of the Bomberai Peninsula and due south of Bintuni. In Babo, Jense started building a mosque that was soon burnt down by lightning. In 1925, he rebuilt the mosque, but by then had exhausted his political and religious influence. Slump concludes: 'He hoped to subject the whole of Bintuni, but it went wrong for him. He passed away among a small group of subordinates. During his whole life he rowed against the stream' (in Kamma 1976: 725, my translation).⁷

This case shows the effect of individual agency on the distribution of early colonial government and mission activities in an area where *rajas* had their spheres of influence and the related attempts of powerful individuals to rule over a large territory (see also Bout 1923). Another example, are the strongholds of the *rajas*. Inanwatan and Bintuni were officially under the control of the *raja* of Arguni (Kamma 1976: 727), whereas the Teminabuan area was part of the *raja* of Rumbati and Sailolof spheres of influence. Due to their fear of losing power in the area where missionaries had become active, government officials appointed special committees consisting of some influential people among groups of Berau people to look after the interests of the *rajas*.

7. Most sources for the historical events in this chapter are Christian because Moslem histories are largely unwritten. Unfortunately, oral histories of Moslems of the Purari area and the Onin Peninsula have not been recorded during field research.

Members of these committees occasionally tried to put an end to missionisation and tried to convert the people to Islam, securing their position. According to Kamma, they turned out not to be very successful, largely because the *rajas*, and thus his committee members, were loyal to the colonial government which had given many of the *rajas* more authority than they had enjoyed before. They eventually had to acquiesce and co-operate with the government and mission plans. Nonetheless, they appeared to have a strong hold on the older generation. For example, they were able to restrain them from attending church services, which meant that at first only children could be proselytised (Kamma 1976: 727).

Another reported problem during the first decades of missionary activity in the Berau area was local belief in spirits, magic, witchcraft, and poisoning. In the mid-1930s, Slump reports that in the village of Mogetemin, which is situated to the north of Inanwatan and halfway between Inanwatan and Teminabuan, stories about the demise of the world due to a big flooding or the opening up of the earth were circulating. The people there strongly believed in evil spirits that bring misfortune. Sometimes the presence of colonial government was considered the cause of these fearful impending events (see Slump 1953, n.d.). Moreover, mission reports that were clearly written for an audience in the Netherlands pictured the local people as fierce head-hunters who cut meat from alive captives for consumption (Van Hasselt 1926: 46).

It is in this terrifying world that Van Starrenburg was welcomed with enthusiasm by some thousand people in Bira (later Inanwatan) in 1911. They built a house for him and a school and, later, raised another house for the Moluccan *guru* Pieter Lewakabessy. Lewakabessy started giving lessons in Malay to 127 boys who spoke only the local language. On Sundays he dressed in black and ordered his new pupils to bring their parents to the school to attend church service. In that time the Royal Packet Company (*Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij*) started a monthly connection between Kokas and Inanwatan, not only to provide the *guru* with food and other materials, but also to regularly check on the vulnerable situation of the mission posts, among fierce head-hunters and Islamic leaders, the anti-Christian followers of *rajas* (Van Hasselt 1926: 46,

see also Wetstein 1953: 101).

The missionaries found it hard to convince the Bira people to devote themselves to Jesus Christ and to change their ‘primitive’ behaviours. As indicated by the account about Jense, there were also ‘selfish’ local leaders who adhered to Islamic doctrine and practices as a result of their relations with the *raja* at the north coast of the Onin Peninsula (Bergh 1964a: 51, 79; Elmberg 1968: 127). These leaders found their trade relations with the Onin *rajas* of more importance than the efforts of missionaries to build schools and churches and spread their news. Their resistance to the influences of Dutch traders and missionaries can be seen as a continuation of reported harsh attacks on foreign ships and their crews in the late nineteenth century.⁸

Nevertheless, from 1912 onwards, the Berau region, together with Bintuni, Kokas, and Fak-fak became an area of active missionary activity after Van Muijlwijk arrived in Fak-fak. Shifts in personnel and the eventual arrival of more missionaries and *gurus* pushed ahead the goals of the mission. In 1913, D.C.A. Bout came to Fak-fak to assist Van Muijlwijk who had to leave that same year due to illness. Van Muijlwijk returned in 1919 with the motorboat ‘Jong Holland’ which enabled the missionaries to travel long distances and to work more effectively along the south coastal stretches of the Kepala Burung.⁹ In 1919, Bout travelled to Ambon to recruit *gurus* because he wanted to respond to the many calls from local groups.

Four years later, when Slump and J. Eygendaal came to assist Bout, plans were made to send out missionaries to different places along the south and north coasts of the Teluk Berau. Wetstein was sent to Inanwatan, Eygendaal to Babo, and Slump resided in Fak-fak. Wetstein gained possession of Van Muijlwijk’s motorboat and established three new mission posts in the Inanwatan area:

8. For example, in 1873 the Prussian pearler Captain Edwin Redlich on the brig ‘Franz’ sent his first mate and seventeen men off in two small boats on 12 November. In December, the Raja of Salawati reported to Redlich that they had been killed and eaten by people on the Klabra River (Bergh 1964a: 28-41; Kamma 1948/9b: 261; Robidé van der Aa 1879: 256; Souter 1964: 38 n. 3).

9. The motorboat was christened ‘Jong Holland’ (Young Holland) because it was a gift from the boys’ legion of the Dutch Youth Union (*knapenregiment van het Nederlands*

Mugim, Yahadian, and Kampong Baru, with two *gurus* each (Rauws 1919: 164, Wetstein 1953: 158). In the following seventeen years the parish at Inanwatan grew to some thousand baptised concentrated around a large timber church building with a twenty-five meter high tower which was later destroyed by the Japanese (Wetstein 1953: 108-9).

The Demand for *Gurus*

From the beginning of missionary activities in Berau, local people regularly asked for *gurus* because, according to Rauws (1919: 166), they felt unsatisfied after they were ‘forced to adhere to Islam under pressure of their leaders but subsequently returned to their pagan state again’.¹⁰ Rauws, then director of the Protestant mission centre in Oegstgeest, the Netherlands, was concerned to satisfy members of his own organisation and the public in general in the Netherlands. Closer to the truth would be that in due course the groups along the south coast of the Kepala Burung began to ask for *gurus* because they also wanted their place to become a landing stage for the Dutch cargo ships, and thus get in touch with Western goods and wealthy whites.

With the ‘Jong Holland’, Wetstein sent the first three Ambonese *guru*, Matatula, Siahaya, and Watimuri to Teminabuan. According to Onim, four young men from the Wersar area visited Wetstein to ask for *gurus* for the prospective parishes of Wersar, Teminabuan, and Konda (Onim 1988: 26).¹¹ Informants from Teminabuan town and the villagers of the sub-district were eager to add to this that back then people wanted *gurus* in order to combat Islam. Such remarks should be seen as part of the local forms of Christianity which has become an important national symbol for most Papuans who feel marginalised in

Jongeren Verbond) of the Dutch Protestant Church (Rauws 1919: 164).

10. In Onim’s (1988) account of the history of the mission in the Teminabuan area, Islam also figures as the bad, impelling people to opt for Christian teachers and Dutch colonial officers.

