

## ***Conclusion***

### **Knowledge, Concerns, and Practice**

With this thesis I want to contribute to the enquiry into how people distinguish between different sets of meanings and different modes of activity as they shape their understandings through the enactment, reproduction, and invention of meanings. A key theme throughout the thesis is the emphasis on tracing the emergence and the historical trajectories of the categories that come to the fore when Imyan discuss their own society, as well as identifying the historical process in which the different are shaped in the ongoing re-evaluations by local people themselves.

As outlined in Chapter 1, in order to recognise both the specific histories of Imyan categories and the internal complexity of Imyan society, I consider it fruitful to see the categories as referring to ‘traditions of knowledge’, after Fredrik Barth’s anthropology of knowledge, developed in *Cosmologies in the Making* (1987) and further elaborated in *Balinese Worlds* (1993). Certain key categories derived from historical streams and the local innovative genius can come to represent a set of meanings and become indigenous categories of objectified forms of culture and develop as traditions of knowledge in the ongoing process of signification. Recognising these cultural dynamics allowed me to show that cultural constructions among the Imyan are ordered on the basis of interacting traditions of knowledge.

Recent anthropological studies show a growing sensitivity to cultural constructions of local people themselves, in interactions within local communities as well as between these communities and the larger world (Barth 1993, Borofsky 1987, Gewertz and Errington 1991, Harrison 1990, Kulick 1992, Otto 1991). At the same time, studies of discourse about experience are becoming widespread (George 1996, Hirsch 1990, Tsing 1993, Weiner 1992), and in attempts to underpin both approaches, analyses of historical, pre-colonial,

post-colonial, and neo-colonial entanglement become more sophisticated (Ballard 1995, Biersack 1995, Forth 1998, Foster 1995b, Keesing 1992, Wiessner and Tumu 1998).<sup>1</sup>

Despite their wide variety of theoretical, thematic, and regional focuses, many of these studies tend to easily accommodate each other; most authors agree that one approach does not preclude the other. Serious engagement with the transformations in the colonial situation and critical reflections on post-colonial inequalities and their effects upon marginalised communities, often go hand in hand with detailed studies of metaphors, local views on time and change, ethno-histories, concepts of knowledge, minds, and agency. Nevertheless, Foster (1995a) sees that there are distinct analytical approaches that have emerged in the anthropology of Melanesia since the early 1990s. Foster writes:

One of these approaches, which I call the New Melanesian Ethnography (after Josephides 1991), highlights fundamental differences between Melanesian and Western presuppositions about social reality; that is, it argues for the recognition of radical alterity, of cultural differences on a scale, say, of the Dumontian distinction between *homo hierarchicus* and *homo aequalis*. In so doing, it constructs an opposition between Us and Them in order to criticize a mode of anthropological inquiry unselfconsciously predicated upon Our presuppositions. The other approach, the New Melanesian History, highlights similarities between Melanesians and Western social realities, similarities generated out of shared histories of colonialism and commerce. In so doing, it deconstructs dichotomies between Us and Them in order to criticize a mode of anthropological inquiry that emphasizes (even essentializes) the otherness of the Other and de-emphasizes the contingent effects of time (history) and power (colonial and capitalist domination) (1995a: 2-3).<sup>2</sup>

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1. Knauft (1993: 45-117) presents a useful overview of attempts to historicise representations of Melanesian societies, thereby also reflecting on the anthropology of West New Guinea.

2. New Melanesian Ethnography is exemplified in the work of Marilyn Strathern and

In what he labels the New Melanesian Anthropology, Foster wants to fuse both approaches in order to arrive at an anthropology that relates internal cultural complexities of the society under study (taking into account specific local realities) to the society's historical engagement with outsiders (traders, raiders, governments, tourists). As indicated above, numerous ethnographers have tried to do this and Foster's juxtaposition of the two approaches seems to me a bit forced. Nevertheless, the simplicity of the comparison provides a fascinating approach to the materials Foster collected during fieldwork in the Tanga Islands, New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea. It is Foster's analysis rather than his juxtaposition of the two approaches that points to what might be missing from the anthropology of the region.

Below I first discuss Foster's analysis of the categories of *kastam* and *bisnis* in the Tangan case. Then I compare his approach with that of Otto who has studied the politics of tradition on Baluan, Manus Province, Papua New Guinea. The comparison of the two cases hints at the variety of ways in which conceptual divisions (and related cultural spheres or traditions of knowledge) may develop.<sup>3</sup> Similarities between colonial and post-colonial circumstances in these two Papua New Guinea societies also have created a certain degree of uniformity. Situated in the Indonesian and formerly Dutch half of New Guinea, the development of Imyan traditions of knowledge may at first sight appear to be altogether different. Nevertheless, there are remarkable similarities that are due to the fact that in all three cases we are dealing with villagers living in an out-of-the-way place in the Pacific and who are concerned with the efficacy of knowledge needed for the successful performance of ritual and for the containment of declining moral standards. The very negotiability of moral standards and the difficulty of the search for efficacious knowledge is, as I will argue, the main factor behind the ongoing changes in the field of categories and the shifting meanings of the

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Roy Wagner; the writings of Nicholas Thomas, James Carrier, Deborah Gewertz, and Frederick Errington, among others, stand for New Melanesian History (Foster 1995a: 3).

3. See Otto and Borsboom (1997) for a comparative discussion of the diversity of internal cultural divisions in the Pacific, and in particular how local notions of the religious have come to be expressed as a discrete domain.

traditions which they refer to.

### **Two Contrasting Domains among Tangan Islanders**

Comparable to what, in Barthian terms, I call traditions of knowledge in this thesis, Foster distinguishes domains of activities which Tangans see as distinct from each other. The most central of these domains appears to be *kastam*, ‘a word and label self-consciously used by Tangans to describe mortuary feasting and exchange as well as to differentiate these activities as a domain distinct from other domains: *gavman* [‘government’], *lotu* [‘church and Christianity’], and *bisnis* [‘commodity production’]’ (1995a: 227). Without paying much attention to the interactions with *lotu* and *gavman*, however, Foster traces the emergence of the category of *kastam* in a history of the commoditisation of Tangan society, ‘the always variable and sometimes forcible process by which local people and their products enter into wider relations of commodity production and consumption’ (1995a: 6).

Foster argues that recent Tangans’ reflections on their mortuary practices are not just yet another case of ‘invention of tradition’ as the outcome of heightened cultural self-consciousness in a process of confrontation with an external (colonial) other, but also occur as the result of transformations in local political and economic relations. Evolving conflicts within Tangan society led to reconfigurations of the field of cultural categories in terms of which mortuary practices are locally undertaken and given meaning. These reconfigurations resulted in the categorical opposition between *kastam* and *bisnis*, the latter term denoting business and commercial activities, largely comprising copra production.

