

Chapter Six

Toward a Potent *Agama* and the Return of the Kingdom¹

Ske om amuk ofo to yase wi tmres idyen tali fo mereo to tetowot tetowot;

‘At night the Honeyeater says he wants to sleep together with others at one place, as from daybreak it becomes clear that one is spotted different than the other’.

(Seppy Kemesrar, Haha, 12 September 1995)

During a nightly pig chase in the tidal swamps some five kilometres south-west of the village of Haha, Seppy used this proverb to lend force to his explanation about the good co-operation between the hunters. Some thirty adult men from all sections of Haha village society worked together efficiently in order to drive wild pigs out of the bushes to eventually stab them. At one stage the shouts by which the men scared away the animals in the direction of the men with spears at the ready, changed from unintelligible noises into such words as OPM, Papua, and *merdeka* (‘freedom’).

The excitement of being out there in the bush, wantonly the men felt to have something in common and trusted each other. While we were standing with spears in our hands, Seppy told me that besides the sheer kicks of shouting these charged words, the event showed the unity among Haha villagers when there is a shared concern, one goal or one struggle. His late father, a renowned war-leader, taught him the proverb’s meaning, ‘When Imyan launch a nightly attack on an enemy from outside there is unity, but when they go to the gardens or the sago forest they all want to be on themselves and different from the other’.

1. Major parts of this chapter have been published as Timmer (2000).

Alongside the tensions between the two factions in the village of Haha, the differences between men and women, and the multiplicity of individual concerns, there exists a remarkable overlap and unity of ideas. This unity extends beyond men's nightly hunts and is most significant when people cope with cultural otherness. The unity exists because all sections of society long for change, that is, change that they themselves can control and which they can bring about aided by 'traditional' or authentically Imyan principles.

I have discussed that the Mejefat faction relates mostly to the *gereja* and *pemerintah* traditions of knowledge. The Kemesrars also tell of a truth that is grounded in the present-day Indonesian sphere. In terms similar to *pemerintah* and *gereja* discourses, the latter also tend to talk more of the present-day disorder than of the practical matter of reinstalling *wuon* or other *adat* institutions. The Mejefats who advocate *pemerintah* and *pembangunan* do this by upholding *adat* principles (expressing the importance of sociality) in much the same way as the Kemesrar *wuon* ideologists tell of the orderly past. In this sense *adat* and *pemerintah* as well as *wuon* and *gereja* overlap and mutually inform each other.

Clearly, both parties want order and in this longing they share a concern with acquiring the necessary knowledge to arrive at the essence of things. This concern is clearly expressed in terms of *agama* ('religion'). *Agama* appears increasingly important in the complex Imyan rhetoric that embraces foreign terms and originally foreign traditions as sources of knowledge (and power). They are sources of knowledge as they suggest giving access to the wealthy and blessed state in which whites live. The development of *agama* is triggered by Imyan men who explore all the foreign sources as well as what their own traditions have in store to reduce the intricacy of their futures.

Agama in fact belongs to the church but is perceived as originally Imyan (and integral to *wuon*) and relates to the *agama* pillar of Pancasila (belonging to *pemerintah*). The *gereja* tradition comprises mission history, church organisation, services, church projects, fixed rituals, and allows a new elite to sustain a fairly large amount of its power on the basis of widely shared ideas about sin and redemption. *Agama* is a newer tradition in the field of traditions of knowledge. It is becoming increasingly powerful as it opposes or supports the

other traditions and successfully relates to people's most pressing concerns.

The tradition of *agama* is both informed by mission Christianity, indigenous ideas pertaining to *ni mlasa*, skills, and highly secret *wuon* rituals, as well as aspects of the national Pancasila ideology. Although the contributions to *agama* are different there seems to be a clear overall meaning. This core consists of ideas pertaining to the efficacy of *wuon* rituals, the excellence of *ni mlasa*, and a hope for completion. In many respects, *agama* is a cosmology that positions Imyan in a personal, local, sacred (and largely secret or hidden) world that arouses expectations for the Millennium.²

The millenarian or cargoistic notions relate to the powerful kernel of the *wuon* knowledge that comes from Imyan land and has provided whites and Indonesians with power and wealth. The millenarian aspect holds the promise of a return to the original cosmic totality, the communion of the sky and the earth allowing Imyan to engage in direct exchange with *ni mlasa*. *Agama* represents the powerful kernel of knowledge and as such this tradition, alongside *wuon*, often emerges as the ultimate test of the validity of other forms of knowledge, which belong to the other traditions of knowledge. This validity test appears to contribute to the hierarchy that exists among the traditions of knowledge.

Signs of the Millennium

On 8 January 1996, guerrillas of the OPM took hostages at Mapnduma, 180 kilometres east of Timika in Southwest Irian Jaya. The OPM abducted eleven European and Indonesian researchers and support staff from a joint expedition from Cambridge University, the Jakarta Biological Sciences Club, and the World

2. Such new indigenous theologies resemble what Lattas, in his analysis of the incorporation and transformation of Western beliefs and practices in New Britain Bush Kaliai narratives, has described as 'attempts to develop new epochal principles, new ontological schemes for organizing human sociability; this is done by developing new practices for disclosing the world, for working secrecy, for understanding those absences that render the world present in a particular way' (1998: xxvii).

Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF).³ The event caused great unrest in Haha. Listening to Radio Australia broadcasts in Indonesian in Seppy Kemesrar's house, some ten men closely followed the developments.

When an interview with Moses Werror, chairman of the Free West Papua Revolutionary Council (FWPRC) based in Australia and Papua New Guinea, was broadcast, they were convinced that Werror, with God's assistance, would now free Irian Jaya. After the rumour was spread, many other villages interpreted Werror's explanation of the kidnapping as a means to draw world-wide attention to the impact of mining activities by Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold and the obliteration of Papuan people as a sign of the impending Millennium.

Further indicating the imminent end of all things to Haha villagers was the news about an Indonesian Special Forces Command (*Kopassus*) soldier who killed sixteen people and wounding another fourteen in Timika on 15 April 1996 in apparent retaliation for the reprisal killing of two Indonesian soldiers by local people the day before. Although the distraught soldier killed Special Forces Command soldiers, an Airfast pilot from New Zealand and four other civilians, the sparse early reports caused many Imyans to believe that a merciless mass killing of innocent Papuans foretold increasing chaos and the impending return of Jesus Christ.

The Imyan response to fragments of the news about the taking of hostages by OPM guerrillas is an expression of Imyan faith in the justice and affluence the Millennium will bring. The expectation for the coming of Jesus Christ is based on the controversial sections of the Book of Revelation that promise a glorious thousand-year kingdom of Jesus Christ and the demise of oppression. The Bible forms the founding text in many of these interpretations, in particular to support criticisms of the Indonesian government. In that respect, Christian redemption and the promise of the Millennium are imputations against Indonesian politics and thus build high expectations for a future of political independence, equality and prosperity.⁴

3. See Ballard (1997: 469-71), Start (1997), and Davis (2000).

4. For similar observations among other peoples of West New Guinea, see Kamma (1972: 283-98) and Giay and Godschalk's (1993) discussions of cargoism, in particular

Imyan ideas about the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ are also formed by the memories of the historical roots of the relationship with the kingdom (*kerajaan*) of Sailolof, located on the nearby island of Salawati, one of the Raja Ampat Islands. As described in Chapter 2, Imyans were on the outer edges of the sphere of influence of the Tidore sultanate from which power and wealth radiated. Direct or indirect trade (via other tributaries of the sultan) connected the Imyan with the sultan's palace. *Wuon* initiation rituals recreate this historical connection through magical journeys to Tidore on flying boats (dugouts) steered by sky deities.⁵

As detailed in the previous chapter, a basic concern for Imyans is that successful rituals must bridge the gap between the earth and sky. Because traditional ritual travelling to the sky entailed magical 'flights' to the royal centres of power and wealth, the Imyan link the *Kerajaan Allah* (Jesus Christ's Kingdom) to the *kerajaan* of Sailolof. Almost every Imyan millenarian story invokes the memory of the *kerajaan/sky* world unity, and the impending return of this golden age during the imminent thousand-year *Kerajaan*. They are attempts to 'capture the past, to create again the memories of a golden age that many people would like to return' (Clark 1997: 79).