11. These three men were Philipus Onim, Evert Thesya, and Konden Seranik (Onim 1988: 26).

large country that is predominantly Muslim. Teminabuan people's forebears, being either 'primitive unbelievers' or 'naive Muslims' are thus not considered as passive and distrustful targets of the first missionary activities at the instigation of Wetstein in Inanwatan, but as active proponents of Christian faith.

The three *gurus* were sent to Teminabuan to explore the situation before the white missionaries dared to go there. This was necessary because during their fifteen years of work among the people of Inanwatan and Bintuni, the missionaries had experienced much 'stubborn resistance' (Slump quoted in Kamma 1976: 724, my translation). In contrast, in Teminabuan the missionaries were welcomed without much resistance. It appeared that the clash of interests between missionaries and assistants of the Onin *rajas* was more muted here than in the Inanwatan and Bintuni areas.

On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that in comparison to Inanwatan and Bintuni the *rajas* did not show much interest in Teminabuan because it was far away; Teminabuan played only a marginal role in the trade with the Berau area. On the other hand, because times were changing: the Dutch government had with increasing success been able to abolish the profitable traffic in manpower in the area and Chinese and Dutch traders began to control trade. The *rajas* began to make the best of the bargain by co-operating with the government to ensure some say in things.

As a result of the heroic role of Wetstein as pioneer missionary, Imyan nowadays often refer to Wetstein as the first missionary to the people of the south coast; he is seen as the regional equivalent to Carl W. Ottow (1826-1862) and Johann Gottlob Geissler (1830-1870), the first missionaries to come to West New Guinea in 1855. Commemorations such as these are strongly related to West Papuan nationalism and the glorification of Irian Jaya as a Christian land (see Chapter 6). While people agree on the heroic role of Ottow and Geissler, others in the Teminabuan area suggest that this honour should not go to Wetstein but to the leader of the people of Wersar. Wersar villagers maintain that the coming of *gurus* was allegedly brought about by virtue of the pious wish of Raja Angguok, whose role was already discussed in Chapter 3.

Many people from Wersar, in particular those of descent groups of Kondjol and Onim, presently consider Raja Angguok to have been the overall ruler of the coastal stretch from Inanwatan all the way to Sele. Imyan informants however stressed that Angguok did not carry the title *raja* but *kapitan* and was much less powerful than Wersar people like to suggest. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the Imyan view is supported by reports written by Dutch government officials and traders in which Angguok is pictured as one of the few *kapitan* in the Kaibus area on which the colonial administration could count on (Dumas 1992[1911]: 12).

In fact, most claims of informants from Wersar are to a large extent dictated by the Jayapura-based theological lecturer Jusuf Onim who supports the common Onim/Kondjol socio-political lobby in their claim of firstcomer status and thus ownership of Teminabuan town and the Kaibus estuary, together with the honour of having contributed to the advent of Christianity in Teminabuan and its hinterland (see Chapter 3).¹² Many others, in particular the Momot, Kondologit, Kondororik, and Thesya descent groups, among others, argue against this claim and maintain that it was solely Wetstein's initiative to send *gurus* to Teminabuan in order to combat Islam and its main founder, Raja Angguok Onim. In still another version, the status and power of this *raja* is disputed and countered by the Momot/Thesya (among others) who claim that it was *raja* Besi-Thesya who was the actual leader at that time.¹³

Although this dispute is of intrinsic interest, my discussion of it is restricted

12. Onim (1988: 26), of course, also claims that it was due to the efforts of Raja Angguok that missionary activity and Christianity got off the ground in Teminabuan, Ayamaru, Aitinyo, and Ayyat.

13. Besides assigning inflated ranks to their former powerful entrepreneurs, both parties here fall prey to a common misunderstanding of the role of *rajas* at the south coast of the Kepala Burung by viewing the *raja* as a district ruler acting in ways similar to colonial district officers and present day *camat* (sub-district head) or *bupati* (district head). Cator (1942: 81-83) points out that these *raja* cannot be considered as territorial authorities because the main point of their function was not exercising authority but rather the maintenance of a trade monopoly (*sosolot*). Their authority was not based on access to land but to people and forest products. Part of their trade monopolies was, of course, a network of reliable suppliers or intermediaries (compare Bergh 1964a: 56-60). When debating this issue in terms of *gereja*, people assured me that Besi was not Islamic because he was not a real henchman of the sultan, in contrast to Angguok.

to the introduction of Christian doctrine to the area. Another argument of Jusuf Onim is worth mentioning though, because it is related to the effects of the new doctrine. Onim explains that ‘people themselves took the initiative and also strongly wanted to receive the Gospel and enjoy Christ’s salvation’ because of ‘the Holy Spirit moving them to receive and demand the vocation of the Saviour’ (1988: 28, my translation). Onim makes clear that he considers Christian faith superior to the powers of *wuon* and thus able to bring about a break with former religious beliefs and practices. This remark follows not only the former ideas and ideals of Dutch and Maluku missionaries in West New Guinea but also the general ideology of the present day leaders of the church organisation in Teminabuan and its village representatives, the preachers and church elders of the village based parish (*jemaat*). These views and the related stance of missionaries, *guru*, preachers, and teachers towards the people and their tradition are outlined below.

Missionisation of the Teminabuan Area

Probably due to the efforts of the first three *gurus* in Teminabuan, the mission in Inanwatan was increasingly requested to start building churches in the Ayamaru and Aitinyo regions (Slump 1953: 110). In 1937, the first *guru* was sent out to Aitinyo and in 1940, the first *guru* was posted in Ayamaru. Nevertheless, mission work in the interior and along the Seremuk, Klabra, and Kaibus rivers was still in its infancy at the time of the outbreak of the Second World War in the Pacific. In 1942, the Japanese occupied the area.

The attitude of the Japanese towards the local people was initially very compliant; the *gurus* were allowed to stay in the newly-built villages and continue their teaching activities. Inanwatan, however, suffered because it became a military base and the people, together with their *gurus*, were chased to the interior. The Japanese prohibited religious teaching and ensured that the Japanese language was on the curriculum. The *gurus* had to attend classes for three weeks after which they received a qualification for being able to teach in

Japanese (Slump 1953: 111). Continuing the Dutch colonial situation, during the Japanese period, Inanwatan became a centre of activities and change and Teminabuan was left relatively untouched.

In the Ayamaru and Aitinyo regions, the *gurus* were ordered to leave their posts, because local people began to attack them. Underlying this sudden turn in people's attitude towards *gurus* was the unfortunate action of an Administrative Assistant to persuade people from the interior to travel to the coast where he handed them over to the Japanese for whom they were to work as coolies. Many never returned, whereupon the people began vendetta against strangers, including the *gurus* (Slump 1953: 111).

The *gurus* who had to run for their lives started assisting their colleagues at the coast, where things kept going, even though the number of absent children increased due to the fact that their parents were afraid of the Japanese and had gone into hiding in remote forests. Another problem was the increasing shortage of food; after harvests, the Japanese often seized the sago. Even more threatening was the situation at the end of the war in 1944, when allied forces started bombing villages. This caused many people to flee far into the forests where they could hide (Slump 1953: 112).

According to Slump (1953: 112), writing for a Dutch audience who would have been excited to hear about Dutch victories over evil Japanese, the Second World War period was characterised by cheating, threat, and uncertainty which encouraged dehumanisation; increasingly people began to slide back into their former patterns of living. In 1950, Slump himself could still notice the effects of this period. As for their belief in God, people remained practising Christians, which Slump concludes from the observation that, although they had fled far into the forests, they returned to the villages to attend Sunday service.

