

## Chapter Three

# The Mimika Coast in the Twentieth Century Prior to Colonisation

### INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the *Soerabaja* expedition in 1876, and the subsequent destabilisation of the influence of the Sultan of Tidore, the Mimika Coast began to see an intensification of its contacts with foreigners. In part, this was a result of the international concerns of the Dutch administration. In 1902, following British Government complaints that the “Dutch” Tugeri (Marind-anim) people were repeatedly attacking “British subjects” on their side of the border, the Dutch again set up permanent posts in New Guinea (Hovenkamp 1937:449).<sup>1</sup> The immediate response was to divide “Dutch New Guinea” into two districts, South and West New Guinea. Merauke served as the capital of the former location and as a place to monitor Marind-anim activity while Fak-Fak became the capital of West New Guinea. Perhaps more important for the future of the western side of New Guinea was not the administrative division, but the enthusiastic administrators assigned to the districts. Assistant Residents Kroesen of South

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<sup>1</sup> At the 1885 Berlin Conference, the other colonial powers determined that claims to colonial possession had to be confirmed by actual control. Although the Dutch did not take part in this conference, they realised that “actual control” necessitated the establishment a physical presence in West New Guinea (Ploeg 2000:3).

New Guinea and Helwig of West New Guinea, combined with a new Governor General of the East Indies, van Heutsz, attempted to put an end to the “policy of abstinence” and bring New Guinea to the active interest of the Dutch Government.<sup>2</sup>

Van Heutsz’s recent promotion to Governor-General sparked a plan for the aggressive exploration and administration of Dutch New Guinea. Highest priority was given to investigation of the as yet untouched interior of the province. Although the Dutch Military was the primary vehicle for conducting these exercises, private and scientific expeditions were especially encouraged in order to alleviate some of the financial burden while improving knowledge of the territory. In the context of realising the primary goals of exploring the interior, Europeans came into increasingly regular contact with the Kamoro.

While European expeditions made several calls along the Mimika Coast prior to colonisation in the twentieth century, Europeans were not the most frequent visitors. Another effect of the *Soerabaja* expedition proved more influential. As detailed in the last chapter, the Dutch administration weakened the regional influence of the Sultan of Tidore by establishing direct contacts with all of the Moluccan rajas up to and including the Raja of Namatote. Strengthened administrative control over the areas formerly under the influence of the Sultan of Tidore served to force illegitimate trade and slaving activities to the “fringe” areas, most particularly the Mimika Coast.

While Naowa, the Kamoro Raja of Kipia, served as the initial conduit feeding the illegitimate Seramese slave and resource trades at the turn of the twentieth century, the nature of his influence and that of his Kamoro associates began to change by the early twentieth century. Initially, as they had done with the broader Moluccan Kingdoms, the Dutch moved to establish direct contact with Naowa and his colleagues. In 1900 Kroesen, the Dutch administrator based in Fak-Fak, hosted the Rajas of Kipia, Akara, and the Major of Umar from July through October (van Hille 1905:317). There appears to have been competition, however, for the allegiance of these Kamoro trading partners with the Seramese

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<sup>2</sup> Government Gazette 1901, No. 239.

Rajas, with the Raja of Kipia and the Major of Umari making visits to Lakahia and hosting the Raja of Namatote (ibid:322). Competition for access to the trade on the south-west coast also seems to have had another impact. The apparent weakening of the Seramese control over trade activities in the region opened up mercantile activity to an influx of Chinese traders who traded with Kamoro from most of the Mimika Coast, not limiting themselves to the known rajas. In addition to trade activities and the massive influx of sought-after iron-wares into Mimika, the period also saw a major war in East Mimika. This war established the population and socio-political dynamics that the Dutch and later arrivals encountered.

This chapter explores how all of these events were interpreted and reformulated by Kamoro through *amoko-kwere*. Indeed, indigenous interpretations of the arrival of the foreigners and their trade goods, as well as the rise in power of the Raja of Kipia, were all, according to the *amoko-kwere*, results of Kamoro agency. Finally, the chapter broadly reviews the social, political, and economic circumstances that fuelled exploration, and ultimately the arrival of the colonial administration in Mimika in 1926 and the Catholic Mission in 1927.

### **Naowa and the Mimika Coast at the turn of the Twentieth Century**

The turn of the twentieth century marks the beginning of the period of the most intensive interactions between the Kamoro as a whole and outsiders. From the perspective of the Kamoro, this period is associated above all with internal wars, powerful warriors, and the arrival of Chinese merchants, *tena-we*. By far the best known and most notorious of these warriors was Naowa, the Raja of Kipia.

While the Dutch administration and indeed the Moluccan traders may have understood the establishment of Naowa as Raja of Kipia as an outgrowth of the expanded power of the Sultan of Tidore, Kamoro explanations formulated his position as the result of Kamoro agency by way of an *amoko-kwere*. As detailed in the last chapter, at least by the turn of the eighteenth century there existed a trade network linking the western parts of the Kamoro region with the Onin

Peninsula on the southern part of the Bird's Head; the Mimika Coast lay on the periphery of this network. There were also direct links, as I have outlined, between the Mimika Coast and Moluccan islands, in particular Aru and Seram. Maramuku, a man born in the mid-1880s, would have been in his youth when Naowa was most active during the latter years of the nineteenth century. Since Maramuku's home village of Poraoka rested within the Kipia district, his understanding of the source of Naowa's power may be representative of local interpretations of Naowa.<sup>3</sup> According to him:

The name of one man was Kapu, the name of the other Katima.<sup>4</sup> Together they went fishing. With the harpoon [*pomo*] they speared a big sawfish. They were sitting with the rope in their hands, but the fish was not dead, and fled away, very far into the sea. The vegetation of our coast here disappeared from their sight. Fish and harpoon they cut off with their chopping-knives [*tai*], and then they began to paddle, but there was no land in the vicinity. Their arms ached. "Oh, oh! Our arms!" they said. They put down their paddles on the canoe and sat down calmly. Then the north wind [*kimiri makemari*] came from the land side, and the canoe went off, very, very far and till daybreak they continued to drive along.

When they saw the vegetation of the Aru Islands [Aro], and the canoe [*ku*] drove further and further, until near Naku it hit dry land. The Serammers [*Terani-tia*] of Naku called out to them. "Where do you come from?" they asked. "We are men from the Poraoka," they said. "We do not know that," the Naku men said. "But what are your names?" "I am Kapu," the one said; "I am Katima," the other said. "But what kind of men are you?" the two asked. "We are men of Naku," they said. They went to sleep.

And early in the morning, when the sun began to give light, they left their canoes behind. The canoe of the foreigners [*ku tenatia*] (the Aru men) was hauled towards the sea [*amairi-kiaa-mae*], and the belongings [*katia*] were loaded. The sail was set; the wind came from the west [*kimiri tarakana*] and took them along. It was moonlight, and till daybreak they sailed on. "Where is your country?" they asked them.<sup>5</sup> "We are from the Poraoka [River, TH]," they answered. Near the cape [*emare*] they dropped anchor. The men from the Poraoka [River, TH] were not on the beach, but in the hinterland [*wamu*, lit. interior, TH]. The two beat the gong [*mamoka*]; they discharged a gun [*minaki*], but the men in the hinterland did

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<sup>3</sup> Drabbe notes at the outset of this story "This, like the preceding, is a legend of the Poraoka people, told by Maramuku, aged 50, of the same tribe. The *Terani* mentioned is Seram. The narrator here confuses the Seram people with the Aru Islanders. *Tena* also is actually divided from *Tjina*, Chinese, but is used for foreigners in general" (Drabbe 1947:258n).

<sup>4</sup> The names Kapu and Katima do not appear in any other documented *amoko-kwere* that I have seen. I'm uncertain if they are considered to be cultural heroes in Poraoka alone or if they were those of former influential residents of the area.

<sup>5</sup> Here Drabbe translates the word *tapare* as country; it could equally mean land or ground.

not hear them; they were far away in the mountains [*pukare*]. Then they called a dog, named Ewara; they tied a piece of new cloth [*piki*] to his neck and tobacco [*kapaki*]. Then they told the dog what he was to do; the dog sped inland. Meanwhile the sail [*kapokay*] was hoisted again, and near Kipia they dropped anchor. An old man [*perapoka*]<sup>6</sup>, the son of Ipi, lived at Kipia. His name was Nauwe [sic, Naowa, TH]! They gave him a *surat*,<sup>7</sup> a paper, and called him “Kepala” (chief)[*kapara*].<sup>8</sup> They remained there at anchor in front of his property.

The dog called the men [*we nata*], and they came from the inland to the coast. Seeing the tobacco from abroad [*tena-tia*, lit. of or from China; Chinese TH], they began to shout. “These strangers [*tena*, lit. China] belong to us,” they said. Then they went away again from Kipja, and settled down here (on the Poraoka) near the coast. From here they could see the strangers, lying at anchor, near Kipia. They shouted and cried out: Hurrah! Hurrah! They who have such things are dear to us [*katia apoka kaar*, lit. goods with I like him, TH], they said.

The strangers gave them choppers [*tai*] on lease [*utani*]<sup>9</sup> and went inland to gather massoy [*tarika*]. They peeled the massoy in the hinterland and returned to the sea [*tiri*, lit. to the beach, TH]. Then they began to barter [*ama-koro-mae*, lit. did barter they] and to buy [same word is used here as previously used for barter, TH] choppers and sarongs [*paruni*]. The massoy was loaded in the canoe.

Aboard the canoe they bemoaned each other and shook each other by the hand. The two said: “We are the men of the things (tools) [*katia-tia*, the same word used earlier to describe belongings, TH] and you are the men of the massoy.” After that they sailed away and the two settled down at Naku and became *Tena*-men (foreigners) [lit. Chinese, TH] (Drabbe 1948a:254-257).

Like the narrative from the previous chapter, this one highlights Kamoro agency in incorporating and understanding the world via *amoko-kwere*. The

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<sup>6</sup> *Perapoka* literally means “with grey beard” (Drabbe 1937:113).

<sup>7</sup> Drabbe notes here: “Before the Government was established here, the incoming traders set up of their own accord chiefs in the villages. Chiefs were previously unknown to the natives, but were established so those traders might have someone through whom to give orders. The son of the present village chief of Kipia [circa 1935-1938, TH] (now called *nati*, i.e. *ratu*) is also called Nauwe. The village chief of Kipia, called Kipia by foreigners, was for a long time regarded as head of the whole Tarya district including the populations of the following rivers: Poraoka, Kipia, Maparpe, Akare and Wumuka. The name Kapia-district was used in speaking and on maps. It was on the beach before Kipia also that in 1896 Pastor Le Coq d’Armandville, S.J., was drowned while returning to the schooner on which he was sailing along the coast” (Drabbe 1948a:257n).

<sup>8</sup> Here it is significant that the vernacular says *we nata*, literally real men or Kamoro, gave Naowa the letter, insinuating that Kamoro themselves were empowered to give the letter and that the foreigners were indeed Kamoro.

present account demonstrates how the Kamoro initiated contacts with the Moluccan traders, and the emergence of Naowa as Raja of Kipia from these interactions. Returning to their homeland, the Kamoro heroes conspicuously used the foreign items, a gun, a gong, cloth, and “foreign” tobacco; the Kamoro become the foreigners and the foreigners become Kamoro. Accompanied by their Seramese “kin”, the heroes summon the other Kamoro with a talking dog who has new (foreign) cloth wrapped around him. After the dog has led the local Kamoro back to the coast, revealing tobacco and other goods as well as the two Kamoro men, the Kamoro from the interior explicitly mark the incorporation of the foreigners when they exclaim: *Tena naatia*, “the strangers are ours,” or “the strangers are of us” (Drabbe 1948a:256).<sup>10</sup>

Implicit in each of the narrative reckonings is the notion that because the foreigners are reformulated as “local” (i.e. they were born of consumed Kamoro flesh or they are mistakenly interpreted as Kamoro), so too are their trade goods and the secret skills or knowledge necessary to obtain them. Interestingly, the story told from the perspective of a person who grew up within the closest sphere of Naowa’s influence emphasises that, like Abrauw in 1828, the *surat*, a paper, was the vital link to the foreign and ultimately the source of his power.

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<sup>9</sup> This word is not translated in Drabbe’s dictionary.

<sup>10</sup> Kamoro travels to the Moluccas around this time were not unheard of. Dutch Catholic Priest, Father Neyens, had a chance encounter with a group of six Kamoro men from Kipia at Banda-Elat (in the Kei Islands) in 1907. These men had been shipwrecked in the Kei Islands while on board the boat of a merchant from Koer, a small island to the west of the Kei Islands. Ironically, they had met the merchant when his boat was blown off course during a crossing from Koer to Aru that left him shipwrecked near Kipia (the same village that Naowa was from). During the process of assisting in the construction of a new boat, the merchant learned the Kamoro language and eventually invited the Kipians to travel with him. By chance, Father Neyens came across the recent shipwreck, and offered clothing and provisions to the group, including a jacket and trousers to an old Kamoro man named “*Orang Toea*” or “Old person” by the man from Koer. After returning to Koer with them, Father Neyens was inspired to contemplate an expansion of mission work to the mainland of New Guinea. He felt that their assistance to the man from Koer, their friendliness and general good nature as “unadulterated primitives” (*onvervalste oermensen*) was an indication of the suitability of the south coast of New Guinea for missionwork (Neyens, 1928:8-9; van Bavel 1946:4). This seems to be in agreement with Whiteman’s generalisation that missionisation of “untouched” or “unadulterated” natives is a common theme in representations of Melanesia (1983:110).

First-hand accounts from Kamoro who knew him or had met him personally shed light on another aspect of Naowa's power, namely his notoriety as a ruthless warrior. Even the Seramese merchants through whom he interacted described him as the "terror of Mimika" (Pouwer 1955:220). Interestingly, Naowa's exaggerated physical characteristics, described by Pouwer's informants, implicitly likened him to the cultural heroes, the *amoko-we*. They described him as an incredibly muscular, broad shouldered man with "pig's tusks" for teeth. Although he was subservient to no one, Naowa was on friendly terms with Moi, the Raja of Namatote, whose father had installed the first Raja at Kipia (ibid).