From the mid-1930s onwards, Tangans were drawn into regular trade in copra, commencing with the establishment of a coconut plantation at which locals were employed to work (1995a: 51-52). In particular in the late 1950s and 1960s, the organised production of copra led to changes in the local economy in terms of big-men politics. Senior big-men, appointed by the government (as *luluai* or *tultul*) and empowered to organise native labour for government

purposes, commanded a work force of younger men and women to process copra from palms owned by these big-men. Alongside massive expansion of plantings, small producers were able to sell copra by the pound to local traders or to the plantations. All this made the individual households, which became the main units of production, much more autonomous than before.

Among other factors which Foster (1995a: 57) identifies in this shift, of particular importance was that the village officials lost control over the channels of labour recruitment and when they died, their successors proved unable to wield effective authority over the first generation of school-educated, business-wise men. When in 1969, Tangans were allowed to elect councillors for the local government council, they voted for schoolteachers employed by the Catholic Mission. ‘Their choice signalled the decisive dissociation of the role of big-man from the realm of “government” or “law” (*gavman* or *lo*)’ (1995a: 57). The inflation of the power of the big-men and the creation of new roles of *bisnisman* (businessmen) and *kaunsel* (councillor) corresponded to the emerging distinctions among *kastam*, *bisnis*, and *lo*.<sup>4</sup>

*Lotu* had its representatives as well, the foreign missionary (*Pater*) and the local catechists (*katekis*), comparable to the former Dutch *pendeta* and the local *gurus* among the Imyan (see Chapter 5). By becoming a major buyer of copra and seller of consumer commodities, the Mission reinforced the autonomy of households in copra production. This led to a reconfiguration of the older

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4. Foster’s discussion of *lo* seems to suggest that Tangans’ understanding of this domain comprises such things as government, regulation, and taxes, in short, pretty much straightforward ideas about the ways of official government. Showing a much more flexible notion of *lo* and also indicating the changing meanings of this domain, Lattas (1998: xvii, 36-37, 42) reports that for the New Britain Bush Kaliai *lo* may refer to the manners and customs through which local and non-local people organise a way of life, to people’s habits, to local or foreign ritual obligations, as well as to local rules, official laws, forms of order, and a variety of ways of the government. A fine example of how domains can overlap and inform each other is Lattas’ description of the case of Censure, whose resistance to the state and the church was one of claiming to have more effective ways of making Papua New Guineans resemble whites. Censure held the true *lo* of Papua New Guinea, which had come up from the Wind of God rather than from the transformative pedagogic projects of government, school, missions, and development (1998: 198, 212, 326 n. 21).

category of *lotu*, comprising ‘church and Christianity’ and Tangan perception of the domains of *gavman*, *lotu*, *kastam* and *bisnis* as separate and ideally non-overlapping domains (1995a: 61). While Foster does not detail the development of the domains of *lo* and *lotu*, except for a few quotes from informants, he explains the tendency of seeing domains as ideally separate on the basis of a lengthy discussion of the opposition between *bisnis* and *kastam* (1995a: Chapters 4 to 7).<sup>5</sup> In particular a detailed and ethnographically rich analysis of mortuary feasts indicates the main ingredients of *kastam*.

Mortuary rites are the central focus of Tangan *kastam* and are ideologically associated with matrilineal identity. This ideal entails that for the undertaking of mortuary feasts collective action comes through the co-operation of closely related matrilineages. After a description of this matrilineal system and the related mortuary practices that construct collective individuals out of composite persons (compare Strathern 1988), Foster goes on to suggest that certain tensions in the system have become inflected in the context of commoditisation. For example, lineage members may expect to receive remittances from migrant labourers, while *bisnis*-wise fathers regard remittances as filial recognition of paternal care and resent the demands of their children’s lineage (1995a: 90). With regard to land use, according to *kastam*, any lineage member is entitled to reside and garden on lineage land, but with the advent of *bisnis*, rights to harvest coconut palms derive primarily from particular egocentric and household-based relations (1995a: 88-89).

Moreover, the household, through its association with *bisnis*, has become associated with restricted consumption deriving from the expenditure of almost all cash income on coveted consumables. In contrast, *kastam* relates to traditional consumption, the ‘free’ distribution of garden produce and pork at mortuary feasts (1995a: 91). Most crucial is that through the successful hosting of feasts, a

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5. For example, Foster cites a man who criticises the missionary in 1985 for devoting too much time to *bisnis* and not enough time to *lotu*, to suggest that people see the two as discrete activities (1995a: 61). Questions arise to what extent this man is judging norms and values provided within one domain by the criteria of validation that are internal to another domain and whether his view is embraced in other contexts or by the population at large (see below).

lineage 'finishes' its own deceased, realises enduring bonds, and emphasises lineage-based social reproduction. The *bisnis*-related household is, in contrast, a particular and temporary realisation of bonds.

On the basis of further analysis of the concepts of continuity and social reproduction, the key concepts, values, and objects that play a role in mortuary feasts, in the conclusion of the book, Foster constructively returns to the observation that through the process of commoditisation, *kastam* and *bisnis* have become separated. He aims to offer an example of the kinds of questions and analyses the New Melanesian Anthropology would engage. His recounting of the history of commoditisation of Tanga society, an example of New Melanesian History, is juxtaposed with the analysis of mortuary rites, illustrating the concerns of New Melanesian Ethnography. To do that, he makes a distinction between two modes of social reproduction: 'replication' and 'multiplication'.

Foster argues that the need for replication in Tanga has conditioned the historical process of commoditisation and thus encouraged the separation between *kastam* and *bisnis* (1995a: 228). In short, the thread of his argument is as follows. Replication is based on the logic of keeping-while-giving (compare Weiner 1985, 1992, and Munn 1986) that emphasises the return of valuables previously put into circulation and limits the proliferation of relations engendered through exchange. With its undercurrent of retention, the restricted circulation of objects ensures some control over the process of social reproduction as it supports the non-hierarchical, complementary relations in a form that is constant and enduring. Being characteristic of the traditional form of Tanga mortuary practices, the ideal of social reproduction has become the key meaning of the domain of *kastam*.

Multiplication involves the logic of dispersal that is typical of several Highland societies such as Melpa, Enga, and Mendi (compare Godelier 1986 and Godelier and Strathern 1991). In these societies people are not motivated to keep but to give; there is a drive for prestige created by individual ambition and inter-group rivalry that informs competition both among living men and between humans and their deceased agnates. The antithesis this forms with replication is the basis for Foster's observation that in the Tanga case, recognition of a

cognate distinction between ‘gift’ and ‘commodities’ is central to the distinct classification of *kastam* and *bisnis*. By distinguishing between replication and multiplication Foster narrows down the meanings entailed in both domains. Foster places replication within the sphere of the ‘gift’ and multiplication within the sphere of ‘commodities’. This Maussian dichotomy then appears to relate directly to Tangan moral standards.