At the end of 1944, allied officers and soldiers stationed themselves in Inanwatan and Teminabuan to chase away the Japanese. Apparently, local people assisted with enthusiasm in this task. Heroic stories of how the Japanese were cheated, tricked and killed are still told. When in 1945 the Japanese were killed or chased away, the colonial administrators and the Dutch missionaries had not yet returned. The *gurus*, however, continued the pre-war programs and started to

urge people to rebuild their villages or to establish new villages.

The first Dutch missionaries to be sent out to Inanwatan after the war were Minister Middag and Reverend Slump. On board one of seven minesweepers of the Dutch navy that planned to comb through south coastal Kepala Burung, they were able to travel to Inanwatan, in October 1946. There they met several *gurus* and one assistant civil servant who had managed to arrive there a couple of months earlier. The company of the missionaries was a great encouragement to the *gurus* because they could now meet to their promises that missionary efforts would continue in the same manner as before the war.

Numerous people from the interior came down to the coast to verify for themselves that the Dutch missionaries had indeed returned. They immediately asked for the return of their *guru* or a new *guru* for their newly built villages. Only after an exploration of the interior by a civil servant, did the government and mission begin to address the Aitinyo and Ayamaru areas in 1948. In addition, in 1948, Slump opened the first school at the Seremuk River, in the village of Klabot, together with several mission posts, among others in Rinkasin (presently the villages of Woloin, Haha and Tofot, see Introduction).

Mennonites in Teminabuan and the United Church of New Guinea

Because of an increasing amount of people wanting to have their own school and teacher, the Protestant mission of the UZV had to contend with a shortage of *gurus* and missionaries, during the first few years after the war. In the 1950s, the situation changed when large Dutch subsidies enabled the churches to build more schools and health centres and employ more personnel. In Sorong this resulted in the building of a leper hospital, Sele be Solu, where the Mennonite sisters Lydia and Ruth Bähler from Switzerland were employed (see Laurensen 1972).

Around the same time, in consultation with the United Dutch Mission Corporation (*Vereenigde Nederlandse Zendingscorporaties*, Oegstgeest), the parish of Teminabuan was handed over to the Mennonite Missionary Council (*Doopsgezinde Zendingsraad*) which also benefited from the Dutch subsidies. The Mennonites were allowed to work in the area under the condition that they would contribute to the establishment of a united church of West New Guinea that would later become the Irian Jaya Evangelical Church and presently known as *Gereja Kristen Injili di Irian Jaya* (GKI). The Mennonite missionaries were thus expected not to make Mennonites out of ‘pagan’ Papuans.

Nevertheless, problems arose around the Mennonite principled refusal of infant baptism. According to Jensma (1968: 15) the ecclesiastic Mennonite rejection of infant baptism was not of great concern to the Protestants. The latter reasoned that if whole families wanted to be baptised there would be plenty of *gurus*, not limited by moral dilemmas, to serve them. Moreover, Slump reported that in the practice of baptising the people of Ayamaru and Teminabuan it only rarely occurred that children had to be baptised (Santema 1987: 6).

In any case, by not acknowledging and discussing the problem of dismissing infant baptism by the Mennonites, the umbrella organisation of the Protestant mission burdened the concerned missionaries with the practical problem of how to deal with the Moluccan *gurus* who generally baptised whole families, and even proclaimed and practised the ‘separation of the sacraments’. The latter comprises the practice of not allowing those who have not made a confession of faith to participate during the Holy Communion. In line with the idea of keeping the Communion pure, that is, guarded against unbelievers and sinners, this was of great concern to the *gurus* who generally entertained rigid ideas pertaining to sinners and believers, Hell and Heaven. These ideas and practices of the *guru* working in isolated mission posts were a major concern of the missionaries in Teminabuan.

In October 1950, the parish of Teminabuan was handed over to the Mennonite missionary Marcus. Being a man of principle, stern in character and disciplined in his life, he often came into conflict with the *gurus*. Moreover, he regularly collided with the Protestant mission organisation as well as the

government. The conflicts with the Protestants arose mainly because Marcus aspired to have a pure Mennonite parish, where no children would be baptised and where things would be organised after his own fashion. Without consulting *gurus* he made new rules governing church life in which he strongly condemned infant baptism and proclaimed that participation in the Holy Supper is dependent on the confession of faith. Though many of the new rules that Marcus imposed were largely based on Protestant baptismal formulas, Marcus' policy angered the Protestant missionaries (Santema 1987: 7).

The Protestants suspected Marcus of separatism, a curse at the time because the Protestant missions aimed at the creation of a united church of New Guinea (*Nieuw-Guinea Kerk*). The initiative for this allied church was taken by Isaac Samuel Kijne whose aim it was to create an independent church of West New Guinea that would be Protestant in scope and would eventually be managed by indigenous people and *gurus*. The churches in the Netherlands would provide financial and policy support (see Kamma 1976: 768-77). Of primary importance to Marcus though was the implementation of Mennonite doctrine. He determined that he would be responsible to the government only and not to those Protestant missionaries nourishing peculiar ideas of a united church. Marcus thus found himself, on the one hand, in conflict with Moluccan *gurus* who were lavish with their baptismal water, and, on the other hand, on bad terms with the Protestant mission.¹⁴

In 1958, Marcus was replaced by Koopmans, also a Mennonite minister. The discussions about infant baptism and the conflicts arising from it continued but now took place in the context of the GKI, the Evangelical Church of West Irian, the result of Kijne's initiative. Koopmans thus saw himself confronted with an organisation which considered him as a refuser of infant baptism. Because the GKI aimed at independence, which meant that Papuans or local Moluccans would eventually replace Dutch missionaries, they were not concerned with Koopmans' problems. In a letter he was notified that 'every minister is obliged to

14. Marcus eventually returned to the Netherlands feeling misunderstood. In reaction to it he started writing his memoirs (Marcus n.d.) in which he, on his turn, rebuffed those who have misjudged him during his work in West New Guinea.

serve infant baptism, and that you are accepted as an odd man out for the time being' (Koopmans 1958: 9, my translation).

As mentioned earlier, after 1956, the Protestant churches in Irian Jaya became institutionalised under the heading of the GKI. The GKI is a Protestant organisation that is based on Dutch missionary structures and discourse (see Kamma 1976: 768-81). In contrast to the foregoing situation, there are officially no leaders to make policy, but only chairpersons or presbyters of multiple church organisations. They are supposed to put into practice what is decided during meetings according to a Presbyterian model of church organisation: the presbyters are chosen by members of the different church organisation and they, in turn, choose the members of the meetings, the parish, and the General Synod.

The first chair of the General Synod was F.J.S. Romainum, who found himself in a difficult situation. Not only did he have to shape the new organisation (with the assistance of Kamma, among others), he also had to cope with much social and political hardship during (and after) the period of the United Nations transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia.¹⁵ Under Indonesian rule, the GKI church has developed more and more into an organisation of and for Papuans who find themselves in increasingly marginalised social and political conditions. In the mean time, the government actively promoted world religions labelled as *agama* to dismiss 'tribal religion' or 'superstitions'.