By the late nineteenth century, under the control of Naowa, Kipia became a central location for the Mimika Coast's increasing appetite for iron-wares, tobacco, and clothing. An administrative report of 1905 notes that Kamoro from the entire Mimika Coast, and in particular those from the eastern periphery were eager to obtain the items. According to his informants, entire families would travel westward towards Kipia. During the latter years of the nineteenth century, the stronger East Mimikan communities, such as Tipuka and Atuka even traded women and children to Naowa and/or his representatives to acquire the trade goods. The Tipuka in particular dealt in children whom they had captured during battles with the neighbouring Nawaripi communities (van Hille 1905:320 as cited in Pouwer 1955:221; see also van Hille 1905:320).<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, in imitation of the Raja of Namatote, Naowa empowered his cronies at various villages with titles such as *nati*, *major*, *kapitain*, *hakim* and *orang tua*.<sup>12</sup> In general, the titles had little to do with actual duties or hierarchies. Instead, influential village elders received the titles and served as representatives for the Moluccan traders (Pouwer 1955:221). Naowa and his men were absolutely

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<sup>11</sup> Although slavery had been officially abolished in the East Indies in 1860 (Ellen 1976:311), because the eastern parts of the archipelago had yet to see much of an administrative presence, the slave trade continued to flourish into the twentieth century.

<sup>12</sup> All of these titles, with the exception of *nati* were commonly association with the Moluccan "kingdoms" (see Ellen 1986). *Nati* appears to be specific to the island of Seram. Sachse describes *Naten* as one of three types of leader in a particular area of Seram (1907:79). It appears that the word as presented by Sachse is a Dutch pluralisation of *Nat* or *Nate*. This would clearly follow

ruthless in their control over access to the trade items however.<sup>13</sup> They often attacked the villagers from the east who were visiting to engage in trade, sometimes taking them captive, other times stealing their captives to exchange against the trade goods. Naowa's activities also forced several villagers from West and Central Mimika to flee to the east, where they stayed with the Wania River communities until his death (Pouwer 1954:42-45). While small-scale skirmishes between Kamoro communities seemed to be characteristic of Central and West Mimika during Naowa's lifetime, a larger battle permanently altered the power relationships in East Mimika.

### **The Tipuka War**

In the previous section, I described how Tipuka was among the most powerful communities in East Mimika during the latter part of the nineteenth century. While the west and central parts of Mimika were dealing directly with the ruthless Naowa, sometime around 1900 the power structures of East Mimika changed radically, when a confederation of communities attacked Tipuka, killing many of its people and capturing others as prisoners of war. In turn, these captives were either incorporated into the attacking villages or traded to the west.

The Nawaripi communities of the Koperapoka area appear to have led the attack, perhaps in response to repeated Tipukan abductions of their people. The fact that surrounding Kamoro communities from Mware, Pigapu, Hiripao and Mioko joined in the attack indicates that there was plenty of will to attack the Tipukans and eradicate their powerful influence in East Mimika. The aftermath of the battle saw Tipukans scattered throughout the south-west coast; some are known to have been traded as far to the west as Arguni Bay (Coenen 1963:5).

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Kamoro patterns of incorporating words with a terminal "t" sound by adding an "i"; thus *Nat* or *Nate* becomes *Nati*.

<sup>13</sup> Naowa and his cronies were also not against participating in Seramese "blood feuds" as pointed out by a Dutch report that Kamoro communities at Wumuka, just west of Uta, had plundered a boat owned by an "*Orang kaya*" from Goeli (East Seram) around 1899/1900 as part of an internal Seramese dispute (van Hille 1905:317).



Pouwer surmises that politico-economic reasons were most likely the underlying cause of the Tipuka War; Tipuka had grown large enough that it had become a threat to its neighbours' sago resources (Pouwer interviewed by author 12 February 1999). Significantly, Kamoro informants have always explained the Tipuka War not in terms of resource shortage, but as the result of ritual error, ostensibly linking the interpretation of the war to the spirit world and the *amoko-we*. In this case, through the carelessness of Tipuka men, women from other settlements saw and heard secrets of *Kaware*, the feast associated with men's secrets and the *amoko-we* Mamirima, while they were at Tipuka (Coenen 1963:5). When news reached the other settlements that had representatives at the feast, the men became outraged. While the Tipukans were out hunting in preparation for the closing stages of the same *Kaware* feast, men from the Wania, Kamoro and Koperapoka (Nawaripi) communities, along with men from Atuka, attacked Tipuka village. Older women who remained behind were slaughtered, while the younger ones were taken captive by the raiding communities (Pouwer 1954:46). The impact on Tipuka was devastating, reducing its population to insignificant numbers.

Accounts of the Tipuka War provide a striking parallel to my argument that the Kamoro tend to interpret events through *amoko-kwere*, in this case via the *Kaware*, a feast explicitly linked to men's secrets and to the Mamirima narrative. Interestingly, there was a linkage between the Tipukans' loss of socio-political power and their loss of spiritual power. Prior to the feast, the five *taparu* of Tipuka were capable of holding the *Kaware* independently. After it, their numbers were so decimated that the Tipukans as a social group barely survived (Pouwer 1954:46).

## NEW EMPIRES

For the Kamoro, the first decade of the twentieth century marked a point when Europeans began to make increasingly frequent, though sporadic, landings along the Mimika Coast. By 1902, at least one Dutch merchant had begun visiting

West Mimika.<sup>14</sup> Just one year later, the visit of “The Great Man of Merauke” (*Grooten Heer van Merauke*) to the Mimika River marked more significantly the beginning of more regular Dutch administrative contact.<sup>15</sup> The event itself is worth reviewing as it proved to be a strikingly parallel situation to that of nearly a century earlier.

The format of interactions between the Kamoro and the Europeans in the opening years of the twentieth century seemed to adhere to ritual-like prescriptions of the interactions between Abrauw and the Dutch in 1828, and presumably Abrauw and the Moluccan traders prior to 1828. For their part, the Europeans identified a single man from the village and escorted him back to their vessel.<sup>16</sup> On board, just as the traders had done before him, the foreigners presented clothing to this man, an apparent endorsement of his ability to interact with the outsiders. The linen jacket and trousers, blue glasses and a hat (Meyjes 1908:76-7) were a stark contrast to the *kabaya* and the turban presented to Abrauw by the Moluccan foreigners. They symbolically marked the beginning of a shift in the socio-political world of the Mimika Coast; Europeans, more precisely interpreted by the Kamoro as *Turabaya-we*, Surabaya men, were by this time becoming more influential than the Moluccan traders.

Just one year later, another similar vessel<sup>17</sup> approached the Mimika Coast between Nimé and Mimika.<sup>18</sup> As if on cue, the ritual-like process of engagement

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<sup>14</sup> This was likely the merchant J.M. Dumas (Pouwer 1954:44).

<sup>15</sup> This was the Assistant Resident of South New Guinea, J.A. Kroesen who was conducting a reconnaissance trip in preparation for an upcoming expedition.

<sup>16</sup> The vessel was the Dutch Administration steamer *van Doorn* (Meyjes 1908:77).

<sup>17</sup> This was the *Valk* that arrived as part of the South-West New Guinea Expedition (*Zuidwest Nieuw-Guinea-Expeditie* or ZWNG) of 1904-1905. Sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Geographical Society (*Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* or KNAG), the primary aim of the expedition was to explore the mysterious interior of New Guinea and specifically the region of the “Snow Mountains” (Rouffaer et al. 1908:XII). First described by Carstenz in 1623 the tropical snows, also dubbed the “Carstenz Tops” had fuelled discussion and debate for centuries; in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, debate seems to have centred on verifying the very existence of the equatorial snows. By the turn of the twentieth century however the snows were confirmed to exist and the “eternal snows of the tropical Netherlands” remained the only equatorial glaciers yet to be scaled. The other equatorial glaciers were located in Ecuador and east Africa. Whymper, an Englishman reached a summit of 20,577 feet in Ecuador in 1880. Meyer, a German, had climbed Kilimanjaro to an altitude of 19,565 feet

with the foreigners began again. The Kamoro man who now introduced himself as the “Raja of Mimika” along with his colleague the Major of Nimé<sup>19</sup> approached the vessel accompanied by several other Kamoro.<sup>20</sup> His linen suit, glasses and hat distinguished the Raja from the others clad only in loincloths. Based on Dutch accounts, he seemed disappointed that, unlike the case with the merchant vessels on which the same traders frequently returned, there was a different foreigner on board this ship. The Raja seemed satisfied, however, when the European identified himself as a representative of the Great Man of Merauke, the man with whom the Raja had previously interacted (Meyjes 1908:76).<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, after establishing contact, the Raja of Mimika, the “leader,” after making initial contacts with the Dutch, was quick to remove his clothing, essentially stripping his signs of supposed status (ibid:77). Just as Abrauw had communicated in a foreign tongue nearly a century earlier, the Raja spoke with the foreigners in their own language, an ability few other Kamoro had. Communicating with the expedition in “very good” Malay, the Raja was able to understand the expedition’s goal of reaching the interior. He even suggested various routes that they might take. Like Abrauw, the Raja explained to the foreigners that he had visited Ambon, Makasser (Sulawesi) and Timor-Kupang (West Timor); perhaps this was indicative of the trade networks linking the

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in 1889. An account of one of the expeditions lodged to the Carstensz Tops was titled *Naar de Eeuwige Sneeuw van Tropisch Nederland (To the Eternal Snow of the Tropical Netherlands)* by H.A. Colijn (1937). Although the ZWNG expedition failed to meet its primary objective, it was successful in compiling detailed and extensive cartographic information of the south-west coast of West New Guinea between the Digul River and Etna Bay. With regards to the Mimika coast, the expedition ascended and mapped the Oetakwa (Otakwa), Mimika and Omba Rivers as far as they were navigable as the best potential routes of ingress to the Snow Mountains.

<sup>18</sup> While the “official” account of the expedition (Rouffaer 1908) called the Raja’s settlement “Mimika,” IJzerman calls it “Kankano” [sic Kokonao] (1904:350).

<sup>19</sup> Though their titles would suggest that the Raja of Mimika would be of higher rank than the Major of Nimé, the political relationship between them (if any) is unclear.

<sup>20</sup> In published journal entries, IJzerman says that the Raja of Mimika’s name was “Milie” (Izerman 1904:349).

<sup>21</sup> This was *Controleur*, Seyne Kok who was assigned to the expedition by the Dutch Administration.

Mimika Coast to the outside world.<sup>22</sup> He also claimed that he had already been to the mountainous interior and that he was in good standing with the inhabitants before assuring the expedition that they need not fear theft or loss of life if they chose to penetrate inland from there (Meyjes 1908:77).<sup>23</sup> According to IJzerman, thanks to the Raja, contacts all along the coast, in particular at Nimé and the Raja's kampong of Kankano [sic. Kokonao], were very friendly.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to his rather bland account of the contacts, IJzerman remarked about the reception at Nimé:

We had a very friendly contact with the inhabitants of the Nimai [sic], who circled us in great numbers. The women in particular put on a fantastic show, dancing around wildly...while a few old men cried pathetically. According to Raja Milie, they were overcome with joy at our arrival (IJzerman 1904:349-350, my translation).

Like Abrauw, the Raja of Mimika also outlined the social, political, and geographic dimensions of the Mimika Coast for the foreigners. His descriptions matched those of Abrauw from nearly a century earlier in 1828 described on page three. From West to East he listed the "rulers" along the local [Mimika] coast as follows: the Rajas of Kapia, Akra, and Mimika and the Major of Nimé.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Van Hille, the Assistant-Resident at Fak-Fak remarked about a certain Raja of Mimika from the settlement of Wakatimi (also known as Mimika) who had traveled with the Netherlands New Guinea Trading company merchant J.M. Dumas to Fak-Fak in 1902 (van Hille 1905:318-321). It appears likely that he could also have visited the other locations as they lay on known trade routes of the merchant and the government. However, whether or not he had actually been to the mountainous interior is unknown. A 1905 account describes that Kamoro men used to ride on-board administration vessels to Seram where they would be treated well by their Seramese hosts who would utilise these relationships when they returned to the Mimika Coast with the Kamoro in order to purchase slaves (van Hille 1905:322-323).

<sup>23</sup> Recall in Chapter One that the interior was later documented to be the place where the spirits of the dead (*mbii*) live. This of course invites the suggestion that having learned of foreign preoccupations with the interior, the Kamoro may have made a causal link between the foreigners and their dead ancestors.

<sup>24</sup> He describes a friendly meeting with the Raja's wife, "Toekiani" at Kokonao (IJzerman 1904:350).

<sup>25</sup> Nimé [Nimy] is the "tribal name" of the village presently known as Timika Pantai. The Raja of Mimika appears to have been based either at Wakatimi or at Kokonao (IJzerman 1904:350). The Raja of Akra was likely based in West Mimika near the present kampongs of Amar, Kawar, and Manoare. Presumably Akra is a conjugation of Amar and Kawar. Kapia is also known as Kipia.



Image 5: “Followers” of the Raja of Mimika on board the *Valk*, 25, October 1904 (Rouffaer et al. 1908:77).



Image 6: Kamoro near Mimika, 1910. Original caption reads “The Idle, Slothful Savage.” (Rawling 1913:228).

While Dr. Koch, the expedition's medical officer "armed with anthropological instruments," obtained physical measurements from willing Kamoro volunteers, the Raja assisted *Controleur* Kok in the creation of a Malay-Kamoro word list. During their conversations, the Raja of Mimika formally asked Kok to establish a presence in his territory. He specifically mentioned that he wanted merchants to have access to the region and that he wanted a "Guru" (teacher) and a school that could teach his community to speak Malay (Kok 1908:467).<sup>26</sup>

After just two days, the foreigners departed.<sup>27</sup> Just as Abrauw had provided local guides to accompany the foreigners in 1828 to point out features of the coast, the Raja of Mimika accompanied the Dutch vessel as it steamed westward. Marking the Bokamau River as the limit of his territory, the Raja of Mimika urged the expedition to either anchor or attempt to enter it.<sup>28</sup> Again, like the other inlets, the Bokamau was unfavourable, and the ships steamed further west toward the Utanata, where they anchored on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October to take on water.<sup>29</sup> The following morning, a final attempt to access the interior from the Mimika Coast

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<sup>26</sup> The remainder of the crew on board the *Valk* spent much of the day engaged in barter; the Kamoro were particularly keen on obtaining iron and tobacco (Meyjes 1908:78). Kok reported that overall "contacts were most pleasant" and that the Mimika would certainly be a good place for an expedition base given the fact that the population was "sympathetic" and that they had a willing chief and translator who would fully support the venture (Kok 1908:465). The official account of the expedition mentioned that although the region near the Mimika River proved inferior from a nautical perspective to the East Bay River area at the mouth of the Utumbuwe River to the East (e.g. for anchorage and entrance into the rivers due to sand bars), the population here was far more favourable (Meyjes 1908:77-78).

