



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies

*State* **Society** *and*  
**Governance** *in* **Melanesia**

# NARRATIVES OF GOVERNMENT AND CHURCH AMONG THE IMYAN OF PAPUA/ IRIAN JAYA, INDONESIA

Government agents, foreign corporations and aid agents coming into contact with people such as the Imyan described in this paper, should not assume that they can ease their way by having an understanding of "Papuan values" or even something as specific as "Imyan traditional values". The values of the Imyan are dynamic and under stress. They are products of the recent past, particular Imyan perceptions of who they were, and who they might be. Moreover, they are shaped through increasing discrepancies between Imyan experiences and expectations that show no sign of abating. This paper illustrates that understanding the Imyan entails not only knowing that these Papuan people encountered Protestantism, Dutch colonialism and an attempted absorption into the Indonesian state, but also being aware of Imyan understandings, adaptation, and assessment of those 'experiences and teachings.

## INTRODUCTION

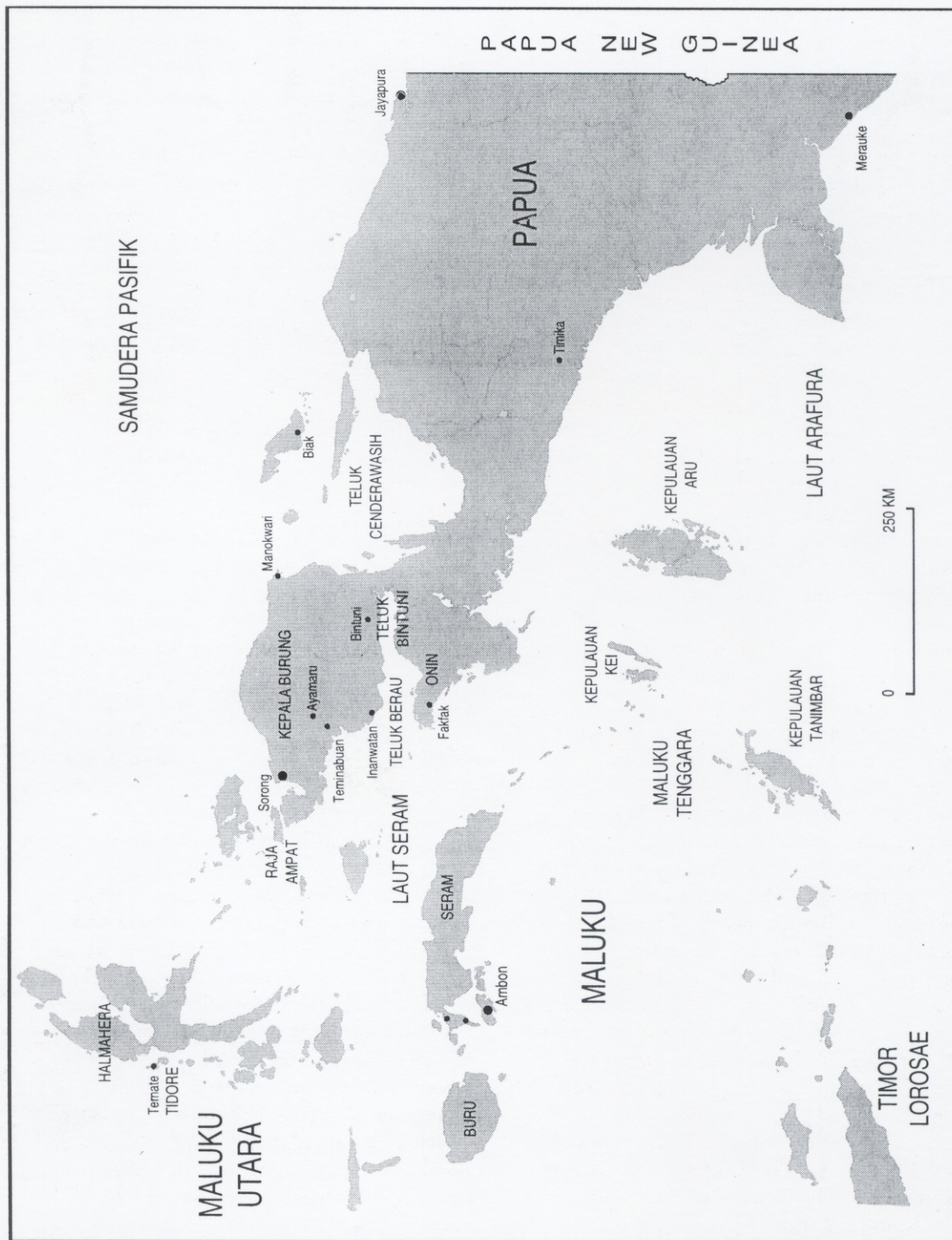
Around the same time as the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of Indonesia's independence (17 August 1995) Imyan speakers in the village of Haha (Teminabuan district, south western Bird's Head or Kepala Burung, Papua / Irian Jaya) commemorated the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of their missionary hero.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the Imyan had experienced some 34 years of New Order administration and 25 years of *Repelita* (Five-year Development Plans). The government stressed national independence as a national victory and local civil servants regularly gave speeches about the spectacular social and economic advancements (*pembangunan*) of Indonesia's New Order government. They stressed that the goal of the development plans is to bring welfare and industrial take off, Imyan on the other hand appeared to be convinced that it was more important to dwell upon the moral and Christian achievements that had occurred since the Gospel was brought to them.

The Imyan, numbering more than twelve hundred, are the Imyan-Tehit speakers of the north western part of the administrative subdistrict of Teminabuan. The subdistrict has a relatively dense population of about nine

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## EASTERN INDONESIA



thousand people, of which some fifteen hundred are Buginese and Butonese from south Sulawesi and about two hundred Javanese transmigrants. The Imyan live in the villages of Sasenek and Sodrofoyo, nestled in the lush green hills in the north western part of the subdistrict, and the villages of Haha, Tofot, and Woloin to the south. The southern villages are located near the swampy mangrove tidal flats of the upper Seremuk River. While the northern Imyan cultivate a variety of tubers, bananas, and peppers, the people living near the coast mainly harvest sago. Together with the Yatfle, Sawyat, and several Maybrat groups, the Imyan consider themselves *Nasfa*, people of the hills. The Nasfa share a tradition of male initiation called *wuon*, a ritual central to concepts of social relations, identity, power and wealth. Imyan are tied together in a so-called *sorsorat* customary network of collaboration and ritual practices centred on *wuon*. These practices are now defunct due to missionary activity and government interference, but in their reflections on past, present and future identities many Imyan hold *wuon* and *sorsorat* central.

Considering commemorations of pioneer missionaries who have become 'heroes' of a local Christian mythology among people of the D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago and Epi islanders in central Vanuatu, Young (1997) shows the extent to which national narratives are interwoven in Melanesian Christian celebrations. Re-enactments of the arrival of the heroes appear most significantly as narratives that people tell to themselves to make or remake their local identity. Young concludes that 'if commemorations of missionary heroes can be construed in any way as 'narrating the nation' then they are in a markedly Christian key' (1997: 124).

In another investigation of narratives of nation, Clark (1997: 71) characterises Papua New Guinea Highlanders' worldview as "Melanesian Gothic" to indicate the extent to which contemporary Melanesian worlds are 'based on the Bible and its laws, morality and millennial prophecies'. Clark points out that in contrast to pre-nationalistic Europe, these worlds also comprise 'a universe in which computers, videos, Toyotas, and international flights are observable and available (if not to all!)' (1997: 71). It is in this world that Highlanders imagine the state and the government, and new forms of consciousness arise. For Huh people, as Clark notices, these new forms of consciousness are as yet precursors

not to nationalism, 'but merely to a form of ethnicity which unites Huli-an unity which was once expressed in the mythology and rituals of ground fertility ... - in potential opposition to the state' (1997: 89).