15. Days before Romainum passed away in January 1968, he wrote a little booklet about the first ten years of the GKI after one hundred years of mission work in West New Guinea. Kamma (1976: 794) interprets the contents of Romainum's review as follows: 'Here it is, something to hold on to, the gospel and the church. The Word of God has continued to be preached, churches and parishes around them have been built and many missionaries did their work, even under conditions of much hardship and contest. And the church has grown and is there with many new workers and with an organisation that now lasts for ten years in spite of all changes that have taken place' (my translation).

Today, all Imyan villagers belong to the GKI. The GKI of the sub-district of Teminabuan which has thirty-one parishes (one parish in town and thirty in the villages), each served by four visiting clergymen, a resident parish teacher (*guru jemaat*), and a church council (*majelis*). The local parishes comprise alliances of fathers and elder men (the *Persekutuan Kaum Bapak* [PKB]), the alliance of women (the *Persekutuan Wanita* [PW]), juvenile adults (the *Persekutuan Anak-anak Remaja* [PAR]), and children (the *Persekutuan Anak-anak Muda* [PAM]).

The religious teacher of the village primary school who organises Sunday school leads the PAM. The PAR has weekly meetings during which elders teach the Bible and sing hymns and psalms with the boys and girls. The PW has a weekly prayer meeting on Fridays. Other activities organised by the parish members are choirs and vendues (*lelang*) for selling local products like couscous, pork, and shrimp to collect money for the church. Over all the parish alliances stands the all-male *majelis* headed by Amos Mejefat. This parish organisation, the regular prayer meetings, Sunday school, and well-organised Bible teachings for adults, makes that all Imyan become increasingly acquainted with the Bible and the organisation of the church. On the basis of matters discussed, stories explained, and new theories developed during these meetings, many villagers regularly assiduously discuss the truths of the Christian teachings, in particular what its eschatology has in store for them.

The Bible, Salvation, and Eschatology

Not forever will your musty forest
 obscure the light from Heaven;
 One day also will thou become a planting of God,
 A fertile garden of the Lord, O New Guinea! Although
 a Geissler leaves you; a Jesus is alive!
 Who had sent him out
 has found new assistance.

Poem by Nic. Beets, read at the occasion of Gottlob Geissler's
 death in 1870 (in Reenders 1991: 322, my translation).¹⁶

In the remaining part of this chapter, I delineate how the tradition of *gereja* functions in present-day practical matters pertaining to people's concerns. I attempt to show how Imyan have interpreted and applied their pre-Christian categories of spirits and (supernatural) agency to conform to mission concepts of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Satan, redemption, sin, charity, Hell, and Heaven.¹⁷ A major question is why and in which contexts citation from the Scripture or reference to biblical stories comes to fore in discussion of moral behaviour of others. Another central theme is why affiliation with Christianity entails strategic ethnic and political identifications through which Imyan negotiate their marginal situation with respect to wealth, prosperity and the nation's Muslim majority (compare Aragon 1996: 352).

16. The original in Dutch goes as follows: *Niet altijd zal uw dompig bosch / Het licht des hemels keeren; Eens wordt ook gij een planting Gods, Een vruchtbare hof des Heeren, O Nieuw-Guinea! Al begeeft / een Geissler u; een Jezus leeft! Die hem had uitgezonden / Heeft nieuwe hulp gevonden*. On Beets and his role in the UZV, see Kamma (1976: 200-2).

17. Because of the variety of religious teachers that have been active in Imyan villages since the late 1920s and the general problem of reconstructing the contextual nature of the process of negotiation of Christian motives by Imyan over a period of several decades, I can only point in a very general manner to the most central Christian themes that have been of importance to that process.

It is not only religious Christian themes that have taken on fundamental importance to Imyan worldviews but also the practical side of church rituals, which seems to reflect the belief that the church and its Christian lore have become interpreted as an important ritual which should be acted out according to the way the first messengers and performers did it. The present-day church councils in most Imyan villages stress that liturgy should be similar to that practised in the 1940s and 1950s. For older Imyan, the old sermons of the Dutch and Moluccan missionaries remain the benchmark for the success of Christian ritual. They were usually based on passages of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the epistles of Paul pertaining to Jesus' deeds, lessons, and miracles.

As can be seen in the examples of sermons cited in the next chapter, local clergymen such as Elias Mejefat in the village of Haha, usually take passages from Old Testament texts like Isaiah and Jeremiah to teach about sin. Others, like Amos may prefer the Gospels. All preach in rather formal Indonesian that is poorly understood by many of the older parishioners, and speak about events that are not part of Imyan daily lives. The liturgy in the villages explains the conservative Protestant outlook of the church. As a Dutch researcher it was interesting to find myself in a reformed Dutch village when attending Sunday service in Haha or any other Imyan village, seeing all the villagers seated so neatly on the church benches, singing so bravely, some pretending devotion while actually feeling bored, and above all, hearing Amos and Elias preaching fire and brimstone.

The importance of observing original or authentic ritual prescriptions has to do with the observation of continuities between *wuon* and Christianity, and reflects widely-held ideas about pre-Christian logic of earlier rituals, ceremonies, and the whereabouts of deities and unseen powers. Although some names and concepts of former deities have been adjusted to the Christian lore, explanations of sinful behaviour and misfortune are most often believed to be effects of, for example, *ni mlasa* ('sky beings'), *ni kamyang* ('water spirits'), *na koli* ('fools'), *lait*, while, at the same time and in the same context, people may also refer to, for example, the temptations of Satan. In explaining their concerns to me, but also

when people amongst themselves are interchanging accounts for the problems they are facing, they generally depict beliefs in spirits, ghosts and magic as wicked (*dosa* - Indonesian 'wicked, sinful, sin' or *wbot ndait* - 'not right, misdoing') and old-fashioned (*kamwolo* - 'long ago, in the past').

In Imyan, there is no equivalent for the word sin. In addition, the concept of sin as referring to a transgression of the divine law and an offence to God is hard to understand for Imyan people. In general, they explain *dosa* following the local religious teacher and parish preacher, as breaking the Ten Commandments. 'So we are always wicked, because one always transgresses one of the commandments. In that case, none of us will be in Heaven', was one of the many desperate conclusions I have heard after a discussion on *dosa*. This indicates what it is that people strive for when going to church and reading the Bible. Others, however, treat the matter more lightly and see sin as behaviour that is not correct, not good, not ethical (*wbot ndait*).

Related to ideas of sociality and co-operation between villagers as understood in terms of *pemerintah* is the widespread and persistent anxiety about the presence of non-believers in society. The presence of a non-believer is seen as a threat to society's well-being, an idea that dates back to the early missionaries who introduced such ideas in order to get local support for, or merely to explain, the need to abandon former practices such as male initiation, extensive ceremonies, cloth exchanges, and collective harvesting in the coastal sago forests. Therefore, for example, in this new current line of thought, *wuon* ways of placating the spirits or sky beings are seen as wrong and inferior to praying in the church. Consequently, those who support *wuon* or exalt its powers may be convicted as sinners.

A scheme of Protestant concepts is placed on top of a set of actions of pre-Christian supernatural agencies. Depending on the context people may initially refer to this pre-Christian scheme when explaining the reasons of misfortune. In other contexts, however, people hold one-sided opinions related to Christian agencies such as God's punishment. To understand these contextual differences I analyse the case of the illness of Barnabas Kemesrar (34) and how members of the church council in Haha attempted to convince Barnabas of his sins and their

ideas of how he could cure himself by confession and being a good Christian.