<sup>27</sup> The *Valk* was now accompanied by the *Anna*, which had replaced the vessel that formerly accompanied the expedition, the *Flamingo* (Meyjes 1908:79).

<sup>28</sup> At the time of the expedition it was uncertain as to whether the Bokamau was in fact another mouth of the Utanata. It wasn't. It is east of the Utanata and immediately west of the present day village of Amar. Perhaps a settlement at Amar marked the limit of the Raja of Mimika's territory (see Pouwer 1953:9).

<sup>29</sup> Van Hille, the government head of West New Guinea, earlier remarked on the size of the Utanata and the availability of drinking water described it as "the very long and abounding with water Uta" in 1902 (Meyjes 1908:79).

failed when, even at high tide, the expedition could barely enter the mouth of the river (Meyjes 1908:80).<sup>30</sup>

I would like to briefly point out some points of significance regarding Dutch interpretations of Kamoro political structure during the ZWNG visit to the Mimika Coast. First, the Dutch identified a “leader” among the Kamoro based on the same criteria as the *Triton* expedition of 1828 (and presumably Moluccan expeditions before then): attire and the ability to converse in a foreign language, which had presumably been learned during travels to the West with the Seramese traders. In both cases, the adornments had been given to the Kamoro representatives on previous expeditions. I question the interpretation of the community as consisting of a “leader” and “followers.” More accurately, the community *appeared* to the Dutch as followers in contrast to the “leader” whose clothes and linguistic ability were the only things separating him from the others. In both cases, these criteria led to the foreigners presenting gifts to the “leaders” in exchange for the services of the “followers”. It appears that both “leaders” did not customarily wear the clothing that marked their position. However, it also appeared that in response to the Raja’s usage of his clothing and his linguistic ability, the foreigners began steady sessions of barter and gift giving with the local Kamoro. Finally, when the Raja of Mimika passed away while accompanying the expedition further to the west, and his body was returned to his village, it was unceremoniously stripped of its clothing and adornments. While this seems to be hardly appropriate treatment for a political “leader,” it is certainly consistent with feelings that there was something efficacious about the clothing.

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<sup>30</sup> By this time the expedition was in its closing weeks. Failure at Uta and desperation forced the expedition to return to the East and attempt the Mimika again, which they did to no avail. Though the expedition failed to achieve its primary objective, it did map nearly the entire south coast of West New Guinea. At the same time they made more accurate maps and drawings of the snow mountains taking measurements while along the Mimika coast, including the identification of a new snow-covered peak to the East of the Carstensz group which the captain of the *Valk* dubbed Wilhelmina Top in honour of the Dutch Queen (Souter 1963:132).

### EXPLORATION AND THE ARRIVAL OF “OTHER” FOREIGNERS

The period from 1907 to 1914 marked the most aggressive period of military exploration in the history of West New Guinea. The driving force behind this rapid expansion in colonial activity was Major H. Colijn, adviser for “Outer Possessions” (*Buitenbezittingen*) to the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies, van Heutsz, (Le Roux 1935:45). In 1898, with Colijn as his “right hand man,” van Heutsz had led an expedition that proved decisive in the pacification of Aceh in North Sumatra.<sup>31</sup> Later that same year, van Heutsz was appointed governor of Aceh (Kuitenbrouwer 1991:273-275) and, ultimately, Governor General of the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>32</sup> Van Heutsz’s pacification of Aceh was incredibly influential in the new directives of the East Indies Administration at the turn of the twentieth century. Not only did it free up troops and financial resources for use elsewhere, it also served as a model for pacification in other outer islands of the Indies Archipelago. In particular, policies based on the *Korte Verklaring*, the “Short Declaration,” drafted by van Heutsz and Snouck Hurgronje, became the rule for all “native self government” (ibid:277). This declaration required indigenous rulers to “declare that their territory was under Dutch rule, that they would not enter into political relations with foreign powers, and that they would agree to comply with the rules and orders regarding their states as the government should prescribe” (Ellen 1976:314). Promoted to Major in the aftermath of the Aceh pacification, Colijn was responsible for the implementation of the *Korte Verklaring*, which he did by persuasion when possible and by force when necessary (Kuitenbrouwer 1991:277).

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<sup>31</sup> Although van Heutsz’s pacification policies in Aceh were initially heralded as “ethical” in that they were said to be “in the best interests of the Acehnese” news eventually trickled out as to the nature of his work on the ground. Indeed in 1904, under van Heutsz’s leadership as Governor of Aceh, 3000 villagers, including 1,200 women and children were killed while the military police incurred only minor losses (Kuitenbrouwer 1991:321).

<sup>32</sup> Both of van Heutsz’ predecessors, Governor General Roosenboom and Minister of the Colonies Idenburg had a military background. By the time of van Heutsz’ appointment, debate had been stirring in The Netherlands regarding the militarist attitude that had begun to characterise Dutch rule in the East Indies (Kutenbrouwer 1991:321-322).



After making an exploratory trip up the Mamberamo River from the north coast in 1906, Colijn resolved that a systematic exploration of New Guinea was necessary and that the military would be the perfect vehicle to carry out the task (Le Roux 1935:45). In his “Note Concerning a Line of Action for New Guinea” Colijn wrote a persuasive argument outlining how Dutch colonial authority and subsequent development of the commercial economy of the region depended upon thorough exploration (cited in Souter 1963:131). His pleas were well received in the socio-political climate in the Netherlands, whose contemporary colonial administrative policy was characterised by what was known as the *Ethische Richting*, or the “Ethical Policy”. The aim of this policy was to raise the moral and material welfare of the colonised through an expansion of indigenous education, closer supervision of village government, and decentralisation of administrative power and education (Furnivall 1944:227-232). In this atmosphere, Colijn’s argument convinced the authorities to allot massive funding to the task, which may have been seen as a logical step toward the implementation of the *Ethische Richting*. His plan went into effect in July 1907 and continued through 1914.<sup>33</sup> Military exploration began on the south coast of New Guinea at Merauke, and eventually systematically explored and charted each major river along the coast to the north-west. During this aggressive campaign, military expeditions explored the Digul, Mappi, Eilanden, and Otakwa Rivers, in search of routes of ingress to the interior (Souter 1963:132).<sup>34</sup> In addition to the independent military expeditions launched during this period, the number of scientific expeditions increased dramatically, and each was accompanied by a military detachment. It is from in expeditions that the history of West New Guinea again intersects directly with that of the Kamoro.

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<sup>33</sup> During this period over 5.5 million guilders were spent and over 800 men participated in military exploration. By the end of the seven years the military exploration directive had nearly a ten percent personnel mortality rate, excluding an unknown number of indigenous people who perished at the hands of the military (Souter 1963:131).

<sup>34</sup> From the north coast, military exploration met with some difficulty as the Mamberamo proved to be the only navigable river penetrating into the interior (Souter 1963:132).

On the fourth of January 1910 the Major of Nimé led a flotilla of canoes setting out to greet a foreign steamer. His canoe stood out from the others by the bright cloth attached to its stern. Appropriately the cloth was a Union Jack, and the foreigners being greeted were British (Rawling 1913:43).<sup>35</sup> In line with the apparent protocol for such encounters, the individual with the most conspicuous display of foreign items and those who accompanied him were invited aboard the foreigner's boat.<sup>36</sup> Showing neither fear nor surprise, the Major of Nimé boarded the vessel and shook hands with all of the men on board (ibid).

The Europeans simply asked the Major, "Mimika?" The Major responded, pointing out a promontory some two or three miles to the west. Like his predecessors had done, he stayed on board the boat and accompanied the men to their anchorage off the mouth of the Mimika River. Interestingly, the Europeans were one of numerous groups of people who would have passed by Nimé in recent days. Most of the Kamoro were headed in the direction of the Mimika River to Wakatimi, where a feast was well under way (Wollaston 1912:40).

Soon after daybreak on the fifth of January 1910, the expedition approached Wakatimi. A Kamoro sentry sighted their vessel ascending the Mimika River, and his shrill shouts were the prelude to the launch of a dozen canoes that set out to greet the foreigners. After having a clear look at the foreigners, the Kamoro men repeatedly leaped backwards out of their boats into the river, before climbing on board them again (Rawling 1913:48). Guided by the flotilla of dugouts, the expedition's steam launch arrived at Wakatimi to an impassioned welcome.

The reactions of the nearly 1000 villagers at Wakatimi that morning appeared to have been perhaps ritualistic. English accounts describe the experience:

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<sup>35</sup> Late in that same year the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), with cooperation from the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), resolved to celebrate its Jubilee with an expedition to the Snow Mountains (Ogilvie-Grant 1912:xx). The core members of the expedition included the leader, Walter Goodfellow, Wilifred Stalker and Guy C. Shortridge (animal specimen collectors), A.F.R. Wollaston (Medical Officer, entomologist, botanist), Captain C.G. Rawling (Surveyor), and Dr. Eric Marshall (Assistant-Surveyor and Surgeon) (ibid).

<sup>36</sup>This was the Dutch steamer *Nias*.

The excitement was intense. Men, women, and children poured down to the banks of the river, adding their clamour to that of our escort in the canoes. No welcome could have been more enthusiastic, and few sights more astonishing. The women cast themselves into the mud, rolling over and over and plastering themselves from head to foot, while the men and boys preferred the cleaner option of throwing themselves backwards into the water. The women, now hardly to be recognised as human beings, but delirious with joy and excitement, started an inartistic dance, going down on hands and feet and wriggling their bodies from side to side with their sterns waving in the air...(Rawling 1913:48).

Another English account contributes details of the women's dancing and other reactions:

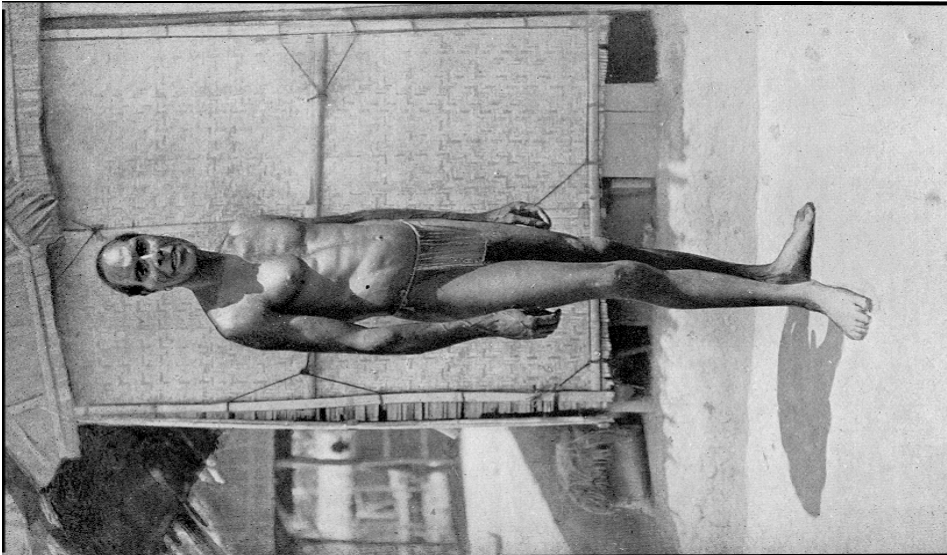
The body is bent forward from the hips, the hands rest on the knees or on the hips, and then with a shuffling movement of the feet the woman swings herself from side to side or up and down, always presenting her back and the narrow strip of barkcloth, which usually hangs down like a tail behind...She sings all the while a monotonous whining chant...Many of the people both men and women on this and other occasions of great excitement were so overcome with emotion that they actually shed tears of rapture. For many days after this boats were constantly coming up the river from the ship, and they were always welcomed in a similar manner by the natives (Wollaston 1912:41).

Reasoning that the location provided easy access to the sea, and that it was well situated to access labour, the expedition members decided to set up camp across from Wakatimi. Soon after the establishment of a base camp, a group of Kamoro established an adjacent settlement to provide labour for the foreigners in exchange for access to foreign goods.

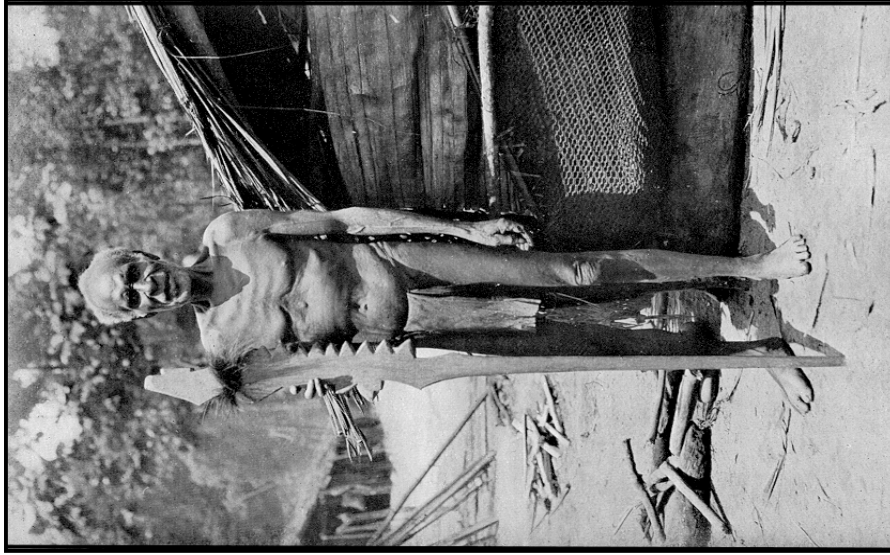
During the third month of the expedition, Father Neyens, a Dutch Catholic Father visited the expedition. Previously Neyens had met Kamoro men from Kipia when they were shipwrecked in the Kei Islands (see footnote 10, this chapter), spurring his interest in expanding mission work onto the mainland of New Guinea from their Kei Island base. He was accompanying a Dutch Military Expedition that had surveyed the Arguni and Etna Bay areas before continuing on past Kaimana to the Mimika Coast.<sup>37</sup> The mission accounts seem to mirror those

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<sup>37</sup> Mission historian van Bavel made a point of documenting the fact that while enroute, on the thirtieth of March Father Neyens became the first Sacred Heart (MSC) missionary to set eyes on the snow-capped mountains which lay in the interior beyond the Mimika coast (van Bavel 1946:4-6). The importance of the snow-capped mountains, reaching them, and indeed ultimately exploiting their resources are persistent themes uniting the history of the Mimika Coast from 1623 to the present, and tend to play a role in the continual relegation of the Kamoro to the role of a community who stands between the explorers and their real goals and as such are denigrated.