In his final reflection on the history of commoditisation (1995a: 243-48), Foster shows that big-men who were initially oriented towards replication began to draw upon and developed a set of social relations outside the bounds of identical exchange: they became like Highland big-men by side-stepping the constraining exchange obligations and introducing hierarchy into social relations. Next, the end of indenture and the increase of households engaging autonomously in copra trade, led to the inflation of the big-men status. Commodity relations, however, continued to refigure local social relations and to engender hierarchy, but now outside the *kastam* sphere of the big-men. *Kastam* ‘evolved into the forum *par excellence* for identical exchange’;

The emergence of *kastam* as a separate domain of activity - a domain that is more and more becoming self-consciously identified by Tangans with a local Tangan identity and, as a result, perhaps deliberately conserved in a way hitherto unimagined - was premised upon a process of commoditization that has transformed Tangan matriliney and created new forms of household social organization.... As a result of this process, *kastam* now denotes for Tangans a form of sociality that differs from that associated with the domain of *bisnis* (a domain itself associated with Europeans) (1995a: 244).

But if the image of the autonomous collective individual (or matrilineage) constructed in mortuary rites evokes ideas about the autonomous and threatening (European) businessman, it seems to me that more facets of the altering power relations resulting from specific interactions of Tangan society with the global, as well as changing relations within Tangan society have contributed to the

emergence of the domains of *kastam* and *bisnis*. Moreover, expressions of local autonomy may also be associated with *lotu*, similar to the way Imyan distinguish themselves from the threatening Islamic Indonesians through stressing certain aspects of *gereja*, in particular as this tradition refers to the coming of the first missionaries (see Chapter 5).

As for ideas of propriety, *kastam* and *lotu* may support each other or mutually inform the scope of their meaning, and together undermine authority based on the domains of *bisnis* or *gavman*. In that respect, Christian charity may well be lined up with the ideal of replication and lasting relationships, as well as with the dead. In other contexts, *lotu* may be seen to contribute to the individualisation of society and thus to threaten *kastam* and hence Tengan identity. These are but a few of the crucial aspects of the diversity and variation in the expression of the categories that underlie the dynamics of their emergence, to which Foster pays insufficient attention.

As I have tried to indicate in this thesis, the relationships between domains or traditions of knowledge is more than up front dichotomies, even though they often come to the fore as such in local people's explanations. I agree with Foster that the emergence of cultural categories should be understood by locating synchronic analyses of people's practices and ideas within the context of historical circumstances. But by abstracting from people's practice and by failing to place the development of *kastam* in the context of the other domains, Foster does not fully succeed in his ambitious attempt to integrate a rich analysis of mortuary rites into an incomplete analysis of the interactions between the different domains.

As a result, Foster's final analysis suffers from too narrow a view of the dynamics of domains and too much emphasis on the antagonism between *kastam* and *bisnis*. It does not become clear in which contexts and from which points of view references are made to these primary frames of reference. As they constitute important orientations of Tengan, a description and analysis of the uses of *kastam* and *bisnis* in people's practice, illustrating how the categories relate to people's concerns, would have clarified matters. Now that the analysis remains confined to the distinction of ideal types, we do not come to clearly understand the cultural logic of the different domains in the way they interact with each other, in which context they overlap and how some domains may gain hegemony over others or be undermined by meanings contained in other domains.

In his review of Foster's book, Otto (1997: 532) reaches the same conclusion: 'A proper integration of the new Melanesian ethnography and the new Melanesian history would require an analysis of the (changing) practice of cultural logic, and, in particular, an analysis of the competing cultural logics and their mutual effect in the practice of daily life'. In his own analysis of the emergence and dynamics of domains on the island of Baluan, Otto (1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c) presents a more encompassing view of the dynamics of domains than Foster. On Baluan, people subdivide their social experience into the three domains of *kastam*, *lotu*, and *gavman*.

### **Three Interacting Domains on Baluan**

The dynamics of the three domains on Baluan come clearly to the fore in a conflict between three brothers in the village of Lipan, demonstrating that there are several paths to obtain status and authority (Otto 1991: Chapter 1; 1992a). Otto shows that these paths relate to different sets of institutions and different idioms in which to talk about these institutions. As among Tangans and Imyans, Baluans divide their social reality in different semantic spheres or domains. Placing the uses of the categories that refer to these domains in the struggle for leadership between the three brothers, allows Otto to demonstrate that the distinctions between *kastam*, *lotu*, and *gavman* are ways in which Baluan people reflect on their own society and that, most crucially, differences in people's concerns lead to contrasting articulations of the domains.

In comparison with the Tangan case, the Baluan domain of *kastam* is very wide (Otto 1992a: 271): besides traditional ceremonial exchanges and leadership practices it includes traditional rights to land and sea, agricultural and fishing practices, belief about illness and the power of spirits, as well as traditional ways of solving conflicts. Similarly, *gavman* also comprises a wide variety of meanings referring to all levels of government and its representatives, judiciary, and village courts, as well as health centres, development projects, banks, and in its widest meanings it may be identified with all aspects of modern development (compare *pemerintah* among the Imyan which also refers to *pembangunan*).

While also introduced by whites, *lotu* is clearly distinguished from *gavman* because it is seen as continuous with traditional ways of communication with the unseen world (comparable to how Imyan see striking parallels between Christian doctrine - *gereja/agama* - and the traditional *wuon* lore).

Otto shows that from the point of view of functionality the domains overlap: ‘Although there certainly is some specialisation, similar functions are addressed by the institutions of different domains.... This functional overlap occasions many potential and actual conflicts’ (1992a: 274).

In the story of three brothers Ngat, as *gavman* representative, came into conflict with his elder and his younger brother because he felt that they infringed upon his domain. Ngi, the traditional leader, did not accept his younger brother’s authority to decide on community tasks, when he disagreed with the latter’s judgement on priorities, and consequently he was taken to court by his own sibling. Aiwai, the youngest, was publicly put in his place as a church leader by Ngat during a village meeting. The conflicts arose because there is an overlap between the institutional domains as far as functions are concerned. Both traditional and church leadership involve the organisation of communal activities and a sharp distinction with community work as organised by the community government can only be fought out in practice (1992a: 276).

Departing from these kinds of contemporary articulations of domains in the village of Lipan, Otto (1992a: 277-79) traces the emergence of the categories in the colonial history of Baluan.<sup>6</sup> *Gavman* was introduced when Manus people accepted colonial rule around 1911 and village leaders were appointed as *luluais* who had to perform administrative duties. After Papua New Guinea gained independence in 1975, the sphere of *gavman* rapidly extended further through the establishment of community governments and, due to an increasing number of

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6. In his Ph.D. thesis (1991), Otto recounts the historical trajectories of Baluan domains in more detail and elaborates detailed case studies on the historical interactions between the domains on the local level.

paid politicians, *gavman* came to dominate the commodity sector of the Baluan economy (in contrast to Tanga where copra production dominates commodity production resulting in the emergence of the domain *bisnis*).