In Papua, the landing of the first missionaries on Mansinam Island in the Cenderawasih Bay in 1855 (see Kamma 1976: 53) is throughout the territory celebrated as a nationalist event. People emphasise that these missionaries blessed the land of the Papuans to become God's chosen land, reaffirming its ancient sacredness. Experiencing a history of harsh oppression, countless violations of human rights, and rampant exploitation of natural resources, many Papuans tend to relate the event to the glorification of Papua or their own territory as a Christian land opposed to Indonesia's Islamic majority (Timmer 2000a: 53-54). The Imyan case that I discuss in this paper shows that such Imyan unity is not only an instance of Melanesian Gothicism, but that it also leads to local political struggles that either strengthen or undermine positions of individuals and descent groups. Debates about village leadership, reflecting both local histories and people's reactions to the worlds of the church and the government mark the social conditions in which millenarian critique arises and the cultural forms it takes.

Imyan messianic stories stress the excellence of the Imyan past in terms of a completion (cf, Mimica 1988); the biblical end of all things appears as a restoration of the ancient unity between the sky and the earth. Their millennial narratives heap criticism on ineffective church rituals belonging to *gereja* (church, Christianity) that fail to deliver material and spiritual goods, as well as on the government (*permerintah*) whose promises of development do not easily materialise. These stories indicate that Imyan attach growing importance to finding effective ritual means to restore completion of which a free West Papuan state with Jesus Christ as its President forms a part.

To understand the meaning of these stories it is necessary to look closely some recent shifts in the field of Imyan cultural domains or traditions of knowledge.' I focus on the tradition of the religious that has taken on local notions since Imyan encountered mission Christianity, condemning 'traditional religion' and bringing new forms of guilt and fear in terms of sin and the fate of sinners. These notions have developed into a discrete realm of the religious that Imyan gloss as *gereja*. *Gereja* comprises

ideas and practices related to a clear church organisation, fixed Christian rituals, and a body of knowledge contained in a single book, the Bible. The most significant aspect of the *gereja* tradition of knowledge is that many Imyan tend to take seriously the widespread rumours that materialisation of The Revelation of St John the Divine is imminent. Imyan scenarios of the end of all things not only suggest that tomorrow will not be a continuation of today, but they are also moral messages about Imyan people's own community.

The other tradition that I discuss in this paper is *pemerintah*, which, among other meanings, comprises local ideas about the state ideologies of *pembangunan* that classify Imyan as second-class citizens, particularly in the context of development projects. In many respects, *pembangunan* condenses ideas about the state' and provides a discursive framework for conceptualising and managing relationships with the government.' The *pembangunan* policy as it is executed most profoundly through the implementation of development projects takes hold and manifests itself in the local setting in terms of lack of sociality. The sociality that people feel is lacking relates to ideas about a coherent and pleasant companionable group. Imyan seek a society united in purpose and with all people at ease with each other. Besides criticising themselves for lacking this sociality, they blame the government for placing them as unequal subjects in the modern world. The latter mentioned critique assumes forms that relate to feelings of dependence or inevitable threat from outside.' As *pembangunan* promises wealth and a better future, it gives shape to Imyan desires that are believed to be hard to realise because of the community's shortcomings. These beliefs sprout from a particular dynamic of negotiating difference that is triggered by decades of insults from government agents and condemnations by missionaries and present-day church leaders. Both the *pemerintah* and *gereja* traditions trace their origins to outside influences but have developed distinctively in interaction with each other and with existing 'traditional' traditions of knowledge. In this complex dynamic of cultural practices of Imyan villagers in the context of local and global power relations, *gereja* and *pemerintah* have become specific conceptions of modes of activity.

In the field of competing ontologies, a newer tradition called *agama* ('religion') is becoming increasingly powerful as it opposes or supports the other traditions and is mainly

perceived and lived by Imyan as a cosmology that positions them in a personal, local, sacred (and largely secret or hidden) world. *Agama* in fact belongs to the church but is perceived as originally Imyan. *Agama* is a pillar of the Pancasila state ideology and belongs to the New Order policy that promotes a double conversion. Indonesians must declare membership to one of the five religions recognised by the government - Buddhism, Catholicism, Hindu-Bali, Islam, or Protestantism - and pledge allegiance as a citizen of the Indonesian State. As laid down in the first principle of Pancasila all citizens are expected to believe in a singular God (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*).<sup>1</sup> If people convert to one of these five religions, they fulfil one of the main duties of every Indonesian citizen. The policy is especially designed for 'underdeveloped primitive peoples' in out-of-the-way places (*masyarakat terasing*, see Koentjaraningrat 1993). These peoples have yet to accept religion (*belum beragama*) because they still hold 'superstitions' (*kepercayaan*). Not surprisingly, most indigenous people in the province of Papua are considered *belum beragama*. Effectively opposing and undermining this classification, Imyan say that their 'traditional' religion, in combination with another religion that is also marginal in Indonesian, is *agama*. Perhaps even more powerful the fact that the Imyan *agama* arouses expectations for the Millennium.

What millenarianism among Imyan shares with Melanesian cargo cults, cargo movements, or Melanesian religion in general, is a 'keen awareness of limitation, a refusal of self-satisfied tendencies to cultural inertia' (Jorgensen 1994: 130). In the Imyan case, this keen awareness is reflected in questions of renewal and redirection of group life values; a concern over deterioration of morals which obstruct the building of a good Christian community that is prepared for Christ's coming (and related prosperity or cargo'). Imyan expect the cargo to come when their relationship with the dead is restored after Jesus has inaugurated the Kingdom on Earth, that is, when they sky and the earth become one and Imyan can again engage in direct exchange with sky deities and the dead. Imyan stories of power and divine forebears begin at the beginning of things and end at the end of time; godlike forebears maintained close relations with the other worlds of power and end with the return of Jesus Christ at the end of time.'

Below I address the question of human cultural practice in the context of the above mentioned power relations in order

to discover the social conditions in which millenarian critique arises and the cultural forms it takes. I discuss Imyan peoples' reaction to Indonesian development projects and a village-based struggle for power highlighting the use of traditions of knowledge traceable to recently introduced institutions (government and church) in order to exemplify the way millenarian critique leads to the emergence of *agama*. In conclusion, I discuss the extent to which critique of their society can or may become effective in transforming social life.

MUNGBEANS AND AUTONOMY

In 1996, the government implemented a new project within the framework of a national IDT program for 'underdeveloped villages' aiming to reduce the 'social and economic disparity' of Haha villagers whose lives were considered *teninggal parah* ('seriously left behind by progress')." The new project consisted of the production of mungbeans (*kacang ijo*) as a cash crop in Imyan villages. After several information and instruction sessions, Haha villagers had slowly and with little complaint begun to work for the project. The beans to be used as sowing seeds were provided free by the government. If this initial phase was successful, it was planned that they would then continue using a part of the initial harvest as seeds or buy new beans in the town of Teminabuan using the funds provided by the IDT program.

After two days of instruction by two Ambonese men from the department of agriculture of the district government, some twenty men and fifteen women worked for four days to prepare a garden for the mungbeans. When the garden was ready, the villagers collected two ten kilo bags of bean seeds from town, cleared the garden, planted the beans and regularly weeded the new crops for two months. Right from the beginning, some villagers were critical of the project, saying that it would never last long because of the time-consuming work needed to get a good harvest.