**Image 7: Major Nimé, 1910 (from Rawling 1913 after page 182).**



**Image 8: Original caption reads “The oldest man of the up-river tribes, who on account of his age, wielded a wooden instead of a stone club (from Rawling 1913 after page 224).**

of the English expedition with regards to the Kamoro reception. When the ship approached the Mimika River, Neyens described seeing Kamoro, in particular the women, jumping into the water, coating themselves in mud and swimming to meet the boat (van Bavel, 1946:4-5). Later he revealed that this reception gave him the terror of his life, describing the Kamoro women to another missionary as “female devils straight out of hell” (Zegwaard 1995:311). Based on this experience, he determined that a mission post in Mimika remained “too dangerous for young priests” (Boelaars 1995:252-3).<sup>38</sup>

Although the Catholic Mission would not return to Mimika for more than a decade, the events that preceded Neyens’ 1910 visit were telling of attitudes of the Dutch Administration which ultimately impacted later mission and administration work in Mimika. In 1909 Neyens initiated correspondence with the newly installed Assistant Resident of West New Guinea, Dumas, who was based at Fak-Fak. In one of the letters, Dumas indicated that potential work of the Catholic Mission in south-west New Guinea was mutually beneficial to both the mission and to the Administration in the pacification of the population.<sup>39</sup> More personally, Dumas was eager for the establishment of a mission post to stem the expansion of Islam which had, in his words, already “infected” the north coast of the MacCluer Gulf (the Bintuni Bay of the Bird’s Head Peninsula) and had spread as far south as Arguni Bay. In a response to Neyens’ query regarding government plans for the region, including the Mimika Coast, Dumas described the spread of Islam as an “atrocious,” and suggested that Kaimana would be a good point to set up a mission post to halt its spread (Neyens 1928:10-11). He also mentioned that as yet there was no immediate plan for a permanent Administration presence on the Mimika Coast, due to poor sea connections. In fact, at that time he had not even been to the Mimika Coast and for police and communications vessels, Mimika remained “forbidden terrain” (ibid:11).

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<sup>38</sup> A.F.R. Wollaston, the physician of the British expedition noted that Neyens had already decided not to begin work in Mimika at that time (Wollaston 1912:154).

<sup>39</sup> The position of Assistant Resident is roughly equivalent to that of District Officer in colonial Papua New Guinea.

Bolstered by apparent governmental support in New Guinea, in June 1910, Neyens wrote to Governor General van Heutsz, requesting permission to open mission posts in accordance with Dumas' recommendations, near Arguni Bay and on the north coast of MacCluer Gulf. He supported his letter by commenting that he had also gained full support from the Resident of Ternate who happened to be on a service trip to Fak-Fak when he was there.<sup>40</sup>

After nearly a year of waiting, in January of 1912 Neyens received a response from the Governor General in the form of a stern reprimand. In the first place he was scolded for seeking support from the Resident of Ternate who had no jurisdiction over this territory (it fell under the Residency of Ambon).<sup>41</sup> Secondly, the Governor General accused Neyens of "Papist naughtiness for trying to establish mission posts at Arguni and on the north coast of MacCluer Gulf which directly violated an earlier agreement which placed all territory north of four degrees thirty minutes under Protestant Mission jurisdiction (van Bavel 1946:5).<sup>42</sup> For his part, Father Neyens saw opening posts in this area as a chance to halt the spread, not only of Islam, but also of Protestant Mission work. As a result, potential work in Mimika, which lay for the most part south of the separating line, was seen in a new light, though its almost complete isolation from Dutch commerce and communication, as outlined by Assistant Resident Dumas, kept it effectively beyond the reach of the Church. The official "boundary line" between Catholic and Protestant mission work could be drawn by extending a line east from just south of Etna Bay to the border with British New Guinea. This delineation effectively placed the Kamoro population within Catholic jurisdiction but impossible to work among in the as-yet unadministered. With the outbreak of World War I in July 1914, the mission and the administration were forced to become thriftier, lessening their presence in

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<sup>40</sup> The position of Resident is roughly equivalent Resident Commissioner.

<sup>41</sup> It is possible that the fact that the Administrative centre in Ambon was also the headquarters of the Protestant Mission (and hence a disproportionate amount of Protestant civil workers) may have deterred Neyens from seeking support directly from Ambon.

<sup>42</sup> Indisch Staatsregeling number 177 which replaced article no. 123.

outlying areas that were expensive to maintain, and thoughts about expansion into the Mimika area were shelved.

With the end of the war in late 1918, the mission again began to strengthen its work in the Moluccas and West New Guinea. Administratively, Netherlands New Guinea became a vicariate in 1920, with Mgr. J. Aerts as Vicar. By this time, there were already nearly 8000 baptised Catholics in his vicariate, the majority of whom were in the Moluccas (about 5000 in the Kei Islands and about 2500 in Tanimbar). There were just 250 Catholic converts on the mainland of New Guinea. For this reason, Mgr. Aerts began to send cadres of Dutch Catholic Fathers and Kei teachers to Merauke, the only place on the south coast within the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church which already had both an administrative and a mission presence.

#### **INTERPRETING THE FOREIGNERS: *TURABAYA-WE* AND *TENA-WE***

While Surabaya was (and remains) a major port town in East Java, the Kamoro would likely have heard of the name through the Moluccan traders. As discussed in the last chapter, in 1876 the *Soerabaja*, a government paddle steamer, travelled around the Eastern Moluccas and along the south and west coasts of New Guinea establishing direct contacts with various rajas and local “leaders.” They issued them “letters of appointment” as representatives of the Dutch Administration (Pouwer 1953:14). Although unfavourable weather prevented the expedition from reaching the Mimika Coast, Kamoro in West Mimika experienced the impact of the expedition through the Moluccan Raja of Namatote who, after receiving a “letter” from the Dutch Administration, proceeded to empower Naowa as the Raja of Kipia.

Subsequently, it appears that Europeans became associated with Surabaya, and labelled as such. Indeed, some of Drabbe’s informants in the mid-1930s continued to label Europeans *Turabaya-we*, Surabaya people. In 1910, the name of the indigenous settlement, which sprung up to support the needs of the Europeans on the English expedition, was recorded as “Tourapaya” (Rawling

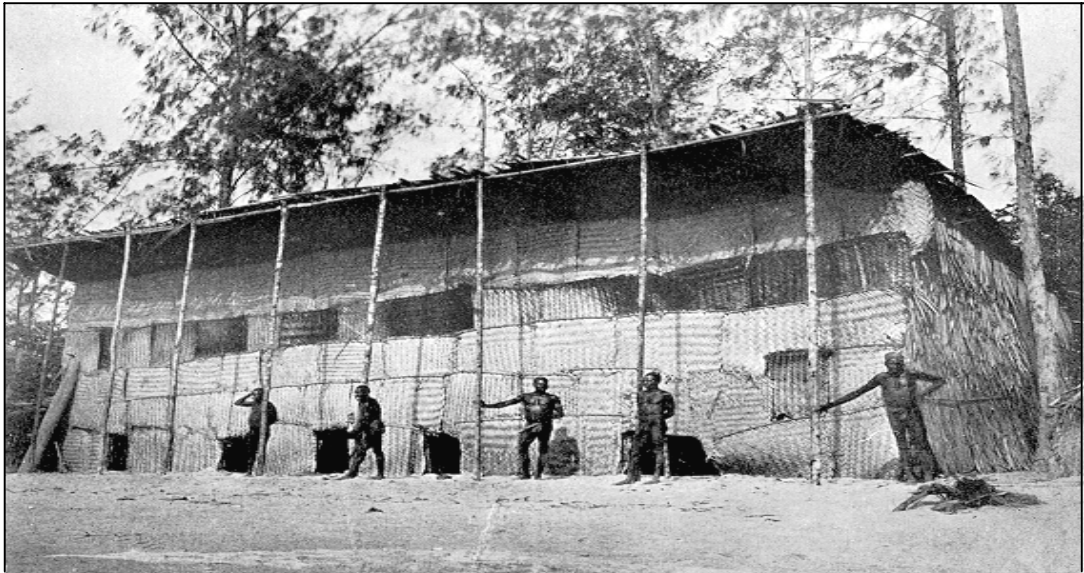
1913:179, 192). Dutch Catholic Fathers who later visited settlements along the Mimika River in 1927 were also explicitly addressed as *tuan surabaya*. Given the fact that the British expedition visited nearly all of the most populated settlements, it is not unreasonable to assume that instances of Kamoro classification of the Europeans on the Mimika River are representative of the classificatory schemes elsewhere in Mimika; European foreigners were *Turabaya-we*, Surabaya people. During this period, it appears that there was no differentiation between church, administrative or other Europeans.

At the same time, the circumstances of European arrivals suggest an array of possible Kamoro interpretations of the foreigners as in some way originating from Mimika. First, the English expedition explicitly sought to go to the Mimika River, where a large portion of the Central and Eastern Kamoro had already gone to participate in a major feast. Two general characteristics of Kamoro feasts that I discussed in Chapter Two are that they venerate the recently deceased and engage the spiritual. The British expedition arrived during a feast and was greeted in what could only be described as ritualistic fashion: people coating themselves in mud, singing, and jumping into the water. Setting up a base camp on a strip of land just across the river from Wakatimi also may have sent particular signals to the Kamoro. According to Wollaston this area appeared to have been “cleared of forest at some time, for there were no large trees growing on it” (Wollaston 1912:46), suggesting that it may have been the site of a former settlement. This is significant because even by the time of the expedition’s visit, administrative survey reports and even the expedition’s own accounts noted that Kamoro settlements commonly consisted of paired settlements on either side of a river. As explained in Chapter Two, a community on one side of a river forms the *aopao*, the ideological reciprocal counterpart, of the other. This fact combined with their reception and the timing of their arrival lends plausibility to the assumption that the indigenous communities would have had little difficulty interpreting the European foreigners as being in some way Kamoro.





**Image 9: Camp of the British Ornithological Union Expedition along the Mimika River, built opposite Mimika settlement (from Wollaston 1912, after page 48).**



**Image 10: “Ceremonial House” (*Karapao*), Mimika, 1910. The British Ornithological Union Expedition arrived during an indigenous feast at Mimika. Published in Wollaston (1912, after page 48) also published in Rawling (1913, 282) where it is described as a “dancing hall.”**

### **Incorporating the *Turabaya-we***

Despite extensive exploratory activity well into the second decade of the twentieth century, contact between Europeans and the Kamoro remained sporadic. At the same time, other outsiders began increasingly regular visits to the Mimika Coast. Again, an *amoko-kwere* serves to outline the social boundaries of the Kamoro world, this time more explicitly labelling the foreigners who originated from Mimika. Drabbe collected the following between 1935 and 1938, from a man from West Mimika born circa 1900, the narrative proceeds as follows:

There are a young man [*koapoka*] and his mother [*a-ote*]; a large edible animal [*ereka atoa*], a big lizard [*weko atoa*] that eats everyone up. It lies making a noise like thunder. The young man and his mother build a great long house [*kame atoa*]. They hang up an axe [*pokani*] and a knife [*tai*], and a larger axe [*marata*]. They kindle a fire [*uta*]. The lizard smells it and comes near; he comes into the house and breaks it up, and the axe falls down on to him, and the knife falls down, and the big axe too, and this falls on to his head, and he is then dead.

The young man cuts him open, he cuts, cuts him open altogether and divides him into pieces. Pieces of flesh [*nata*] he puts in one pile, pieces of fat [*iwana*] in another. And the pieces of fat he calls Dutchmen [*Warta*] and Chinese [*Tina*] and the people that live in the east [*we karu-miri-tja*], they are many pieces of meat and one piece of fat; the men of the interior [*kapaoku*], there is only one piece of fat for them; the men from the west [*we emaru-miri-tja*], there is only one piece of fat for them. And the local people [*we mimare-tja*], only few in number, are one piece of fat. Then he speaks: Come on, stand up, you, he says. And the white men [*wenata puu*] and the Dutchmen [*Warta*], and the men from the interior [*kapaoku*] and the man from the Tarya-region stand up in great numbers. Then he says, white men, go off to the west; men of the interior, go off to the interior, to the mountains; men of the east, go off to the east. There is a multitude of men and many canoes. Dutchmen and Chinamen go their ways separately; the people of the interior go off separately to the interior. The easterners go off separately to the east (Drabbe 1947:169-170).

Assuming that this narrative is in some way indicative of the degree of their social and economic interactions, the Kamoro sphere of social interaction explicitly included Dutchmen and “China-men” by the second decade of the twentieth century. As in the version presented in the last chapter, specific words may be indicative of the nature of Kamoro contact with these specific foreigners. *Warta*, the word used in this narrative to describe the Dutch, is a derivation from the Moluccan-word *Walada*. According to Drabbe, *Walada* is a Moluccan-

language interpretation of *Belanda*, the Malay word for Dutchmen (Drabbe 1937:156). This suggests that the Kamoro would have known of the Dutch primarily via Malay and more directly Moluccan intermediaries. The word for the Chinese, *Tina* or *Tena* appears to have been derived from Tjina or China which Drabbe argues may have been a local adaptation of Chinese words, which suggests the possibility of direct contact between the Kamoro and the Chinese merchants (Drabbe 1947:258n).

The paths of contact suggested in this narrative are supported by the historical sequence of interactions between the Kamoro and outsiders, which can be pieced together from administration and indigenous accounts. The expedition of the Dutch steamship *Soerabaja* in 1875-1876 appears to have had two major impacts on administration of Mimika. First, by establishing a system of administration of direct proxy via individual rajas, the Dutch destabilised the influence of the north Moluccan Sultanate of Tidore.<sup>43</sup> By the early twentieth century, these rajas all received salaries from the Dutch administration and were the only formal link between the administration and the Kamoro.

A Dutch administrator's research over the period from 1918-1919 revealed that, as in the early nineteenth century, most of the rajas linked to Mimika (i.e. those with whom the Kamoro directly interacted) continued to have direct Seramese heritage and all were at least nominally Moslem (Kok 1919a:70-71). This information supports the notion that numerous words used by the Kamoro to describe material culture, titles and foreigners were adapted from Moluccan, perhaps more specifically, Seramese words.<sup>44</sup> One key aspect of the newer

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<sup>43</sup> I contrast “direct proxy”—establishing direct contacts between the rajas and the administration—to “indirect” or “remote proxy” which I define as administration via the Sultan of Tidore. Initially, as a tactical move the Dutch propped up and expanded the Sultan of Tidore's influence as a means to legitimate their ownership over the west side of New Guinea. Later, when it suited their economic and political agendas they established direct contacts with individuals formerly empowered by the Sultan of Tidore.