Appropriations of *Agama*

To understand the current fascination with *agama* it is important to realise that the concept of *agama* relates to Pancasila discourse and the local tradition of *gereja*. In *gereja* terms, *wuon*, the most important element of *agama*, is designated as being part of the dark times (*waktu gelap*), a time when Papuans were still infidels (*kafirs*), lived in ignorance (*masih bodoh*), and held unavailing

the section on Thomas Wanggai's West Melanesia Movement, and Giay's (1995, Chapters 5 and 6) analysis of Wege Bage beliefs among the Me of the Paniai region.

5. These sky travels are reminiscent of the Biak men who travelled to Tidore where they prostrated themselves before the sultan and touched the floor of his palace. Bestowed with power (*sakti*) they returned home where they were welcomed like conquerors. The heroes passed the *sakti* on to the villages during ceremonies, in eating, singing, and dancing, and through gifts of cloth (Kamma 1982: 61, 68-75; compare Visser 1994:

‘superstitions’ (*kepercayaan*). The interpretations of *agama* discard these classifications by ascribing the current problems of Imyan society to the loss of pre-Christian rituals. Another feature of *agama* is the formal omission of *kepercayaan* and consequently *wuon* as an officially recognised *agama* in Indonesian State discourse.

Since the advent of Suharto’s New Order in the early 1970s, the government incorporated religion into its state ideology. The New Order promoted a double conversion. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the first principle of the Pancasila says that all citizens are expected to believe in a singular God (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*). By converting to one of the five officially sanctioned religions, people fulfil one of the main duties of every Indonesian citizen. I recall that this policy is especially designed for such people as the Imyan who yet have to accept religion (*belum beragama*) because they still hold *kepercayaan*.

Borrowing from the early Dutch missionary campaigns that condemned *wuon* as a pagan practice, Indonesian officials attacked the initiation ritual as subversive in the 1960s and 1970s. Still today, belief in *ni mlasa*, *lait*, and *wuon* are ridiculed by church representatives, local church leaders, and cited by government officials as evidence that Imyan villagers are unworthy citizens. Dedicated supporters of Pancasila and the ideologically dictated path of *pembangunan*, government officials proclaim that local beliefs and practices form a serious obstacle to development. People who are *belum beragama* hinder the progress of New Order *pembangunan* through ignorance. The village leader Amos Mejefat and his supporters reiterate these dogmas.

A 1982 official report on belief in *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* in Irian Jaya states that, because Irianese retain their *adat*, the people who believe in a monotheistic deity in the province are nearly all immigrants (Depdikbud 1982). The report suggests that despite the fact that most locals belong to the Catholic or the Protestant church, most do not fully comprehend a single god, in contrast to the mostly Islamic immigrants. According to officials interviewed in Teminabuan and Sorong in 1995 and 1996, this view has not changed significantly. These officials label local villagers as dumb (*bodoh*) and lazy

(*malas*) and accuse them of ignorance of a true religion. Consequently, most government officials in Teminabuan and Sorong see the development of the Imyan villages as a hopeless venture. This feeling further encourages official indifference toward the local officials in charge of the implementation of national development programs (see Chapter 4).

Another aspect of religion that upsets Imyans is the tension between Islamic immigrants and the Papuan population. The Pancasila state ideology is intended to safeguard national unity. The first principle (belief in one God) is said to guarantee harmony between the different religious communities in the Indonesian archipelago. While this doctrine advocates religious tolerance, it masks a growing distrust between Christian Papuans and Islamic immigrants from elsewhere in Indonesia.

In Teminabuan town, where there are three mosques and one Protestant church, both parties show little indulgence towards each other's faith. The practice of Islam by increasing amounts of immigrants is of much concern to Imyan because they consider Islam as a tool of Javanese imperialism intended to undermine Christian (Papuan) identity. The Imyan justify this belief by citing ongoing news about Muslim arson attacks on Christian churches all over Indonesia. When one of the mosques in Teminabuan burned down in November 1994, some people predicted a religious war that would cause the end of the world.

Most Imyans, sensitive to ethnic tensions, did not dare to discuss the mosque's burning with the BBM traders in the market. A week after the fire, I was at the market with several Imyan friends to purchase rice, flour, and cooking oil for the Christmas celebration in the village of Haha. I asked them about their Muslim neighbours in Teminabuan. They said of their prayer services, 'It is complete nonsense and even they themselves do not know what they read and pray. The services are in Arabic, but no one understands a word of it. Absolutely nothing!'

They criticised all disengagement from God and one villager told that he felt sorry for the Islamic immigrants because they do not know about *wuon* lore and *gereja*. 'How will they get salvation?', he asked. Islamic immigrants also

evoke pity because Imyans think that they are mere puppets in the Indonesian game of *agama* politics. When one of the Haha villagers said that the Indonesian government wanted to Islamise the Papuans, others immediately agreed and stressed the need to oppose this policy.

In the meantime, some twenty Papuans had assembled around us. We were standing in the middle of the street when a group of Buginese women, fashionably dressed and sporting headscarves, walked by on their way to the mosque in town. ‘See, these women walking jaunty and looking down on us. They are going to the mosque to cry and return home later to put on their business smiles again. These people only think about finding money and as a result God punished them by burning their mosque’.

Although state discourse insists that *wuon* belongs to the category of *kepercayaan* and *belum beragama*, Imyans argue against this by claiming that *wuon* is superior to Christian rituals, let alone Islamic rituals. Imyans maintain that Christian doctrine is based on the key parts of *wuon* lore that were taken away from the Imyan in mythological times. They believe, however, that the Dutch missionaries never revealed the core of Christian lore to them. The powerful secrets, the *kahan* that once belonged to Papuans and would allow them to become as prosperous as whites, were withheld to prevent Imyan from gaining control over their own lives. As Yopie Krimadi (46) from the village of Sasenek told me after a long discussion about the effectiveness of *pembangunan*, Imyan prospects and the usefulness of *wuon*:

Wuon is good, it can do everything, and perhaps *agama* will become as powerful. We do not know yet. Those who knew have already taken their knowledge to their graves. The lore is already depleted. People now are in search of the missing pieces, the lost *kahan* and that is why they told us to believe in Christ and to go to the church. Something must be there, but also in white man’s things, in the books, and the Indonesian Pancasila. We must search everywhere. But you can see it with your own eyes, we are not yet there.

Yopie Krimadi, March 1995, Tape 22B: 010-058

This perception stimulates people to reread biblical stories, to reflect on Pancasila, and to seek clues inside their own history that might reveal the key parts of *wuon*. That which is hidden is of great importance to Imyans (see the discussion of the different forms of knowledge among the Imyan in Chapter 1). People see *wuon* not only as knowledge, but also as analysis. Through *wuon*, or by having access to its secrets, one can find the necessary components that can help to trace things to their sources, to the *kahan*. Biblical stories can also give clues. Both *wuon* and the Bible are seen to hold the principles for carrying out rituals effectively.