When, after a month, the garden promised a good yield, others began to add that it would be virtually impossible to find an outlet for the product because Javanese immigrants in the district had already been selling beans for years. Haha villagers would only be able to compete with them if they lowered the price to such a level that no one would be motivated to carry the heavy loads to town. During these discussions, everybody seemed to have forgotten

that the government controls the co-operative that pays a fixed price for the beans and that also the church co-operative had decided to add ten percent to this price .<sup>1</sup>

People started expressing serious doubts about the project after a prayer session at Amos Mejefat's house. As head and clergyman of the village, Amos (49) used this session to remind people about the promises made to them and that those working in the mungbean-garden should continue trying to finish the job, collect the money and thus set an example to others. After a severe speech he tried to motivate them by suggesting that they set up a competition with surrounding villages that were also engaged in the IDT beans project. His attempt to keep a close watch on the fulfilment of the project, as he was told to do as representative of the government, did not do any good.

The harvesting took three days and when the beans were dry, put in bags, and readied for transportation, nobody felt like carrying the heavy loads to town (a 15 kilometre walk through a muddy forest). People gathered in the empty garden to discuss the matter. Amos was also present and told the people that the hard work required to carry the bags did not provide an acceptable excuse, particularly not for the government officials in Teminabuan who would show up the next week to evaluate the progress of the project. Yuwel Mejefat (48) stood up and explained that it was not the hard work, but that people found it ridiculous to sell the beautiful product to the Indonesians:

Why should we sell this stuff for little money to people who already have enough money to feed their children? Why feed the Indonesians in town and in the city of Sorong? We get very little money in return and stay hungry. If we collect the money then we have to walk back to town, buy beans, and rice at the market, thereby enriching the outsiders [*pendatang*]. With their big salaries the government employees will buy the beans and feed their children. Forget about this project and feed the beans to your family. We have already eaten about a quarter of the harvest and our children love it. Over the past week, my children have eaten beans every morning and they feel healthy. They do not fall asleep in class, as they tend to do when they only get some cold sago jelly for breakfast. Therefore, we should not feed the

Indonesians but ourselves instead."

Yuwel's brief for keeping the consumption of mungbeans for the Imyan themselves met with wide approval. It was clearly not the time for Amos to deny Yuwel's argument and he walked home murmuring about *pemerintah* and *pembangunan*. When I visited him a few hours later he told me that he would not support the now widespread enthusiasm for making new gardens to get more beans.

It may sound all right that all villagers should enjoy this good new food, but it does not make sense. We should be concerned with work, *pembangunan*, and God. Read St. John 6: 27 where it says, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'. As long as Jesus' Kingdom is not here we should serve the government [*pemerintah*] which is also given by God. Yes, but as you whites know and the villagers will probably never understand, working for the government will be rewarded by God. *Pembangunan* also includes becoming good Christians. Just consuming the beans, will not get you anywhere.

When others also joined the discussion, Yuwel again put emphasis on the threat of government harassment and warned villagers that they might not get any *pembangunan* support in the future. In an attempt to satisfy the government with the progress that he was attempting to bring about in the village he simply forbade the sowing of mungbeans. During the session of the IDT inspection-team a few weeks later, Amos had to really pull out the stops to explain to the officials in front of the villagers that the mungbean project was too *time-consuming*. Haha villagers already had too much on their mind: harvesting sago to feed their families, getting their children to school, attending church services, hosting prayer services at their houses, and meeting obligations such as marriage payments and paying fines. None of the villagers wanted to let Amos down in front of the officials. Showing such deeprooted discontent amongst them in front of the powerful outsiders was simply not done. The conclusion of the leader of the IDT team was typical: Imyan villagers are too lazy to plant and harvest mungbeans and too dumb to understand that they would get *pembangunan* by merely selling beans at the market in Teminabuan. The Imyan villages would remain backward, no matter how great the efforts of the Indonesian government.

The villagers' *renunciation* of selling mungbeans to *Indonesians* and their emphasis on the importance of *consumption* for their own physical and mental strength should first be seen as a negation of *pembangunan*. It is an example of a tendency towards closure, a *negation* of the confusing outsiders, a turning away from the separate world of Indonesians who come to Imyan land to ventilate insults or to execute policies that culturally and economically deprive Papuans. Drawing on *pembangunan* cases elsewhere in Indonesia, Li illustrates that 'the separation of state and society produced through the exercise of planning enabled a community to find new and stronger ways to define "itself" and contest state plans that threatened to appropriate crucial resources' (1999: 316). Li clearly shows that this capacity for action or agency is not constituted outside but within the framework of state and society. In that respect *pembangunan* (and *pemerintah*) should be seen as a terrain of struggle, as the routine and intimate compromises through which relations of domination are lived.

The Imyan case indicates the level of compliance achieved at the local level and shows that development involves complex cultural work at the interface between development projects and those they target. The majority of villagers tend to see work not as a moral duty in *gereja* or *pemerintah* terms, but rather as an important contribution to the building up of self. In line with the traditional domestic mode of production, local consumption of the mungbeans is seen as solidifying the foundations, autonomy, and individuality of Imyan society (compare Maclean 1994). The *foundations* of society are strengthened because work invested in the new good product, like any work performed for local production, is seen as the basis of human sociality. This is most clearly expressed in Imyan people's critique of recent changes in co-operation and communal work, and shifts toward increasing individuality.

If critique of the government and the church is widespread in the village of Haha, we still need to explore the reasons for the marked difference between the majority's withdrawal into autonomy and Amos' self-representation as someone who supports the power and promises of the government. What were Amos' reasons for taking a position against his own people and does he in fact suggest that compliance with the rules of *pemerintah* will bring prosperity and wealth? A few months later, there were several

individuals planting mungbeans in their gardens. They did not discuss this with Amos and told me that they wanted to produce something that is good for the society. In later collisions with villagers about other things such as the collection of money for the upcoming Christmas celebration, Amos and others who supported him continued to reiterate pemerintah and gereja dogmas to safeguard their position. The way they incorporate these new institutions in their lives suggests that the New Order and Christian doctrines are largely convincing to them. What is most obvious though is the way their appeal to gereja and pemerintah is integral to their involvement in local politics, as I discuss below.

COMPETING ONTOLOGIES

People's reaction to the actual practice of pembangunan and the villagers' emphasis on local production and autonomy, brought about confusion and ontological dilemmas. In expressing the perceived disordered condition, Imyan distinguish between six traditions of knowledge: adat ('custom' or the bygone order), wuon (lore and imagery related to the now defunct male initiation cult), lait (pervasive death-dealing evil powers), gereja (church and mission), pemerintah (colonial and post-colonial governments, modern world, Pancasila state ideology, media, school), and agama (cosmology informed by both mission Christianity and local myths and ideas about sky deities).

In people's talk, there are connections between Imyans' own past and the meanings of the present-day Indonesian State and its ideology, or between the church and the wuon lore. These connections appear to reflect the fact that apparently different traditions of knowledge can assume similar contextual meanings, allowing alternation between different worlds of meaning and possibility. In many instances, this alternation highlights a widespread and recurrently expressed concern with knowledge, in particular the powerful knowledge that was possessed by ritual leaders and employed during wuon rituals.

Wuon was a ritual central to conceptions of social relations, identity, and power and wealth. The idea of cargo or blessing (berkat) appears to be central in Imyan ideas about the powers of wuon and the sky beings (ni mlasa). During rituals, a sky deity named Klen Tadyi takes the ritual leaders and the novices in a flying canoe (kma sene) to the other world where ni mlasa dwell. 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, the waters and the palace of the sultan at Tidore (see Timmer 2000a, 2000b). Through the offering of gifts of cloth (kain timur) the initiators conciliate the ni mlasa who control these riches or could bring them to the palace.

Imyan exploit their contact with sky beings in a number of ways. For example, they can prepare 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, the ritual leaders positioned themselves at the headwaters in preparation for a competitive struggle with Klen Tadyi. Others stood downstream along the banks of the river waiting for the loud sound of Klen Tadyi indicating his surrender to the ritual leaders. 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 they heard the sound, the people would see this yield float to the surface.