<sup>44</sup> With Seramese I include not only the island of Seram, but also Seram-laut, Goram, and Gisser Islands. A 1932 administration report explicitly investigated the genealogy of most of the “indigenous administrative heads.” Wolongtua Sifa, the initial head installed as Raja of Namatote (the region linked to Kipia and the Mimika Coast) by the Sultan of Tidore was married to a Goramese woman. Their son, Mooi Boeserau, had four wives, three of whom were from Goram

administrative style was the removal of the threat of attacks by the Sultan's *hong*i fleet, opening the area to merchants from outside the region. The most frequent of these "foreign" visitors were Chinese merchants and their emissaries.

### **The arrival of the *Tena-we***

The Atokoaripiti from Amarapia went fishing on the coast at the time of *Nati Atana*. In the distance they saw a "foreigner's canoe," a *tenaku*, approaching. It was a Chinese schooner from Kaimana. The Chinese landed and laid red cloth, axes, machetes, knives, tobacco and pinang on the ground for us to see. He made it clear that we could have all of these things if we collected yellow wood [*geelhout*]<sup>45</sup>, damar resin, massoy-bark and sago. Almost every month the Chinese returned to collect these products. He even built himself a house. Since this time, the three *taparu* that presently constitute Amarapia have lived on the beach and become the people of Amarapia (informant from Amarapia as cited in Pouwer 1955:230, my translation).

The account of the Kamoro informant from Amarapia in West Mimika establishes the approximate date (in the time of *Nati Atana*, just prior to 1920) of initial contacts with Chinese traders. It suggests that one of the key impacts of their arrival was the communal resettlement of disparate communities from the same region to the coast for access to foreign goods (see Pouwer 1955:231). Spurring "spontaneous" resettlements to the coast, the Chinese traders may have inadvertently assisted in the later formalised process of coastal resettlement associated with pacification. As early as 1917, sixteen merchants from Kaimana, at the mouth of Arguni Bay, went to Mimika to establish contacts on behalf Ong Kie Hong, a Chinese merchant. Because the Mimika Coast remained only loosely administered by the Dutch, it was eyed as a potential "Wild West" by Ong Kie Hong and other Chinese merchants who aggressively extended their activities deep into unpacified Mimika.

The Chinese mercantile activity focused on trade in natural resources, in particular bird of paradise and crown dove skins, crocodile hides and damar-resin

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while the fourth was the daughter of the Islamic spiritual leader (*Imam*) of Namatote (Vink 1932b:19).

<sup>45</sup> These are fustics, most commonly used to make yellow-dyes.

(Pouwer 1955:230). Vink, the administrator of West New Guinea, described the surge in the Mimikan economy in connection with the Chinese merchants, which had by 1924 begun to be taxed by the administration:

People often go from Arguni Bay to Mimika as damar [resin] gatherers. They begin by receiving an advance [payment] from a Chinese merchant by whom they are employed. From the administrative side, the Chinese must pay taxes on behalf of their employee; a tax which naturally is counted as a debt of the worker. Setting foot on land in the Mimika district usually means that one has a debt of between ten and fifteen guilders. Food, rice or sago, and other necessities must be purchased from the Chinese *toko* [store], thus unless one is quite hardworking, one remains in constant debt. Many people bring their wives and children along and remain there for about a year. Intermarriage with Mimikan women is also common ...In this way, several Arguni men have established themselves permanently in Mimika as damar collectors (Vink 1933 as cited in Pouwer 1955:230-231, my translation).

The influence of the Chinese merchants spread rapidly along the Mimika Coast in the 1920s. In most cases, the Kamoro openly received and formally assimilated the foreigners into local communities (Pouwer 1955:231). The receptivity of Kamoro toward these “foreigners” in the social and physical sense is strikingly parallel to the incorporation of foreigners in the cosmological sense via *amoko-kwere*.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps the incorporation of the “foreign” workers into local communities was a local way of effecting ownership or influence over the foreign as in the *amoko-kwere*.

Although visits were sporadic, government reports provide a rough sketch of Kamoro social life just prior to the establishment of a permanent administrative post. J.S. Kok, former administrator of West New Guinea, had made a few trips to the Mimika region around 1918, where he observed large gatherings at Obata (Obota) and Wakatimi. According to him there were around a hundred residences (i.e. doors in long houses) in Wakatimi and double that in the adjacent settlement at Obata (Kok 1919a:65-66). A significant number of dugout canoes on the

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<sup>46</sup> Already by this time Chinese bird hunters had reached all the way into the subdistrict (*Onderafdeling*) of South New Guinea. In 1919, a government post was established along the Digul River at Assike to supervise the hunters, though hunting was restricted to a season from April to September. In 1922, bird hunting in South New Guinea was forbidden due to a rapid outbreak of venereal disease (Schoorl 1993:149). The Muyu region was ultimately closed to bird-hunters in 1926 in response to complaints from the Australian government that hunters were crossing into Australian territory. The impact of prohibitions on the bird trade in the Merauke and Muyu areas may have made un-administered Mimika particularly attractive for the bird hunters.

shores of both settlements, he discovered, was due to the arrival of people from Atuka and Wania in relation to a feast-house which he describes in some detail:

Near Obata or Atape (Mimika) there was a long, high feast house decorated with carvings. Crocodiles formed a very prominent motif. On the whole, it was nicely painted and made a nicely agreeable impression, but they did not maintain it (Kok 1919a:58, my translation).

From his observations, Kok deduced that the Mimika district was “very well populated”. He also astutely noted that interior villages had specific coastal fishing locations to which they made periodic trips (Kok 1919a:66). He also described the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Kamoro as punctuated by regular feasts. He singled out settlements along the Mimika River as having particularly active and ongoing feasting. In many ways, Kok’s descriptions resembled those of Wollaston from nearly a decade earlier. Similar to earlier observations of the Kamoro acceptance and incorporation of Papuan bird-hunters, Kok commented on the general receptivity of the Kamoro to foreigners, describing them as “ever-friendly” and “most suitable to be brought under the influence of the Administration” (Kok 1919:128, my translation). Already by this time, bird hunters connected with the Chinese traders had not only penetrated into the interior of West Mimika, but had also moved further to the east. Even the easternmost Koperapoka settlements recall the arrival of the Chinese merchants as a time of abundance and unprecedented access to trade goods (Pouwer 1955:230).

Another report labelled as a “note of transfer” (NvO) of West New Guinea<sup>47</sup>, filed in March of 1919, elaborated on the nature of organisation of long houses in Mimika. Kok commented that the houses were neatly organised in rows and that each compartment (*vak*) had its own door, sometimes two; each house was made up of anywhere from six to sixteen compartments. According to him:

The entire scene made a surprisingly clean impression, [which was] conspicuous in these outer regions seldom visited by Europeans (Kok 1919b:79).

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<sup>47</sup> The standard administration document was a *Memorie van Overgave*, a Memorandum of Transfer. The “note” seemed to indicate that the information was supplemental to the more substantial memorandum.

Dersjant, the next Assistant Resident of West New Guinea, seemed to be more interested in macro-level issues than in individual settlement organisation (1923). One of the most striking features of his report was a census that gives some sense of the ethnic composition of the region in 1920. It enumerated just over 30,000 people living within administrative contact in West New Guinea. The Sub-division (*onderafdeling*) of West New Guinea, at that time, consisted of the southern half of the Bird's Head Peninsula and what is now the Mimika Coast up to Cape Steenboom.

The population was broken down into the following categories: Europeans (42), Chinese (375), Arabs (91), non-indigenous natives (1448), and indigenous population (28,056). "Non-Papuans" in areas under administrative contact numbered under seven percent of the overall population. Of this group, nearly three-quarters were "non-indigenous natives." This group comprised individuals from elsewhere in the archipelago who lived primarily in the trade centres at Kaimana and Fak-Fak. Chinese accounted for the next highest percentage of non-Papuans at nineteen percent, while Europeans represented just two-percent of the foreign population.<sup>48</sup>

By 1925, van Geuns reports that the administration had allocated a special budget for establishing a district head in the Mimika area, which by then had become the "El Dorado of the Bird-hunters" (cited in Pouwer 1955:231). The primary purpose of this position was to closely monitor and, more importantly, uniformly tax the trade and to expand the Dutch Administration's head tax roll. As a direct result, in 1926 the first administrator was appointed and sent to the Mimika district.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, I found no records of Memorandums of Transfer for the period between 1924 and 1928 in the Dutch archives; thus it is difficult to understand any specific pacification techniques, policies, or observations from this period.

<sup>49</sup> The first administrator was an Ambonese man named Kolobonso. He initially established a post in Mimika at Wakatimi, which soon moved to the nearby coastal area at Kokonao.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Early accounts demonstrate that linguistic ability was a key component underlying access to trade goods for the Kamoro. Those Kamoro who spoke at least some Malay (or perhaps one or more of the Moluccan languages) were the ones who interacted with foreigners and thus had the most direct access to trade goods. At the same time, these relationships seemed to be symbolically sealed by “letters” of authorisation, and to some degree by wearing or displaying foreign clothing or materials, or demonstrating first-hand knowledge of places beyond the Mimika Coast. Certainly in the case of Naowa, and perhaps also in the case of Abrauw at Uta in 1828, interpretations of the foreign and indeed the actual letters, were understood via *amoko-kwere*. Not only did their interpretation legitimate Kamoro access to foreigners and their trade goods, but also, more importantly, the *amoko-kwere* reformulated them as objects of indigenous agency.

Not surprisingly, the Kamoro are documented as having invited both the church and the Dutch Administration to settle among them. While in part this would seem to play into colonial agendas of the time (e.g. reporting that the indigenous communities requested colonisation), the consistency of the reports suggests otherwise. Kamoro requests from observers spanning nearly two decades and with entirely differing agendas were surprisingly consistent which I take to be a strong suggestion of Kamoro desires. The explicit Kamoro request was that the foreigners set up schools where Kamoro communities could learn Malay (Kok 1908:467; Aerts 1927:367). I suggest here that, in keeping with the Kamoro narratives and their observed behaviour, there is the notion that *knowledge* of Malay would open access to the trade goods. As we shall see more clearly, based on Drabbe’s research in the next time period, there is a crucial link between (secret) knowledge, physical belongings, foreign trade goods, and abilities to control aspects of the natural and supernatural world. For the Kamoro, all of these things are part of a common classification of secret and protected items: *kata*.



## Chapter Four

### ***Turabaya-we* and Taxation: Administration from 1926 to 1944**

#### INTRODUCTION

The Kamoro appear to have interpreted all Western foreigners as *Turabaya-we*, Surabaya people. Not surprisingly, this interpretation was not limited to the initial Western visitors to the Mimika Coast at the turn of the twentieth century, but also included the Dutch Administration which arrived permanently in Mimika in 1926 and the Catholic Mission which arrived the following year. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, the *Turabaya-we* were known to have ruled over the Moluccan trading empires. For the Kamoro, direct access to the powerful foreigners who were seen to possess special abilities that enabled them to create and access foreign wealth, *kata*, was invited and welcomed. Eager to access the *kata*, viewed as ultimately descended from the *amoko-we*, Kamoro quickly sought exchange relationships with the foreigners to access the *kata*. Unfortunately, the *Turabaya-we*, the Dutch Administration and the Catholic Mission, had other social, political, and economic concerns. For the Administration in particular, taxation of the expanding trade in natural resources (and of the population) was its primary concern. Ultimately this set the foundation for an extractive relationship of unbalanced reciprocity with the

Kamoro. In turn, *amoko-kwere* from this period demonstrate how the Kamoro rationalised their relationships with the outsiders and their *kata*. This rationalisation included the formulation of the *kata* as products of Kamoro agency, and as *amoko-kwere* demonstrate, the foreigners failed to engage in proper exchange relationships, essentially stealing the *kata* from their rightful owners.

### SETTLEMENT OF THE *TURABAYA-WE*

During the second week of May 1927, Kamoro communities at Irawea and Nawateri, not far from the administrative base at Kokonao, were visited by two *Turabaya-we*, “Surabaya People”. After the foreigners handed out trade goods, the Kamoro greeted them in ritual fashion with drumming and singing, and as in the past explicitly invited the foreigners to live among them. The foreigners accepted the invitation, though their expectations and motives differed from those of the Kamoro. The Mimika post was only the second to be established south of the arbitrary line of 4°30’ set out by the Dutch Administration which divided Catholic and Protestant mission zones.<sup>1</sup> As a result, it took little time for the Mgr. Aerts, the apostolic prefect of the Catholic Mission in Tual (in the Kei Islands) to establish a mission station alongside the administration at Kokonao, assigning Father Kowatzki as the first European missionary to live among the Kamoro.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The other was in Merauke.

<sup>2</sup> Mgr. Aerts had several motives for specifically selecting Father Kowatzki to open and oversee mission work in Mimika. Despite the fact that he had worked in Great Kei for nearly seven years, he was certainly distinguishable among his companion Fathers. First of all, he was not Dutch (he was German); second, he had served in the military during World War One. While, Aerts viewed Kowatzki’s regimented, hardworking military background as particularly advantageous for pioneering mission work he also saw opening a station in Mimika as a good opportunity to smooth-out relationships within the Mission in the Kei Islands that Father Kowatzki may have aggravated. During his time in Great Kei, Father Kowatzki endeavoured to learn as much as possible about the indigenous culture. His research revealed a regimented system of status whereby the entire population was divided into three classes or castes: nobility (*mel-mel*), commoners (*ren-ren*), and slaves (*iri-iri*). Kowatzki personally found slave-holding to be “unchristian” and as a way to counter-act this system, he openly gave preference to those who fell into the class of “slave” in his mission work (Zegwaard n.d.a:3). In the process, he alienated the other two classes, which in turn upset communications with the other missionaries.

In May of 1927, Mgr. Aerts accompanied Father Kowatzki and two Kei teachers, Benedictus Renyaan and Christianus Rettob, on a groundbreaking trip for Kokonao via Kaimana.<sup>3</sup> The trip to Kaimana aboard the KPM ship *S.S. van den Bosch* was quick and uneventful.<sup>4</sup> A few days after their arrival at the nearly abandoned settlements of Kokonao, Kolobonso accompanied the missionaries to two settlements upstream on the Mimika River. Following a cramped five-and-a-half hour dugout canoe journey, the group arrived at Irawea, where the entire population of 400 was “home” (Aerts 1929:367). Mgr. Aerts described a bustling kampong with women crouching in the houses, men approaching to meet them and children running around. Through “the [exchange] media of tobacco for adults and beads for the children” the missionaries “quickly cemented” friendship with the people at Irawea (ibid:368). In honour of the two “*tuan turabaya*,” three drummers sat in a circle, drummed and sang while women of the settlement danced.<sup>5</sup> After their pleasant reception at Irawea, the Fathers travelled to the other side of the river to visit the Naweteri.