Insofar as it has taken shape, the tradition of *agama* is the result of this blend of *wuon* and Christian doctrine. It is a theology that gives prominence to the unseen *dysi* world and relates to Toror and to the autonomy enjoyed at Baimla or Amaksahen. It undermines the discourses of the missionaries and state and criticises the state and missionary Christianity for denying access to the powers of Imyan sky deities, enriching Europeans, and empowering Indonesians to build the oppressive New Order state. The main purpose of *agama* appears to be a return to local beliefs and past autonomy, which in combination with selected Christian doctrine, will reveal white and Indonesian power and restore to the Imyan their stolen future.

Toward a Potent *Agama*

In June 1995, after spending seven months among Imyan people in the village of Haha, I went to a weekly Wednesday evening prayer meeting of the parish alliance of fathers and elder men (*Persekutuan Kaum Bapak*) which differed from previous gatherings. These prayer meetings are hosted by the families in the village and follow a standard liturgy prescribed in the *Tata Ibadah* of the GKI. This evening the liturgy was performed, but afterwards suggestions were solicited to contextualise the prayer (*khotbah*). The event was significant because it revealed some contrasting ideas about the meaning of Christian lore and the effectiveness of church and traditional ritual.

The evening prayer attracted about thirty men. They assembled at eight o'clock to sing hymns and psalms, read the Bible, hear a sermon by one of the members of the village church council, and pray together. Elias Mejefat led the service. Elias chose to read a passage from I Samuel 17, about the apparently hopeless battle of the Israelis against the Philistines. In his sermon, he explained how David succeeded in slaying the giant brute Goliath and he stipulated the lesson to be learned from the subsequent total victory by the Israelis over the Philistines. Elias first explained that David was the youngest child, like Benjamin, the son of Jacob:

If we read about Jacob in Genesis, we see that Jacob had twelve children, but the one chosen by God was the youngest. If it were not for God's plans, Benjamin would have been sold. God accompanied him, which proves that God is always there to help people. Similarly, if we look at the story of I Samuel, we see that God was with David and assisted him. At the end of the story we will see that David became king of Israel.

Elias Mejefat, June 1995, Tape 35A: 405-432

Elias then went on to stress the ostensible invincibility of the Philistine Goliath by comparing him with the Marind people from the Merauke area of south New Guinea, 'with their tall and well-muscled bodies and their fierce fighting techniques'. He continued:

So when Isai, the father of David, sent out his son to the battle field to fight against the Philistines, how was David going to beat this brute warrior? Goliath was not afraid and considered himself invincible. David came to the battlefield only armed with a catapult. When Goliath saw him coming he started to laugh, 'Why are you carrying a catapult, are you going to shoot a dog?' Folks, what we have here is an unbeliever going to the battlefield. David, however, came with the help of God. While Goliath was laughing, David told him, 'You may carry an axe, a bush knife, or whatever, but I come with the help of God'. Thereupon David hit Goliath with a stone. The

giant fell down, dead. So you see, that is what it is like. If you believe in God, you can triumph.

Elias Mejefat, June 1995, Tape 35A: 510-562

Elias advised that the people would be strong if they placed their lives in the hands of God and had faith (*punya iman*). He then expressed his concern with the deplorable situation in the city of Sorong where many Papuans are unemployed, uneducated, tempted by modern goods and lifestyles, and are not church-goers.

But it doesn't have to be like this. We should not spoil our lives and commit sin [*bikin dosa*] all the time. Do not always incite and do not disobey all the time. If you want to know what happens to people who do not behave like an adult, read Amos 8: 12: 'They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it'. Soon, at the end of all times, the unbelievers will wander aimlessly and not find Him. If they look for food, they won't find anything to eat. When they are thirsty, they won't find any water. But they are not thirsty because they want water and they are not hungry because they want food. No, they are hungry for God's Word. Hence, we as a parish of believers will be saved [*dapat selamat*] if we believe in God....

So we must attend services. There is no excuse. Some say that they are too busy in the sago groves, fetching sago, hunting pigs, or catching fish to feed their families. Careful, for it is Satan who is talking then. It is Satan who tries to keep us away from the church. We often see that women walk out of the church because their children start crying. But who makes these children cry? It is Satan and these mothers adhere to Satan by being engaged in employing *lait*. But what if Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom and our lights [*pelita*] are dull? Where will we then find a pig? Maybe there will be a glowing stick, but we will have to blow hard to let it burn again. Therefore, we need to prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus.

Elias Mejefat, June 1995, Tape 35A: 556-end

After Elias closed the rite, Tonis Klaflé, a 34 year old man from the upper village, took the floor to tell about the pivotal themes of *agama* and to explain how people could best prepare themselves for the imminent coming of Jesus. Though it is not uncommon to have such discussions during PKB meetings or after Sunday services, these gatherings usually discuss everyday domestic practicalities such as plans for making a garden, a recent or announced visit of government officials, bride-wealth payments, the problems of collecting money for church celebrations, and so on.⁶ During this evening, however, Tonis did not give others a chance to enter into what he called ‘twaddle’ (*omong kosong*) because he wanted to share his important insight into *agama*, which he called his analysis (*analisa*).

For our prayer meeting, I have a story about *agama*. I have the story about the first beginnings, when Adam lived in the Garden of Eden [*Byele Eden*]. Adam walked around in the Garden of Eden and saw animals having partners; there were husbands and wives and they had sexual intercourse. Adam returned to his house and said, ‘Why can’t I have sexual intercourse, why don’t I have a wife so that I can have sex with her?’ Thereupon he went to sleep and while he was asleep there came a soft breeze [*angin sepoi*]⁷ and God took a bone from his left side. He created Eve. Adam woke up startled and saw that there was a wife for him.

6. As indicated in the previous chapter, Imyan also explicitly talk about Bible stories and discuss Christian doctrine at other occasions, usually when men gather in the gardens, the sago forests, or at home.

7. In the Makasol Movement in Manus, God is called Wing, a word that is said to arrive from the Tok Pisin word *win* which means: wind, breath, spirits, or soul (see Otto 1991: 269: n. 7; 1992c: 66 n. 15). Stewart and Strathern (2000: 18) suggest that the breeze in which God came to Adam and removed a rib to create Eve may be cognate with the idea of wind referred to in the Red-Box cult in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea. In that cult, the idea of wind referred to the spirits’ putative ability to travel on the wind between Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, and Hagen to bring desired sums of money. I have not asked Tonis about the wind but I think that his referring to it relates to existing ideas about *angin sepoi* being a power of the *ni mlasa*, or the power that radiated from the palace of the sultan at Tidore (see below).

Adam went for a stroll and again saw animals having sexual intercourse. He returned home and fell asleep. His wife walked around in the Garden of Eden by herself to check the situation. She saw beautiful fruits in the trees. Satan came and told her to eat the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and bad [*pohon pengetahuan*]; she learned the difference between right and wrong. This is the origin of *lait*. Titillated by the idea of having sex, she went home and made love to Adam. Therefore, they fell into sin [*jatu ke dosa*]. You can read about this in Genesis 6: humans fell into sin due to their lack of belief. The children of God thus fell under the spell of Satan. The first sin came from a woman and we call it *lait*.