Ritual leaders 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 wuon 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 of 'cargo', or 'blessing'. Similarly, Juillerat (1996: 536) reports recent Yafar (West Sepik) 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 analogous conclusions as Yafar in maintaining that western 'cargo' is originally part of their cultural heritage.

The parallels that Imyan establish between Christian lore and wuon are apparent if we realise that for them both doctrines are complex interplays of secrecy and sight. The teachers and novices depart into the woods to obey the sky beings of which Klen Tadyi, together with Bitik, is the most important. During their encounters with the sky beings, the lay people who have stayed behind only hear the spirits' voices. Only upon the return of the novices to the public grounds do the people get visible evidence of the presence and workings of the sky deities. Of these, the signs drawn with chalk on the torsos of the newly initiated men are the most significant; they are seen as the signatures of Klen Tadyi and remind people of the first time that Klen Tadyi left his mark on the body

of Bauk, the first Imyan novice.<sup>12</sup> These signs, together with a range of stories about the hardships endured during the rituals, create the recognition of the divine powers of the sky beings whose celestial salvation (*berkat*) will only come through offering cloths, lives and the integrity of people.

The outsiders labelled as whites (*na welek*), Westerners (*orang Barat*) or *Belanda* ('Dutch') are accused of having withheld the originally Imyan *wuon* secrets (*kahan*) in order to prevent Imyan from gaining control over their own fate. Imyan lost the *kahan* as the result of a disaster that happened during the second initiation organised by Bauk. It forced the departure of Olinado, a manifestation of a sky deity, Klen Tadyi, taking the *kahan* to the West. The loss of power (knowledge, *ilmu*, cargo) through Olinado's departure (as the result of ancestral transgressions) appears to structure all subsequent events. Olinado's journey to the West produced a cultural order in the world which, however, was only to be discovered when Imyan encountered the 'other.'

For Imyan, the loss of *wuon* entails an estrangement from the sky beings and triggers the feeling of having lost control. This situation warrants the search for truth of people's own predicament in order to transcend it. Imyan feel that their community has been in debt for a long time following the loss of the key powers of *wuon*. This loss led to neglect of the sky beings and an increasing distancing of the living from the dead. This broken relationship has buried the sky beings and the dead in oblivion. Imyan feel that this is why humans cannot establish something good in this world and will not succeed in being unitary and sociable again.

In these theories, the concerted efforts of missionaries and government agents to abolish 'pagan' practices including the *wuon* initiation cult are considered crucial. Reflecting, Imyan point out that the Dutch took no notice of the evil forces (*fait*). They regret this because as *wuon*'s counterpart and only controllable by *wuon*, *fait* has now full freedom of action. *Wuon* and *fait* are both forms of knowledge but differ in their moral content; *wuon* allows contact with the benevolent sky beings while *lait* requires 'evil' human sacrifices and killings. Therefore, *lait* far outweighs *wuon* as a dangerous force. Now that the *wuon* lore is seriously depleted, men are nostalgic about the times when ritual leaders contained *fait* through calling upon sky beings during trials that typically led to the execution of women found guilty. Current Christian ritual leaves these sinners unpunished.

Due to the demise of ritual leaders and the abandonment of *lait* trials, many men feel that *lait* is now lurking everywhere and is slowly taking society apart.

Loss of knowledge has put Imyan society in the predicament presently felt. The loss of knowledge is believed to have impoverished Imyan and has created a divide between Papuans and whites and Indonesians. Only the recovery of that knowledge or regained access to powerful knowledge in general will reform the situation." In line with this major concern, Imyan increasingly attach importance to effective knowledge in order to perform effective rituals and to uphold the ordering principles of *adat*, the traditional practices underpinned by the *wuon* lore. In particular *wuon* rituals are now considered effective if they result in the establishment of close contact with ancestral and non-ancestral spirits who may bring riches, food, and blessing (*berkat*) for the living. As *wuon* knowledge provided the most powerful means, it is thereby important to recognise that it is part of a tendency to produce internal differences in Imyan society.

## VILLAGE POLITICS

Amos Mejefat's reaction to his people's refusal to produce mungbeans for the good cause of *pembangunan*, shows that at the local village level, *gereja* and *pemerintah* appear to provide meaningful identities such as 'good Christian' and 'good citizen' characterised by morality and charity. These identities appear to be easily opposed or undermined by reference to *adat* and *wuon*. Underlying much of the discussion of *pembangunan* among Imyan is the fact that a significant number of villagers oppose the ruling elite which allies with the truths and rules of *gereja* and *pemerintah*. The opposition suggests that the present-day tide of increasing confusion and deterioration of morals can only be turned through a return to the *adat* principles, revitalisation of the *sorsorat* customary network, and adherence to traditional leadership holding exclusive access to secret *wuon* knowledge (see below).

To show how this conflict highlights some crucial aspects of the role of the traditions of *gereja*, *adat*, *pemerintah*, and *wuon* in Imyan society, it is necessary to sketch briefly the history and social structure of the village of Haha. The Dutch government and missionaries in the late 1940s forced people to leave their settlements in the hill interior and move to

open spaces or to the coast. Some ten descent groups moved down to the coast to build clusters of houses between the gently sloping mountain range and the mangrove forest with vast sago-palm forests, streams and meandering rivers. Local memory holds that Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands ordered her citizens in the Teminabuan sub-district to move down from the hills and build the village called Rinkasin and that Trithoin Kemesrar was appointed by her as the first village head (*kepala kampung*). Due to a conflict that arose between clans belonging to the Woloin descent group and clans belonging to the Mejefat group, Rinkasin split into two villages. Trithoin Kemesrar decided to move to a new settlement called Teltolo and the other group moved to what is now the village of Woloin. Teltolo was a concentric cluster of houses near the bank of the Mario Creek that leads to the Seremuk River and was built in the 1950s by the four clans that until the present day live together in Haha: Mejefat, Kemesrar, Woloble, and Klafle.

In accordance with the national Village Law No. 5 (Undang Undang No. 5 Tahun 1979 tentang *Pemerintahan Desa*) (MacAndrews 1986: 38)

all settlements in the Teminabuan sub-district were clustered into ten *desas*.<sup>4</sup> Teltolo became the seat of the new *kepala desa* (village leader). Lagging behind developments in other provinces of Indonesia, the regional *desa* system was reformed in the late 1980s. The administration considered that it would be more effective if funds could be distributed to smaller units. Reorganisation resulted in 31 administrative units for the Teminabuan sub-district. Woloin, Tofot, and Haha became separate *desas*. Around the same time the settlements rearranged themselves according to an image of a 'civilised' human society. Typical Indonesian village houses with iron sheet roofs and plank walls now line a main road passing through the village. The church, the school, an office, and a meeting hall are situated in the middle of this oblong layout.

At the social and local political level, the most striking aspects of the recent changes are the differences that have arisen between old and new elites. The crack between these elites splits the village both politically and geographically in half. It opposes the majority of the old elite living on the western side (*kampung bawah*, where the sun sets) of the oblong and the new elite living at the eastern side (*kampung atas*, where the sun rises). The new elite largely consists of people of Mejefat descent and the old elite is centred on a few leading Kemesrar people who trace their

The important figures of the Mejefat elite are Amos and his brother, Elias (47), who is the head of the school and holds a leading position in the church council. The traditional Kemesrar elite are represented by Lourens Kemesrar (58), one of the remaining initiation leaders, and his son-in-law, Seppy Kemesrar (37), who traces his descent to a famous warrior. Due to pacification and the abolishment of male initiation, the power vested in the possession of secret knowledge, the ability to stage powerful rituals and the capacity to communicate with sky beings to get access to 'cargo' (see below) has diminished significantly.