The advent of *lotu* began after pacification. After some initial reluctance towards missionaries, mass conversions took place in the 1920s, once men began to think that the missionaries possessed a powerful form of knowledge. In line with traditional ways of obtaining status and influence, the followers of missionaries had found an alternative route to leadership, a route that was also open to men of low ascribed status (1992a: 278). Soon, however, disappointment with the failure of the churches to bring economic development materialised after the Second World War in the form of several cults, notably the well organised Paliau Movement.<sup>7</sup> The movement related to both *gavman* and *lotu* and was incorporated into the local government and led to the establishment of an independent church. Presently, *lotu* occupies an important part of the lives of Baluan people and, like *gereja* among the Imyan, it is associated with spiritual and community well being.

*Kastam* initially emerged on Baluan in the process of a growing awareness of cultural differences among indentured Manus labourers who saw that people from other areas possessed different identities. Under indenture, the culturally diversified Manus people began to stress common characteristics, showed commonality, and formed inter-ethnic friendship all labelled by 'our ways of doing things'. Crucially, the labourers also came to perceive themselves as belonging to one group opposed to the white masters, resulting on Manus in a negative evaluation of indigenous culture, especially in the Paliau Movement which, after the Second World War, advocated a complete break with the past. Therefore, *kastam* referred negatively to 'the ways of the native', opposed to the 'ways of the white man' as objectified positively in terms of *lotu* and *gavman* promising economic prosperity and better lives (Otto 1992a: 278-79).

Interestingly, while the word *bisnis* is known on Baluan, the term does not evoke a separate sphere of experience or a separate set of institutions. Otto

(1992a: 272) argues that it is an ambiguous category because it is used both in the context of modern development and in the context of *kastam*. In contrast to the Tangan case, it seems that on Baluan *bisnis* has not (yet) developed into a domain that supports a contrast with the autonomy of traditional ceremonial exchange or ritual practices that ensure reproduction. Otto argues that this is due to the fact that cash economy on Baluan is based on remittances rather than on local commerce and commodity production, or, in Foster's terms, that there is no felt need for Baluans to morally distinguish between replication and multiplication.

In a reflection on subsequent recountings of the Paliau Movement in the late 1980s, Otto (1991: 293-94) writes that people referred most often to *gavman*. Most informants emphasised Paliau's success in emancipating the local people by giving them their own government, thereby fostering self-respect and a sense of agency. References to *lotu* appear more rarely. Those considering the events from the point of view of belief accentuated that Paliau was the source of true knowledge. 'They provided many examples of the efficacy of this knowledge in the past as well as in the present' (1991: 293). Others, arguing from a more politically oriented point of view, would play down the importance of the Movement's religious aspect. Interestingly, *kastam* was conspicuous in its absence from such discourse. Supporters of the Movement ignored Paliau's rejection of tradition and adherents of the Seventh Day Adventist church that strongly opposes tradition deliberately avoided the term. For followers of a recent revival of the Movement, then called Makasol (see Otto 1991: 265-293 and 1992c), the issue of *kastam* in the history of Paliau was most unsettling because it contradicted some central tenets of their belief.

Official Makasol ideology had appropriated *kastam* as a symbol to differentiate themselves from groups that associated with the sitting government and the other churches. In ways similar to the representations of *agama* among the Imyan that oppose *pemerintah* and *gereja*, many Baluans distinguished between Makasol and *gavman* in terms of pro-*kastam* and anti-*kastam*. In that respect, the Makasol movement further marked differences between *lotu* and

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7. See Otto (1991: 150-181; 1992b), Schwartz (1962), and Mead (1956).

*gavman*, and brought *kastam* into this field as a positive symbol. Priority however was given to *lotu*, because it most clearly relates to Baluan people's concern with efficacy and a belief that knowledge, if true, can successfully contribute to the valued aims of life: health, longevity, power and wealth (Otto 1991: 122).

In a manner reminiscent both of the way in which men in the 1920s men had attempted to assert their status by allying with the missionaries and, more recently, the tactics of the three brothers in trying to secure and increase their influence by promoting the domain that each stand for, in the early 1960s some Baluan men openly staged major exchanges along traditional lines. They wanted to express dissatisfaction with the new social order and wanted to reconfirm their traditional kin ties and statuses that were turned upside down by the Paliau Movement. They were successful, and soon more people supported their point of view and *kastam* became more popular as a way of expressing local identity. Of crucial importance in this process was that the colonial state adopted a law in 1963 which recognised 'custom' in a variety of legal contexts including land ownership.

Further contributing to the growing importance attached to *kastam*, schoolteachers were encouraged to invite village elders to instruct children in traditional songs, dances, etc. in the early 1970s. But, as Otto (1992a: 279) argues, the most important influence came from migrant workers in urban areas who got involved in nationalist discourse. Rooted in the need to define a national identity in the context of independence and based on a growing political awareness in a widening horizon of the state and the world at large, migrants took ideas back to the villages that encouraged the proliferation of expressions of indigenous identity in terms of *kastam*. At the time of Otto's fieldwork from 1986 to 1988, *kastam* appeared to have become a well-established domain connected with land ownership, political authority, health, religious belief, social obligations, etc. 'It thus cuts across the sociological division of a society into political, economic and religious systems. *Kastam* comprises all these aspects' (1992a: 279).

This brief sketch of the emergence of domains on Baluan indicates the dynamic nature of this cultural division. Among other factors, the defence by individuals of those domains which relate to their concerns seems to be a major impetus behind reconfigurations in the field of the domains (Otto 2000). To effect such changes one needs to be able to impose one's ideas and ideals upon the community as a whole. That is, it is always crucial to appeal to other people's concerns and to communicate in terms that are largely shared by others. Without support, a domain ceases to exist; with sufficient support and concerted effort, in particular by influential people, new domains can come into existence, obviously only in opposition to or in support of already existing domains. *Agama* among Imyan provides an example of the latter, whereas the three Baluan brothers' politics of domains shows parallels with the struggles for power between the two camps in the village of Haha (Chapters 5 and 6).

### **People's Concerns**

Otto arrives at a conclusive understanding of the recent historical development of the domains of *kastam*, *gavman* and *lotu* on Baluan that acknowledges political, economic and demographic developments as well as the dynamics of social and cultural changes through people's conceptual and practical innovations. He convincingly shows how ongoing negotiations of meaning at the level of local communities, reflecting local struggles as well as contingencies present in a world that extends beyond the community such that at certain times and in certain contexts, domains are edited out or come to overlap with other domains, and lead to the emergence of new domains.