Because of their sin, God came and expelled them from the Garden of Eden. He cast Adam, our grandfather, from the sky [*dysi*] onto the earth [*fobi*]. Since then man lives on the earth. From the grandfather Adam descended many people, many. Then humans fell into sin again. That is the second sin. In the Bible this is the story about the Deluge and Noah.⁸ We all know that it happened here and that it is about *wuon*. *Na wuon* say that it is a secret but we all know that it is about a big bird who brought the *berkat* ('blessing, cargo') to the Western countries.⁹

We stayed behind. Noah's Ark [*kma sene*] is still here on Buakolo or Ararat Mountain.¹⁰ Noah is the second person; Adam was the first. Noah built an ark and travelled away; he was thus able to save his soul. After that incident, there were many descendants again. These were the second people and God saw that they committed many sins. Thereupon he delegated Jesus

8. As recounted in Chapter 3, Nimrod Krimadi's story about Toror relates the tower built by the Woloin people to the biblical story about Noah. At the end of all times, everything will return to Toror which in that respect was depicted by one man as the alpha and omega.

9. The big bird that Tonis refers to here is Olinado, a manifestation of Klen Tadyi. As described in Chapter 1, Olinado took the core powers of *wuon* to the West. Therefore, those who stayed behind remained ignorant, poor, and illiterate, that is, deprived of *berkat* (see below).

10. I recall that the *kma sene* is the flying canoe used by novices to travel to the other world and by which Olinado or Klen Tadyi sailed to the West (see Chapters 1 and 3).

to be born on earth. After Jesus was born, man committed many more sins and Jesus died because of a very big sin. He then went home, back to God. Jesus Christ said, 'Later I will return, I will come for the second time'. That means that we will be saved [*dapat selamat*]. So Jesus is still in *dyi* and we humans here on *fobi* are still sinful. Those who commit sins will not be saved, He said. Sinners will be sentenced and burned or go to hell.

When people killed Jesus, our grandfathers knew about it. That was in the Klabra area, on the other side of the Seremuk River in between the villages of Buk and Ndiwi. There is a place called Ti Naron [literally, *ti* means place and *naron* means immortal person], where our ancestors waited for Jesus to come to bring blessing [*selamat*].¹¹ They were informed about the Saviour's plans of coming to Irian. They made preparations such as a large garden where they planted banana trees, taro, peanuts, and corn. They danced *orok* and waited for Naron. They waited a long time but Jesus did not manage to get to Irian because he was killed in Israel. Then sago trees began to grow in the garden; the garden became a large sago forest. Sago is thus *berkat*.

I propose that we discuss this with the church council [*majelis*], the district [*klasis*], and the synod [*sinode*]. We should ask them to consider my analyses so that we put an end to making explanations with quotations [*nas*] only. The clergymen or others who announce things from the pulpit should search beyond the Bible. They know that the Bible contains stories that are based here and deal with things that our ancestors knew about. Why then keep on following the twisted words in the Bible? Only when they make analyses like I do, other parish members will understand what the Bible is about. Now many of them do not understand and fall asleep during services and do not bother about God's Word. *Agama* will be successful only if everybody believes in the true stories of the Bible. This is our *wuon*

11. Naron is seen by Van Rhijn (in Miedema 1995b: 29-30, 61-62) as a messianic movement resembling the Biak Manseren movement (see Kamma 1972). Van Rhijn (1957a: 8) observed that Naron would come and received in a house specially raised for him. People thought that if they could induce him to come to their settlement, they

knowledge and we have to explore it.

Tonis Klafilé, June 1995, Tape 35B: 138-427

Tonis' rendition of traditional *wuon* lore and Christian doctrine appealed to his fellow villagers. The reference to the Garden of Eden and Noah's Ark evokes the widespread belief that biblical stories relate to events that have taken place in Imyan land. As shown in Chapter 3, most Imyan know about the Garden of Eden, Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, and prophets such as Elijah and enjoy blending local myths, origin stories, and ideas about the powers of *wuon* with the blood-curdling accounts of slaughter and intrigue, miraculous virgin births, demonic possession, mysterious resurrection, and living people ascending to the sky.

As biblical tales contain powerful images of *wuon* and *na wuon*, they are believed to offer a valuable key to the 'truth' and the ritual means to get access to *kahan*. Biblical stories are thus a source of much enthusiasm. The stories that Imyan create by blending biblical stories with local narratives restore a sense of Imyan control over their destiny and renew hope that their current marginality in the Indonesian state will soon end. Tonis rejects *gereja*, because its sermons aim to quote biblical passages as unadorned biblical truth. He wants sermons to move away from 'exegesis' (*khotbah*, *penjelasan*) which merely emphasise the moralism of observing Christian rules of conduct. The secret knowledge of *wuon*, he suggests, will prevent the deterioration of morals that dogmatic liturgy has failed to contain. The observed deterioration of morals is generally explained as the result of evil powers.

The frequent reference to sin in Tonis' account reflects this concern with control over *lait*. In that respect, *agama* is typically a male account and further strengthens the gendering of blame that was already enforced in *gereja*. Thus basically lamenting a loss of autonomy, men, in their *agama* discourse, stress that Adam, as forefather of all humans, fell into sin which caused God to banish humans from Heaven or sky (*dya*) to hard labour on Earth (*fobi*). The resulting gap between sky and earth is the source of Imyan problems. Consequently,

would not die. I have not been able to collect more detailed information on Naron.

Imyan must restore the knowledge and skills to bridge this gap.

Crucial to the gendering of blame in *agama* is the epitomising of the differences between *wuon* and *lait* for explanations that stress that both forms of knowledge differ in their moral content; *wuon* allows contact with the benevolent *ni mlasa* while *lait* requires ‘evil’ human sacrifices and killings. Therefore, so this male ideology goes, *lait* far outweighs *wuon* as a dangerous force. When asking men about the origin of *lait* they readily refer to the story of Genesis suggesting, as Tonis does, that *lait* originated when Eve ate the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and bad. Not surprisingly, male discussions about *agama* exclude women because men fear the transfer of *wuon* knowledge to women and the dangers of *lait*. The all-male PKB meeting in which Tonis told his *agama* story thus followed the traditional *wuon* ritual patterns of seclusion and exclusion, further empowering the *gereja*-based instrument in men’s struggle with their feelings of losing autonomy.

Stories about migrations of Nasfa people often relate to the importance of seclusion of initiation rituals. These stories speak of initiation rituals destroyed by the introduction of *lait* into the initiation house. In such cases, *lait* upsets Bitik and Klen Tadyi. This can cause the death of novices. Those found guilty of *lait* contamination face prosecution, but the accused often flee to other areas. The most dramatic disaster happened during the second initiation organised by Bauk. It forced the departure of Olinado taking away the *kahan*. When discussing *agama*, many suggest that Bauk possessed the Bible, which Olinado took to the West. Tonis refers to this when he explains about the second sin and that Noah’s Ark is still at Baukolo.

The claim of having been in possession of books before the arrival of Europeans is widespread in New Guinea. The Arguni people, for example, assume that all knowledge and skills are recorded in some large books, which were taken to Ambon, China, America, and the Netherlands by the Arguni who sailed away because they were treated rudely (Van Logchem 1963: 200).¹² Imyan

12. See also Giay (1995: 140). Recently, Laba (1996) has reported that ‘Trans-Fly’ people also hold this claim. Swadling (1996: 158-60) argues that this could be explained by the Indonesian practice of giving documents to appointed headmen in the villages

assume that Olinado's current offspring, all white Europeans and Americans (*na welek*), have continued to receive the benefits of the knowledge that he took with him. As Nimrod Krimadi (70), a ritual leader in the village of Sasenek explained:

Olinado made you white people wealthy and prosperous. If he had not taken the *kahan*, we would still be able to build aircrafts, make computers, build huge cities, and possess all the money. If you do not believe it, I can show you the site of a very old huge city, the remains of large bridges, and other modern things (*ni ksa*; *ni* - 'thing, tool', *ksa* - 'manufactured, store bought') that show that we already had everything that *na welek* are now producing.