The opposition of the old elite of ritual leaders and war leaders takes the form of imagery of the good old days when *adat* was still prized and the traditional order provided stability and welfare. As a result of growing concern with lost knowledge and increasing importance attached to the *wuon* techniques for getting 'cargo', over the last few years the Kemesrar faction has seen greater chances for success in the village. Since God is one of the Imyan sky beings and Christian lore is traditionally Imyan, the church is most easily accepted as being able to perform the same role as *adat*, but since the church is in the hands of the new non-*wuon* elite, opposition against them comes in terms of 'the good old *tirines*' promoted by the children and grandchildren of, initiators and war leaders.

In contrast, during the first decades of colonial and post-colonial regimes there was a tendency to negate tradition, do away with pagan rituals, and get involved in modern projects. During this period most Imyan attempted to learn the coloniser's language in order to be able to attend schools and to become religious teachers. The spread of Malay in particular is recalled as a determining factor that helped to create the current elite. Amos was the first Imyan to attend the boarding school in Teminabuan in the mid-1950s and to return to his land after graduating as village preacher from the Dutch mission school in Miei. Presently, most villagers speak Indonesian but still Amos and Elias give most of the official speeches, in addition to their lessons at school, the sermons in the church, and their *pemerintah* addresses to the villagers (*pidato*). In all these public addresses, Amos and Elias use a 'real', 'civilised' and 'official' form of Indonesian that carries the suggestion that they know what they are talking about and that their authority has not appeared out of the blue.

Alongside language and the employment

of the meanings of the *gereja* and *pemerintah* traditions, the Mejezat also employ the institutions in which they hold dominant positions to discriminate against others. For example, they may exclude opponents and their family members from active participation in church activities such as Holy Communion, forbid staging of prayer meetings at certain people's houses, and postpone children's confirmations (*sidi*). I have witnessed the latter performed twice by Amos. The distress he caused among the children and their parents was terrible to see. The children had been studying for months, their parents had made sure that their child would sport nice cloths that very day, and a few days before the happening Amos cancelled it. The children who realised that the church organisation did this to punish their fathers or mothers were most seriously affected.

However deep and unsettling the regular disputes between the factions may be, there is no element of discord powerful enough to break all the ties between them and produce two separate villages or to lead to really dangerous outbursts of hate. The men who play the most distinctive role in the conflict are much less deceitful than might be expected. They also do not fight physically and do not shout at each other. The politics are more subtle and careful, avoiding aggressive conflict and accusations of tyrannical avarice. Also of major concern to the antagonists is the conflict between the ideal, the pure, the powerful, on the one hand, and the harsh reality of life, the vigorous, the deceptive, the alluring, on the other. The latter is associated with the outside other and the former is related to *wuon* and Christianity.

In struggles of power at the local level, the glosses that evoke certain meanings belonging to different traditions of knowledge are used to strengthen or undermine the powerful positions of individuals and descent groups. The Mejezats regard themselves as more civilised than those who want to revive and seriously examine *wuon*. The latter group consists of the potential adherents of the flourishing new tradition of agama and they 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 these factions over moral and historical rights to lead the village also reflect the importance attached to clan identity through origins, precedence, and practices such as *wuon* initiation. *Desa Haha* has become not only a venue for political struggle between the Kemesrar and Mejezat factions, but also a critical site for reflection on co-operation

and morality.

The village conflict is in essence a continuous shift in arguments relating to the value of stability, the fear of transience, uncertainty, and change. From both sides, people argue against rootlessness, disruption, and anti-social forces and pretend to work for loyalties, co-operation, and solidarity. From the side of the Kemesrar people, *wuon* has proven to be the most powerful order-ensuring system of values and taboos. For them, the past was the truth. Oriented towards the church, the school and the government are the Mejezat who obviously mimic the order that provides identities which bear Indonesia's seal of approval and, perhaps more of a motivation, government and church positions offering money and prestige.

## AGAMA AND THE EFFICACY OF RITUALS

The concern with lost *wuon* knowledge sustains the Kemesrars' distinctiveness and their superiority. I have indicated that the traditional differences between '*wuon* related' and 'nonwuon related' clans in Imyan society are both maintained and undermined by using new forms of knowledge from outside (*pemerintah* and *gereja*). Aldrigsid'e the, internal conflicts, another local concern is the decades long denial of Imyan people's competence in learning and performing in modern colonial and post-colonial contexts. This concern is in fact a crucial part of a larger and still more intrusive concern with denied identity and lost certainties. In particular in stories about the Millennium, Imyan refer to the ancient topographies that characterise the essence of their past lives..Central to this essence is the knowledge by which Imyan could get close to the 'cargo' (*berkat*). Through interpreting, combining, and inventing new schemes of the past, Imyan try both to embrace and subvert the disciplining principles of the Indonesian government and the church. Both these foreign institutions are undermined through the claim that although whites and Indonesians benefit from their ability to perform superior rituals, everything they do to become so wealthy is based on Imyan knowledge.

Informed by this major concern, Imyan often negotiate the differences and the powers of other people in a search of lost elements of an (imagined) ancient order. Therefore, the dynamics of the traditions of knowledge among Imyans reflect openness to outside ideas

and structures and an experimental approach to finding potent new customs. In that sense, everything that Imyan do is always provisional and regarded as perhaps closer to the solution, but not yet close enough. To illustrate this let me discuss a new tradition labelled agama, which is born out of the frustration sketched above and is driven by Imyan pre-occupations with the possibility of Jesus Christ's return.

Opposing the government and the church and in search of efficacious rituals, Imyan have labelled a new revolutionary doctrine as agama ('religion'), a safe term as it relates to one of the pillars of the Pancasila (Timmer 2000a, 2000b). Significantly, agama also comes to the fore in Papuan cargo cults. For example, in the Tanah Merah region, the local 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 Cyclop 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 Syariwari (Kamma 1972: 287).

The agama that Imyan envision consists of a blend of wuon and Christian doctrine that may help to disclose the truth. This theology gives prominence to an Imyan world of sky deities related to the sultanate of Tidore, and thereby undermines the discourses of the missionaries and state. Agama criticises the state and missionary Christianity for denying access to the powers of Imyan sky deities, enriching Europeans, and empowering Indonesians to form the oppressive New Order regime. The return to local beliefs in wuon, in combination with Christian doctrine, will reveal white and Indonesian power and restore to the Imyan their stolen future.

Imyan agama never explicitly refers to any form of pembangunan and Indonesia does not play a role, even though the implicit suggestion is that all that is promised by New Order pembangunan will at one go materialise in Imyan land. The 'cargo' that is part of this package comes from the West, Olinado's destination. Indonesia is edited out and as such the Millennium among Imyan can be read as a way to explore and define the political economy of their relationship with the West. By re-inscribing a sharp distinction between local and Indonesian perspectives on *pembangunan*-a

process triggered by the harsh and disrespectful presence of 'Indonesia' - Imyan prevent pembangunan from making sense. As belonging to what threatens their world's integrity, Imyan intentionally disregard Indonesians by relegating them to the hell contained in end time stories.

Besides being a potentially successful way of escape from outside forces, the Imyan search for community can be understood more clearly when we realise that it resembles the community of initiates that retreated in the forest for months in order to team the wuon lore. The participants in this now defunct male cult were sworn to secrecy. Whatever the secrets may be, the secrecy is the search for a community that excludes those who do not know the secret, or the ones who do not properly handle the secrets. The first are traditionally those members of society who were excluded from initiation: women, children and non-initiates; and the second are whites who have received the secret core of wuon from Imyan but refuse to return it or share the powers and wealth that it involves. The latter group includes white missionaries and, by extension, all whites, as well as the Indonesians, in particular the Javanese elite, who elaborate on the knowledge and technologies developed by whites on the basis of the kernel of power and knowledge (kahan) that came from Imyaci land.