The richness and complexity of the uses and function of a discrete cultural realm, on the other hand, are beautifully illustrated by Foster's painstaking analysis of Tangan *kastam*. It shows the central focus of traditional Tangan life that evolves around safeguarding matrilineal identity and social reproduction. Tangan attempts to 'seal off' *kastam* from *bisnis* entail a deliberate attempt to preserve an arena for the social constitution of positively-valued relations and

identities (Foster 1995a: 17). Although Foster's analysis fails to show the extent to which *kastam* has developed and functions in relation to other domains, he clearly shows the need that Tangans feel to support *kastam* in an attempt to control knowledge.

The sequence of Tangan mortuary rites undertaken by the lineage of the deceased comprises a series of communications characterised by a dialectic of concealment and revelation (1995a: 207-12). This dialectic conditions the circulation of shells as exchange transactions through which feast givers constitute and communicate knowledge about themselves. Feast organisers shroud their plans in secrecy in order to challenge a host lineage by contributing large, not easily matched gifts, and to effectively display their lineage's competence. With respect to the latter, secrecy enables feast organisers to publicise their plans in a measured and regulated matter (1995a: 211).

Foster argues that from this perspective 'Tangan sociality assumes the general form of eliciting revelations from others *and* making revelations in response to the elicitations of others. Only through and in display - of which exchange, the transfer of objects, is a privileged instance - do persons and things become definitely intertwined and, hence, social identities valorized' (1995a: 209). Power is thus manifested through control over consumption and knowledge, strategies that contrast with uncontrolled consumption (*bisnis*) characterised by gluttony and hoarding. As Foster takes this to be the crucial moral dimension of the contrast that Tangans draw between *kastam* and *bisnis*, it leads to the construction of the difference between the autonomous collective individual constructed through mortuary rites and the threat of the irreversible expansionary networks of the businessman.

On Baluan, a concern with knowledge also plays a crucial role in the historical dynamics of the domains. An epistemology featuring secrecy and concealment through metaphor played an important role in the ideology of the Paliu Movement. There was also lively speculation concerning the true meanings of the images used by the church, and, when in the Second World War the American army appeared on the island with its enormous material wealth, the

idea that white people had been hiding something all along was hard to avoid. To a large extent Paliau crafted his career by claiming to be able to supply the knowledge which had been withheld by the whites (Otto 1991: 153-65 and 1992b: 437-38).<sup>8</sup>

In a way that is reminiscent of the Paliau Movement on Baluan advocating that ‘indigenous people had to organise themselves and work for themselves, because this was the only way they could achieve a prosperous and more equal society’ (Otto 1992b: 445), Haha villagers argue to keep mungbeans for themselves. I recall that Haha villagers’ renunciation of selling mungbeans to Indonesians and their emphasis on the importance of consumption for their own physical and mental strength reflects a turning away from the world of Indonesians. Illustrative of this is that the majority of Haha villagers tend to see work not as a moral duty in Christian or Pancasila terms, but rather as an important contribution to the construction of the self. Absolute autonomy is promised by *agama*, which expresses Imyan discontent with the current condition of inequality in the world in ways similar to the Tangan distinction between *kastam* and (Western) business. Significantly, *agama* stories do not mention *adat*, but emphasise the potential future achievements that can be gained through investigating *wuon*. In that sense, *agama* is not so much about a past sociality that it aims to recreate; instead, it seeks effective knowledge to reduce confusion and to work toward completion and oneness.

The change in perspective entailed in the *agama* tradition of knowledge revises the understanding of the Pancasila (the Garuda becomes an Imyan sky deity and loses its Javanese ancestral legacy) and opposes the Western view of development and God’s Word (technology and wealth come from Imyan and the

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8. Michael Taussig’s (1999) recent study of defacement demonstrates the extent to which (public) secrecy, which creates and maintains the gap between seen and unseen worlds, is the most powerful form of social knowledge. Compare Lattas’ (1998: 145-51) discussion of space as a tool of thought, where the multiplication of spatial varieties provides images for different vantage points in knowledge and thus for the problem of cultural difference. Among the Bush Kaliai of West New Britain, whites are believed to secretly visit the dead with aircraft, ships and submarines, and taking away not only the

Bible). From this perspective, Imyan problems in coping with *pemerintah* is partly a refusal of the meaning of *pembangunan* (based on ‘development’ and ‘technology’ that comes from Imyan and supporting the New Order state symbolised by the Garuda) and a reaction to the apathy that is observed by officials when they reflect on Imyan participation in projects. As the result of Imyan frustration with the untrue exchange that *pembangunan* offers and the incomprehensible and the postponed rewards of *gereja*, they attempt to restore a sense of agency.<sup>9</sup>

People generally refer to *adat* in order to relate to the ideals of co-operation for the staging of initiations and the organisation of gatherings and feasts for the exchange of cloths, as well as the pre-colonial collaborative work in the sago gardens. *Adat* thus stresses the need to bind people and in that respect it can be effectively used to found criticisms of *pemerintah* and *gereja* as they involve individualisation. From another perspective, *adat* denotes a form of sociality that is seen as necessary for the development of the village and paradoxically differentiates the community between progressives (adherent of *agama*, *wuon*, and *adat*) and conservatives (supporters of *gereja* and *pemerintah*).

As the result of the successful suppression of *kebudayaan* and local *adat* by the Indonesian government, in contrast to the active support of *kastam* by the Papua New Guinean government, through *agama* Imyan have found a way to conserve their identity by capitalising on the force given by the Pancasila ideology that privileges ‘world’ religions over indigenous ones. *Agama* creates a new kind of history centred around sins, the need to contain transgressions and reflecting a concern with sociality and the search for redemption. A variety of aspects from *wuon* and *gereja* are drawn upon to define sociality as premised on *wuon* and oneness with the unseen world where effective knowledge can be found. It presents completion, promises order, and opposes the threats of futures that are intricate. *Agama*, like *kastam* in many Papua New Guinea societies,

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cargo but also a secret position of knowledge (like *kahan* among the Imyan).

9. Compare Lattas (1998: 113) describing Bush Kaliai of West New Britain being critical of ‘the road belonging to business (*bisnis*)’ because they believe that their cargo story is more likely to deliver a European existence than development projects.

highlights the incompatibility of *gereja* and *pemerintah* with local practices and concerns.