Nimrod Krimadi, January 1995, Tape 8B: 337-352

At a later session, after having refused to take me to the site several times, he explained that,

Before Olinado's departure there was a city called Aididi at the Rohot Creek. There was a Dutch ship named Seremuk that harboured there. In Aididi there were peoples that come from the Netherlands. The peoples include the Aimere, Aisok, Ayfat. The Mejefat and Kaliele people already lived there. The Klaflé and Krenak people share one history, they both originate from Amaksahen. The Klaflé people who stayed behind in Seget also speak Imyan.

Nimrod Krimadi, January 1995, Tape 16A: 220-246

Many Imyan assert that, after Olinado inflicted the initial loss, missionaries further contributed to the present predicament of their society. Because missionaries did not allow *na tmak* to organise initiation rituals, they were not able to disclose their knowledge to new generations. Meanwhile, the ageing *na wuon* were the only ones who could curtail *lait* and organise rituals to get *berkat*.

where they traded. The possibility that the books were copies of the Koran may also be considered (Wagner 1996: 294).

The current interest in *agama* reflects the initial loss, a concern about the declining numbers of *na wuon* and the corresponding predicament of Imyan society.

Lost Knowledge and Cargo

When Imyan narrate the origin of *wuon*, they compare Adam in Paradise to their ancestor Bogelit Bauk who received *wuon* knowledge from Klen Tadyi and brought *wuon* to the Nasfa people (see Chapter 1). Like Adam, Bauk is depicted as a primordial human maintaining strong ties with the sky world and the *ni mlasa* that dwell there. Many Imyan consider the biblical Heaven as *dysi*, the hidden space that was only accessible to *wuon* initiates. *Dysi* is the hidden world, a world through which one can get power and wealth.

Next to God (*Na Ago, Na Ha, Tuhan Allah*) and the sun (*tali*), Klen Tadyi (morning star) and Bitik (evening star) are the most important beings that dwell in *dysi*. Tonis refers to Klen Tadyi as the ‘big bird’ and appeals to the generally held idea that Klen Tadyi is a very graceful bird, a provider of prosperity to the people and initiator of novices in the qualities of the *ni mlasa*. Significantly, Klen Tadyi is a messenger between the *ni mlasa* and *na wuon* and is often described as an angel (*malaikat*) who mediates between *dysi* and humans. The magical powers ascribed to *ni mlasa* makes the mediation of Klen Tadyi of central importance. Referring to the revelation of the *wuon* lore to Bauk, some informants suggested that Klen Tadyi is in fact one of the prophets (*nabi*) of the Old Testament. As Seppy Kemesrar explained:

Bauk is John the Baptist. If you read about John the Baptist, you see that he was like a *na wuon*. He searched for esoteric knowledge [*ilmu*] in the forest and he wore animal skins and ate grasshoppers and honey. One day God revealed to him an important message while he was asleep. Thereupon he went down to the river Jordan and everybody came to him to get baptised. He was an initiator [*na tmak*]. Later, Jesus also learned about John and went

to see him. Then Jesus was baptised. We must realise that John was a *na wuon*. He was a bachelor and lived alone in the forest. He concentrated on *ilmu* and therefore he was ordered by God to initiate people. I am sure that John was a *na wuon* because he possessed *ilmu* with which he could give blessing [*berkat*] to people. He stayed away from women and others who commit sins.

Seppy Kemesrar, February 1995, Tape 22B: 240-286

The idea of *berkat*, as described in the previous chapter, appears to be central in *agama* as it relates to the (lost) powers of *wuon* and the *ni mlasa*. During rituals, Klen Tadyi takes *na wuon* in a flying canoe (*kma sene*) to the other world where *ni mlasa* dwell. An initiator told me that what he saw during the flights is comparable to pictures in the cinema. To ensure a safe return, the canoe is tied to a large tree with a rope. Once contact is made with *ni mlasa*, the initiators and the novices bargain for the riches hidden in the forest and the waters. Through the offering of gifts the initiators conciliate the *ni mlasa* who control these riches. *Na wuon* exploit their contact with *ni mlasa* in a number of ways. They can, for example, ready all the fish in a river for easy capture by non-initiated men, women, and children.

In the fishing ritual, still performed in the 1960s, *na wuon* positioned themselves at the head-waters in preparation for a competitive struggle with Klen Tadyi. Others stood downstream along the banks waiting for the howling sound of Klen Tadyi (produced by swinging a bull-roarer) indicating his surrender to the *na wuon*.¹³ Klen Tadyi then prepared the catch for collection by cutting the fish tails and tying the shrimp feelers together to make neat bundles. Soon after hearing the sound, the people would see this yield float to the surface.

13. Imyan were not able to show me a bull-roarer; people explained that it was disposed of long ago or that it is too powerful to show. Van Baal describes the object as used in cults in Australia and southern parts of New Guinea as follows: 'a flat, lancet-shaped slab of wood, sometimes resembling a long, flat fish, more often just a lancet, with, at one end, a hole with a cord passing through it. When whirling the instrument at the end of the cord, the operator gives the bull-roarer a spinning movement of its own, e.g. by making one side touch the ground ever so lightly, thus causing it to produce a

Na wuon can also ask Klen Tadyi to gather pigs in the forest for later retrieval. The pigs always have one ear cut off. Similarly, during the initiation ritual, Klen Tadyi bestowed aid and gifts to novices in the flying boat. Klen Tadyi guided the boat to places where initiates could gather game for the initiation house. All natural riches that Klen Tadyi controls and gives to man are seen as *berkat* or ‘cargo’. Similarly, Juillerat (1996: 536) reports Yafar (West Sepik, Papua New Guinea) exegeses of myths which ‘did not need much touching up to identify European goods with game, a scarce product in a subsistence economy’. Imyan arrive at similar conclusions as Yafar in maintaining that Western ‘cargo’ is originally part of their cultural heritage.

Tonis alludes to *berkat* as a by-product of the *wuon* rituals held during the Ti Naron session that was organised because people expected the arrival of Jesus. Although Jesus did not come, the powerful ritual created a vast sago forest, the source of Haha villagers’ staple food. *Wuon* bestows *berkat* in yet another manner: coastal wealth. In the origin story of *wuon* as recounted by Lourens Kemesrar (Chapter 1), Bauk arrived from the coast and introduced an iron axe (*tmak besi*). Nasfa people considered the iron axe as a gift from the sky deities who were guiding Bauk. Once the axe was in their possession, Nasfa could fell trees more easily than before, hence the idea that the axe is *berkat*. An important impetus for the tradition of *agama* is *wuon* stories that refer to *berkat* that comes from *ni mlasa*. The connections between *ni mlasa*, *wuon* rituals, and wealth blessings partially accounts for the recent upsurge of hopeful expectation for *wuon* knowledge as most clearly expressed in the new tradition of *agama*.

Significantly, *agama* also comes to the fore in West New Guinean cargo cults. For example, in the north coastal Tanah Merah region, the cult leader Simson called his movement *Agama Kubur* (‘religion of the graves’). The movement was active in the early 1940s. Simson’s doctrine explained that the Gospel had been mutilated so that the Dutch could keep all the goods that they obtained from the Cyclops Mountains by an underground sea-route (see Kamma 1972: 286). A leader of a millennial movement in the Wandamen area claimed to have been in contact with the land of the spirits and called his doctrine *Agama*

surprisingly loud noise’ (1977: 322, see plate I).

Syariwari (Kamma 1972: 287).