Imyan responses to government and church discourses reflect their observation that the demands of both institutions lead to chaos that can only be corrected by reversion to old traditional powers and politics. This interpretation transforms Imyan land and its people into powerful grounds and potentially powerful individuals. In this way Imyan build, maintain and defend boundaries in a world which they experience as intricate and threatening, but also shaped as such in order to discriminate against 'the other'.

In this sense, Imyan do not avert the threats from outside or inside their community, they embrace them. This entails the reproduction of cultural values whereby there is an increasing emphasis on the margins, boundaries and the distinguishing qualities of 'Imyan', and, by extension, the national traits of (West) Papuans. These attributes include pre-colonial autonomy; the power of ancestral knowledge for getting 'cargo' and the related peculiar relation to sky beings and the dead; and Christianity. Running through these attributes is the Imyan conviction that the past was the truth, completion, and it lay hidden to them but is now exploited by 'the other' to return to its

origin during the Millennium.

Triggered by frustration with the untrue exchange that *pembangunan* offers and the incomprehensible and postponed rewards of Christianity, Imyan attempt to restore a sense of agency. The most important theme in this respect is the sociality that comes to the fore in Imyan thoughts about the Millennium. Sociality is needed to bring about the Millennium - becoming good Christians is emphatically a team effort and one of the main goals of agama. This reiterates both *pemerintah* and *gereja* ideologies, but by suggesting that such team effort existed in the past and that through it the powers of sky deities could be accessed and the ancestors would assist with getting cargo and making gardens fertile, the past relations of exchange with the sky beings are depicted as the alternative to the present-day situation.

A concern about sociality is the basic reaction of Imyan people to the colonial and Indonesian governments which incessantly have told Imyan that they are backward and primitive, and that it is impossible for Imyan to build a cordial mode of being-together, working-together, and being charitable. In their discussions about the ways to establish such a community, Imyan do not solely refer to the powers that come through successful contact with sky beings, but also express the feeling that since they started to disregard the 'other world' their own world appears to have been forgotten by the rest of the world and disrespected by themselves. The gods have left and the people are in debt. Now that the primordial and most essential exchange has ceased, all giving, reciprocity and exchange no longer make sense. Only through engaging in exchange with the dead through wuon rituals, could they be propitiated for the evil that has been done. Now that Imyan are no longer able to correct things themselves because wuon ritual cannot be performed, Christian doctrine allows them to wait impotently for the Last judgement and watch their land being destroyed. Yulianus WoloW commented on the oblivion of the gods:

Look, it are people like Reverend Marcus [the major first Mennonite missionary who worked in the area in the 1950s] who urged us to do away with wuon and tell us our other world is not true but evil. Seems that he wanted to lead us astray [kasih sesat] because those things were too powerful. He was lying to us. No problem. But the problem is that I don't even know where it is. It were the old people who knew these

let alone my children, wah, it's long past, it is sunk in oblivion [dilupakan]. Because there are no gods anymore people stay at home when they are sick. The health centre is too far and too costly and will there be friends who care? Since we have left the gods behind us and believe in God, everybody feels alone and has an intense need for more [sikap minta].

Indeed, particularly when people are ill they get frustrated about the lack of wuon specialists and the virtual impossibility of carrying out really effective rituals that involve their own ancestors, let alone the powerful sky beings. If on top of that a prayer session does not improve the situation, uncertainty is blamed on what others did and do: the Dutch who took and destroyed wuon and the Indonesians who worked to put Papuans into a structural state of oblivion so that they will be unable to exercise or have access to power."

I think that it now becomes clear why Imyan consider the collective tasks proposed by the *gereja* and *pemerintah* as setting them on a false course. Many Imyan are sure that the church and the government attempt to artificially sustain the non-community with seemingly endless speeches, sermons, and project after project. Some go even further and say that this is part of a conscious policy aimed at keeping Papuans busy so that they will not think of ways to get back the powers that are rightfully theirs. Most however, see that the attempts of the church and the government to restore a sense of group harmony are empty because without the involvement of the beings in the sky it is inauthentic.

Elsewhere (Timmer 1998, 2000a, 2000b) I have described the symbolism that is derived from the Book of Revelation as it informs the enthusiasm with which people talk of the need to create the condition of sovereignty for all under the democratic and fair leadership of Jesus Christ. This movement towards the New Jerusalem often appeared to me as an apotheosis of Jesus and the Scripture and as such an intended symbolic move. This move in turn, it was hoped, would trigger others, make them have faith in Jesus, thus summoning up the energies deemed necessary to shatter the Indonesian state, restore justice, and give the Papuans an autonomous state.

The Imyan will be taken to heaven when they themselves enjoy the greatness of Jesus' Christ in their midst. We do not know how this'

complex processes into a contest between good and evil promises no good. What will happen if eventually angels join devils and devils join angels? In light of recent massacres at cults that isolated themselves from 'the other' we should not even be surprised to see Imyan putting effort into making the Word become flesh (compare Wemick 1999). If the Word does not become flesh, there are other, hopefully more likely options, which Imyan may choose in the future.

I have shown that in two senses there

is inequality between different traditions of knowledge. The first is an 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 Mejefats and the Mejefat elite's attempt to maintain their leadership positions; the other, directed towards the outside, is a 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 elements of the foundations of wealth and health that was sought in the sultan's palace on Tidore.

The knowledge needed, many Imyan believe, is out there and is not easily accessible. In the ancient wuon-related geography the search was oriented towards the power of ni mlasa and the cargo located in 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 outsider's system encompasses an even larger 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 pemeintah discourse and 'Mejefat-speeches'; they tend to talk more of the wrongs of tramps, rebels, thieves, Satan, witches, sinners, than of 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 hunger for change, that is, change that they themselves can control, which therefore requires intervention based on 'traditional' principles. This shows the level of compliance achieved by decades of *pembangunan* (cf. Li 1999). 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 is now safely categorised as agama. It thus seems likely that in the future wuon will gain precedence over all other traditions and that agama among the Imyan will not lead easily to the wished for renewal of everyday life but to an increasing distancing from the government and the church.

## RECENT EXPECTATIONS AND INCREASING LOCAL TENSIONS

Like many other Papuans, Imyan believed that the independence of Papua was impending after President Suharto fell in May 1998 and in particular after the armed forces announced on 12 November 1999 that Papuans would be admitted to raise the Morning Star Flag and sing their national hymn on 1 December (Van den Broek and Szalay 2001: 81). The planned flag raising marked the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these national symbols, which were first expressed in front of the New Guinea Council that was established by the Dutch colonial government in 1961. The rapid transformation of Indonesian policy on autonomy and independence for East Timor during the first half-year of Habibie's presidency also gave Papuan leaders the confidence to think that a peaceful resolution of their demands might be possible and that Papua would eventually be able to separate from Indonesia.

As elsewhere in Papua, the announcement

that a team of one hundred Papuan leaders (Tim 100) had pointed out to President Habibie that Papuans wanted independence (ibid. and Sumule 2002) and reflections on the developments in East Timor, made many in the Sorong region think that the power of Jakarta and the military had weakened to such an extent that independence would follow the 1 December commemoration. In the town of Sorong, people were afraid that the armed forces would not hold their word, particularly because some locals were still to be sentenced for raising the flag in front of the Imanuel church in Boswezen at 22 August 2000. During that incident, the Brimob shot dead three people, injured twelve, and fifteen people disappeared (see Van den Broek et al. 2001: 230). Because of the fear that the 1 December event would become violent due to responses of the security forces or through the instigation of certain elements of Papuan society, locals began to organise a people's security force, *Satgas Papua* ('Papuan Task Force') (Van den Broek and Szalay 2001: 85-86). In Sorong, this *satgas* appeared to be poorly organized and because of fluid and unclear membership and alleged provocation from outside, regular internal conflicts made the situation more tense than necessary.