In most cases, knowledge appears to be a main concern. Whites use Imyan resources given to them by Olinado. The Indonesians have been able to proclaim independence and to establish the Indonesian state organised around Pancasila because of the knowledge which Sukarno took from Irian. They claim that Pancasila is about Papuan resources and Imyan sky deities (Garuda = Klen Tadyi) and they fill up Christian doctrine with bits of *wuon* lore. Significantly, in stories about the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, the Saviour becomes the president of a free Papuan state sporting Indonesian military attire. As such Imyan occupy the space of a perceived ineffective and boring church liturgy and the space of a repressive regime. By occupying these spaces, Imyan reshape the world that is disciplined by these two institutions to form an alternative order that places Imyan in a central, autonomous, and powerful position. As the Christian Millennium promises redemption and the returning of power to Imyan, people try earnestly to live in accord with God's will. This morality, however, is a continuation of the moral behaviour demanded for the successful carrying out of (initiation) rituals. It thus stands in contrast to what church leaders and government officials suggest; namely, that good behaviour (that is, subservience to government and church politics) is needed to bring about development.

The parallels that Imyan observe between *agama* and *wuon*, and between *pemerintah* and *gereja*, should be read as an expression of the felt need for order (which *agama* promises) and the confusion brought about by *pemerintah* and *gereja*. There was not much need to test the forms of knowledge associated with the latter two traditions when Imyan first saw them as the sources of white men's wealth, efficiency, and power. This was sufficient to indicate the powers of these new concepts and related rituals. Relating these powers to *wuon* and the wealth inherent in the pre-colonial ritual landscape led to incorporation of *wuon* ideas into people's understandings of *agama*, *gereja*, and *pemerintah*. In the opposite direction, concepts from the new traditions became incorporated in reflections on *wuon* as its lore became depleted (with the dead of *na wuon*) and increasingly

important due to the growing disappointment about the accomplishments of the church and the government.

Such incompatibilities are manifold and there is no clear distinction that can be drawn that is similar to the incommensurability of *kastam* and *bisnis* as it appears in Foster's analysis. Imyan traditions of knowledge can overlap, largely because they were once integrated in previous traditions, and knowledge provided within a single tradition of knowledge are judged by the criteria of validation that are internal to that tradition and not necessarily embraced in other contexts or by the population at large (Barth 1993: 309). This observation stresses the need for proper integration of ethnographic analyses that focus on the changing realities (appearing as traditions of knowledge or domains) and the local dynamics of social life and its intersections with global developments.

### **Imyan Concerns and Traditions of Knowledge**

In the analysis of Imyan cultural divisions presented in this thesis I have traced certain crucial traditions of knowledge which are constructed differently on the basis of 'traditional' and more recent practices and ideologies that are historically shaped by people's experiences. I have tried to indicate that each tradition has its own cultural logic that depends on the meanings it is expected to convey in the practice of human interaction and how it is contrasted with other traditions to argue against existing ideas or to search for new meanings. I have therefore illustrated and emphasised how references to the tradition is interpreted by others and, most importantly, what it has in store for people who come to the traditions with certain concerns and to what extent it links with shared ideas and concerns.

That said, I hasten to add that I have not been able to properly integrate all facets of the Imyan traditions of knowledge. Instead, following Barth, I have set out to concentrate on people's daily concerns. For in order to become a set of shared meanings and to consolidate a position in people's thinking, a tradition of knowledge has to be deemed important, that is, crucial to the concerns of a community. Seeing certain categories turning up regularly in conversations and then relating these to the concerns of the speakers allowed me to identify the

dynamics of Imyan culture as outlined in this thesis.

I have highlighted personal, individual interests, and personal, group and community politics. This has shown that aspects of diversity and variation in traditions of knowledge have to do, to some extent, with the role of control and utilisation of knowledge. To employ knowledge successfully, by referring to traditions of knowledge which are deemed significant in certain contexts, requires certain skills of reasoning and styles of deploying one's thought processes. But, as I have discussed before, however different the ideas, concepts and ideals that are involved in the (re)interpretation of events, most of this occurs as a social process, forcing people to make use of public imagery and knowledge.

Following on from this emphasis on people's concerns, in the remainder of this conclusion I discuss how Imyan refer to different ontologies for the interpretation of events, not only to search for a degree of order, the ultimate truth, completion, or 'cargo', but also to settle relative claims to validity in the social process of negotiation. This implies that the unfolding of social life on the local level triggers the dynamics of traditions of knowledge among Imyan. I hark back to some of the described processes to sketching how the field of traditions continuously changes.

In local political struggles, traditions of knowledge are used to strengthen or undermine powerful positions of individuals and descent groups. The Meje fats regard themselves as more civilised than those who prefer to live in the sago groves for long periods of time or those who want to revive or seriously examine *wuon*. The latter group consists of the potential adherents of the flourishing new tradition of *agama* and are seen as threatening because they are inclined to escape the *pemerintah* and the *gereja* ways of running the *desa* and its *jemaat*. The debates between the moral and historical rights of leading the village between the 'Mejefat' and 'Kemesrar' factions also reflects the importance attached to group identity through origins, precedence, and *wuon* practices. *Desa Haha* has become not only a venue for political struggle between the Kemesrar and Meje fat factions, but also a critical site for reflection on co-operation and morality.

As Imyan struggle to reconcile the values of *pemerintah* and *gereja* with local values of good behaviour defined by *adat* and the balance between *wuon* (order) and *lait* (disorder), again in reflection upon the ways of newer traditions, the *desa* has become an important ‘self-conscious object of moral concern and political negotiation’ (Barker 1996: 212). The concerns relate to local ways as defined by *gereja*, *pemerintah*, *adat*, *wuon*, and *lait*, reflecting memories of past situations and traditional forms of co-operation and ideologies of morality and sociality. I present a final illustration to show how Imyan concern with sociality relates to struggles internal to society, gender differences and the influences of *gereja* and *pemerintah*.

After the church service on Sunday 15 January 1996, a group of Haha villagers began to discuss the attitude of the church council towards the question of whether one could swear to God upon the Bible as to the truth of an alleged use of death-dealing *lait*. The point at issue was the contrast between the ease with which *na wuon* could confirm such suspicion through a ritual investigation, and the virtual impossibility of binding people by an oath today. The discussions resulted from feelings of unease about the unresolved death of a fifty-year-old man that many held to be caused by the use of *lait*. Because outbreaks of anger were seemingly endless, some had decided to ask the *majelis* for advice on how to determine who was responsible for the evil forces that had caused the tragedy. One of the main questions asked was if the church could play a role in resolving such matters in a way that is more effective than the usual declaration that *lait* is Satan’s work which can only be stopped if everybody would be a good Christian.

The discussion took place in Amos’ house and the conversations were monopolised by the master of the house himself. Under the pressure of Amos’ authority, the attending men who were almost all members of the church council, agreed that according to Matthew 5: 33-34, it was forbidden to swear to God in order to solve such things as *lait* accusations, however unsettling they might be. As Amos said, ‘As head of the *majelis* I dare not swear least we sin against God. Believe me, we bring evil upon ourselves by an oath’. He stressed that if he found out that people swore to God or upon the Bible they would be suspended

from the services and any other church activity, ‘They are the worst sinners’.