In line with *gereja* and perhaps with even more persuasion, *agama* supports the distinction between men and women, male and female powers. With regard to the two factions in the village, however, *agama* appears not to be used in local struggles for power. Although *agama* proposes a re-empowerment of the *wuon* institution and that therefore is more of a popular subject in the ‘Kemesrar camp’ than among the ‘Mejefats’, below I show that the struggle between the two camps is not the main trigger for supporting *agama*.

Secrecy and Social Distinction

Both for social distinctions along gender and power distinctions in the village, secrecy, which creates and maintains the gap between seen and unseen worlds, appears to be a crucial form of controlling knowledge. By referring to the secret about the ‘big bird’ bringing *berkat* and suggesting that in fact everybody knows about this secret, Tonis appeals to the widely shared idea that perhaps so-called secrets are not as mysterious as *na wuon* want them to be. At the same time though many suggest that *agama* deals with secrets. The project which *agama* entails aims to unravel the secrets by unearthing all knowledge held by *na wuon* who are still alive.

As discussed in Chapter 1, connotations pertaining to secrecy among Imyan agree with peoples’ attitude towards the secrets of *lait* and the secrets of origin stories and histories of descent groups, as well as the secrets of white man’s material prosperity. This prosperity, in its many manifestations in Imyan imagery, is labelled *berkat* in the *agama* tradition. In former times, as Tonis explains, *berkat* was all the good that *na wuon* were able to wheedle out from *ni mlasa*. In the past the ritual leaders or initiators organised initiatory rituals by which new generations of Imyan men were entrusted with the *wuon* lore. These initiations were shrouded with mystery, not the least because all the leaders and novices observed strict secrecy. Following Barth’s (1990) characterisation of the politics of knowledge among Melanesian initiators, Imyan *na tmak* used secrecy

to enhance *wuon* knowledge and to obtain rank.

The way in which *na tmak* taught the sacred *wuon* lore to novices evokes Barth's characterisation of the power and sophistication of the tradition of knowledge transmitted through the male initiations of the Ok peoples of Inner New Guinea:

Using secrecy as their means, they conjure forth a subtle experience of mystery; and by manipulating concrete symbols they construct a complex and moving tradition of knowledge. The initiator must command this body of knowledge, and know which items belong in the particular step of the initiation he is performing. But his task is to put this knowledge to use and affect the novices by its force, not simply to explicate the knowledge to them (1990: 643).¹⁴

The *na tmak* took care that the secrets of *wuon* remained the property of the intellectual elite of initiated men. Only at the risk of receiving severe punishment could a *na tmak* or any other *na wuon* talk about the secrets. Non-initiates also had to be careful not to publicly speculate about *wuon*.

Wuon as a secret affair of a few select male individuals, has always been an important source for fantasy about magical powers. Since the abolishment of the cult, non-initiates have increasingly felt more freedom to express their ideas about the truth of *wuon*. Some, like Tonis, no longer fear reprisals for revealing what they consider secret knowledge. A *na tmak* told me that in the past the ritual leaders would allow some degree of exegesis among non-initiates but if they noticed that they were publicly claiming to know the secrets about *wuon* they would be punished. He suggested that men like Tonis are slowly but gradually getting understanding of *wuon* to a degree that would have never been allowed formerly.

In ways similar to how the *wuon* elite established and maintained its position in society, the current church council uses *gereja* to establish new forms of social distinction. The previous chapter described how Amos in particular

claims to know more about Christianity and the Bible because he attended a Dutch mission school. His arguments make much less impact than before however. In particular within the scope of *agama*, the claim of having been closer to the former powerful mission organisation and its heroes is of less importance than it was several decades ago.

Formerly, there appears to have been a firm belief that schools can equip people with literacy skills and command of Indonesian (or formerly, Dutch), in which the Bible is written (compare Kulick 1992: 176). Moreover, while formerly people thought that schooling and access to the powerful knowledge (the secrets held by the whites) were needed to establish economic enterprises to become wealthy, today they generally believe that the present-day Indonesian school system intentionally blocks this road. They believe that, through the spread of poor teaching methods in Irian Jaya, local Papuans will remain cut off from the means to regain their power and wealth. Often the current teaching methods used in the primary school are contrasted with those formerly used by Dutch teachers.

In line with the features of the *pemerintah* tradition, here is another example of criticism of the Indonesian government for its control over the lives of Irianese. Similar to Dutch missionaries having destroyed the initiation cult and having refused to convey the full story about God, the prophets, and Jesus, the present-day government is accused of preventing Imyan from rediscovering their lost secrets which would enable them to re-establish a powerful and autonomous position in the world. They also blame the Indonesian State for holding back economic development, because it on purpose wants to prevent the Irianese from regaining power.

During a period in which faith in the government, the church, and the school is seriously waning, *agama* forms a threat to Amos' position as head of the church council. After Tonis told his story, Elias said that he was worried about the practical constraints to changing the liturgy of the GKI. Elias feared that contesting the established practice of *gereja* is not only unworkable, it carries an

14. Compare Strathern (1992: 266-67) and Tuzin (1992).

implicit threat to current Mejezat leadership. Wanting to avoid tension the other attendants kept silent. After the PKB meeting, Tonis argued that Elias merely supports *gereja* and answered the complaints of Elias as follows:

I do not care what he says. He wants us to think that he knows a lot about the Bible and Christianity [*agama Kristen*]. Just like his brother, Amos, he makes long prayers and long sermons to impress people. But they only quote from the Bible. They are afraid for their own position. During every prayer meeting, each human being has faith [*iman*]. If we believe in God, we will be able to cross creeks and walk where there are slippery stones. Our belief will be like a walking stick to traverse impassable roads.

My prayer is always my personal prayer and therefore generally short. Maybe I am not very clever and maybe my belief is still weak. Those with long prayers may be very clever and therefore need to use longer words. In any case, God will be grateful. Let some be clergyman, the head of the *klasis* or even the head of the synod [*sinode*], and let them suggest they know the ways of God; according to me it does not make a difference because there is only one road for us all.

I tell everybody about the truth of the Bible and I will keep digging up more *wuon* secrets so that things will become clear. I am not afraid to say that *wuon* is *agama*. Most are afraid that others will spread rumours that they do not believe in the Bible and desecrate God's Word. But one can never be wrong when one thinks according to one's soul [*roh*]. I search for secrets and present these stories because they explain the Word of God and tell us about the road to *berkat* and *selamat*. These stories are about the roots of the problems we have here.

Tonis Klafle, July 1995, Tape 37A: 442-496

The emphasis Tonis puts on the importance of *wuon* lore to perform efficacious rituals is thus not only related to an attempt to re-establish relationships with sky deities, but also a struggle for power on the level of the village. Thus, secrecy is an essential part of village politics. Suggesting that they possess secret *wuon*

knowledge is the main weapon of the Kemesrar people supporting *agama* against the Mejefat people who support *gereja* and *pemerintah* traditions. Given the changing attitude towards modern institutions and the growing importance attached to *wuon*, it did not come as a surprise that a Kemesrar man was elected as head of the village of Haha in 1997.

Although the *majelis* and other conservative forces, mostly from the Mejefat camp, support church rituals and often argue that *wuon* is pagan and say that they want to keep any form of *agama* within the outlines of the church, they are also eager to know what *agama* might bring. They also realise that the *gereja* tradition constructs a narrower, less all embracing and hence less powerful cosmology. Therefore, alongside *agama*'s threatening of the power of the church, they are inclined to support *agama* in particular as it undermines Pancasila and thereby the core of Indonesian New Order government. In that respect, *agama* appears much more as a concerted village or even Imyan community effort than *gereja* and *pemerintah*. However deep and unsettling the regular disputes between the factions may run, there is a shared concern with the harsh reality of life as well as with the end of all things and blessing (*berkat*).