The Fate of a Sinner

On the night of 11 June 1995, I was sitting in the rear of Barnabas Kemesrar's house. The night began in the evening when relatives, neighbours, and friends of Barnabas dropped by to see how he was doing. This had become a usual daily practice since Barnabas had become bedridden a week before. For a week, he felt weak and coughed a lot but nobody seemed to worry a lot except for Barnabas himself. He had already confided in me that he was sure that he had become a victim of *lait* and that his task was to detect the agent and stop it in time before the *nadli lait* would devour his *klebet*.

When alone with him he regularly expressed his desperation that sprouted from being unable to square this attack of *lait* with his conscience. Was it from his family-in-law because he was late in fulfilling his bride-price payments? Was it his mother-in-law who was disappointed and angry because there were no offspring after five years of marriage with her daughter, Ester (32)? Was it that Ester was disappointed or jealous of the three children of Barnabas' previous wife? Or was it Satan himself making use of the stress and agitation that characterised their family life? People readily referred to Barnabas' relationship with Ester, saying that when a couple cannot make a happy life together and when no babies are born after such a long time, things will inevitably go wrong. After all, God wants to see happy families producing many offspring. Many suggested that it was Barnabas' own fault that he became ill.

That evening nobody talked about what was wrong, what could be the cause of Barnabas' illness, and what could be done to heal him. It seemed that visitors simply dropped by to ask Barnabas, his wife, and Ester's mother who was nursing Barnabas, how he felt. After this question was answered with some general statement like 'nothing has changed', they would smoke a cigarette and then quickly excuse themselves by indicating that they'd better be going. Some gave some practical advice on how to nurse him and seemed to worry about

Barnabas' condition, but the majority appeared to me unconcerned and coming to visit Barnabas only in order to be able to pass on the latest gossip.

The previous night, members of the village church council paid a visit to Barnabas. They came to hear Barnabas' and Ester's confessions and to remind them of their Christian family duties. They believed that Barnabas had fallen prey to Satan because his marriage with Ester had not resulted in offspring and therefore agitation and stress had taken possession of Barnabas' family life. Amos began by arguing that Satan interfered in Barnabas and Ester's household and that Barnabas was the victim. Through confession and prayer, God would conquer Satan and eventually heal Barnabas. Ester was quick in confessing that she was agitated by Barnabas' behaviour and that her unfulfilled wish to give birth to children had made her stressed. Barnabas had nothing to add to her statements and said that he had always stood by Ester as best as he could. He also emphasised that he was sure that neither he nor Ester had turned away from God and that they had done their utmost to build a true Christian family.

All visitors present nodded at Barnabas' words and some of his friends subsequently stressed that Barnabas was not to blame. Barnabas' brother suggested that *lait* was involved because of the bride-wealth payment obligations. Hereupon Amos readily interrupted the discussion by saying that the session was not about *adat* but about *gereja*, about faith in God. 'If there is a question of *lait* than it is the result of Satan interfering in a relationship, a marriage out of balance', he explained. He stressed that there was no reason to discuss the potential human agent who had made Barnabas ill. It was now times to join hands in prayer and ask God to have mercy upon Barnabas. After the confessions and lengthy praying, all visitors left the house at around a quarter to midnight.

Together with Barnabas' brother and Seppy Kemesrar, the later head of the village and one of Ester's brothers-in-law and a good friend of Barnabas', I stayed on. Barnabas explained that this night something was bound to happen. He felt that the dark powers that tormented him would give a sign after all the visitors had assisted in calling upon God's help. He was convinced that now that many important people had prayed for him, that there was a chance to defeat *lait*.

He said that he believed that God was punishing him through the work of *nadli lait* who were relatives of Ester:

But since Amos and the rest of the *majelis* members are against me [since he is a Kemesrar and supports Seppy, Amos Mejefat's rival candidate], I do not believe that the church prayers will work. No, we have to do it ourselves. I mean, if God hears my prayer and understands what I am going through, He will stop the workings of his enemy. However, if we leave the prayers to those people who only think about themselves, then Satan will be happy and feel free to kill me. You see this is how Satan does damage. He sees where there is discord and takes advantage of that. If people fight, they do not behave like God wants them to behave. Poor Christians are vulnerable to Satan and will die. Then people say it was *lait*, but in fact, it was due to them that God did not come to stop Satan's work.

It seemed that Barnabas had worked out for himself what had exposed him to evil. He discussed his behaviour and family life with Seppy and Ester. Ester assured him that he was doing his best to have a Christian family and Seppy reminded him of the power of *adat* which made other people think that the illness was brought about by the relatives of Ester who wanted Barnabas to pay.

While they quickly agreed on Barnabas being a good householder, there remained much doubt whether the obligations of *adat* played a stronger role than the opportunity Satan had taken because there was discord in the village. The three agreed with Seppy's explanation that discord in the village always results from the conflicting concerns between *adat*, *pemerintah* and *gereja* and that therefore it was best to explain this to God in a prayer. Satan, as Barnabas added quickly, would then feel weak because his strategy would be shattered, leaving no reason for God not to intervene.

After these reflections, Seppy suggested praying together after which he would try to cure Barnabas with blessed water. In the prayer, they asked God to understand the village situation and see that Barnabas was a good person. Seppy demanded remission for all of Barnabas' sins, explained the situation of those asking him for cloths and asked forgiveness for the *majelis* who, as Seppy said, 'did not know how to translate God's plans for the village to the people because they were more concerned with personal interests'.

After the prayer, Seppy took a glass of water and mumbled some words into the glass. In the meantime, Ester explained to me that he was using *ilmu* that he had learned from an Ambonese friend in Sorong. According to Ester, many villagers have been trying to get access to these kinds of powerful rituals but so far only Seppy has managed to get the right phrases and apply them with success. When he had imbued the glass of water with the necessary power, he moved the glass about ten centimetres from Barnabas' body starting at his head and going down towards his feet. He repeated this seven times and when he was finished, he said to the patient that he should relax and that everything would be fine.

We had only just laid ourselves down near the fireplace to sleep when we heard a loud bang from the front of the house. It was as if someone had thrown a stone against the timber front door. Trembling with fear, Barnabas' brother lit a torch and inspected the surroundings of the house. He saw nothing. When everybody had quieted down a bit, Barnabas said that he felt that the disease had disappeared from his body. He felt good and sat up straight. Seppy explained to him that through the prayers and his *ilmu*, he had exorcised Satan. Dismayed, Satan, after having left Barnabas' body and being turned into a large bat, flew against the door, causing the bang. Barnabas agreed and said that it may as well have been an owl (*klen sok*), one of the many disguises of *lait*. Feeling relieved and excited by what had happened we continued discussing the event until dawn. That night Barnabas ate many tubers and seemed to be on the mend.

Unfortunately, a week later, Barnabas began to feel ill again. He was coughing seriously and suffered from high fevers. He had no appetite and was confined to his bed again. He indicated that it might be serious this time. Again, conflicting rumours were going round in the village. Some said that Satan had

really come to take Barnabas to Hell, while others suggested that this was the last chance for the *majelis* to pray honestly so that God would show mercy. In an attempt to exonerate themselves from the previous accusations that they were using *lait* to get Barnabas to fulfil his *adat* duties, some of Ester's relatives suggested that it was Ester who was now killing her husband. Ester had organised *lait* conspiracies so that she would get rid of Barnabas in order to relieve herself from the shame of living with this bad man.