Although he agreed with the council’s point of view as it was based on the Scripture, Lourens Kemesrar (58) was of the opinion that the matter was more complex. After the meeting, he explained things to his eighteen-year-old son, Permenas, while we were out for a night-time fishing trip in a canoe in the creeks south of the village. Permenas was inquisitive about what the elder men had discussed that afternoon. He also asked his father about how people found solutions in the past to such problems as sociality (*sosial*) or charity (*kasih*). While I was paddling, Permenas sat in the middle of the canoe and Lourens stood in the front with a spear ready to pierce shrimp whose eyes would light up red reflecting the kerosene lantern attached to the bow. While concentrating on catching shrimp, Lourens explained to us that,

The matter has to do with a problem pertaining to *gereja* and *adat*. A long time ago people created this problem. In those days, people did wrong. A long time ago the people did *adat* like *wuon*, which people took from Baimla to here. They could use this knowledge to determine who had used unseen evil powers. The accused had to take an oath as to the truth, and the *na wuon* never failed to point out the inflicter. Then the *gereja* came and said that there is no need to swear and that it is forbidden to swear to God. That means that those who are sanctioned or are accused of doing wrong are still sick at heart, because they are accused all the time, for example for using *lait*.

If the truth is established by a *na wuon*, people will believe it. If the accused is a liar the *na wuon* will also discover that. If the truth is not established in this way, someone who is accused by all kinds of people from many different sides will remain sick at heart because he or she can think of nothing but accusations. Therefore, anybody who is accused has to find a *na wuon* to take an oath as to the truth of *lait* accusations. But the *gereja* forbids this, while in fact, it is a good way to free people! If not applied, the accused may be victimised for the rest of his or her life and may start to do wrongs. This is a difficult problem: the *gereja* has no means

to free people from accusations, but *na wuon* can.

Today, the *majelis* wants to suspend members who swear on the Bible and those who are engaged in the recent *lait* killings. The latter is right because *lait* is a matter of Satan. This Satan has an urge to kill people here, there and everywhere. In former times, when there was no *wuon*, many people died because of *lait*. Therefore, there were not many people living in this area. Then came *wuon* that bore the method of the oath. This put some limit to the workings of *lait*. Now, though the *gereja* claims that it is able to control these things, we are again seeing many people die because of *lait*.

Although women were repeatedly ordered to store away *lait* at its place of origin they keep seeking for it. Women still tell each other about *lait* and incite others to employ it. In the old village, there was a lot of *lait*. When we moved to the new *kampung*, *lait* followed us. Today, only a few women can say that they have really liberated themselves of *lait*. Perhaps, if young women enter the modern world, in the end they may decide never to get involved in *lait*. Unless they stop using *lait* they will be bad people, sinners, who will be judged at Judgement Day. They will be punished because the Bible says that it is forbidden. John narrates it.

‘But what if these women use *lait* and afterwards confess in church, will their fate be that of sinners or not?’, asked Permenas. His father answered,

Such confessions are most often mere words. How can we know if these words are true? It happens a lot that these women lie. Perhaps if one swears on the Bible it will show in the near future, but most likely we must be patient because God is patient and merciful. Our God is tolerant. God wants to see many thousands of sins first and then transfer them to the dead and let the dead wait until the end of all things. Because of this long process, many people see that for the time being there is no point in making false oaths or to begin anew with using *lait* to kill people. In contrast, the *wuon* oath produces immediate resolution - it directly points out who is guilty. But in the case of the *gereja* these sins will only be questioned when

everything is ready for the Kingdom of Jesus.

The unconditional sentence is felt necessary in order to discipline people and to re-establish order and the villagers' moral sense. Permenas' father agrees with many other Haha villagers that morally correct behaviour is the way of good Christians. By making women into dangerous 'others' and sinners, *wuon* and by extension *agama*, functions in much the same way as *gereja*. *Gereja* and *agama* are thus used to reinforce and legitimise the conceptualisation of power relations between men and women in terms of *wuon* and *lait*. Men suggest that the *gereja* (and *agama*) is their domain. They leave a marginal space for several women whom they allow to sing at Sunday services and order to serve food during church celebrations. Some men compare this to the role of women during the guidance of the novices to the initiation house.

The present-day exclusion of women from powerful domains draws on *gereja* and *pemerintah* ideas that have become widespread since the advent of Christianity and government: that local history and customs are stupid, satanic, and worthless. Women are strongly identified by men as belonging to this pagan past. Evidence for this is sought and found in the use of *lait*, significantly labelled as Satan by Lourens. Christian lore has in this respect provided Imyan with new material to draw contrasts between the power of *ni mlasa* sky deities (as God's angels) and the earthly powers of *lait*. For *wuon* to return or the traditional order to be re-established, men must gain control over *lait*. By emphasising the wrongs of women and by suggesting to be able to reassert control over the world, men place women in the pillory of pre-Christian darkness and reserve a bright future for themselves - perhaps as servants of Jesus during the Millennium.

With reference to the world that extends beyond the village, I have shown that Imyan *agama* stresses the moral aspect of the floodings of Imyan land. It was because humanity had become corrupt, because 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth', that God decided to 'destroy man from the face of the earth'. Imyan believe that Noah was a Papuan and singled out as being a just person and perfect in his generation. The details that Imyan stress relate to the Imyan belief

that when the waters began to recede, the ark came to rest on Baukolo, the mountain of Bauk. Much as Noah began to cultivate the ground surrounding the mountain, so too Bauk brought fertile and potent knowledge to the people located on Imyan land. Both Bauk and Noah are the bringers of plenty and order.

The stories recounted in this dissertation such as Imyan narrations of Noah's Ark and their version of the Babel catastrophe, are dictated mainly by historical and political considerations. The historical considerations follow the play of historical 'truths' surrounding the knowledge of origins, descent lines, and migration histories that were important to substantiate claims over land and to settle disputes over the use of natural resources in the past. Nowadays, they relate most strongly to the differences between 'Imyan', 'Nasfa', 'the people of Teminabuan', and 'the Irianese', on the one hand, and new others like 'whites' and 'Indonesians' on the other. Or, as Kalen Kaliele in the village of Tofot explained,

The story about Olinado tells about the knife [*parang*] and the hilt [*hulu*]. God disclosed *wuon* to Bauk. This revelation was a powerful *roh* that appeared in the form of a flying canoe. The canoe landed and transformed into a *roh*. This *roh* was used in the *wuon* rituals that produced *berkat*. From then on people did *wuon* and were well to do. Then the Woloin people built the Tower of Babel which collapsed due to which mankind spread all over the world. The whites took the knife and those who stayed behind kept the wooden hilt.