In particular the latter is associated with 'the other': whites and Indonesians. With respect to this concern for *berkat* want things to change in a way that they themselves can control. Below I show that because it proposes to undermine existing differences at a global scale in order to engage the loss of autonomy, this part of *agama* is most crucial and dominates its other aspects that reinforce the existing gender differences (as I have discussed above) and the distinction between the two factions in the village of Haha.

Towers, Kingdoms, and Pancasila

According to Genesis 11: 5-9, the earth was united by language until the inhabitants of Sinear built a tower to Heaven. Most Imyan believe that Sinear was actually Baimla where the Woloin people, one of the Imyan kin groups, built a wooden tower. In this story, mankind lived in Baimla and the Woloin people

built the tower to gain access to *dyi* to contact *ni mlasa* (see Chapter 3). Some believe that the people of Baimla, fearing to be drowned by the Deluge, used the Woloin tower like Noah used the Ark. Most people think that through the collapse of the tower humankind got scattered over the world and that this happened before Olinado went away. Others maintain that their white relatives already possessed the *kahan* of *wuon* before the tower was built and took it with them when the tower collapsed. People are unanimous in their blame on ancestral faults leading to the destruction of the tower and the departure of Olinado.

While biblical stories about Babel and Noah's Ark can be interpreted as a curse, Imyan relate them to Baimla and use them to explain the spread of mankind over the world and the unequal division of wealth and power in the current world (compare Lattas 1998: 6). In these explanations, Baimla signifies autonomy as it was a settlement on an island in the estuary of the Segun River and formed part of the sovereign territories of the *kerajaan* of Sailolof (see Chapter 2). In that situation Imyan maintained trade relationships with the sultanate of Tidore. Local people bearing titles held positions as local ceremonial leaders and war leaders who collected labour and forest products as tribute payments to the sultan.

At Baimla, Imyan were important intermediaries between eighteenth and nineteenth century trading parties that ventured along the south-western coast of the Kepala Burung. The Imyan were thus trade oriented and held a strategic position between the western estuarine swamplands of the Southwest Kepala Burung and the Raja Ampat Islands. The story of Bauk, bringing a metal axe into the interior of the Teminabuan area, relates to this trade history. Of great importance were the connections with the palace of the Tidore sultan that imbued the axe, and other trade items with power. As Kamma points out, the sultan and his court were a source of wealth and power to West New Guinean people, because of the 'positive contagious magic' (1982: 80) which radiated from the palace of the sultan (see also Visser 1994: 155-56 and Visser 1989b).

People from Biak founded colonies or trading posts such as Baimla along the coastal stretches of the Kepala Burung. The migrations of Biak people to the Raja Ampat area is traced back to the end of fifteenth century (Kamma 1947/8a:

365). The Biaks spread their language as a trade language throughout the western and northern coast of the Kepala Burung, the Raja Ampat Islands, and Eastern Maluku (see Donohue 1996: 715, map 78). Biak cultural practices and forms of knowledge also spread throughout the area: in particular, the Biak-Numfor area messianic Koreri movement is noted to have occurred on several islands, in the 1930s (see Kamma 1972: 145-52 and Mambrasar and Mambrasar 1978: 20-1).

According to Kamma's Biak informants, the sultan was able to bestow the same power as deities in the sky. Reminiscent of Imyan belief in the former powers of *wuon*, Kijne (quoted in Kamma 1972: 95) reports a myth of a man from Wandamen who travelled to Tidore to receive *airora* ('magic wind') with which he could make everything. Imyan have similar ideas about this power that they situate in *dya* and possessed by *ni mlasa*. This power was obtained through the exchange of labour and forest products for cloths as well as iron objects (*ni besi*), both associated with this power. Due to their association with the power of the palace, these objects became items of considerable wealth and important sources of power and strength in the Teminabuan area.

As already indicated before, the story that recounts the migration of the Kemesrar and Krenak people from Baimla into the interior of the Kepala Burung where they settled among the Nasfa people, is crucial for later developments, in particular with respect to present-day struggles for local power and ideas about autonomy in a larger world. When the Kemesrars and Krenaks arrived, they maintained their former trade relations with the Sailolof kingdom. Moreover, the autochthonous Nasfa people recognised their power that came through the association with this kingdom. Still today, their historical interaction with *rajas* and the sultan of Tidore evokes ideas about power and wealth among a wide range of people in the hinterland of Teminabuan.

Imyan benefited from the potency of Tidore by incorporating its power, its material items and its titles in their local worlds. They therewith (unconsciously) reaffirmed the sultan's reign. In Chapter 3, I have described how the immigrants from Baimla introduced new and superior knowledge and some magnificent pieces of cloth. Nasfa envied the Imyan because they possessed iron objects, valuable cloths, and the secret knowledge that enabled them to get *berkat* by

successfully contacting *ni mlasa* during male initiation rituals. Moreover, bearing titles such as *kapitan* they were appointed leading roles in the formation of villages in the colonial period (see Chapter 4), and currently, these titles carry a history that relates Imyan (relative) autonomy to pre-colonial and early colonial periods.

Triggered by a wish for autonomy or salvation, in recent times the ideas about their closeness to *berkat* when they still lived at Baimla led Imyan to associate the *kerajaan* of Sailolof with the *Kerajaan Allah*. In this association, Christian lore enriches the historical landscape with the idea that a kingdom will return to liberate West Papuans from oppression. Most Imyan expectations for Jesus Christ's Kingdom on Earth relate to the historical relationship with the *kerajaan* of Sailolof.

As initiation rituals recreated this historical connection through ritual journeys to Tidore, until the present-day the tradition of *wuon* evokes the power and wealth enjoyed at Baimla. In addition, the Kemesrar migration from Baimla to become title-bearing leaders among the Nasfa appears to be constitutive of important cultural meanings. It is important, however, to point out that Imyan do not suggest that they want the restoration of the kingdom of Sailolof or the sultanate of Tidore. They use the old historical connections to mediate the perceived divide between the earth and sky. Jesus' Kingdom will restore this state of affairs to the situation in the Garden of Eden or at Baimla. As such, the old regional geography has assumed an altered significance as it has been incorporated within larger political units.

Current ideas about the Woloin tower and *wuon* rituals also arise from representations of the Indonesian state. Not surprisingly, Imyan equate *merdeka* ('freedom') with *berkat*. The millenarian *agama* ideals draw political support from *merdeka*, the foundation of the 1945 proclamation of Indonesian independence, the speeches of Sukarno, the first president, and the OPM. There is a widespread (and erroneous) idea among Irianese that Sukarno was banished to the internment camps in the Boven-Digoel area in then Netherlands New Guinea (see Salim 1980: 9). Often within the context of discussions about *agama*, Imyans elaborate on this story and suggest that Sukarno managed to

escape from the camp and walked to the Bintuni Gulf in order to get powerful things from Babo. As Yopi Krimadi explained, Sukarno got a Garuda and a *beringin* (banyan) tree. The Garuda and the banyan tree both figure in the seal of the Indonesian republic to symbolise the Pancasila State ideology:

Yesterday I spoke to my father in law. He told me about Sukarno. He said that he got it all from here. He dug it from a pool near Babo. The well has very clear water and next to it stands a *beringin* tree. The freedom fighter [*pejuang*] dug and found something that forced him to leave Irian. He thus took it away. He dug up the Garuda bird and the *beringin* tree. When Sukarno found these, he took them to Java in order to exert his strength to proclaim independence on 17 August 1945.