Due to all the disagreement about the significance of Barnabas' suffering nobody actually devised a plan to cure the patient. It seemed as if the disputes were of more concern than the death of this fellow villager. The few who were concerned with Barnabas managed, however, to withstand the criticism and resistance and were eventually able to carry Barnabas on a stretcher to the health centre in Teminabuan. I suspected tuberculosis, but the doctor insisted that Barnabas was merely suffering from malaria. Because I had uneasy feelings about Barnabas' health, I had him transferred to a health centre in Sorong. The doctors there diagnosed tuberculosis and after two months of medication, rest, and good food, Barnabas slowly returned to full health.

When he came back to Haha after three months, most villagers agreed upon Amos' explanation that after all God had remitted Barnabas' sins and that, if the parish (*jemaat*) had not prayed all the time, this would not have happened. There seemed to be no concern about *lait* anymore and all accusations were deemed irrelevant now. It was clear that Barnabas had suffered from an illness that would have killed him if the villagers had remained in discord. This explanation is very much in line with the general idea of charity and the need for all villagers to become good Christians in order to become prosperous. When Barnabas was away from the village, so Amos, Elias, and others, explained to Barnabas, not only was the source of all conflict removed, but also the sinner was no longer in their midst. The next Sunday, Amos stressed in his preaches the evil of sinners causing disasters to the village community.

The Village Divided among Sinners and Believers

The latter interpretation is common and pertains to the politics of power of the Mejefat camp which over the last few decades has increasingly supported a new elite attempting to rule the village by using such categories as sinners and good Christians. As institutionalised in the church with its own council, liturgy, and social influence, *gereja* thus figures as a foundation for the politics of the Mejefat leaders, in particular Amos and his brother Elias. Many villagers' frustration about this is understandable because by using *gereja* some low-down tricks are played. The main power of *gereja* for local politics is the use of the status that comes with being a member of the church council.

As a member of the council one may feel supported by the other members to claim authority over other people's behaviour by threatening with reporting sinful behaviour to the council. Such a report may result in reference to a person's name, his descent group or his part of the village in a sermon - and thus thought to be potentially subject to divine will, but in any case becoming an icon in all villager's minds. Though not many believe that this entails a sentence to God's punishment, as claimed by the council, it puts the individual, his descent group, or his part of the village in a vulnerable position. It allows others to control the victims' freedom of movement and public defence in such matters as land disputes, the exchange of cloths, the distribution of funds, and the ambitions to develop something that envies others.

At another level, the church council controls the behaviour of all villagers by claiming exceptional knowledge of God's Word, rhetorically applied in sermons and public speeches in which villagers are urged to become good Christians. These fire-and-brimstone sermons and public harangues always refer, in varying order, to the lack of co-operation and charity amongst villagers, the disorder created by *lait*, people's preoccupations with cloth exchange, all restraining God from being amidst them to bring well-being and healthiness.

Being a member of the church council, Barnabas was expelled from the

elite as soon as he became ill and rumours spread about his bad conduct as a householder and as a man who did not comply with the *adat* laws. These rumours gave Amos the chance to get rid of Barnabas in order to cleanse the church council of a member of the Kemesrar group and a fervent supporter of Seppy Kemesrar, who increasingly began to pose a threat to the position of the Mejefats. I recall that this struggle for leadership revolves around traditional roles marked by present-day ideas contrasting *pemerintah* with *adat* and *wuon*. *Gereja* also plays an important role in the consolidation of Amos Mejefat's power.

Supported by his brother, Elias, their relatives, and most Klaflé people, he uses the argument that only through general acknowledgement of his command of the Bible and his teachings of how to create a community of good Christians would the village become prosperous. To illustrate this let me recount the way he introduced the importance of the commemoration of the appearance of the first missionary, Alek Flassy, on the scene of Rinkasin.

In June 1996, Amos reported to his parish (*jemaat*) and village community that he had written a first draft of an official document titled 'The Story of Evangelisation in the GKI Parish 'Eklesia' Haha' (*Riwayat Pekabaran Injil di Jemaat GKI 'Eklesia' Haha*). He stressed the importance of this document, not only for the upcoming 50th anniversary of the coming of the Gospel (*Injil masuk*) in Haha on 24 September 1997, but also to correct history. He informed the people of this important job in the context of a lecture to his subjects on a Sunday morning in June 1995, after his sermon.

The general tone of this lecture did not differ from regular ones in which he usually denounces the villagers' sins, indolence, charity, and lack of sociality and mutual assistance. To many these weekly imputations are mere repetitions of themes they have been hearing from him for almost two decades. Usually, his audience is restless and bored. This time, however, his discussion of the arrival of the first missionaries in West New Guinea (Mansinam, 1855), Teminabuan (1927) and the village of Haha (1947) made many sit up and take notice. Amos explained that his documentation of the first arrival of the first missionary and the formation of the village of Haha was correct because it is based on an interview held with Alek Flassy a year before. He explained that among other

things, Flassy had reminded him that formerly the people of Haha were very strong, concerted, and motivated to work.

The examples were plentiful: the amount of people from Haha who began to work at the NNGPM in Sorong in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and their contribution to the building of government offices and houses in Teminabuan and construction of the road to Ayamaru. Moreover, the people supported the missionary with sago, vegetables, and meat and fish, and attended every service. In contrast, Amos continued, today the people cannot organise themselves. He said,

We will commemorate the arrival of the first religious teacher every year, not merely to celebrate something, but to reflect on what has changed since then. If we reflect on the past 48 years, we can ask what we have accomplished. Very little! If I listen to Bapak Flassy's recollections I realise that formerly the people were devoted to *gereja* and to *pemerintah*. Look at what I am doing. I am preparing for the 50th anniversary of the coming of the Gospel while you people are not able to put even the smallest effort in the coming Christmas celebration. We are still waiting for the donations of the women and the youth. Let me tell you that we are not going to wait until December. Those who will not have complied with their church duties will not be allowed to enter the church at Christmas. We will then clearly see who is indolent [*malas*] and who is interested [*minat*], who is stupid [*morait*] and who has faith [*iman*]. Those who believe in God and live according to God's Commandments will have no problem to work for the church activities, but the unbelievers find all kinds of apologies to excuse themselves from these important duties.

Amos Mejefat, June 1996, Tape 140B: 215-322

Amos then returned to Flassy and said that he urged him during the interview to again remind the people that there are no excuses for not working for the government programs and that *pembangunan* is equally important as *adat* obligations. Comforted by the authority of Flassy and imitating the talks of government officials, Amos went on to suggest that due to indolence the people of Haha come up with all kinds of arguments to excuse themselves from the church, the community, and the work that has to be done in order to develop the village. By harking back on a preceding sermon, he warns the people about their attitude:

If you want to continue like this, beware; because then your fate will be like sinners. You may seem clever people and hold yourself in high esteem, but in the end, you will be punished. Thus if you commend your soul to Him everything will be possible. Hence, if you are indifferent to the church and the government your destiny will not be certain. I myself also do not fully understand God's Word, which means that I cannot say that God is with me. Nevertheless, what is sure is that I know my duties and that I know at least a little about God's Word.