In Teminabuan, Mihel Momot of the newly established local customary organisation *Lembaga Masyarakat Adat Tehit* ('The Tehit Customary People Foundation') and government official, Alex Duwit, were able to organise the local *satgas* more effectively. They went to great lengths to explain to the people that independence was imminent but that the current openness should above all be seen as an opportunity for Papuans to engage in a more open, plural and inclusive society and as an opportunity for the expression and mobilization of Papuan political and cultural aspirations. They spent about a week with the hundreds of locals that gathered around the flagpole in front of the house of the outspoken customary leader Mesak Momot, explaining that Papuans should show that they are peaceful and democratic and willing to solve the problem through dialogue and negotiation.

The *satgas* in Teminabuan managed to engage in talks with the few Mobile Brigade (Brimob) officers that were posted in Teminabuan to keep an eye on the situation. When the Brimob wanted to prevent the raising of the flag on 1 December, Alex told them to keep away from the group of people around the mast, arguing that people were also

the Indonesian flag raised to the same height as the Morning Star Flag. "So if you guys forbid this ceremony than in fact you get in the way of people who are respectfully performing a cultural ceremony and you will also disgrace the Indonesian state," Alex told them. Others were less tactful and wanted to attack the Brimob office and take control over the district government office, but the *satgas* was able to keep things under control.

Another point of concern was the increasingly radical expression of grievance towards people from South Sulawesi who are often labelled as *pendatang* ('immigrants') or Makassarese. Within the spirit of the idea that Papuans were about to rule their territories in their own ways, many began to speak out brusquely against the presence of these traders. These immigrants mostly dominate the market at the harbour of Teminabuan and are increasingly engaged in selling land to other immigrants and developers that they bought for low prices from local Papuans. Fed by rumours and knowledge about the conflicts in the Maluku and tensions between Muslims and Christians elsewhere, the Muslim Makassarese began to fear attacks from Christian Papuans who themselves got worried about a growing number of recently arrived foreigners amid the *pendatang* spreading rumours about upcoming attacks.

At the same time, exaggerated stories about a Muslim militia called Laskar Jihad establishing bases in Sorong and organising military-style trainings for local Muslims to prepare them for attacks on Papuans and to burn and bomb churches fuelled the tensions in Teminabuan.<sup>16</sup> Besides rumours, two faxes were sent by people from Teminabuan living in Sorong to the Maranatha church detailing planned attacks of Muslims on the Christian community in Teminabuan. The faxes were safely stored in the classis office to prevent further escalation. Religious leaders from both sides were able to reconcile people through meetings and through informing their followers during prayers and through organising regular meetings for both parties to discuss crucial matters. A painted line and the words *Batas Wilayah Makassar* ('Makassar Territory Border') on the street marking the border between Papuan Teminabuan and the immigrant market area signify the tension of those days.

Since increasing optimism and high hopes about immediate independence and a process of Papuanisation of governmental organizations, tensions between Imvun have also increased.

The process of dialogue between Papua and Jakarta ended after Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency when Megawati announced in late 2001 that the armed forces did not have to worry about human rights violations anymore and that Morning Star flags were no longer allowed to be flown. The hope that things could be resolved through dialogue between Papua and Jakarta was still high when President Wahid regularly spoke out on Papua, visited the province to celebrate 1999's New Year's Eve and financially supported a *Musyawarah Besar* ('Grand Gathering for Discussion', MUBES) in Sentani. The MUBES was held from 23 to 26 February 2000 and brought together representatives from all over the territory, met openly in a peaceful way and discussed the past and the future of Papua (see Van den Broek and Szalay 2001: 86-87). Organising Papuans in terms of religion and *adat* appeared to be a powerful strategy to consolidate communities and to advocate a peaceful way of dealing with the current problems, and furthered the spirit of struggling together for independence. A second MUBES was held from 29 May until 4 June 2000 with much wider participation and resulted in even clearer demands for independence, a goal to be pursued in a democratic and peaceful way (ibid: 89-90).

Soon however, the high spirits of the Papuans were acutely curtailed upon the commencement of Megawati's presidency. President Megawati, under pressure from the armed forces who feared the looming independence of Papua, effectively invoked a New Order-like policy towards the province. It allowed the military as well as parts of the police to move relatively freely in the 'power vacuum' left by the state after the fall of Suharto. Perhaps with more certainty than before because of their growing need for business and related decentralisation and increased autonomy of regional commands, the armed forces are becoming a major player by instigating conflicts, building militias, and executing a harsh policy towards independence leaders. Under the guise of upholding the unity of the Indonesian state and therefore safeguarding Papua from the alleged influence of 'terrorists' that conspire to break up Indonesia, the military is ensuring its access to Papua's natural resources. Papua has become a major focus, as it is one of the few remaining areas in Indonesia that is still rich in natural resources and where the armed forces can still legitimise its presence and activities.

To uphold the idea that there is a conflict in Papua the military is increasingly relying

on the methods of counterinsurgency warfare. Counterinsurgency has long been practiced in East Timor and West Papua. Even though it is obvious after the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 and numerous failed operations in Papua that counterinsurgency practice is unsuitable for dealing with civilian resistance among Papuans and East Timorese, the army still relies on it and has even strengthened its special forces, Kopassus. Kopassus now has more power and more freedom than ever to act against opposition movements and to secure its business interests in Papua. This forms a major threat to most kinds of attempts to organise Papuan communities in order to defend rights and to continue pressing Jakarta to seek solutions to injustice and feelings of disenchantment.

A major step forward in the imperfect talks between Jakarta and Papua was the passing of the Bill of Special Autonomy (*Otonomi Khusus*, Otsus) for Papua in January 2001. The idea for special autonomy as a kind of middle way between authoritarian rule and independence, came from discussions among NGO workers and academics in Papua (see Sumule 2002). The autonomy package was offered by Jakarta in an attempt to curtail the demands for independence. The new laws are however viewed with suspicion by most Papuans. First of all, they see that the laws were drafted by

the governor's office in Jayapura and a team of Papuan academics. Otsus has not really been 'socialised' among the communities and there is no provision for any dialogue in the future or any sort of negotiated resolution of the conflict between the government and the Papuan community. Financially, however generous the provisions appear to be - 80 percent of resource revenues and 70 percent of oil and gas, for instance - there is a very real fear that a lot of that money will stay in the hands of a few. Another serious problem with the special autonomy bill is that its implementation will be very difficult because the province is severely lacking in trained human resources and it is not in a position to maximise revenue benefits. Overall, the promises and the few likely benefits of special autonomy frustrate Papuans and motivate more and more people to attack those who are seen as the menace, i.e., the Indonesians, the immigrants, the big companies, and the armed forces.

Despite forming a challenge for Papuans in terms of organising themselves, creating opportunities to manage the exploitation of resources in their own ways and putting a lot

of effort into capacity building so as to become significant players in politics and economics, Otsus so far leads to tensions among Papuans. The struggle over land and natural resource rights is a key aspect of the conflict in Papua. It is not only about the limited sharing of resource exploitation benefits and the lack of seeing local Papuans as stakeholders in business ventures, but much more threatening is the involvement of the armed forces in the management of natural resources. As indicated briefly above, the security forces have a significant interest in resource extraction in Papua through direct involvement in logging, fishing, mining, and protection fees paid by resource companies. Recent incidents and the investigation reports of human rights organisations indicate clearly that particularly in the logging industry, local people get exploited and deceived by companies and the armed forces that own the ventures or collaborate with the companies.