By using the force of the Garuda and the *beringin*, the freedom fighter proclaimed independence from the Netherlands. Thus, the freedom of the Indonesian State was established because of the power from Irian. Therefore, Irian was deprived of powerful resources. The Garuda is known in Imyan as Klen Tadyi or ‘mighty bird’ [*klen kohok*]. This bird is known to spread good news that is infallibly predictive, just like Klen Tadyi revealed *wuon* knowledge to Bauk.

Yopi Krimadi, May 1995, Tape 30B: 482-590

The powers necessary to establish Indonesian independence thus originated from Irian Jaya. If Papuans would still have access to them, that means if they had the same *ilmu* as used by Sukarno, it would be easy for them to become independent. That Klen Tadyi now figures in the national symbol of Pancasila proves to Imyan that all of Java’s powers are based on powers from Irian Jaya cleverly used by Javanese who apparently know how to successfully communicate with *ni mlasa*.

This again shows how Imyan perceive their loss of control over their *ni mlasa* whose powers are used elsewhere. The main concern expressed in the *agama* tradition, forming the trigger behind its coming into being, is the search for ways in which the ancient sacredness of their land as expressed in its relation with the kingdom of Sailolof and the powers of *wuon* can be restored, ideally

through the return of Jesus Christ or the bridging of the gap between mankind and the *ni mlasa*, the unification of earth and sky.

Characteristic of salvation as perceived by Imyan people is that it will prevail here and in the near future, not at some unknowable time and unknowable other world. This new order is seen as a state where first of all people live peacefully together, without conflicts, quarrels and disputes. Salvation thus means a return to an earlier state of the world when Papuans were wealthy and possessed all the knowledge which is now successfully used by Dutch, Europeans, Americans and Indonesians to become rich and prosperous. The order in the world will be restored and Irian Jaya will be God's dwelling place again where He will live amid his chosen people. After this era of prosperity and freedom from concern Judgement Day will come.

Moreover, Imyans believe that resistance or pro-independence movements designated as OPM, will succeed in their struggle for political freedom and the formation of the independent state of West Papua. In his work among the Me of Southwest Irian Jaya, Giay observed that young Me join the OPM thinking that the head of this new state will be the anti-Christ (1995: 238). Imyan, in contrast, take the view that Jesus Christ will perform this role. He will bring wealth and prosperity to West Papua and He will re-establish the order in the world. People refer to this order in terms of Toror or Baimla, when Papuans still possessed all the knowledge and power and were at the centre of the world.

The ideas about loss of essential knowledge and wisdom in the story about Olinado resemble the themes about original fault or transgression in well-known Melanesian messianic or cargo cult stories (see Lindstrom 1993). Just as the Biak ancestors rejected Manarmakeri (Manseren Koreri), the itchy old man who departed to the West to teach white people how to become rich (Kamma 1972: 37-49), Imyan hold their ancestors responsible for letting Olinado go away, for the ignorance of those who built the Tower of Babel, and for the destructive *lait*.¹⁵ The misery of the Imyan people is the result of the stupidity of their

15. Oosterwal (1963: 7) reports that among the Aurauwedj of the Mamberamo area, people believe that their ancestors insulted Djemwé, 'the owner of the pigs', by dancing

ancestors, particularly of those women engaged in *lait*. In particular in reflections by men, the past is depicted as a space of male power and *wuon* knowledge destroyed by the barbarous practices of women. Only *wuon*, in the context of *agama*, can restore *berkat* to the Imyan.

The concept of *berkat* refers to items of local wealth such as sago, pigs, and exotic wealth (*kain timur*). As Lattas (1998: xi) explains, the Tok Pisin word *kago* refers to all sorts of European commodities (cargo) and the alterity of the world of commodity production that is generally expressed in terms of a millenarian utopia. Among the Imyan, ‘cargo’ finds expression in the Malay words *berkat*, *selamat*, and *merdeka*.¹⁶ The first two words come from Christian discourse, but share political connotations with the word *merdeka*.

Agama thus contains a strong political agenda. This is most clearly pronounced during the yearly commemoration on 5 February of the missionary heroes Carl W. Ottow and Johann Gottlob Geissler and the local commemoration of the arrival of Flassy in Haha (see Chapter 5). Imyan relate the event to the glorification of their territory as distinct from national Indonesian identity (compare Young 1997). People like Tonis are convinced that access to the *berkat* of political independence of West Papua can only be obtained through a creative combination of Christian lore and *wuon* rituals. Their utopian *agama* vision for political change challenges the current power system which leaves the Imyan feeling powerless, undervalued, and discriminated against in the Indonesian nation-state. The enthusiasm for *agama* thus also follows from the opposition of a Christian community of Papuans to Indonesia’s Islamic majority and the pervasive state bureaucracy (compare Erari 1994).

and singing at daytime, while Djemwé had told them to dance at night because at daytime people eat pigs. Similar to Klen Tadyi, Djemwé is the owner of all animals and determines when and who is going get a share of that wealth.

16. Pim Schoorl (1996: 255) notes that Muyu people of South New Guinea were concerned over access to *pusaka* (inheritable cloths) during a raid of men from out-of-the-way territories on villages and settlements that were already under government and church control in the mid-1950s. Lagerberg (1979: 66) describes the flaring up of the Koreri-movement in the Biak-Numfor area as a movement in which both immaterial goods and *barang* (‘cargo’) play a role.

By blending biblical and local narratives and relating them to pre-colonial, colonial, and neo-colonial situations, Imyan articulate relationships between people and their spiritual ground, different neighbouring cultures, and local and authoritative visions of their history (compare Goldman, Duffield, and Ballard 1998: 6). The expression of Imyan identity in terms of their old relations with the sultanate of Tidore reflects a dialectic between the meanings of regional history and wider, more recent, historical processes. In reflections on both the old regional system and the current global system, *wuon* provides the Imyan with their most comprehensive sense of identity.

Agama reiterates this as it relates in significant ways to *wuon* and is appealing because it has a different status from original Christianity and other national Indonesian religions. The emphasis on *wuon* in the *agama* tradition finds expression in first lessons about God's creation of the world and stories about true prophets (*nabi*). Evangelism by white missionaries in Irian Jaya, the Gospels and the Book of Revelation reveal the current circumstances of Imyan life, and the future.

As indicated in Chapter 5, male *gereja* discourse wants that the pre-Christian world was a time of darkness when women practised evil such as poisoning and killing people through *lait*. These practices threatened Christian charity (*kasih*) and, consequently, women are considered sinful and expected to end up in hell. Like *gereja*, *agama*, through further emphasising the opposition between *wuon* and *lait*, marks the current male witch-hunt as a way of dominating women and reasserting male control over the world.

Moreover, during the first ten years after the transfer of Irian Jaya to Indonesia in 1963, Imyan, like many other Irianese, witnessed the brutal use of force by the Indonesian military. Some suggest that the brave Imyan heroes were able to resist these forces because of the strength they gained from *wuon*. The bloody post-colonial period reminds Imyan that any overt talk about the OPM, the death of Arnold Ap, the 1996 hostage taking at Mapnduma, local forms of organised resistance possibly with arms, or public criticism of the Indonesian government might lead to harsh disciplinary measures from the military.

However, not all voices were silenced. Being an officially sanctioned domain, Imyan feel free to express their discontent with the current inequality in the world under the guise of *agama*. Moreover, through labelling their revolutionary *agama* with a term that relates to official *agama*, one of the pillars of the Pancasila, they seem to have found a way to preserve and reproduce pre-Christian beliefs and practices under the guise of the precepts of Pancasila.