Amos Mejefat, June 1996, Tape 140B: 369-400

He then proceeded by criticising the indifference of some members of the parish alliance of fathers and elder man, the PKB, who had recently called into question the obligation to give donations (*derma*) to the church now that they were also obliged to donate money for the Christmas celebrations. They had come to Amos to express their concern over how this money was spent by the *majelis* and the *klasis* in Teminabuan. Some openly accused members of these church organisations of lining their pockets at the expense of poor villagers who have to work to death to gather the weekly *derma* (usually the equivalent of US\$ 0.10 for children and US\$ 0.50 for elders). This is how Amos put their complaints into words:

You see, I have had people from the PKB coming to me complaining that the church council asks for *derma* all the time. Paul preached the gospel without getting any consideration from the parishes. If you read Philippians 4: 10-20 and in particular verse 15 you can see this with your own eyes. Then there are also those who peddle stories about Otto and Geissler suggesting that they were not compensated by the people of Mansinam Island. The fact is that the *sendung* [from the Dutch word *zending*, meaning: 'Protestant mission'] supported them and sent them to Irian. They were of German origin but received training in the Netherlands before they came to Irian. The *sendung* Gossner looked after its personnel and indeed, they did not expect the people from Mansinam to give donations. The mission organisation is named after Gossner, an important religious figure in Germany. I have also heard people saying that when Jesus lived on earth nobody donated any money to Him. However, Jesus had already said that he came to earth not to be served but to serve in order to save our souls. So if you can read, take the Bible and figure this out for yourself. Read about the Acts of the Apostles and about the life of Jesus Christ. Read it and you will learn that Jesus did not come to be served but to serve, to give blessing to those who obey the Commandments.

Hence, the meaning of the money for the GKI and the *majelis* lies in the implementation of the church programs, the events during which we celebrate God's power. Thus, whoever allows his mind to wander on these things again, do not approach me for answers. The answers to your questions can be found in the background of Jesus' life and the origin of the Apostles and the evangelists. I already know these histories and therefore I do not ask such stupid questions as some of you do. What is that? That is *pengetahuan* ('knowledge'). Maybe some of you have knowledge that goes higher but it is certain that there is no foundation. I learned things in the Dutch period from Dutch missionaries and Dutch teachers. Most of you can only mimic the Indonesian rubbish taught at present-day schools.

Amos Mejefat, June 1996, Tape 141A: 050-182

People like Amos are eager to stress that they have enjoyed Dutch education and that the Dutch knew that Papuans would become good Christians and that perhaps New Guinea is the last country to be saved and the first country to be visited by the returning Jesus. The association between Christianity and powerful Western countries authorises truths that challenge the Indonesian State and suggests an alternative to their experienced state of powerlessness. Moreover, the Mejefat elite sustains a fairly large amount of its power on the widely-shared ideas about the hellish fate of sinners while good Christians can enter a world of light. To a large extent this gives power to Amos' warnings towards all those 'sinners' who do not comply with the demands of the government and who do not work for church projects, and thus the power of the Mejefat elite.

As women, in association with *lait*, are depicted as sinners, the *gereja* tradition of knowledge also refigures and reinforces gender hierarchies. The moral lessons of the Bible are often directed towards women who are considered as the culprits who cannot stay away from *lait*. Imyan men see that it is extremely hard through Christian ritual to punish women who are engaged in *lait*. They are nostalgic about the times when *na wuon* contained *lait* through calling upon *ni mlasa* during trials that most often led to the execution of women who were found guilty. Current Christian ritual leaves these sinners unpunished. Due to the demise of the *na wuon* and the abandonment of *lait* trials, many feel that *lait* is now lurking everywhere and slowly taking apart society.

The designation of *lait* as devil's work highlights an anxiety about loss of control over evil powers and a disappointment with Christian doctrine for its failure to provide Imyan men with the tools to successfully combat *lait*. While Amos Mejefat and others maintain that *lait* would disappear if every member of society really believed in God and lived as a good Christian, in particular the Kemesrar people emphasise that only the powers of *wuon* can diminish the effects of *lait*.

Also through the seclusion of women from the church council and the fact that most other important decisions are made during all-male prayer meetings as I detail in the next chapter, *gereja* appears an crucial instrument in men's struggle with their feelings of losing autonomy. The demonic character of *lait*, supporting

current male ideology, can be traced to a male fear of femininity, a common feature of Melanesian male cults (see Tuzin 1997). Surprisingly, some women seem almost indifferent to *lait* accusations and *wuon* benefits. They are fed up with the continuous male accusations of female *lait* conspiracies and men's fuss about *wuon*.

Opposing Amos' claim of being able to establish God's kingdom as a practical reality of a community of good Christians characterised by such values as charity and diligence, influential Kemesrar people would suggest that this was a lie based on incomplete knowledge and poor ritual practice. Kemesrars typically undermine the *gereja* values upheld by the Mejefts through their claim of having been in possession of the Bible when they lived at Baimla. Counterpoising *gereja*'s portrayal of the ancient *kerajaan* period as a time of darkness, many Kemesrars stress that in this past people had access to magical powers and wealth through ritual travels to the sky world.

The alternative to *gereja* proposed by the Kemesrar comprises re-enactment of *wuon* rituals and the control of the social order through the disciplining rules of *adat*, in particular the role of initiated men who can identify and combat the sources of *lait*. As Barnabas later explained to me:

Formerly, if people were sick like I was, a *na wuon* could be called upon. He would come and use leaves, pieces of wood, and say a prayer that was directed to God the Father and the Holy Spirit. If this method would not work, several *na wuon* did a secret ritual in the bush where they had erected a *wuon* house. Like during initiation when the *na tmak* gathered in the house and called upon Bitik, Klen Tadyi and God and the Holy Spirit. They did this to unite the *na tmak* with the *ni mlasa* who could strengthen their powers. They also gathered much food to share with the *ni mlasa*. It is a secret that during that occasion they eat eel.

The *na wuon* tell us that they are not allowed to eat eel because it is the snake in the Garden of Eden; the snake by means of which Satan introduced himself to mankind. The snake came down from the tree and began to live in the water to become an eel. *Na wuon* caught the eel, recited

a formula, and gave it to the *ni mlasa* who would then help to cure the sick person. It is a medicine. Other medicines are palm wine [*enau, sageru*] and tubers. They also used pieces of cloth called *kaya*, which they empowered with specific formulae. These powerful cloths cannot be used for other purposes. If others take them, they will die.

These secrets can not be revealed to women! Only men are allowed to know that *na wuon* still do these things even though forbidden by Marcus and the current church organisation. I have seen such a ritual with my own eyes when I was still a child, some ten years ago. In fact, what they do is similar to the act of donation [*derma*] in the church. The donation in the church consists of money that is offered to God in order to make Him join us so that He can give us strength and blessing. As for the church ritual, I have doubts, but I know that the *na wuon* action is almost always successful; the sick person will most often become healthy again. The problem with the church ritual is that while the money is for God, the church council pockets it all. Amos gets the largest share and shouts from the pulpit that it is for God.

Barnabas Kemesrar, December 1995, Tape 92A: 110-405

This is a frank evaluation of a widely-observed problem that confronts Imyan since the abolishment of *wuon* ritual and the dominant role taken by the church. The core of this is a discontinuity in the meaning and effects of sacrificing to gods. Quite unexpected at the time when Imyan embraced Christianity as a powerful ritual, they now see that the offerings of *na wuon* to the sky deities and the dead were more successful than present-day prayers and donations to God. As Barnabas lends force to the point he was making: ‘You see, *gereja* deals with stories about offering and the importance of offering, but since nobody sacrifices anything to the gods anymore the effects of the offer are nil’.