Since 1999, people at different levels have been establishing *Lembaga Masyarakat Adat* ('Customary People Foundations'), partly in response to the availability of government funding for such organisations and partly because people wanted to take the opportunity to organise themselves. Most of the newly established foundations in the Sorong region are not (yet) capable of analysing the social, economic and cultural problems of communities, developing sensible intervention strategies, administering funds, writing proposals, building networks with other community based organisation in Papua, Indonesia and abroad, and engaging with donors. Even more unsettling is that some of the organisations hold racist views (in particular with respect to immigrants) and consider a return to how things were when everything was ruled by *adat*, which is then seen as the perfect and most democratic way of doing things. Moreover, there is competition of interests leading to fights about donor funding, disputes about borders between customary groups and a gradual division of *adat* regions into tribal territories, descent group lands, and even the properties of individual households.

In the village of Haha, the concern is still with knowledge, power, order and completion. Under the new autonomous and largely Papuanised government that is not yet able to implement Otsus regulations, the tradition of *pemerintah* among the Imyan is developing into an ontology that is compatible with present-day *agama*. People begin to see significant overlaps between the two traditions that could become

highlighted more frequently and may be further developed along courses of reasoning driven by hope and new ambitions. On the other hand, new political constellations in the province, ongoing politics of violence by the Indonesian military, progressing merciless elimination of freedom fighters, and dreadful incidents such as the recent ferocious murder of the chairman of the Papuan Presidium Council, Theys Hiyo Eluay, appear to Imyan to possess a large degree of disorder.'? In that case, certain degrees of orderliness are still sought in the tradition of *agama*.

Most unsettling is that moderate Papuans who held out for genuine self-rule and feel disappointed about Otsus fear that the armed forces will continue playing games with innocent lives and that no justice will be done for the long history of injustice that they suffered. They are angry about the killing of Theys and others and may now be driven into the rebel camp, convinced that there is little likelihood of success from any foreseeable source. Parts of the resistance movement will most likely stop believing in the peaceful struggle and may begin considering the use of violence to cleanse their country from outside 'contaminations', i.e., in-migrants and the military." Alarming, Papua seems to move from passive resistance to scattered guerrilla activity and in recent months - to the presence of opposing armed marauding militias trained by the special forces of the Indonesian military.

## AUTHOR NOTE

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Research for this paper was carried out among the Imyan from November 1994 to June 1996 and from December 2002 to January 2003. The language used in interviews and during discussions with Imyan was Indonesian and, to a limited extent, Imyan. All translations in the text are mine. I thank Hank Nelson for his comments on a previous version of this paper and Mike Cookson for producing the map.

<sup>2</sup> *Pembangunan* is that complex of top-down programs (village formation, development projects, resettlement programs) introduced by the New Order government with the aim of bringing welfare to Indonesian citizens. The programs come in the form of *Repelita* (*Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun*) or Five-year Development Plans, which are year after year brought to Imyan with the recurring promise that this new phase will really pave the road to welfare.

<sup>3</sup> Local categories such as *gereja* and *pemerintah* result from decades of engagement with Christianity and the colonial and post-colonial governments. The resulting cultural changes have led to the emergence of the categories that in people's talk appear as recurring glosses with distinctive sources and histories and particular sets of meanings and moral guidelines. I see these sets of meanings as 'traditions of knowledge', following Fredrik Barth's anthropology of knowledge, developed in *Cosmologies in the Making* (1987) and further elaborated in *Balinese Worlds* (1993). The categories I deal with in this paper appear largely as expressions of heightened cultural self-consciousness that have emerged in confrontation

(Foster 1995, Otto 1991, Otto and Borsboom 1997, Timmer 20006).

<sup>4</sup> The state' is also associated with vivid memories about evil military operations in the 1960s and 1970s and the unsettling feelings that arise from the threat of military forces that are ever present in such Indonesian centres as Sorong, Fakfak, Biak, Jayapura, and Ambon.

<sup>5</sup> Reminiscent of other constructions of risk and blame (Douglas 1992), these Imyan constructions condemn those different from themselves.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> IDT stands for Inpres *Desa Terringgal* ('Underdeveloped Village Presidential Instruction'), a World Bank supported development program for 'isolated' or 'backward' villages. This three year program provides the district government in Sorong with a substantial subsidy sent directly from Jakarta through the national banking system. The aim of the program is to encourage villagers in the Teminabuan sub-district to cultivate peanuts and mungbeans as cash crops. Despite the enormous money flows generated by the IDT program for the Imyan people, they hardly begin to solve the region's problems. See Timmer and Visser (2000) for a discussion of the paradox of development involved in this program.

<sup>9</sup> People's distrust of government initiatives prevailed. These emotions revolve around such things as government plans to construct a large coconut plantation and bring immigrants from Java and Sulawesi, both of which the government believes will boost development activities in their region. Some villagers hope to free their region from isolation with the help of funds and large-scale projects, but most argue that the influx of immigrants will marginalize the less educated Papuans. In light of these kinds of threats it is not surprising that people did not immediately believe that there were indeed ways for them to compete with *pendatang* groups.

<sup>10</sup> Maclean (1994: 675) notes a similar attitude among Papua New Guinea highlanders who do not want to

between freedom and autonomy, a theme that is also central in the present paper.

"After the session I explained the situation to the IDT official in private but that did not keep him from arguing that he had to report to the government that these primitive villagers are good for nothing. He said, 'Jaap, you may be right about the culture (*kebudayaan*) of these people but believe me, after years of working with them I can see that there is no way that we can help them to raise money and to alleviate their poverty'.

<sup>12</sup>Interestingly, the signs are now also taken as evidence that Imyan could already read and write long before the whites came to teach them these skills. Most informants added that Bauk was in possession of a book (the Bible) which Olinado took to the West. They argued that after the book was lost Imyan people lost their writing skills. From then on, they could only write (draw) marks on the breasts of the novices with chalk.

<sup>13</sup>The knowledge with which Imyan are concerned is 'knowledge' in the non-restrictive sense. It comprises the information, beliefs, magic, ritual, and techniques need to fruitfully engage the world (cf. Barth 1993: 306-8).

<sup>14</sup>See Zakaria (2000) for an overview of the desa-law and its impact on local communities, for example in Asmat (pp. 147-9), in Maluku Tengah (pp. 146, 163-6), and Maluku Tenggara (pp. 161-3).

<sup>15</sup>Indonesian propaganda as effectively expressed in schools, books, newspapers, radio and television for decades has indeed put much effort into putting official positions on matters of any sensitivity and suggesting that the history of Irian Jaya is one of an age-old struggle (*perjuangan*) for unity with Indonesia. In a situation in which the army plays a crucial role to control the population it is not surprising to see widespread written histories that tell of grand military battles in which Papuans play heroic roles (see, for example, *Sejarah Perjuangan* 1989 and compare Ballard 1999: 153).

<sup>16</sup>During recent fieldwork in the Sorong region in 2003, I have not found any evidence of the presence of well-organised Laskar Jihad groups, let alone training camps. Other outside observers such as Martinkus (2002: 57-64) seem convinced, like many local Papuans, that "Muslim Cloaks" present in Sorong are readying themselves for an Ambon like holy war (*jihad*) against Christians.

<sup>17</sup>There is much recent immediate and considered writing on human rights violations in Papua. *Kabar-Irian* ([www.kabar-irian.com](http://www.kabar-irian.com)) provides daily postings and weekly digests on happenings in Papua. Alongside numerous reports produced by NGOs, more widely distributed recent publications include: Kholifan (1999); Van den Broek et al. (2001); and a limited musing by Pamungkas (2001: 253-4).

<sup>18</sup>JUBI 13 Tahun 111, 25-31 Oktober 2001: 4-

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