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Though I have not uncovered extensive data supporting the inference that mission education was geared specifically toward children of “nobles” in the Kei Islands, children of aristocratic classes were certainly privileged in education elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies (Father Philip Tule SVD, conversation with author). Further, some of Sowada’s Kei Island informants (whom he interviewed while they worked as mission teachers in the Asmat area in the 1960s) recalled incidents of people bringing food to the children in the Mission Boarding School in Langgur in “slave fashion.” Even after WWII, a *mel-mel* girl attending the Catholic boarding school in Great Kei was not obliged to work as her classmates and she had a slave girl as an attendant (Sowada 1984:66). A comment by Zegwaard (ndb:3) suggests that there were ill feelings between Father Kowatzki and the “nobles” in Kei. Presumably he meant the parents of the noble children participating in the Catholic school.

<sup>3</sup> Transport to Kaimana had been recently facilitated by a new communication route opened by the Royal Freight Line *Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij* (KPM), the Royal Packet Company.

<sup>4</sup> The isolation of Mimika only truly became apparent however when the two missionaries set out from Kaimana for Kokonao aboard the schooner *Lily* (van Bavel 1946:6). Travelling at just two to three miles per hour under motor power, and reaching five miles per hour under favourable winds, it took the *Lily* nearly three days to cover the 180 mile stretch of coast to Kokonao (Aerts 1927:366).

<sup>5</sup> The name recorded by Aerts and described in the last chapter as “*Toean Soerabaia*” was likely applied to all white men. In recent memory, the only ship with European passengers to visit the Mimika region was the steam paddle ship “*Soerabaja*.” Prior to the *Soerabaja* calling at Uta in 1876, the last Europeans to visit the Mimika coast were the Triton and the Iris expedition in 1828 (Aa 1879:336n). More likely the Kamoro actually pronounced the word “*Toerabaya*” or

As at Irawea, the entire population of approximately 400 was home. According to the Aerts' account, acquaintances were made even more quickly here than in the other kampongs. Again there was singing and this time the population explicitly asked that the "*tuan turabaya*" remain among them and build a school and quickly send a teacher for their children (ibid). These requests were consistent with those made of the ZWNG Expedition of 1904/05 discussed in the last chapter. Although the ZWNG Expedition made clear that at least one of the Kamoro informants spoke Malay, Aerts makes no comment about the language of interaction on this occasion.

At the Naweteri and Irawea kampongs there was drumming, singing and dancing upon their arrival. It appears that contact with Europeans remained sporadic enough that there was little evidence to suggest that the Kamoro differentiated among light-skinned people. Just as Wollaston had been described some seventeen years earlier, the Kamoro addressed the Europeans as *tuan surabaya*, Surabaya people. This would suggest that the Kamoro knew of the Europeans (and their status as politically powerful) via the Seramese rajahs on the south-west coast who were empowered directly by the *Surabaya* expedition. The only direct interaction between the majority of the Kamoro and these rajahs was at Namatote, where two rajahs had appointed two consecutive Kamoro rajahs at Kipia (Naowa was the second). At the same time, just as they had done during the ZWNG Expedition and previously with Moluccan traders, the Kamoro actively sought relationships with the economically and politically powerful outsiders.

Monseigneur Aerts' eagerness to develop mission activities in the area fit well with the Kamoro request that the powerful outsiders remain among them. Given that the westernmost part of Mimika around Etna Bay fell above the 4'30" boundary separating Protestant and Catholic mission activity, Aerts' concern was less with the christianisation of the population than with a strategic blockade against the Protestants:

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"*Turabaya*" as the local language lacks an "s" sound as documented by the linguist Drabbe (Drabbe and KITLV 1953).

Mgr. Aerts said that the Mission must begin here before the Protestants with their “baptise-on-sight” (*doopen-maar-raak*) method would make mission-work difficult. The two teachers remained behind. “They both cried like children”, said Monseigneur, “because they were to be left without a priest”, but the foundation of the Mission is now entrusted to upright fellows; they are doing it for Our Dear Lord (van Bavel 1946:6, my translation).

Within a short time and with the help of enthusiastic Kamoro assistants, the “upright fellows” successfully opened schools at Kokonao and the nearby settlement of Migiwia. Within the first year, Kei teachers had opened up schools elsewhere in Mimika at Atuka, Keakwa, Paripia, and Timuka. All of this occurred prior to the permanent arrival of any European representatives of the Catholic Church. At the same time, by opening schools on behalf of the mission, the Kei teachers accelerated the process of Kamoro resettlement to the coast initially triggered by the Chinese traders (Pouwer 1955:231). The introduction of Kei teachers and staff would ultimately prove to be one of the most significant impacts that the Catholic Mission would have on the Kamoro. With the exception of the initial expedition of Mgr. Aerts and Father Kowatzki, in the history of Mimika, European mission and Administration personnel combined would always be substantially fewer in number than mission personnel of Kei Island extraction. And Kei Islanders have had the longest running direct relationship with the Kamoro of any foreigners to date.

While the schools were seen both by the government and by the mission as initial steps in the pacification of Mimika, from the Kamoro perspective they appear to have been a means to access foreign trade goods in exchange for compliance with the teacher’s demands, most often in the form of manual labour. At the same time, as the number of schools increased, so too did the number of Chinese *tokos*, small trade-goods shops, in the villages.

With the combined presence of Chinese merchants, the administration and the mission teachers, for a period of a few years the Kamoro enjoyed access to foreign trade goods unprecedented in Mimika. The rapid influx of previously scarce trade goods is reflected in Kamoro narratives of the time. Among the most sought after of all trade goods were iron and iron-wares. In the mid 1930s, Drabbe recorded a narrative regarding how iron, one of the most influential of all



**Image 11: Kamoro children carrying “*tumangs*” of sago and standing before (unknown) school in Mimika (ca. 1940). Two Kei teachers stand off to the left while Father Tillemans stands on the right (Image courtesy of MSC Missiehuis, Tilburg).**



**Images 12 and 13: Kamoro children at school in Mimika (ca. 1940) under the guidance of their Kei Islander teacher (Images courtesy of MSC Missiehuis, Tilburg).**

of the trade items, and the ability to forge it, originated from a Kamoro cultural hero. His informant, a man from Paraoka, West Mimika born around 1890, explained:

Upstream [*erepao*] at a place called Toarpa lived an old man [*perapoka*] named Tamatu and his two wives. They all went together downstream [*amaika-kam-uru-mate*] to the swamps to collect *pea*-crabs and *minaraiku*-crabs which his two wives cooked in an iron pan [*yawe*]. The women ate the *minaraiku*-crabs and gave their husband the *pea*-crabs. The husband commented “I eat only the poor *pea*’s [sic], that are good for nothing, and you two eat the fat, juicy *minaraiku*’s[sic]” They called him “bald pate.” In the evening they lay down to sleep, and in the morning when twilight began to shine, quite early, he loaded an anvil [*tetani*] in the canoe and set out from the river. He sailed towards the cape [*emare*] Weke-mako, and remained sitting out of the gate.<sup>6</sup> Then he set out for the sea, and threw out a stone; far into the sea he cast the stone, and it became a high mountain there in the sea. On the bank of the Tuga, however people were making fire; he saw it, and he saw the smoke and said: “The Tuga is close by.”

He saw the overgrowth near the Umari [River], and the Peari-mountain, and he saw that it was near by. “So,” he said, “perhaps they might steal [*otomo*] my belongings [*kata*].” He took up the stone again, loaded it in the canoe [*ku*], and he gave the mountain a kick and it fell into nothingness.

Then from the sea, he went back to the huts at the cape, and stopped there and sat down to forge [*ama-pao-more*]. In the morning he planted sago [*amuta*], and at once there were standing around a great many sago-palms. He passed the night, forged, slept, and when it was dawning again, he loaded in his belongings [*katia*] and sailed out of the river.<sup>7</sup> Then he cast a piece of burning wood towards the land [*ama-ij-ini-mi-ko-m-more*], and the fire destroyed all the sago-palms, only a few remaining.

Then he took an aren-palm and planted it on the cape; he took breadfruit [*opako*], *pata*-fruit, bamboo-reed [*tipu*], *inamo*-palm and planted them on the cape and left. At the Umari-river he went ashore. The men of the Umari asked him: “Where are you from?” “I am from the Paraoka,” he said; “I am Tamatu,” he said; “I am on my way to the west [*emaru*].” He passed the night there, loaded in and landed at the Potawaj-River; there he passed the night, loaded again and stopped at the Buru-River. He passed the night there, loaded in again, and being ready, he left again and put in at the Opa-River in the west; he passed the night, loaded in again at the Opa –River, and went westward [*ama-kop-more*] to the Atawpia. He put in, some distance inland at Merawa, and passed the night there, planted one breadfruit, and early in the morning he loaded in and left again. Further to the west, he put in at the

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<sup>6</sup> In the vernacular, there is no mention of “sailing”. Instead, he “went out of the river.”

<sup>7</sup> Again, no mention of “sailing” in the original.

Tenema.<sup>8</sup> He passed the night and sailed due west, he made a fire, and the fire consumed all the wood on the mountain, so that only the mountain and stone ground were left. Then he put in at the Wakea, passed there the night, loaded in again at the Wakea and settled down at the Yakawri, some distance inland.

At Yakawri there are many foreigners [*Tina we*, lit. China people, TH]. “Come, come, come!” they said. “From what district are you [*Oro tapare wekati*, lit. Your land where?, TH]” they asked. “I am Tamatu, from Poraoka.”

“Tamatu,” they said, “come to us!” “Let us dwell together in the houses, there towards the land [*kapao*].” “Hi,” they said, “what a lot of things [*katia*] you have! We are the owner of the riches [*Nare katia amako*; lit. we things owner], but you perhaps are like unto us.”

By now the narrative of Tamatu reflects the complete inverse of foreign portrayals of contact with the Mimika Coast, which held that outsiders initiated contact with the Kamoro through travel to the south-east then toward the interior. In this narrative, Tamatu lived upstream (e.g. in the interior), travelled toward the coast, and then made his way to the west, marking each location along the way. After meeting the foreigners, Tamatu began to reveal his secret:

Then he put a piece of iron, a big anvil, upon the ground. He set down two bellows [*eme*]<sup>9</sup>; he put down a hammer [*kumamu*], a pair of tongs, a chisel and iron.<sup>10</sup> Then he made a fire and placed a piece of iron in it. A man climbed upon a scaffolding and began to pump. The fire made the iron all red. He took it from the fire, seized a hammer [*kumamu*], and started forging. He splitted [sic] a fish-spear [*purumuku*], and when he had finished it, he forged a chopping-knife [*tai*], a big axe [*marati*], a lance [*uruna*], a harpoon [*pomo*] and a long head [*kara*] for a lance.

Then he called one of the Yakawri-men, gave him a hammer, and that man began to forge, until he knew. But then he had forgotten it again. So Tamatu handed to him water with file-shavings [*puriti ata*] to drink, and the man started forging again and now he knew it. Then

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<sup>8</sup> Drabbe notes: “Tenema is called on the maps Tarera; Kamera is the so-called Kayumerah Bay; Jakawri is Lobo on Triton Bay; at the beginning of last century (1828-1836) there was a fortress there, Fort Du Bus, to which the reference here is probably directed” (1948a:255).

<sup>9</sup> *Eme* means both “drum” (the musical instrument) and “bellows” (Drabbe 1937:15). Perhaps this is due to the fact that Kamoro drums are hour-glass-shaped, thus one side would bear a resemblance to a bellows.

<sup>10</sup> In the original there is no mention of tongs or a chisel; Tamatu putting iron into the fire implies them.



Tamatu began to sing [*tao*] and to beat the drum [*eme*]. Then he called another of the Jakawri-men. And this man began to sing till he knew.

The sun set, night fell, and in the morning, when twilight grew, Tamatu began to forge again, but the men, who were living in the houses, said “Oh that noise with the iron, our poor ears! Go away!” they said; “go away, go somewhere at a distance, bald-pate, shining coconut-shell, baldhead!” they scolded [*moamo*]. When they chased him away, he went, early in the morning, to lay out a plantation [*kawti*]; he planted breadfruit [*opako*] and sago [*amuta*]. After that, his two wives loaded his belongings [*katia*] in the canoe. When the land wind [*makemari*] came from Jakawri to the sea, Tamatu placed his pole across the canoe. Near Taparuka, it fell off and was changed into an *oroka*-fish. From the canoe he stepped ashore, put an iron pan [*yawe*] on the ground and laid his bow on top. “Let it become one with testicles, let it become a testicle [*Ayur, mutapoka, muta a-ke-ro*; lit. Child, male, testicle become let it, TH]!” he said. His two wives said: “Let the pan become a woman, a bosom [*yawe kaokare, ao a-ke-ro*, lit. pan woman breast become let it, TH].” And they stepped together into the canoe [*ku*] again. After that, they settled down at the Utama district, near the mouth of the river. He put the anvil upon the ground, and also some iron. Then he forged a fish-spear and chopping-knife. He called an inhabitant of the place [*we tapar-amako*, lit. owner of the land, TH] and gave him iron-water [*puriti-mi*] and so he too learned how to forge.

Then he went fishing, cast out a fishing hook, but caught nothing. He returned to the land, took up a stone and placed it on his forehead, and petrified; but when he threw the stone away, he became again a man. Then he stepped aboard the canoe and returned to Utama, to live in his house. In the morning he put on a loincloth and went off again to Tanitia. There he took up the stone and placed it upon his face. He wrapped a pandanus-mat around his head, and petrified. His two wives bewailed him. They seated themselves with their backs against one another and they, too, petrified. The natives of the country [*tapar-amako*, lit. owners of the land, TH] mourned [*make*] them. This is the end, I have said (Drabbe 1948a:248-254).

Spurred by the unequal sharing of better food items and the taunts of his wives, Tamatu sets out for the coast. After reaching the coast he heads to the West, where he encounters foreigners who declare to him that they are “the owner of the riches.” After this, Tamatu teaches them the process of forging iron including the necessary songs; he solidifies their knowledge by offering them water with iron-shavings to drink. Later, annoyed by the noise of his forging, the foreigners chase Tamatu away. On the return to his homeland, Tamatu spreads the ability to use and work iron all along the Mimika coast.