The ruling out of *wuon* ritual has damaged the relationships that Imyan held with the deities in the sky. Most Imyan feel that they are presently not connected to the other world where power and wealth resides. They live lives to which the sky deities and the dead are not invited anymore. While leaders of the church

organisation suggest to people that things will be better and all mistakes redeemed when people allow God and Jesus into their lives, many fail to see the value of Christian ritual in the form of stories told by insincere ministers. As an older man told people during a discussion about redemption and the church, taking place after a PKB meeting:

If you read the Bible, you will see that nobody has ever seen God. While *na wuon* were able to travel to this world and see the *ni mlasa*, Christians are too afraid of God. I do not know why, but it could be that when you believe in God you will not survive seeing His face. Perhaps that is why the disciples were scared stiff during the Transfiguration on the mountain. In St John 21: 12 you can read that the disciples did not dare to ask Him who he was, knowing that was Jesus. In *wuon* ritual this could never happen because the novices were taught in detail how to communicate with the *ni mlasa*. They were afraid to embark on their journey to *dyi* but once there they saw that the *ni mlasa* are good. *Ni mlasa* are not as dreadful as God.

This is a characteristic Kemesrar view, but is also shared by many others. Mejefats, in particular Amos, Elias, and the church council members, supported by most Klaflé people, however, are far less critical about Christian ritual. When stressing the differences between them and the Kemesrars, they argue that Kemesrars have stayed behind. On their part, the Kemesrars argue that the Mejefats do not respect history and only enrich themselves at the expense of others. They also blame them for the ongoing failure of government development programs and lack of co-operation in the village.

In the case of Barnabas' illness we see that the powerful church council, in particular as Amos leads it, makes use of Christian dogma to maintain its position. This control is informed as much by belief in the importance of having a community of good Christians without sinners, as it is by the desire of the Mejefat elite to maintain their power through social control. The designation of Barnabas and others who have not confessed their faith as sinners appears to be a powerful means of the church leaders to order public life in the village along

lines of ‘good Christians’ and ‘sinners’.

Investigating Christian Lore

Besides being central to attempts to maintain power, *gereja* refers to concepts of morality and lack of co-operation. How to become good Christians remains a major problem for Imyan villagers. While Amos, Elias, Hendrik, and other influential people from the upper village faction may suggest that they are doing well in terms of God’s commandments, most others often publicly express their doubts. They not only doubt if their behaviour is Christian, they also express their concern about the way the church operates. On top of their worries about the way in which the government wants them to have *pembangunan*, they are frustrated that the church organisation also fails to provide the means to get a better future. The lack of co-operation in the realisation of government programs as well as in organising Christian religious festivals is often explained as either the lack of respect of Mejefat people for historical facts or the arrogance of Kemesrar people claiming leadership while being mere immigrants. This envy and the resulting wrangling often finds expression in people abusing each other in terms of misconduct of ancestors.

As indicated in previous chapters, many Imyan complain about the lack of harmony and co-operation amongst villagers. After lengthy discussions about the reasons for the underlying attitudes, in the end people often blame other villagers for not having faith and not wanting to take the Ten Commandments seriously as explanations for the observed lack of morality and mutual respect (compare Smith 1994). At other instances, the felt predicament of social life is largely spoken of in traditional supernatural terms and in particular in terms of *lait* that frightens people and drives wigs between people.

As shown in the case of Barnabas illness, *lait* is often depicted as being able to raise the devil, and stands in opposition to its mythological counterpart *wuon*, from which the Bible also is believed to have originated. The attempt by Seppy to heal Barnabas with blessed water indicates that the power of *wuon*, when

compared with church ritual relates to the contrast between *ilmu* and *pengetahuan*. Many Imyan believe that Seppy's special technique has to do with *wuon* ritual that is more powerful than mere prayers to God. As Seppy himself explained,

With the power of our own *roh* ['spirit, soul'] we can produce practical formulae in order to cure people. That this works indicates that I am doing the same as *na wuon* do. My father-in-law who is *na wuon* has confirmed this and told me that I am on the right track. The formulae I use are about the illness and I end each session with a prayer to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is hard to tell which part works best, but we have seen that when we do not use formulae the odds are that the patient does not recover. When you use the formulae, God will surely come and bless the water that will eventually cure the patient.

Seppy Kemesrar, January 1995, Tape 14B: 175-203

A couple of days later, when I was discussing *wuon* rituals with Seppy's father-in-law, he explained to me that,

What Seppy does is blending *wuon* with *gereja*. For example, if you are sick I need to help you with my *roh*. Maybe I have a little faith and I will ask God for His blessing. I will ask Him to help me with curing my friend, because you cannot beg for help yourself anymore. As a friend, I will ask God to come and help you. In case you recover, we will praise God, because I know he was present when I imparted the formulae in the water that you drank.

That is not begging God, but something natural, something our ancestors knew about. It has to do with the forces of nature, the forces that are also used in *wuon* rituals. God is one of these forces and in any case, God interferes. That is for sure and therefore it is good what Seppy does. Let the *majelis* do as they please and forbid these practices. They are only concerned about leadership and setting people against each other. That is

the Indonesian way [*cara Indonesia*], not the way of Imyan [*cara Imyan*] and *wuon*. Besides Seppy, many others hold *ilmu* that they will never reveal. Some will reveal their *ilmu* to others to help them but many others do not. They keep their skills and knowledge to themselves.

Lourens Kemesrar, January 1995, Tape 15A: 352-418

The positive powers of *ilmu*, in particular those of *wuon* are out of people's reach and what remains manifest are the evil powers of witchcraft (*lait*). *Lait* not only terrifies people; it also explains social disruption, misfortune, poverty, illness, sudden death, and people's immorality. Concerning the possession of wealth and labour opportunities in modern Indonesia, most Imyans do not consider themselves to be in favourable position. Not many people expect to become wealthy if the political and economic situation in Irian Jaya does not radically change.

In line with the grounding of Kemesrar criticism of Mejejat *gereja* hegemony, most Haha villagers contrast the former closeness of the Kemesrars to the Tidore sultanate and the sky world (*dysi*) with their currently unequal position within present-day fields of power and knowledge and remoteness of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and neglect of the *ni mlasa*. Consequently, a basic concern for Imyan is to find successful rituals in order to bridge the gap between the earth and sky, something which many do not hold the church capable of.

A general but not very elaborate idea among Imyan is that, through investigating Christian lore, which after all originated from Imyan country, they might find the key to regain what has long been inaccessible to them. Others, however, are very sceptical about this and maintain that Indonesia will never allow Papuans to recover full *wuon* knowledge, which after all would enable them to re-establish a central and autonomous position in the world (compare Kulick 1992: 180-89). As I show in more detail in the next chapter, a creative combination of the *wuon* story about Olinado, the biblical teachings about the Second Coming of Jesus, together with a specific view on the origin of wealth has resulted in a now widely-shared idea about the future of the world in terms of the Book of Revelation. The disappointment caused by the unsuccessful attempts

of *wuon* ritual leaders to bring Olinado home and the general discontent with their marginal position in the modern world seem to be the factors behind the central role of the *gereja* tradition in Imyan worlds.