Just after the whites went to the West, Sawen and Kolin lived at the river called Kla Ogin. They prayed and the Kla Ogin came out of the rocks. Its source is at Ayamaru. Other rivers also have their origins there, like the Klalot and the Kla Fle. Kolin lived at the headwaters of the Kla Ogin. After a conflict with other people, some of Kolin's children flew into a hole in the rocks and came out in America. They entered a cave underneath the water.<sup>10</sup>

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10. Interestingly, this is one of the few references to an underground world of which most informants denied the presence and usually nobody volunteered stories about. The story is an exception to the more usual stories about sky travels to powerful places

He came out in America! A year ago, I was in Sorong where friends told me that they had met an American whose name was Kolin.

He must be offspring of the Kolin from Kla Ogin. This story is true! Perhaps Olinado did the same, but only *na wuon* know where he ended up. I have heard people say that Olinado's offspring included Queen Wilhelmina, the Nassau lineage of the Netherlands. There is a group of people among the Moi who carry the name Sony. They have relatives in Japan. The original Sony people live in Sele. I would not be surprised to find a people named Suzuki somewhere in Irian. I know that among the Asmat there are people named Kecap. It could well be that they come from Java, where they produce soy sauce [*kecap*].

Kalen Kaliele, December 1994, Tape 6A: 100-339

These kind of stories depict Imyan ancestors as wrongdoers, doing stupid and evil things which resulted in the scattering abroad of mankind (leaving Imyan behind in an impoverished state), the decreed flood (which eventually brought *wuon*, but also *lait*), and the departure of Olinado (taking away the core of *wuon* knowledge). All these stories are mystical and have millenarian characteristics. In their invocation of ancestors and past geographies, their focal themes are lost powers and return to a past central situation amid spheres of power. The recent constructions of *agama* which are build around these themes are not yet strongly part of the shared knowledge but its prospects of becoming a taken-for-granted tradition of knowledge in the future are good as most of its symbols relate to concerns that are widely held.

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which seem to have suppressed the narratives about the earthly origins of the Lumna, for example (see Chapter 1). Kaliele belongs to the groups that trace their origin to Baimla and came to the Teminabuan in a flying canoe and strongly associate with the advent of *wuon* (see Chapter 3). Perhaps due to Christianity stressing the importance of heaven located in the sky and an earlier domination of *wuon* ideas about the need for travels to the sultan's palace over pre-*wuon* ideas about the dead, spirits, and cargo in an underworld like prevalent among the people of Inanwatan. Inanwatan does not have initiation practices similar to *wuon* and people there do not relate to Biak/Raja Ampat mythology (see Van Oosterhout 1998a).

The most crucial factor involved in the ability of *agama*, or any other new or old tradition, to gain a more or less hegemonic status is the question of the evidence for truth. As the sources of knowledge about the future, about how to improve the current situation, and about how to access the unseen world are located in the West, in Jakarta, and consciously kept away, Imyan cannot authenticate them. Imyan can creatively search for new forms of knowledge and at certain points have the idea that they have found it, but their basic ontology forces them to immediately realise that it should also relate to places, locations, and truths, that are not Imyan. The idea of lost knowledge shows its full extent in the search for authentic and effective *agama*.

### **Inequality between Different Traditions**

In two senses there is inequality between different traditions of knowledge. First, there is inequality that grows from imbalances in the field of power: Haha society's internal struggle is fuelled by Kemesrar attacks on the positions of power of certain Meje fats and the Meje fat elite's attempt to maintain their leadership positions. The other relation of inequality is directed towards the outside: the shared concern with knowledge and hope vested in the Millennium. In that sense, the precedence of *wuon* over *gereja* and *pemerintah* is a response to colonial and post-colonial incursions. The response is a search for power and prestige in the 'foreign', and shows continuity with pre-colonial strategies, when Imyan searched for the foundations of wealth and health that was located in the sultan's palace on Tidore.

In the ancient *wuon*-related geography the search was oriented towards Tidore and in practice this meant close scrutiny of people, knowledge, and material items that came either directly from Tidore or through indirect trade lines. Presently, the outward search or attempt to grasp the other's system (that is geographically and socially concealed from them) encompasses the world and is thus seemingly targetless. Again though, those elements representing the powerful topoi in the modern geography and which come within reach of Imyan

are subject to their scrutiny. The persuasiveness of the Kemesrar arguments also comes through the suggestion that only they have command of the knowledge to get access to the topoi of power. Having access to certain bodies of knowledge thus also determines the inequality between traditions of knowledge.

*Pemerintah* (supporting Mejefat power) and in particular its *pembangunan* symbolism, money, and projects is still a candidate for hegemony among the traditions of knowledge. Oriented towards the church, the school and the government, many Mejefats mimic the order that provides identities which bear Indonesia's seal of approval and, perhaps more of a motivation, because it offers money and prestige. But beneath the cover of all the conversations about the past, the rules of *wuon* and the disciplining of *adat*, Kemesrar people tell of a truth that is grounded in the present-day Indonesian sphere. In terms similar to *pemerintah* discourse and 'Mejefat-speeches', the Kemesrars express their concern about present-day disorder in terms of *wuon* but appear to be little occupied with the practical matter of re-installing *wuon*. In this sense both *wuon* and *pemerintah* traditions of knowledge overlap and mutually inform each other.

This meshing exists because both parties want to affect the course of changes through with 'traditional' principles. The ontology of the *pemerintah* tradition at the village upholds in many respects the highly valued *adat* principles in much the same way as *wuon* ideologists. Both parties want order and in this longing they share the concern with *wuon*, in particular as it has become safely categorised as *agama*. It thus seems likely that in the future *agama* will gain precedence over all other traditions. The hegemony of particular traditions thus has to do with the frameworks people use to arrive at what they wish, to get what they want and, as such, reflects their concerns.

Change of government and government policy as it is unfolding under Abdurrachman Wahid's presidency at the moment may well change the field of traditions of knowledge. In particular when there is a chance that West Papua will gain more autonomy, the tradition of *pemerintah* may again get to shape the ambitions of the youth. As the concern is with knowledge and power, under a new, perhaps extensively autonomous provincial government, the tradition of *pemerintah* among the Imyan may develop into an ontology that is compatible

with present-day *wuon*. The existing overlaps between the two traditions may become highlighted more frequently and may be further developed along courses of reasoning driven by hope and new ambitions.

On the other hand, the new political constellation of Papua (as their province was recently renamed) may appear to Imyan to possess a large degree of disorder. In that case, certain degrees of orderliness may be increasingly sought in the tradition of the *gereja* as comprising a clear organisation, fixed rituals, and a body of knowledge contained in a single book and commanded by preachers. What I want to indicate with these speculations about future events is some sense of how easily things can change, that the hegemony of a tradition can crumble and yet that there is also a considerable degree of order in the foundations from which people select between these different ontological options.

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