Thus it is the *amoko-we* that are responsible for giving foreigners the ability to work and use iron. Drabbe suggests that based on the locations of the foreign

settlement outlined in the narrative, the narrator was referring to the Dutch settlement at Fort du Bus (Drabbe 1948a:253fn10). I disagree with his conclusion. First, the narrator explicitly labels the foreigners as *tena-we*, Chinese people. Second, given the era when this narrative was recorded, I believe that the narrator is more likely referring to Chinese merchants based near Arguni Bay from whom the Kamoro obtained the most direct access to iron during this period. By the end of the nineteenth century, Papuans had been forging and working iron in this region which they had acquired through Moluccan trade networks (cf. Kamma and Kooijman 1973:1-3, 23-29). The Fort du Bus settlement had been abandoned nearly a century earlier in 1836. Further, the Seramese, from whom this region would likely have learned to work iron are only presumed to have had the technology by the latter part of the nineteenth century, matching up with the presumed period of this narrative (ibid:30).

The period from 1926 through the late 1930s proved to be a remarkably eventful period in the histories of the church, the administration and the Kamoro. From the Kamoro perspective, access to trade-goods had increased on a historically unparalleled scale. As this narrative suggests, foreign trade goods, in particular iron and ironwares, figured centrally in Kamoro engagements with foreigners and, as it turned out, with their indigenous neighbours.

Lured by the foreign trade goods and iron-wares brought to Mimika by the Chinese merchants, the Administration, and perhaps most visibly the Mission teachers, the Asmat began a series of violent raids on Kamoro communities.<sup>11</sup> Beginning with the easternmost communities in Omauga and Inauga, they eventually raided settlements well into central Mimika near the mission and administration centres (Kowatzki 1930:282; Zegwaard n.d.b:4; Pouwer 1955:233-

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<sup>11</sup> While the narrative of Tamatu holds that Kamoro gained access to iron-wares through the activities of an *amoko-we*, the neighbouring Asmat may have held parallel views as to proper ownership. Viewed from the standpoint of Asmat *je atakam*, narratives equivalent to Kamoro *amoko-kwere*, iron is incorporated as a product of Asmat efficacy. In one example, it originates from the bones of a culture hero after his death (Biakai 1982). In another perhaps more significant example, two Asmat cultural heroes, journey to the far west of Mimika, where they find Safan, the under world, which includes Surabaya, the location of the foreigners (Pouwer forthcoming).

234).<sup>12</sup> In the process they had already plundered villages, murdered some and captured others. The attack on Atuka village in October of 1929 was particularly severe. Two Chinese stores had been completely looted; school benches, cabinets, and tables were cut apart, their iron nails ripped out. Even schoolbooks and materials were stolen along with the teachers' meagre stock of basic medicines (Kowatzki 1930:284). Apparently, Asmat hunger for foreign trade-goods, especially ironware, equalled the Kamoro desire for it, but since neither the administration nor the mission had arrived in their region they had no other way of accessing it.<sup>13</sup> During this period, the local Ambonese administrator was trained to do little more than assess and collect taxes, so Father Kowatzki felt it his duty to protect his teachers and the Kamoro by alerting higher level administrators in Kaimana (Kowatzki 1930:283).

Since his trip to Kaimana, the administration had sent ten armed policemen and stationed them at Atuka to protect against any future attacks. When the next attack occurred in early 1930, most of the villagers were away. Thanks to the assistance of the Chinese storeowner, the policemen were able to barricade themselves behind the counter inside the store to set up a protected fortress. Safely hidden, they began to fire in the direction of the attackers. Startled by the sound of the gunshots, the attackers grabbed just a few victims as they fled (Kowatzki 1930:284-5; Pouwer 1955:234).

By late February 1930, rumours were rampant that the "head-hunters" were preparing a larger-scale attack on Atuka in retaliation for the successful defence

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<sup>12</sup> Although Kamoro narratives and histories detail that migrations and mass movements were directly related to bloody battles over land and inter and intra-tribal warfare, there is no concrete evidence suggesting that large scale attacks from the Asmat occurred prior to the arrival of the mission and the administration. Also, Zegwaard notes that these original attackers were perhaps from the village of Yeni on the Cassuary/Cemara River (n.d.b:4).

<sup>13</sup> Pouwer comments that the village had become more vulnerable to surprise attacks given its relatively recent move at the instigation of the church and the administration to an unprotected coastal location (Pouwer 1955:233). However, in the administration's Memorandum of Transfer for West New Guinea for the period 1929-1932, Vink comments that the "old kampong" [of Atuka] was a few hours rowing up the Atuka River and that the people requested to be moved to the coast (Vink 1932:12). In light of similar movements elsewhere, it is certainly plausible that the Kamoro of Atuka may have moved to the coast of their own accord for access to the school and trade goods.

of the settlement by the Dutch. Based on reports by Kamoro informants that the attackers were returning with a 1000-man raid, the government sent the full army of police and weapons available—seventeen armed men. Father Kowatzki joined the police en-route to Atuka. He rationalised that he should stand by his teachers and catechists and if need be, he should die with them (Kowatzki 1930:285).

As it turned out, the information regarding the size of the attacking party was inaccurate. While Atuka was assaulted again in May of that year, the group consisted of about 400 men in twenty-two canoes. Some Kamoro had mistakenly identified a large party of men as an Asmat war party. With the police armaments and Kamoro assistance an ambush was set up. Kowatzki describes the event with regards to the Kamoro:

The Mimikans are...strong people [like the Asmat, TH], but they are not very warlike in nature: among each other they fight both small and larger quarrels, even with deadly weapons, but they are horribly afraid [of the Asmat]. When they were signalled [that an attack was coming], they let out a cry for their lives and they lose their heads before they are literally cut off; as if they are mad they shoot their arrows and throw their spears in the air or into the sand. Clouds of shell-chalk (their poison gas, poor things, and their means of defence!) cast, then blown in the direction of the enemy, and bunker themselves down in the jungle, or hide themselves in the mangroves along the sea and the creeks. When all appears calm again, they come out again and boast about their courage and heroic feats...(Kowatzki 1930:286, my translation).<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding Kowatzki's low appraisal of Kamoro fighting tactics, all except sixteen of the Asmat attackers were ambushed and slaughtered by the Kamoro and the seventeen policemen (Trenkenschuh 1982b:26; Pouver 1955:236).<sup>15</sup> Those not killed were imprisoned in Fak-Fak.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, when considering the Asmat attackers, Kowatzki did not focus on the fact that they had violated Kamoro property. Instead, eyeing another potential mission opportunity,

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<sup>14</sup> A chapter in the account of the South-West New Guinea Expedition (ZWNG) is dedicated to a chronological overview of observations of "chalk throwing and chalk blowing" on the south-west coast of New Guinea. Initial accounts date to Cook's observations of 3 September 1770 (Rouffaer 1908:626-634).

<sup>15</sup> According to Trenkenschuh's account, all but seventeen Asmat were killed while Pouver claims the number was sixteen.

<sup>16</sup> When the prisoners were returned to their homeland in 1933, yet another confrontation occurred.

he commented: “They appear to be courageous and fearless: by the grace of God later we shall make good Christians of them” (Kowatzki 1930:286, my translation).<sup>17</sup>

### **MIXED MESSAGES**

The Asmat raids ushered in an era of increasing complexity in Kamoro relations with outsiders. On the one hand, the raids triggered an increase in the presence of the Dutch administration in Mimika, which also seemed to enable mission work to expand. For a short period, the increased outsider presence seemed to facilitate better access to trade goods and schooling for the Kamoro. Eventually, however, increased administrative presence resulted in increased surveillance (e.g. census work) which resulted in a more systematic levy of taxes from the population. Increased tax demands seemed to have strained relations with the foreigners; and for the first time instead of openly welcoming all foreigners, the Kamoro had to deal with the competing demands of the church and the administration.

Just one month after Father Kowatzki took up permanent residence, a large conference was held in Ambon between the Utrecht Protestant Mission (UZV), the Catholic Mission, and the Administration. At this conference, the Governor General ruled that the 1912 legislation restricting the activities of the missions to either side of the 4’30” line was no longer in effect. This introduced what became known as the “*dubbele zending*” or “Double Mission” problem. The repeal of the law meant that the Catholics could now establish a post in the Fak-Fak area. At the same time, Mimika would also become accessible to Protestant missionaries, who by the reckoning of the Catholics had the upper hand. With the

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<sup>17</sup> In April of that year, the government steamer, known locally as the “White Boat” manned by thirty armed policemen, the authorities from Fak-Fak, and the government assistant from Kaimana set out to seek justice on behalf of the attacked Kamoro. They found the guilty parties along the Cemara River. They were able to recover a Kamoro woman and her child from the attackers. In all, from Atuka one man, four women and five children were killed. During the raid on Atuka where the ten armed police barricaded themselves in the Chinese store, they killed six of the attackers and wounded four others, one of whom died in custody. Further, several other of the attackers were taken to prison in Fak-Fak (Kowatzki 1930:286; Bergh 1930:287-289).

administrative seat situated in Ambon alongside the main Protestant Mission for the region, many government employees were Protestant.

At the same time one impact of the Asmat attacks was to increase the administration's presence in Mimika. In the first instance, in the early 1930s a post was established at Japero, at the mouth of the Otakwa River on the border between East Mimika and the South New Guinea Division. Designed in the short term to protect administered Mimika from Asmat, its ultimate aim was eventual pacification of the latter population. By 1932, the administration had subdivided the district into East and West Mimika, with the primary base at Kokonao (serving East Mimika) and a secondary base at Uta. An Ambonese "government assistant third class" manned each station. Kolobonso, the administrator at Kokonao, led a small garrison of ten police and reported to yet another Ambonese "government assistant" at Kaimana (Vink 1932b:48-49). Though it remained part of the Residency of Ambon, Dutch administrators had finally begun to be based on the ground in West New Guinea. Their native, mostly Ambonese, administrative assistants however, continued to be the face of the administration for much of the mainland.

The primary role of the Ambonese government assistants in Mimika from the time they began work in Mimika in 1926 was to conduct census work in support of levying taxes. By the early 1930s tax collecting had become their primary role. In Mimika, this was collected in *tumangs* of damar-resin (Vink 1932a:50-54).<sup>18</sup>

As at Kokonao, the Catholics were quick to establish a mission presence alongside the newly opened government post in Uta and they sent Father Hermanus Tillemans to extend the work of the mission in West Mimika and to block out Protestant Missionary incursions into Mimika.<sup>19</sup> Like his predecessors,

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<sup>18</sup> A *tumang* is a woven-leaf package usually created to hold sago. Although they vary in size, they are generally made in a conical shape and worn in "backpack" style to transport the sago.

<sup>19</sup> By 1931, the Catholic Mission (of the MSC order) had sent an experienced Kei teacher from Uta to establish a school at Urama, just east of Kaimana. After dropping off a replacement teacher at Uta, Tillemans continued on to Urama, where he intended to join the new teacher. On the way he shared a motorboat with the Kaimana government assistant's cook who explained that the Catholic teacher was unable to get rowers in Kaimana and therefore was forced to remain there

Father Tillemans seemed to relish exploration; he was driven to discover more densely populated areas in increasingly remote places. Over the course of his thirteen-year stay in Mimika, he explored alone and participated in government expeditions to remote interior populations and to as yet unadministered areas. Largely under Tillemans' initiative, the mission expanded in all directions from the central post at Kokonao. Being stationed at Uta situated Tillemans ideally for expeditions to the interior Me<sup>20</sup> territory.<sup>21</sup> Indeed during his first year of mission work he would write of his anticipation and excitement, "In the highlands the heart begins to beat faster, for there lies yet a future for the mission!" (van Bavel 1946:17).<sup>22</sup>

Having established himself at Uta, alongside the newly established government post, Tillemans soon had a run-in with the administration. His Mimikan parishioners were forced to spend extended amounts of time away from the settlement (and hence away from school and church) collecting damar-resin to pay for the 6000 guilders of back-taxes which they "owed" the government (van Bavel 1946:19). In turn, this kept the Kamoro away from mission and school activities. While the initial amount was five *tumangs* (for what period I am

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for two weeks. In the meantime, according to mission sources, the Administration hurriedly placed an Ambonese Protestant teacher at the settlement (van Bavel 1946:18). Upon arrival, Tillemans learned that because Urama fell under the jurisdiction of Kaimana, they did not want a teacher from Uta (in Mimika, a different jurisdiction). When Tillemans attempted to place his teacher in a neighbouring settlement, he found that these villages now wanted Protestant teachers as well (not Catholic ones, which they had previously requested). He was left with no choice but to place the teacher sent for Urama in the far western Mimika village of Aindua (van Bavel 1946:19). According to the mission, with the Urama episode, the "fight had begun" (van Bavel 1946:18).

<sup>20</sup> At the time this particular interior population were known as *Kapauku*, a Kamoro word for interior people. Later, Pospisil used the name as well to refer to that same population (e.g. Pospisil 1958, 1963, 1978). The population has also been referred to as Ekagi (Steltenpool 1969), and more recently, Me. Giay, who is indigenous to the area, calls the population Me in his thesis because that is the term, which means 'the people' used locally to refer to themselves (Giay 1995:xvii). He also describes the language as Me/Ekagi (Giay 1995:270).

<sup>21</sup> Most notably he accompanied the Biljmer expedition of 1935. Prior to the expedition he had already met Auki, the headman from the Mapia area during his exploratory travels (Giay 1995:26). Auki proved vital in introducing the expedition to local leaders from throughout the area, including Kamu, Tigi and Paniai (Biljmer 1938:113-184).

<sup>22</sup> Though Tillemans' exploratory work was tied to his mission work, most of the exploration in the region came under the guise of scientific, military and/or government activities.

unaware), it was later increased to nearly ten *tumangs*, with dreadful consequences. Vink reports that the rise in taxes actually made it logistically impossible for the Kamoro to collect enough to stay current with their taxes. Indeed, the pressure built up to such a level that upon the arrival of the government administrator:

The entire kampong out of fear disappears into the marshes behind the kampong and only reappears after the disappearance of the government assistant (Vink 1932b:54, my translation).

Thus, by the mid thirties, in addition to the various infrastructural and manning difficulties related to the establishment of a remote outpost, the Kamoro population began to avoid contact with the government due to high tax demands, something the Kamoro may have interpreted as a reciprocal inequity. Indeed the tax expectations may have re-shaped some Kamoro attitudes toward the foreigners. Members of a 1936 expedition to the interior, who sought to enlist rowers and carriers from the administration base at Kokonao, were received very unenthusiastically. In his diary, the Dutch geologist of the expedition recorded that “the Papuans here [at Kokonao] are sluggish indolent louts” (Dozy journal entry 27 October 1936).<sup>23</sup> Fortunately the expedition was able to recruit “excellent rowers” on the perimeter of administration influence in East Mimika. Indeed, the geologist described being greeted enthusiastically by the Kampong Head of Koperapoka who stood out from the others with his old cap with “Kath. Missie” written on it. According to Dozy, the men from Koperapoka were the expedition’s “best rowers” (ibid:30 October 1936).

Over the next several years, animosities grew between the Catholics and the Protestant teachers of the Moluccan Protestant Church (MPK), who were affiliated with the Utrecht Protestant Mission. Beginning in 1933, Protestant

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<sup>23</sup> This was the expedition of the Netherlands New Guinea Petroleum Company (Netherlands Nieuw Guinea Petroleum Maatschappij or NNGPM) to the Carstensz Mountains in the interior. A.H. Colijn, head of the NNGPM and son of the Prime Minister of The Netherlands led the expedition. The expedition’s geologist, J.J. Dozy is credited with having discovered the Ertzberg, Ore Mountain, which would later be exploited by American-based Freeport Sulphur/Freeport McMoRan.



teachers established themselves in Mimikan villages that lacked Catholic teachers. Over time, however, they began to become increasingly bold; with government at least tacit government support, they began to establish a presence alongside Catholic teachers in many of the villages.<sup>24</sup> This was particularly disconcerting to the Catholic Fathers and the Kei Island teachers who had performed the laborious tasks of setting up infrastructure and beginning instruction in Malay.

In the first incursion deep into the Catholic Mimika Coast in January 1934, a Protestant presence was established at Keakwa with the assistance of an Ambonese (Protestant) policeman. Students who had yet to enter into the Catholic school were courted and eventually enrolled in a Protestant school (Pouwer 1955:234-235). By mid 1934, the influence of the Catholic Church in villages with Protestant Ambonese teachers decreased dramatically (ibid). Relationships between the Catholic Kei Island teachers and the Ambonese Protestant teachers were compounded by ethnic rivalries. One response of the Catholic mission was to step up the pace of conversion by orchestrating large-scale baptism feasts, uniting Mimikans from throughout the region for the first time in history.<sup>25</sup> In their annual report of for 1934 the Sacred Heart (MSC) Catholic mission stated:

Mimika is...easily the most difficult part of the Mission territory... Until now, the Catholic Mission worked there alone. For those true Missionaries, who with great difficulty and much patience have prepared work in this region, it is a difficult time. Now that the fruits [of their labour] are beginning to ripen, the *Zending* [Protestant Mission] have come in to pluck them...Two Fathers are working here, who between them have served no fewer than 21 villages. (MSC 1935:56, my translation).

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<sup>24</sup> Pouwer describes how an Ambonese Protestant policeman assisted a Protestant teacher in establishing a school at Keakwa in 1934. He and others were subsequently relieved of their duties in connection with outwardly privileging Protestant mission activities (1955:235).

<sup>25</sup> In Kokonao in 1933 the first baptism took place. Over 5000 Mimikans turned up for the eight-day feast, though only a few school children were ultimately baptised. For many Mimikans, this was the first time that they came into contact with other Mimikans. Ultimately, this could indicate the beginning of a correlation between Mimikan collective identity and the work of Catholic Church which went beyond the linguistic notion of unity described by Drabbe (1947) and Drabbe and KITLV (1953).

Indeed, the Catholics viewed mission work in Mimika as a “crusade” against the Protestants. In his synopsis of the activities of 1934/1935, van Bavel included a section entitled “Position in the fight against the Protestant teachers” outlining the status of various villages with regards to Catholic or Protestant followers. In extreme cases he described how villagers initially converted to Catholicism were converted to Protestantism, then re-converted back to Catholicism through the means of trade goods. Gradually, the Protestant church became overextended and by April of 1937, the Moluccan Protestant Church withdrew from Mimika (Pouwer 1955:235).

In spite of the fact that the *dubbele zending* period caused the diversion of the mission’s funds and efforts toward the “crusade” against the Protestants, the period also marked a substantial growth in knowledge about the Kamoro via Father Drabbe, a mission linguist who arrived in 1935. In just under three years in Mimika he produced a grammar, catechism, hymns in various dialects as well as compiling a dictionary and a large collection of Kamoro narratives in the vernacular from which come all of the *amoko-kwere* I have been discussing so far in this thesis. This collection provides the richest evidence of Kamoro understandings of the world at the time of and just prior to European contact and is the one that I have used thus far.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, aside from Drabbe’s collection of narratives, the missionaries in Mimika during this period seem to have written little about Kamoro ritual life or the impact of the Catholic Church on it. An account offered by Eric Lundquist, a Swede who explored Netherlands New Guinea for useable forestry resources, at least partially fills this gap. In particular, he focuses on Father Tillemans as the senior and most important missionary in Mimika. From Lundquist’s documentation (which is supported by later reflection by Zegwaard), it seems that Tillemans sought not to eradicate local customs in the process of christianisation, but only to curtail aspects that were deemed unhealthy or blatantly unchristian. A conversation between Lundquist and Tillemans explained the demeanour of the Kamoro in contrast to other south coast Papuans to the West as an outgrowth of

the contrast between Catholic and Protestant mission practices. According to Lundquist, Tillemans' explanation closely matched those of his local assistants:

“Why is it, do you think, that these South-coast Papuans are so much more cheerful, so much more positive, and as you've given me the impression, appear to have so much less of a falling out with Christianity than the Papuans that I met in the Bird's Head area and in Kaimana?” I [Lundquist] asked them.

“Not all South-coast Papuans are as cheerful as the ones that you've met here. Hold your judgement until you go further to the west, by Omba. There the people are from the same tribe as these people [e.g. the Kamoro], but you shall see that their life is somewhat different, for there begins the work-region of the Protestant missionary. I will say absolutely nothing against the Protestants, they walk their own path and they of course work with conviction and to the best of their ability. But it is a fact, that they take the joy out of the life of a Papuan in the blink of the eye that they baptise him, clothe him and at the same time forbid all old customs as heathen and sinful. They want to immediately make them into complete Christians. I don't believe that this is possible, perhaps not even for the children of this generation. I have been here now for twelve years and I have watched children grow up to become men and women, who I have baptised and have taught the necessities. But, as you have seen, good [Christian] people they are not. They have an air of boldness—something loutish. They imagine too much; the conversion must occur slowly, very slowly. I believe generations will pass before these people become good Christians (Lundquist 1952:200-201, my translation).

Indeed, when Lundquist visited, the *mirimu-kame*, the nose-piercing feast, was still taking place, though Tillemans felt that it should soon be abolished (ibid:203). Although he personally did not like the feast, he refused to abruptly stop it as his Protestant colleagues had, because he knew of its great significance as perhaps the most important feast for the population. In an interesting comment on Kamoro gender relations, Father Tillemans commented that he believed that the women, who licked the blood of those having their noses pierced, were the strongest supporters of *mirimu-kame* (ibid:203-204). His strongest objection to the practice was that it was unsanitary and many young Kamoro men had died of blood-loss and infection (ibid:204). While Father Tillemans did not wish to end the feast, acknowledging that the Kamoro needed a way to mark the passage into adulthood, he did seek to end the practice of nose-piercing by gradually decreasing the size of the sharp stick used to pierce the septum and perhaps

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<sup>26</sup> Drabbe's informants ranged in age from fifteen to sixty, with an average age of forty.



**Image 14:** School children from throughout East Mimika gathered at Atuka in April 1940. Father Tillemans in the right foreground, several Kei Island teachers and their children are also visible in the picture (Image courtesy of MSC Missiehuis, Tilburg).



**Image 15:** Kamoro man standing before church in Kokonao holding a Chinese gong, around 1940 (Image courtesy of MSC Missiehuis, Tilburg).

replacing it symbolically with some sort of clothing. When he had arrived Mimika, the piercing-stick had to be long enough for “all members of the initiate’s family” to hold on to it. Since then, Father Tillemans had succeeded in shortening the length of the stick in a number of settlements (ibid).

Although the Dutch Franciscans (OFM) began to assist the MSC in parts of West New Guinea, they failed to reach Mimika before 300 Japanese marines invaded the Mimika coastline in November 1942. With no bloodshed, they occupied the Mimika district, soon increasing their troops to as many as 1000 men (Pouwer 1955:238-239).<sup>27</sup> It appears that the Kamoro initially welcomed the arrival of the Japanese and the departure of the Dutch administration (Pouwer interviewed by author 12 February 1999). Indeed, in a “classified” World War II intelligence survey of the south-west coast, Father Tillemans provided the following commentary on Kamoro attitudes:

The people are easy-going, easily frightened and cowardly, though they often make a lot of bustle and hub-bub. Practically all the young people now speak Malay...As to whether they are pro-Dutch or pro-Japanese, there is no definite answer. They will most likely follow the latest comer (Tillemans in AGS 1944:7).

Working through the intermediaries of Ternatan and Ambonese government administrators, the initial relationships between the Japanese and the Kamoro appear to have been cordial, though this soon changed to violence and oppression and a radical demoralisation of the population (Pouwer 1955:239). Inhabitants recruited from along the entire coastline constructed an airstrip between the villages of Keakwa and a settlement then known as Timuka or Timika (ibid). In turn, over the course of the next two years, the settlements near the airstrip endured repeated bombing and strafing from Allied aircraft (mostly American and Australian). In Keakwa some Kamoro were also treated as slave labour as carriers and in the construction of large gardens along the Wania River, all under

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<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that the occupation was not traumatic, especially for the missionaries. Although Tillemans managed to flee Mimika one of his colleagues, J. Laaper, was less fortunate and drowned trying to rendezvous with him while avoiding detection by the Japanese. The Japanese army also killed Mgr. Aerts and thirteen missionaries when they occupied the Moluccas (Zegwaard nd.b:1).

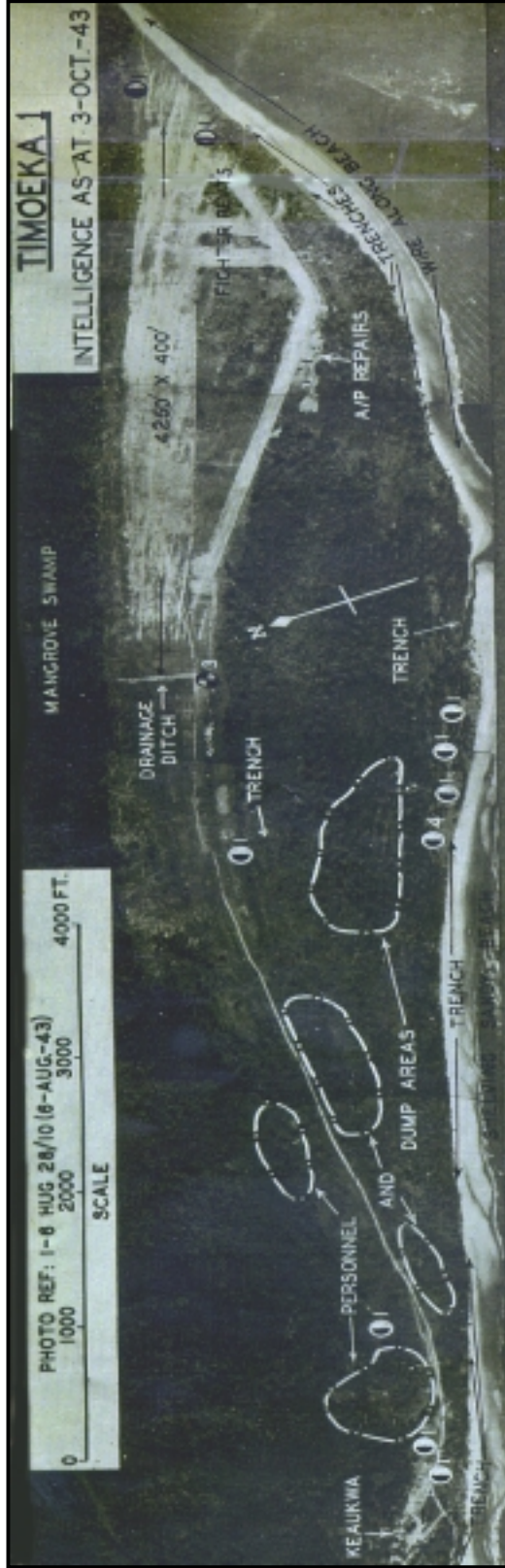


Image 16: Detail of Allied reconnaissance photograph taken over Keakwa ( spelled Keaukwa and located on the left) and the newly constructed Timika ( spelled Timoeka) airfield on the right. (Image obtained from Topografische Dienst, Emmen).

the supervision of Kei Islander teachers. In some respects, according to Pouwer, the Kei Island teachers served as buffers between the local population and the Japanese, which bound the Kamoro more closely to the Kei teachers (ibid).

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

*Amoko-kwere* collected from informants born around the turn of the century explicitly detailed the arrival of the Chinese and the Dutch. Initially, the Chinese, the *Tena-we*, and their emissaries were the first to establish direct contacts with Kamoro communities, pre-dating the arrival of the administration by nearly a decade. Even after the establishment of the first administrative post in Mimika, contacts between the Kamoro and the Dutch administration continued to be through intermediaries; initially this was through Moluccan rajas and later through Ambonese government assistants. Contemporary *amoko-kwere* and village histories match up well with the historical accounts of the mission and the administration. As in the other examples, the Kamoro initially openly received the foreigners and interpreted their arrival within an indigenous cosmological scheme that held that they had ultimately originated from Mimika.

During the initial years of administration and mission contact, the Kamoro enjoyed unprecedented access to trade goods, and although the availability of the goods precipitated violent raids from the Asmat to the east, the administration and the mission ultimately helped to resolve the issue by fighting alongside the Kamoro. Initially the Europeans were interpreted as Surabaya people; it wasn't long however before the differing agendas of the mission and the administration became clearer to the Kamoro. Evading the administrative officials imposing increased tax demands marked one of the very few occasions since the early nineteenth century where Kamoro actively avoided foreigners. For some Kamoro, it appears that, combined with the brutal treatment at the hands of the Japanese, the increased tax demands marked the initial stages of documented differentiation among and disillusionment with foreigners that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapters.