

Introduction

Contemporary consultancy reports commissioned by PT Freeport Indonesia, a mining company whose operations directly impact Kamoro and Amungme communities, paint a rather bleak picture of the ability of the Kamoro to adapt to change. They tend to indicate that due to the “constraints” of their culture, the Kamoro passively resist the massive changes brought about by the pressures of contemporary “development” and “modernisation” (see for example LABAT-Anderson, Inc. 1997:3-2-6 and Dames & Moore 1997:120-122).¹ This thesis examines in detail how the Kamoro people of the south-west coast of Papua (former Irian Jaya), Indonesia have adapted to major political and economic changes over a long history of interactions with outsiders. It is an ethnohistorical analysis of Kamoro sociality focused on their strategies of engagement. The basic theme underlying Kamoro sociality is a form of social reciprocity that I argue is symbolically embedded in conceptions of time, history, and ultimately understandings and constructions of reality. Kamoro narratives about the cultural heroes, the *amoko-we*, form a meaningful merger of this subject matter. Ultimately, narratives about the *amoko-we*, known as *amoko-kwere*, are primary mechanisms for Kamoro interpretation of and adaptation to change.²

Critical elements of Kamoro sociality central to this process of adaptation include the conspicuous incorporation of foreign elements into local systems of meaning and a rather pragmatic approach to power relationships. Both are reflected not only in observations of Kamoro practice, but also in *amoko-kwere*. Within local systems of meaning, “foreign” elements, including people, objects and abilities, are consistently reformulated as products of Kamoro agency. The very “foreign-ness” of these things and ideas underlies their high value and ready

¹ Also cited on Freeport’s web page at <http://www.fcx.com/esp/socialaudit.html>.

incorporation into indigenous schemes and narratives.³ Dutch anthropologist Jan Pouwer clearly recognised this pattern during his fieldwork in the early 1950s:

The arrival of the foreigner placed the Mimikan [Kamoro] in situations that were completely foreign and for which his culture offered no other behavioural norms than reticence and hostility. The challenge [of interpreting the foreigners, TH] was answered through the incorporation of the foreign into his own worldview. In this manner, the foreign was in a literal sense “un-foreign.” One clarified this ethnocentricity through the transposition of the realm of the culture heroes (*amoko-we*).... These culture heroes were esteemed not only as the ancestors of the present day Mimikans, but also as the creators of neighbouring communities, and of the Indonesians, the Chinese, and the whites (Pouwer 1955:251, my translation).

Although Pouwer explicitly described the invocation of the *amoko-we* as a means for the interpretation of foreigners and their arrival, because his thesis had other foci, he did not explicitly analyse the playing out of this process over time. I believe that this “transposition” underlies a core strategy for Kamoro social engagement more generally.⁴ For the Kamoro, the *Amoko*, the timeless period of the cultural heroes, informs the interpretation and experience of change, shaping understandings of the past, present and the future. Kamoro employ *amoko-kwere* either to meet specific political ends (e.g. to impose on another group’s territory) or to rationalise their social, economic, and political status relative to whomever controls these domains.

Indigenous expectations of “foreigners,” I argue, have historically been predicated upon the basic assumption that because the foreign goods, ideas, medicines, etc. originated from among the Kamoro, they are in a sense “owed” to or to be shared with the Kamoro. This basic assumption underlies the disjuncture between Kamoro and “foreign” strategies of sociality and engagement. It forms a

² Drabbe also spells *amoko-kwere* as *ambùku-kwêre* (1947:254n9).

³ Rutherford describes how the people of Biak Island (West New Guinea) conceive of foreigners, their land and possessions as “...a source of pleasure, identity and prestige” (1997:1). Elsewhere in Melanesia “foreign” items are also deemed valuable and readily incorporated into local systems of meaning. Gell notes that among the Umeda of the Border Mountains of Papua New Guinea, foreign myths, magical spells, plants, and by extension ideas are considered, like *kula* valuables, to be prestigious and particularly prized because of their “foreign-ness” (1992:131-132).

⁴ Pouwer explicitly used this as part of an argument which held that the Kamoro lived in two distinct domains, one local, the other foreign (1955:250-255). I discuss this argument in Chapter Five.

central component in a discourse that continuously portrays the Kamoro as passive and escapist, incapable of dealing with change, and ultimately expecting payments of goods and valuables without work.

In most of the ethnographic and early administrative literature, the communities I refer to as Kamoro are labelled as the Mimika. Mimika is the name of the river along which the Dutch Administration and the Catholic Mission established their initial bases in the region in 1926 and 1927 respectively. Properly speaking, only those communities living on the Mimika River call themselves Mimika or Mimikan. The name Mimika however has endured into the present as an administrative term referring to the geographic region. Although the communities living throughout this region sometimes refer to themselves as Mimikan, Kamoro is the preferred contemporary ethnonymic modifier.⁵

Though wordlists for the Kamoro date back to 1828, the missionary linguist Father Petrus Drabbe is responsible for the most complete works on Kamoro linguistics to this day. Conducting both mission and linguistic work among the Kamoro from 1935 to 1939, he produced an extensive repertoire of published and unpublished materials. These included a dictionary (1937), a collection of “folk-tales” (1947, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1950), a thorough grammar, *Spraakunst van het Kamoro-taal* (1953), and catechism lessons in various dialects⁶

Drabbe rightly acknowledged that the inhabitants of the Mimika River area share a relatively homogenous language and culture which covers a much broader area than just the Mimika River area. After documenting words in the Kamoro language for all persons not indigenous to the Mimika area, Drabbe probed for a more suitable name applicable to the entire indigenous population:

If we...go on to ask, “But what, then, are you?” we almost always get the spontaneous answer, *wenata*, real men, or *kamoro* (accent on the first syllable). When we first got that answer, we already had both words in our vocabulary. The first is heard in daily use in the

⁵ In some places, in particular in Indonesian-language documentation, the word is spelled Komoro, though the more generally preferred and used spelling is Kamoro.

⁶ For reviews of Drabbe’s linguistic work among the Kamoro, see Capell (1954:3-4) and Capell (1962:9-12). Galis (1955) also includes compilations of Kamoro wordlists collected by Drabbe and others in his review of the languages of West New Guinea. Holmer (1971) analysed Kamoro language based solely on Drabbe’s work.

common meaning of “person.” In the meaning of “person,” however, *we* alone also appears; *nata* means “true, real” so *wenata*, “real person”. The use of *we* and *wenata* can best be compared with Malay *orang* and *manusia*. In *wenata* and *manusia* the emphasis is laid more on the difference between man and other beings.⁷

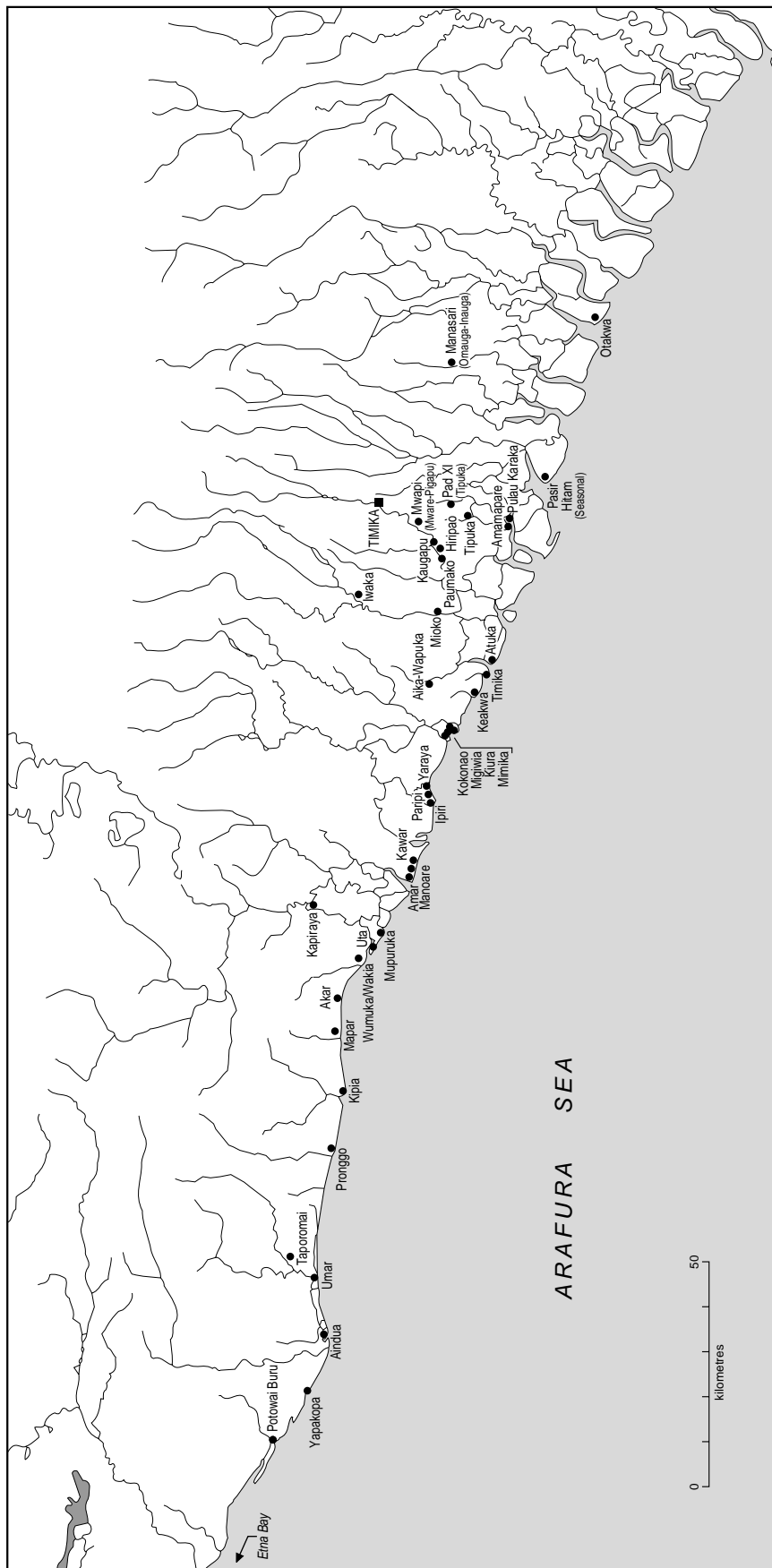
The word *kamoro* emphasizes rather—and we had the word in our vocabulary as—“living person,” in opposition to the dead, ghosts, things plants and animals.... If we ask them whether the mountain folk are also *kamoro*, they say, “No, they are *mii*,” i.e. ghosts, or *kapauku*, “inland dwellers.”

From the preceding it follows that the word *kamoro* cannot be regarded as the name of the people, still less as the name of the country, but it is true at the same time that from the Opa River in the west to the Karumuga in the east all the plain dwellers are convinced that they are Kamoro, and other peoples, even the other peoples of New Guinea, can lay no claim to this title (Drabbe 1947:158-159).

The Kamoro language (*akwere Kamoro* or known in Indonesian as *bahasa Kamoro*) is spoken by the indigenous communities settled over the 300-kilometre stretch of coast between Etna Bay and the Otokwa River.⁸ Linguistically, the Kamoro language forms the westernmost extent of the non-Austronesian Asmat-Sempan-Kamoro language family. With the Asmat, the Kamoro share approximately seventy percent cognates and although no figures are published, presumably more with the Sempan (Foley 1986:232, Voorhoeve 1980, 1975a:370-372, 1975b:31 and 1965:1-17). Currently, when Kamoro want to evoke cultural and linguistic relatedness to one another (e.g. to demonstrate ethnic cohesion for access to funding from Freeport) they proudly declare the geographic limits of their relatively homogenous culture area: “*Dari Potowai sampai Otakwa*” – “From Potowai (the westernmost Kamoro village near Etna Bay) to Otakwa (in the east).” In other contexts, Kamoro communities prefer to differentiate themselves from one another according to affiliation to individual villages or to smaller social units within the village (discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Seven).

⁷ The Indonesian-English dictionary defines *orang* most basically as “person” or “people in general” and *manusia* as a “human being” (Echols and Schadily 1994:398-399; 362).

⁸ The word *akwere* has also been spelled *akuare*, *akware*, and *aware*. Throughout this text I use *akwere*, the spelling employed by linguists Drabbe and Voorhoeve.



Map 3: Kamoro Settlements of the Mimika Coast. Map adapted from UABS base map.

From a point near Etna Bay where the mountainous cordillera of the island of New Guinea nearly reaches the coast, this lowland plain broadens in a south-easterly direction. In the eastern-most part of Mimika at the mouth of the Otokwa River, the foot of the mountains lies approximately eighty kilometres from the coast. The coastal plain is crosscut by a series of rivers, many of which originate in the southern slopes of the Jayawijaya Mountains and flow to the coast. At its broadest areas, the lowlands of Mimika are divided into numerous ecological zones that are particularly noticeable as one approaches from the coast toward the interior in a canoe. In East Mimika for example, beyond the coastline, one passes through tidal mangrove forests, marshy swamps dominated by sago groves, interior lowland rainforests, and foothills, beyond which the mountains rise abruptly. In my experience, and in the documented literature, the areas between the coast and the lowland rainforest form the most intensively utilised areas for the Kamoro. Areas closer to the foothills appear to be only sporadically visited by Kamoro on hunting expeditions. Prior to the establishment of the Timika town, the Kamoro in East Mimika engaged in exchange with the neighbouring highland Amungme communities in these areas as well.⁹

The work in this thesis is the result of a combination of approximately twenty months of fieldwork with extended historical research, both of which are ongoing. By far the most important text I worked with was Jan Pouwer's dissertation *Enkele Aspecten van de Mimika Cultuur* (1955) (*Some Aspects of the Mimika Culture*). His primary foci were social structure and the impacts of

⁹ Kamoro in West Mimika, particularly near Uta, engaged in exchange with the Me (also known as Ekari and Kapauku), the interior highland community linked to them by a common river. This should not be interpreted however to mean that relationships were geographically or socially between the two ethnic groups for various reasons. According to de Bruijn, travel between Uta in West Mimika and the highlands was quite difficult, especially for the Kamoro: "Setting out from the flat, humid coastal [Kamoro] village of Oeta...the first and second days of the journey were made upstream by canoe or outboard motor-boat...There are no villages, only an occasional temporary dwelling on the sand-banks is seen. Perhaps a Papuan might be met, hunting in the jungle for wild sago, fruits, or rattan for trading. Towering towards the hard blue sky is one lone giant tree that is the landmark for Orawja...Because of the rapids it is no longer possible to use the river upstream, and from Orawja the work of overland transport commences...Apart from the heavy going along the trail it is often difficult to get coastal coolies [Kamoro] to go to the interior, partly because of the cold climate ...but also because of their fear of ghosts, which appear to freely inhabit the mountain regions..." (de Bruijn in Rhys 1947:60).

colonisation on Kamoro culture and it remains the only definitive work on the subject matter. I have also read the Dutch missionary-anthropologist J.H.M.C. Boelaars' account of the history of the MSC Catholic Mission in Mimika (Boelaars 1995) as well as numerous articles, letters, histories, and documents either held or referenced by the Mission of the Sacred Heart (MSC) in Tilburg, Holland. Interviews with Pouwer and with present and former government administrators and missionaries both in Indonesian Papua and in Holland helped me to better understand the nature of their work, and the socio-political environments within which it took place.

My research in Holland proved particularly useful in Mimika where several of my informants were familiar with Jan Pouwer and the missionary researchers. Given my knowledge of the Dutch work, the names of the researchers, and the style of questions that I posed, I was frequently asked if I was Jan Pouwer's son. This often spurred memories of Kamoro people's confusion with regards to Pouwer's work. Many recalled that as children they remembered their parents wondering why this Westerner wanted to collect sago or go fishing with them. Although my field research occasionally took me to Jayapura (the provincial capital of Indonesian Papua also referred to by some as Port Numbay), some interior highland villages, and as far away as Jakarta, I spent most of my time in the Timika area. Although my interviews involved some Kamoro language, most of my work in the field was carried out in *Bahasa Indonesia*, the *lingua franca* of the Indonesian archipelago, which I learned from my Kamoro informants who worked at the (I) *Gedung Seni Kamoro*, the Kamoro Art Centre. My rudimentary knowledge of Kamoro language was however particularly useful for gaining insight into Kamoro formulations of alien objects and ideas. After spending several months among Kamoro families at the Kamoro Art Centre during my initial work with the Smithsonian, I managed to travel throughout much of the Mimika Coast. As word spread that a *bulé*¹⁰, a Westerner, had knowledge of

¹⁰ *Bulé*, also spelled *bulai*, literally means "albino" in Indonesian and is generally a derogatory term for a Caucasian. It was, however, generally used by Papuans with whom I interacted simply as a way to denote a Caucasian person with no pejorative intent.

Kamoro culture (e.g. from books) and was taking an interest in their contemporary art and culture, my reputation often reached communities before I did. In one instance a man from a village which I had yet to visit approached me at a dance competition in Timika. His hand extended he said, “Mr. Todd, when will you come to study my village?”

The Mimika Coast is administered as the Mimika Regency (*Kabupaten Mimika*) and is divided into three sub-districts/sub-regencies (*kecamatan*): West Mimika (*Mimika Barat*), East Mimika (*Mimika Timur*) and New Mimika (*Mimika Baru*).¹¹ Three *Camat(s)* administer the sub-districts and a *Bupati* administers all of the sub-districts as the Mimika Regency. Sub-districts are further sub-divided into individual *desa* or villages, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. The combined population of the Mimika Regency in 1997 was just over sixty-four thousand (64,256).¹²

The indigenous Kamoro population in Mimika numbers approximately 15,000, just under one quarter of the overall population of the Mimika Regency. The overwhelming majority of the non-Kamoro population resides in the eastern-most sub-districts of New Mimika and East Mimika, which have a combined population of just under 55,000 (Dames and Moore 1997:49). The large population base in this area reflects the presence of the rapidly growing Timika Town and its satellite settlements and villages. The towns of Timika and Kuala Kencana, combined with the public and Freeport port facilities, form the support hub of the PT Freeport Indonesia Project Area. As a direct result of Freeport’s presence, Timika has recently become the administrative seat of the Mimika Regency and the Freeport Project Area has become the site of numerous military

¹¹ During the time of my fieldwork, the Mimika Regency was an “administrative” regency according to the Indonesian Government. This had implications pertaining to authority and funding. In essence, at that time as an administrative regency, the Mimika Regency served little more purpose than to establish a more visible government presence. Recently the regency has been upgraded to full regency status. In some parts of Indonesia, *kecamatan* are better translated as Districts as smaller, informal, administrative units are devised between the *kecamatan* and village administration. In this thesis I prefer to translate the *kecamatan* as a sub-district as there existed no smaller administrative unit during my fieldwork.

¹² Figure from the Indonesian Bureau of Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*) accessible online at: <http://regional.bps.go.id/~irja/pend-02.html>.

installations. The majority of the population of Timika finds employment either directly or indirectly related to the PT Freeport Indonesia Mine or its contractors. Although roughly half of the indigenous Kamoro population maintains at least a periodic residence in the Timika area, as of 1997 only 134 Kamoro were listed as Freeport employees (UABS 1998b:37).¹³

Timika's non-Papuan residents range from government-sponsored (and multi-laterally funded) transmigrants (so-called Jambals),¹⁴ to the more numerous "spontaneous migrants" from Sulawesi, Bhutan, and elsewhere who are attracted by the region's mercantile opportunities. Beginning in the 1970s, "spontaneous" Papuan migrants began settling in the lowland area that would become the Timika Township. At the same time, Kamoro communities from villages adjacent to and outside of the Freeport Project Area have been involved as "local transmigrants" (*transmigran lokal* or *translokal*) in the Indonesian government's national transmigration schemes. Timika's foundations are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. According to an anthropologist who has worked closely with the various transmigration projects, the aim is to resettle indigenous communities closer to development opportunities and so that they can "learn" from JAMBAL transmigrants (see Suparlan 1997).¹⁵ Though difficult to gauge since detailed census information broken down by ethnicity is lacking, non-Kamoro Papuans appear to readily outnumber Kamoro indigenous to the Freeport Project Area.

Between February 1996 and June 1998, I was one of the regency's nearly 500 long-term non-Indonesian residents. Most of the other expatriates supervised operations either directly related to the operations of the PT Freeport Indonesia Mine (e.g. warehouse, mine and mill managers, engineers, and accountants and

¹³ By comparison, at the same time in 1997, Freeport had employed three times as many people from the other community indigenous to the Freeport Project Area, the highland Amungme (UABS 1998a:42).

¹⁴ This is an acronym representing the areas of origins of the transmigrants: Java, Madura, Bali and Lombok.

¹⁵ One underlying assumption is that the Kamoro will learn to be sedentary horticulturalists from the Western Indonesians. This is bound up in a larger system of relegation of the Kamoro to the lowest rung of a social evolutionary ladder because of their semi-nomadic lifestyle.

their families) or held positions supporting mining-related operations (e.g. harbour master, construction, environmental research, geological exploration, catering, and their families). Prior to 1996, Freeport-affiliated workers lived predominantly in the highland mining town of Tembagapura, while a limited number also lived in the lowland Timika and Portsites areas. By the end of 1996, the majority of Freeport staff, Indonesian and expatriate, had moved to Kuala Kencana, a modern town constructed by the company. Kuala Kencana boasts such amenities as running potable water, central air-conditioning, and satellite television in the houses, and extensive public facilities including department and grocery stores, restaurants and pubs, a bakery, a bowling alley and a golf course. The facilities of Kuala Kencana are conspicuously extravagant when compared to the nearest “public town” of Timika where the majority of houses had only limited access to electricity and running water at the time of my fieldwork. During 1996 I was based in Timika, moving to Kuala Kencana in 1997, both times based in Freeport-sponsored housing. Few foreigners arrive in the area and of them only a small proportion are not in some way affiliated with PT Freeport Indonesia. Accordingly, local authorities as well as some Freeport personnel seemed acutely aware of the arrival of foreigners not affiliated with the mine.¹⁶ On occasion during my stay in the Timika area, small groups of tourists would arrive on their way to or from the town of Agats, entry point to eco- and adventure- tours to the Asmat region to the East. Few of these tourists spent more than a few days in Timika despite the four-star Sheraton accommodation located just minutes from the Timika Airport.

Throughout my research in Papua and in Holland, I focused on Kamoro and outsider engagements with and representations of one another. To make sense of these perspectives, the practices that inform them, and their relation to the region’s history, this dissertation traverses the paths of a variety of scholarly (and popular) discourses. Though grounded in my training as an anthropologist, my

¹⁶ Given the small size of the expatriate community, any foreigners that were unknown were often looked upon if not suspiciously, then with a cautious eye. There was a general feeling about that these foreigners not attached to Freeport or tour groups were in Timika for reasons thought to be subversive to mining activities or to the Indonesian Government.

analysis draws on a wide array of resources: from mining industry analyses and Freeport consultancy reports to the ethnography of Indonesia and Melanesia, from colonial (and post-colonial) studies to museum studies. In part, this thesis is an ethnography of the interactions that have occurred on the Mimika Coast and their divergent representations. Representations of one of the groups should not be predicated on the (fictitious) absence of other groups (cf. Fabian 1991:xiv). Thus, although this thesis favours Kamoro interpretations and representations it also explicitly takes into account the social, political, and economic environments that inform the perspectives of and representations by outsiders who interact with the Kamoro, a practice I tentatively label *multi-sighted* ethnography.

I use *multi-sighted* as a creative adaptation of the well-known concept of multi-sited ethnography (cf. Marcus 1995). Like multi-sited ethnography my research follows communities across geographic domains (for me these locations included in addition to Papua, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, and England). In each case, I traversed the conjunctural spaces, local and international, that inform (and have informed) practice on the ground in Indonesian Papua, specifically focusing on those practices that impact Kamoro communities. In a sense, my approach is a response to Marcus's (1995) observation that translocal identities, and difficult-to-access research sites, suggest the need for new kinds of ethnographic inquiry and fieldwork that do not presume stable research locations or communities. Ironically, although the Kamoro themselves have generally not travelled beyond the bounds of Indonesian Papua, the formulation of their identity is globally entwined. To understand contemporary complexities of the Kamoro, this thesis argues that one must understand the network of people with whom they interact, both directly and virtually, and how they interact with them (cf. Terrell 1993:178). By extending Marcus' multi-sited metaphor across multiple communities occupying the same intersecting geographic spaces as well as beyond them, I hope to open a broader range of possibilities in our understandings of the contemporary

complexities in Indonesian Papua.¹⁷ The underlying process of *multi-sighted* research then is not only to contextualise the indigenous socio-political environment, but also the “foreign” socio-political environments with which it is enmeshed and to extend an understanding of these environments across time.

This strategy has proven crucial to my understanding of the Kamoro people, the Mimika region and ultimately of the wider significance of this work to the anthropology and history of West New Guinea. In particular, because the majority of historical and contemporary sources pertaining to the region are written in Dutch and Indonesian, they have been predominantly unavailable to English speaking audiences. In this respect, this thesis provides a crucial entrée into the history and ethnography of West New Guinea.

EXAMINING THE BOUNDARIES OF POLITICAL SPACE IN WEST NEW GUINEA

One must be ever conscious of what name is used in writing and conversation when referring to the western side of New Guinea. Almost any name used to describe the region is fraught with political implications. Throughout the thesis, I generally follow the concise appellations of Ballard. Namely, I use:

...West New Guinea to refer to the geographic area of the western half of New Guinea, Nederlands-Nieuw-Guinea in reference to the Dutch colonial territory, and Irian Barat or Irian Jaya for the period after 1962, while acknowledging that West Papua is the term preferred by a considerable majority of the Papuan people (Ballard 1999:149).¹⁸

¹⁷ I also see this as a style of “regional study” as conceived during a Wenner-Gren Foundation-sponsored seminar held at Field Museum, Chicago. Terrell relates that one of the outcomes of the seminar was that in contrast to traditional village-based ethnography, regional studies “...try to answer questions about what is going on *among* places as well as—or rather than—*within* places (Terrell 1993:178, emphases in the original).

¹⁸ Here I note that indigenous Papuans frequently labelled themselves as Irianese and the province “Irian Jaya” during my fieldwork, with no implicit political connotation. On the other hand, in my field experience the label West Papua (*Papua Barat*) almost always referred to a desire for independence from Indonesia. My Kamoro informants never spontaneously used the term West Papua, while seemingly the majority of highland people with whom I interacted did (Amungme, Dani, Ekari, and Moni people among others).

Since I left the field, the Indonesian Government has moved to rename the province Papua.¹⁹ Interestingly, although conventional wisdom holds that the word Papua derives from a Malay word used to describe the inhabitants' curly hair, recent research suggests that the word is actually derived from a Biak term (Gelpke 1993). The name Irian also originates from the island of Biak, and was used to describe the adjacent New Guinea mainland.²⁰

Contemporary West Papuan arguments regarding the political status of the western side of New Guinea revolve around the notion that the Melanesians are a distinct race from the Asiatic Indonesians. Along with their supporters, they depict themselves as holders of a distinctive unified collective of cultures and their arguments often emphasise a direct ethnic and racial connection with eastern half of the island, Papua New Guinea; some arguments even envision a unified and independent nation of New Guinea.²¹

At least 5000 years ago a chain of trading relationships linked the island of New Guinea to Southeast Asia; products from the islands off New Guinea's south-west coast had already reached Middle Eastern markets by 4000 years ago (Swadling 1996:15). Various accounts document trade between Asia (mainland and insular) and West New Guinea dating from the first century AD through the

¹⁹ The name Papua was meant to be a compromise on behalf of the Indonesian President Wahid (e.g. between renaming the province West Papua, the name preferred by independence seekers and Irian Jaya). The combined impact of his "renaming" of the province, which has yet to be formally ratified by the Indonesian Government, and his granting of permission for Papuans to raise the "Morning Star" Flag, a symbol of the West Papuan separatist cause, have not only brought about confusion in the Western press, but have also fuelled false impressions of political independence among some of the people indigenous to West New Guinea. The Indonesian government has since rescinded permission to raise the flag.

²⁰ The most commonly accepted derivation of the word Irian comes from the Biak-Numfor language. In this language, Irian means Warm-land or Hot-land (*iri* = land and *an* = warm). Colloquially, many have asserted that IRIAN is an acronym for *Ikut Republic Indonesia Anti-Nederlands*, Indonesian for Pro Republic of Indonesia against the Netherlands. For further details about the Indonesia explanations of the word see *Report of the Committee New Guinea (Irian) 1950, Part III*, published by the Secretariat of the Netherlands-Indonesia Union.

²¹ For an example of a depiction of the New Guinea racial integrity argument see the West Papua Information Kit, created by the Australia West Papua Association available online at <http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/cline/papua/core.htm>. It states "The indigenous people of West Papua are of the same ethnic origin as those in the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and are also related ethnically and culturally to other Melanesian peoples of the Pacific." The implicit contrast is to the "Asians" of the rest of Indonesia.

fourteenth century (Langdon 1971, Ismail, Rapanoi, Said and Hutasuhut 1971, Osborne 1985). Only since the fourteenth century, however, has the island of New Guinea and more particularly the south-west coast become well-documented as an outpost in an expanding region centred on the European and Asian spice and slave trades. By this time, traders representing the (Hindu) Javanese Kingdom of Majapahit (1239-1520) had already established contact with the south coast of New Guinea where they captured slaves and hunted birds of paradise (Budiardjo and Liong 1984:2; Sumule 1994:110-111). In 1365 Prapantja, a Javanese poet, wrote in the *Negarakertagama* that an area just south of the Bird's Head Peninsula called Onin or Wanin was part of the Hindu-Javanese Majapahit Empire (Swadling 1996:136, van Baal, Galis, and Koentjaraningrat 1984:41). By the sixteenth century parts of West New Guinea were incorporated into more localised spheres of political influence. The Javanese-influenced Sultan of Ternate and his political ally the Sultan of Bacan began to maintain economic and political influence in the region through frequent raids, known as *hong*, on mainland settlements, capturing both natural and human (slave) resources (Swadling 1996:27-8). Around the same time, increased European interest in nutmeg, mace and cloves acquired from the Middle East spurred moves to purchase the spices from their source, facilitating the first European "discovery" of the region by the Portuguese in 1512 (ibid:16). During the seventeenth century, the *Verenigde Oostindisch Compagnie*, better known as the Dutch East India Company or by the acronym VOC, tried to wrest control of the spice trade from the established sultanates by disrupting established trade routes. The VOC's inability to effectively do so forced a diversification of their interests to offset financial losses—leading them to the south-west coast of New Guinea in a failed attempt to enter the trade in massoy-bark (*Cryptocarya aromatica*) (Swadling 1996:138). Attempting both to gauge the extent and influence of the sultanates and that of other local traders the Dutch again sought to interrupt trade at various locations in New Guinea, bringing them into contact with Kamoro communities in 1623 and 1636 (see Chapter Two).

Though New Guinea was strategically located to protect other interests in the East Indies, the Dutch had become resigned to the fact that New Guinea was not a financially viable outpost. Accordingly, they empowered the Sultan of Tidore as indirect ruler of the territory on their behalf.²² The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw increased European interest in the region, leading the Dutch to extend the Sultan of Tidore's sphere of influence in 1848, which ultimately reached the 141st parallel (on paper), the current international border between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia (Swadling 1996:16-17).

The earliest account of the political division of the region attributable to the indigenous population themselves dates from 1828. On the fourteenth of May in that year, the Dutch naval corvette *Triton* and the schooner *Iris* dropped anchor at the village of Oeta (Uta) (Modera 1830:72). Over the next few days three Kamoro visited the Dutch expedition, accepting gifts of clothing and other trade items. According to accounts of these interactions given by naval lieutenant Justin Modera, the Kamoro men situated themselves between the political districts of Koiwiai (Koijwai) to the west and Timakowa (or Timoraka) to the east. Names of the settlements in the Koiwiai district were extensive while those further east of Uta were limited to the nearest neighbouring settlements (Müller 1857:473; Modera 1830:73).²³ The interactions between the *Triton* expedition and the Kamoro at Uta are more fully detailed in Chapter Three.

As part of the process of extending his influence, the Sultan of Tidore installed indigenous representatives along the south-west coast of New Guinea. By 1850, the Raja of Namatote, a nominal representative of the Sultan of Tidore had named a raja at the Kamoro settlement of Kapia (Kipia) (Swadling 1996:149). Chosen for his prowess as a warrior, and for his apparent ability to communicate in either Seramese or Malay, the Raja of Kipia was a partner (and

²² This again changed the political shape of the region, forcing further conflict between the Sultan of Tidore with the Sultans of Ternate and Bacan over the region. According to Swadling, the Dutch may have chosen the Sultan of Tidore because he would be more compliant with their wishes (1996:17).

²³ Chapter Three considers the interactions between the Kamoro at Uta in 1828 and the Dutch naval expedition in more detail.

warlord) who assisted the eastern Moluccans in the damar-resin, massoy-bark and slave trade (see Chapter Four). Eventually the Raja of Kipia triggered a series of “empowerments” of cronies along the coast east of Kipia at Uta, Mimika and Nimei, establishing a pattern of exploitation of local resources for the benefit of a select few indigenous allies. By the late nineteenth century evidence of the region’s increasing inclusion within broader trade networks is evidenced by the more clear demarcations of the Koiwai, Kopia and the Timakowa “districts” on maps of the south-west coast.

MUNDANE, BORING, AND BACKWARD: OUTSIDER REPRESENTATIONS OF THE KAMORO

Compared to many communities in Indonesian Papua and indeed throughout Melanesia, the Kamoro have been relatively well documented historically. Seventeenth century Dutch East India Company accounts provide the initial impressions of the Kamoro, supplemented by later accounts by explorers and naturalists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries preceding the arrival of a colonial presence in the 1920s. Mission accounts are the primary sources for information from the pre-World War II era, while administration reports and more detailed research of Pouver and a pair of Dutch missionaries describe the post-War Dutch period particularly well. Freeport histories and consultancy reports combined with the recollections of my informants supplement the sparse information regarding the Kamoro and the broader region in the 1970s and 1980s.

The most striking aspect of this body of literature and that written since, is the astounding number of derogatory remarks throughout all eras of Kamoro history from pre-colonisation through contemporary social consultancy reports commissioned by Freeport. For the most part the commentators are not casual passers-by but seasoned observers. The first to spend an extended amount of time among the Kamoro in the twentieth century was the Englishman A.F.R. Wollaston. During his fifteen-month stay prior to a Dutch colonial presence in Mimika, he described the Kamoro and their territory:

They are, of all the native peoples I have come across...[the] least interesting...they are just about worthy of the country they live in, which is from the sea to the foot of the mountains the most dreary and forbidding country I have ever seen. There is nothing beautiful in it, nothing of romance, nothing to stir one's imagination in the least, but altogether an utterly soul-destroying land (Wollaston 1912:102).

After Japanese troops, based at the coastal settlement of Timika (not to be confused with the modern town of Timika) had occupied Mimika during World War II, a Dutch Catholic priest who had lived among the Kamoro since 1929 provided equally unflattering commentary:

The people are...easily frightened and cowardly. 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 as cited in AGS 1943:5).

After World War II, the Dutch returned to the area with renewed vigour and with the intent to prepare West New Guinea for independence (see Chapter Five). During this period, Jan Pouwer conducted extended fieldwork among the Kamoro, producing a thorough ethnography (1955) as well as a considerable body of administrative and academic reports. Though I definitely would not characterise the larger body of his work as negative, he too pointed out the failure of mission and administration efforts in the “development” of Kamoro communities. In a 1961 letter to the Bishop of Hollandia²⁴ he wrote:

Until now and after thirty-six years of acculturation, they [the Kamoro] have not accepted a modern attitude toward life nor the essence of the Christian faith—although nearly everyone is baptised (cited in Trenkenschuh 1982a [1970]:78).

Soon after, the last District Head of Mimika under Dutch rule, Hein van der Schoot, published a thesis regarding the impacts of “development” activities among the Kamoro:

...[it]...had the effect of leading to the social degradation of the men. In particular the prospective young warriors who had lost all significance as such, became socially displaced. Loss of orientation lay at the bottom of the rather one-sided identification with the glorified past. The sex-bound disorientation lag between men and women explains why the value system of the female part of the population was still suitable as a yardstick for social conduct in its traditional context when the seriously blurred value system of the males, who

²⁴ Hollandia was the name for the Dutch capital of Netherlands New Guinea. The town is now most widely as Jayapura, though West Papuan separatists prefer to call it Port Numbay.

were more directly exposed to the changes, had already lost its suitability (from the English summary in van der Schoot 1969:247).

He went on to describe how spontaneous and planned resettlement to the coast tended to have negative overall effects on community health. Dependence on small-scale horticulture not only yielded minimal produce, but garden clearings often created standing pools of water, aggravating an already serious malaria problem. Van der Schoot also posited that the introduction of money tended to obscure the existing systems of reciprocal social obligations and that elders faced a rapidly deteriorating base of influence in the community.

Pessimism certainly did not end with the hand-over to Indonesian Administration. In 1970, after touring the region, Father Frank Trenkenschuh, an American Catholic father stationed among the neighbouring Asmat, observed:

It is not a pleasant sight — a people totally indifferent to your presence; people educated but without a place in their own society. Mimika strikes me as a dead area filled with zombies. There is no work and no interest in work. Religion of the past is no longer celebrated and the Christian Religion means nothing to the people. The past is gone forever. The present lacks vitality. The future holds no hope (Trenkenschuh 1982a [1970]:78-79).

The 1980s saw a continuation of the pejorative commentary, though by this time it was focused more directly on the Kamoro living in East Mimika, as those in Central and West Mimika were closer to the administrative centre in Kokonao, and hence were represented as more “developed”. A report authored by two European Catholic fathers with four Kamoro men as their primary informants characterised the (eastern) Kamoro as “afraid of change”, “unsettled”, and still relying on “sago culture” (p. 2-3).²⁵

Further, even Kamoro village teachers from throughout Mimika did not escape the stereotype:

Many teachers also exhibit certain attitudes like “we want calm”. They are most happy if they are received as normal community members in lifestyle, housing, eating habits and other things. With the result that they want to be inconspicuous, and as such it isn’t

²⁵ There were explicit social and political implications of the relatedness between diet, lifestyle and development during my fieldwork. Essentially, a “sago diet” combined with a semi-nomadic lifestyle relegated the Kamoro to the lowest rung of Indonesian socio-economic development schemes which contained social-evolutionary overtones.

necessary for them to work up a sweat (Dijkmans and van den Broek 1981:2, my translation).

The report offers the example of a Kamoro teacher who, though he had not actually been teaching for quite some time, complained when he failed to receive his salary. When the teacher asked the headmaster for an explanation he received the seemingly sensible answer that he could not possibly expect pay without working for it. Annoyed, the Kamoro teacher replied, “Fine, it’s done. If you don’t want to pay me, that’s fine. I am a Kamoro. My elders lived without a salary; I too can live from sago and fish.”

My own initial feelings about the Kamoro evident in my research prospectus written prior to fieldwork, also reflected to some degree the atmosphere of the Smithsonian Institution where I was employed at the time. This led me to characterise the Kamoro as having “lost a culture that once was” and by implication having lost some degree of authenticity:

My proposed study of their [Amungme and Kamoro] culture and material culture might be considered “salvage” ethnography since these are the tribes most heavily affected by the PT Freeport Indonesia copper mining operations. At the same time, the extensive disruptions to tribal life caused by the mine have included a large new market not only for agricultural products but also crafts, which consequently seem to be enjoying a commoditization-induced “renaissance.”

As it turned out, these pre-field interpretations were largely inaccurate or at best deceptively incomplete. In particular, the perceived commoditization-induced renaissance at the time was based on a Freeport “development” project that commissioned monumental scale carvings to adorn the local Sheraton Hotel and Kuala Kencana, the Freeport-built town for its employees. The “renaissance” appeared to be almost solely driven by the decorative needs of the company.

In either case, as I review the literature on this area, one major thread of continuity among the commentators (including myself at that point) is that none were there with an academic agenda to conduct research among the Kamoro. Including research done while I was in the field, all social documentation of Mimika was carried out by individuals whose primary function in “the field” was not that of academic researcher (e.g. explorers, missionaries, administrators,

etc.). I think this marks a significant departure from the ethnographic research of many areas of Papua New Guinea where literally hundreds of theses have been written by academic fieldworkers. All of those commenting on Mimika had ulterior motives, many were in fact players in broader international plots and competitions. In any case, nature of their often “incidental” relationship with the Kamoro often prompted the portrayal of the Kamoro in politically motivated Western images of indigeneity. The aforementioned explorer Wollaston for example was in an international race against the Dutch to reach the snow-capped Carstensz Mountains. By encouraging him to explore a less promising route, the Dutch not only hindered his chances for success but also forced him to remain among the Kamoro. Wollaston’s diary (1933) reveals that with each day he grew more frustrated at his inability to reach the mountains and consequently more upset with the Kamoro and their environment to which he had been doomed.

Early church officials, aside from their obvious religious agenda, were also eager to expand *out of* the Kamoro region. Father Tillemans, responsible for the Allied Intelligence information, was passionate about exploring the mountainous interior, which he had begun during his first two years in Mimika. By the end of the 1930s he had already accompanied two expeditions to the interior Wissel Lakes (Ekari/Me/Kapauku territory), where he eventually sought refuge among the population for a short period during World War II before escaping to Australia.²⁶

Even Pouwer did not work in the Kamoro area from choice. He was sent to work among the Kamoro as part of a pilot project to conduct ethnographic work to understand the changes brought about since European contact in support of the administration’s needs in order to reach the goal of decolonisation. In a sense, he too was conducting “salvage ethnography”, which seems inherently doomed to description in the past tense: “what was” rather than “what is”.

²⁶ For a good review of one of the pre-war expeditions which Tillemans accompanied see Bijlmer 1938. For an account of a Dutch administrator who managed to remain in this region of the interior highlands during World War II see Rhys 1947.

Like Pouwer, van der Schoot did not choose to work among the Kamoro. He was informed of his placement and took up the position to “fill an opening” left vacant when the previous administrator had left the region (van der Schoot 1996:449). In his writing and during my interviews with him, he described the economic possibilities of the region as “little to nothing” and the region itself as “uninteresting” (ibid:453-455; van der Schoot interviewed by the author 23 February 1998). Further, he had formerly worked among the more flamboyant and recently pacified Asmat, who lived up to the romantic ideal of the “exotic other”.

Trenkenschuh’s comments in 1970 were based on the perspective of someone eager to *leave* the Kamoro in order to continue work among the by-then infamous Asmat. Like van der Schoot, his perspective seems to be a reflection on Kamoro inability to live up to expectations as stereotypical exotic primitives. Further, Trenkenschuh belonged to the Crosier Mission, a different order to the ones which had operated among the Kamoro, thus mission rivalry may have contributed to his bleak depiction.

Contemporary Indonesian views on development seemed to be the impetus for the negative commentary in the 1980 report. This view emphasised a development agenda similar to that of the Dutch Colonial Government, emphasising permanent settlement and small scale agriculture as the next step in the developmental scheme in the transition from hunter-gatherer (*peramu*) to sedentary horticulturalist to a participant in the modern market economy. It comes as no surprise then that two of the four Kamoro “informants” were representatives of the provincial legislative assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* or DPRD) who would have been well-steeped in State development ideology; all of them appear to have been from Central and West Mimika.²⁷

Finally, my own initial work in the region was not out of choice, but from circumstances that dictated that I should work among the Kamoro. However, I

²⁷ The implication here is that as representatives of the Indonesian Government, they would have been heavily influenced by Indonesian development ideology; “sago culture” in this context insinuates backwardness associated with semi-nomadism.

noticed a definite change in my attitude toward the Kamoro and my writing about them after I had made conscious choices to return to the field. With each return, I challenged myself to separate foreign representations of the Kamoro from indigenous ones. The various guises under which I returned spawned new perspectives and subsequently contributed to different interpretive possibilities with each visit.

Despite the litany of “bad press” about the Kamoro, the idea which I have developed briefly here, namely that the underlying thread that links all of these accounts is the transitory nature of the authors while largely true, is unconvincing as an explanation for the derogatory commentary. What I propose is that the root of the negative commentaries of the English explorer Wollaston, the Catholic Missionary, and the Dutch administrator, among others, is more complex, and related to radically differing notions of sociality and historical consciousness between the Kamoro and foreigners.

APPROACHING THE PROBLEM

In *South Coast New Guinea Cultures*, Bruce Knauft outlined the critical tasks that he saw as prerequisites for an “objectivist” comparative area study of the south coast of New Guinea (Knauft 1993:6).²⁸ Principal among these concerns was to account for the relativity of ethnographic materials written from different personal and theoretical perspectives and at different historical moments, a task with which I agree and I both implicitly and explicitly take up in this thesis.²⁹ Importantly, he points out that the polar contrasts drawn between core highland and south coast ethnographies are “...in significant part a function of synchrony in comparison—the uncritical comparison of accounts gathered at different times and with different ethnographic goals and theoretical assumptions” (ibid:7). Furthering an argument he initiated in 1986, Knauft attempts to dismantle the

²⁸ For reviews of this book see Brown (1994) and Harrison (1993).

²⁹ Historians have of course been generally “relativising” cultivating a critical approach to their sources for quite some time as standard practice.

mis-characterisation of south coast societies initially promoted by Herdt et al. in a collection of essays published in 1984 and subsequently taken up by them and others.³⁰ Knaft questions the underlying premise upon which their arguments hinge: namely that in contrast to highland societies, south coast cultures are characterised by the practise of ritualised homosexuality, in which “insemination” of young male initiates by older men is essential for their growth. Following their argument, this characterisation is then linked to numerous other social and economic factors that serve to contrast lowland and highland New Guinea societies.³¹

Knaft embarks on an important and previously unattempted project, which sets out to challenge mis-characterisations of the south coast, and to better contextualise ethnographic accounts of these regions within broader socio-historical contexts. One of the key strengths of the volume is the rather convincing demonstration that ritualised homosexuality, according to the documentation Knaft analysed, occurs in under thirty percent of south coast populations (Knaft 1993:48). Other conclusions regarding the “distinctive cultural orientations” of the south coast, however, bring to light methodological flaws, which ultimately contribute to contemporary misrepresentations of the Kamoro. In the final chapter of *South Coast New Guinea Cultures*, Knaft outlines what I take as his other key conclusions. Accordingly he describes that the “distinctive permutation” of south coast beliefs and practices hinges upon two factors: “the sexual creation of fertility and the violent taking of life-force through headhunting.”

In support of his key finding, Knaft goes to great lengths to challenge the findings of Herdt et al. He repeatedly remarks that the Kamoro did not practice ritualised homosexuality or “boy insemination” (pp. 47, 48, 49, 236, 237, and 244). The Kamoro, in contrast to their Asmat neighbours do *not* however practice

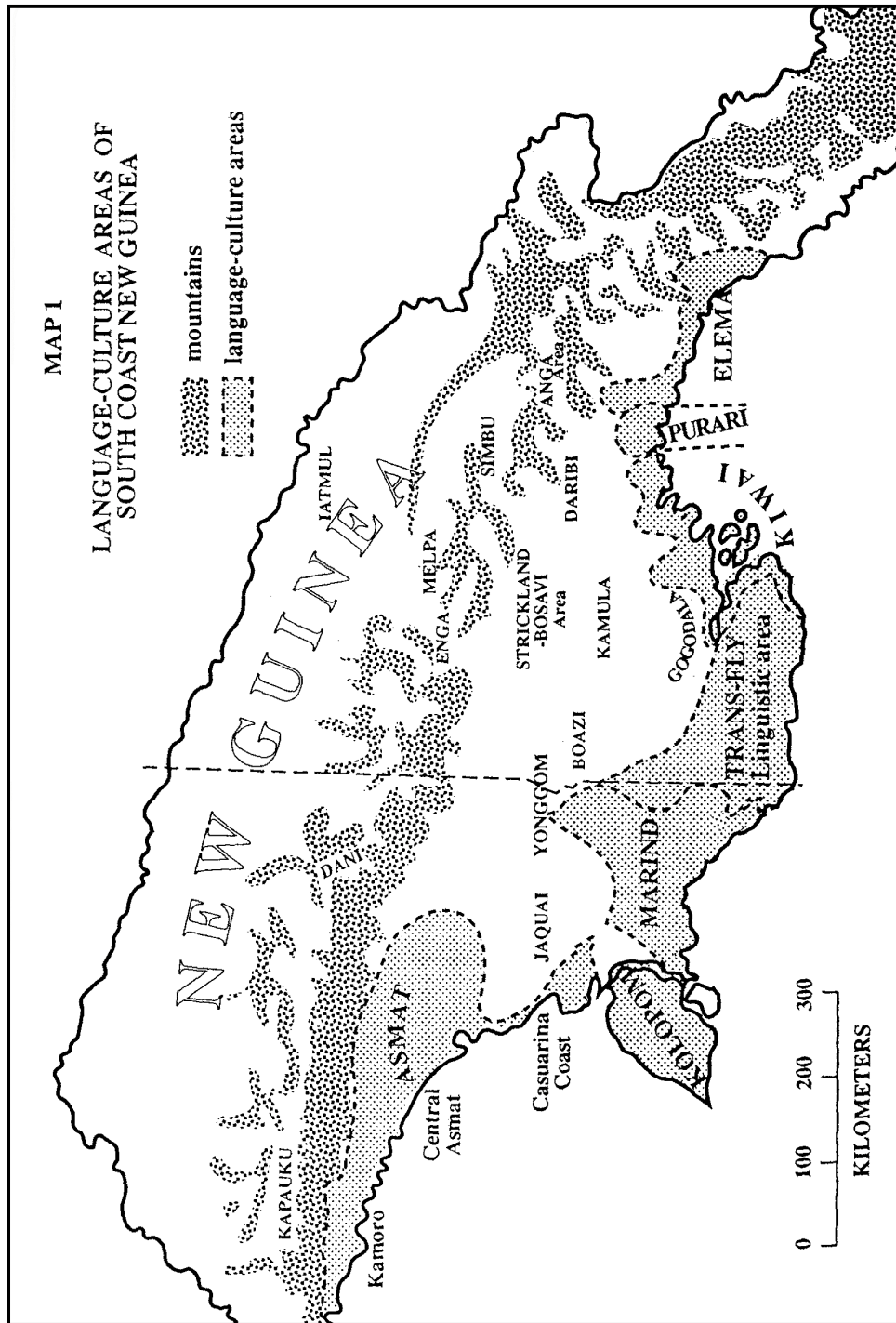
³⁰ For a review of the volume see Whitehead 1985. Herdt certainly has been a key proponent in emphasising the existence of homosexual practices on the south coast. In addition to the widely known 1984 edited volume, see also Herdt 1987a, 1987b, and 1991.

³¹ In his 1991 article, Herdt proposed that symbolic same-sex intercourse among males be more reflexively and accurately described as “boy-insemination” rather than ritualised homosexuality.

headhunting. While Knauff does not state explicitly that they do, the reader is left to assume that in lieu of explicit statements, such as those regarding ritualised homosexuality, the Kamoro are otherwise like the Asmat. This is particularly important because the Kamoro explicitly contrast themselves (and have historically) to the Asmat whom they see as being both headhunters and cannibals. Knauff's analysis which draws differences between the two groups predominantly from Asmat accounts brings to the surface two of the main shortcomings of the book: preferential usage of English language documentation and the characterisation of groups based on "language-culture areas" rather than ethnic sub-group.

I highlight these factors not to undermine Knauff's intriguing findings, most of which I tend to agree with, but because these stumbling blocks are central to contemporary (mis)interpretations of Kamoro society. While Knauff's bibliography of nearly 700 references is testament to his well-researched survey, only approximately four percent of his references (about 31/692) are from non-English sources.³² Given the colonial histories of the south coast it is not surprising that German and French sources are scant, but the dearth of Dutch language material, thirteen sources, is extremely problematic given the colonial history of the western side of the island. For the western side of New Guinea Knauff's information is dominated by English-language materials, which primarily describe only the Marind-anim and the Asmat, biasing his findings. As indicated in Figure 1 of *South Coast New Guinea Cultures* and throughout the text, Knauff presents the Kamoro as a subsidiary to the Asmat language-culture area (see Map 4, page 24). Undeniably there are broad cultural and perhaps closer linguistic relationships between the two societies, however Knauff's "language-culture area" approach, obscures the radical differences between the Kamoro and the Asmat.

³² This assessment was made by a quick tabulation of the bibliography. Whether or not my figures are accurate, the overwhelming certainty is that an extremely small amount of the literature was drawn from non-English and in particular Dutch sources.



Map 4: "Language-culture areas of south coast New Guinea" (from Knauff 1993:xiv).

Commentary about the Kamoro in the text is largely subordinate or used in contrast to information regarding the Asmat. More particularly, the Kamoro are portrayed largely as they are represented in documentation regarding the Asmat. Sources on the Asmat are used, of course, because they are accessible in English. An application of Knauff's broader comparative "objectivist" task, predicated upon understanding the personal, theoretical and historical peculiarities of ethnographic information reveals several underlying reasons why there is a considerably large body of documentation of Asmat material in English than on the Kamoro. Perhaps the most significant contributing factors here are the historical peculiarities of mission (and administration) work in the region.³³ While the same Catholic Order (MSC) *initially* opened the Kamoro and Asmat regions (in that order), the latter region proved too large and they had to request assistance to serve it.³⁴ This assistance came from an American-based Catholic Order (OSC), which ultimately facilitated English documentation.

Because of biases entwined in the language-culture area concept and the biases in the language of documentation which favour the Asmat in Knauff's analysis, the Kamoro are not included in some of the more interesting comparisons which he draws out. In particular, the Kamoro do not figure in the analyses of Big Man and Great Man societies (ibid:79-83), female status and cannibalism (ibid:106-107), the relationship of head-hunting to male prestige and aggressiveness, and in attitude/association with outsiders (ibid:188-189). Although Knauff's general conclusions appear fairly accurate, based on the

³³ In this brief discussion I comment only on the mission, as it is pertinent to the discussion regarding language. In the twentieth century, the administrative particulars of the two regions also contribute to differences in representation of the two groups. Knauff's statement that "A Government post was established in 1925 among the Mimika in the northern Kamoro-Asmat region" suggests that the Dutch administration also followed a "language-culture area" approach. They did not. In fact, Mimika was administered separately from the Asmat region. I discuss some of the ramifications of this administrative separation between the two in Chapter Four.

³⁴ Before opening up these regions for mission work, the MSC mission had already worked among the Marind-anim for more than two decades (as had the administration). Interestingly, the clearest linkage between the groups in the twentieth century has been through the Catholic Mission, which was based in the Kei Islands. As in other areas on the south (west) coast, the Kei Islanders, not the European fathers, were the primary face of the mission and ultimately played an influential role in the colonial process in West New Guinea.

information included in his analysis, the Kamoro do not fit neatly alongside the Asmat in these categories.

I think that Knauff's definition of "classic south coast ethnographies" as the pre-Lévi-Straussian and pre-Maussian work conducted on the eastern side of New Guinea between 1910 and 1940 (e.g. F.E. Williams (1936, 1940); and Landtman (1917, 1927)) represents an Anglo-centric perspective as well.³⁵ From the perspective of a researcher of the western side of the island, the "classic ethnographies" only emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and are heavily influenced by Lévi-Strauss and Mauss. Here I refer explicitly to van Baal's *Dema* (1966), Serpenti's *Cultivators of the Swamps* (1965), and more importantly for this thesis, Jan Pouwer's thesis *Enkele Aspecten van de Mimika-Cultuur* (1955). The latter two sources in particular were heavily influenced by Lévi-Strauss.³⁶ Pouwer demonstrates the centrality of reciprocity with regards to politics, economy, kinship, and more broadly social structure (1955:161-214). While Knauff sufficiently covers material from Serpenti and van Baal, which are in English, the findings of Pouwer's thesis despite the fact that it is one of the few Dutch sources cited, go largely unrepresented.

South Coast New Guinea Cultures was among the few books that I took with me to Mimika in 1996. After discussing bibliographic sources with a Freeport public relations consultant, I loaned him my copy of the book to give an idea about the cultures of the south coast (including the Kamoro). In response, the Freeport consultant proceeded to write an advertisement for Freeport that at least in part reflected his reading of the book. He used (and misused) some of Knauff's general characterisations of the south coast in order to exoticise and Asmat-ise the Kamoro:

Head-hunting, cannibalism, ritual orgies of heterosexual and homosexual persuasion; not all aspects of the cultures of Irian's south coast were so endearing as to preserve intact for

³⁵ One partial exception is that Knauff does include Paul Wirz's work among the Marind-anim in this collection, which is in German, but his characterisations nonetheless are still predominantly English-speakers who worked on the eastern side of the island.

³⁶ Epstein goes so far as to describe Serpenti's work as "preoccupied with kinship" and Lévi-Strauss's approach to it (Epstein 1966:130).

future generations...It is a delicate matter, eradicating objectionable elements which form a part of an integral cultural entity (Muller 1996:24).

Indeed the author of the advertisement seems to have capitalised on his recent reading of Knauft. All of these markers (headhunting, cannibalism, and ritual homo- and hetero-sexuality) are explicitly outlined in Knauft's characterisation of the Asmat, the primary group of the Asmat language-culture area under which he classifies the Kamoro.³⁷ Of these four markers none apply to contemporary Kamoro practice and only one applied to past practice (ritual heterosexuality, more properly ritual promiscuity).

But the advertisement continues, and the author more explicitly takes up Knauft's key generalisations for the south coast (Knauft 1993:210) regarding the centrality of headhunting as a part of a fertility cycle:

That the men were carrying chunks of recently speared wild pigs seemed beside the point: their reception was straight out of head-hunting accounts of the past...Have pigs been recently substituted for humans? (Muller 1996:25).

In many cultures, the taking of heads meant a spiritual and physical rejuvenation for the whole village...The ladies at Kamoro [Timika] Pantai village certainly seemed rejuvenated (ibid).

Indeed, this article is particularly suggestive, all but making the Kamoro into Asmat, but for different purposes than Knauft's. For Freeport, this is part of a larger trend of drawing explicit comparisons between the Kamoro and the Asmat and in some situations overtly "Asmat-ising" the Kamoro to heighten the impact of the *image* of their community development projects (Harple 1998).³⁸ Indeed, the company's distorted perception and representation of the Kamoro is fuelled by consultancy reports that situate the backward and exotic Kamoro near the

³⁷ For Knauft's explicit accounts regarding these topics among Asmat groups see the following: for headhunting (pp. 188-195), for cannibalism (p. 107), for ritual homosexuality (pp. 228-237), and for ritual heterosexuality (pp. 53, 101, 189, 229-233, 235).

³⁸ Freeport promotional material generally follows a trope of wild, exotic savages being brought out of the Stone Age and into a more healthy and prosperous modern era via the activities of the company. I also note that the Kamoro both traditionally and during my fieldwork go to great lengths to differentiate themselves from the Asmat. When I translated the above Freeport article for Kamoro informants, they were appalled by its suggestions.

bottom of a social ladder. Freeport is then seen, through its development initiatives, to be contributing to evolutionary rise of the Kamoro.³⁹

The key commonalities that unite Knauff's academic argument and the contemporary non-academic accounts are gaps in knowledge and understandings of the documented Kamoro past. The impacts of these lapses in knowledge vary. But whether through simple oversight or under the influence of preconceived "foreign" models of development Kamoro agency continues to be written out of the picture. In large part, contemporary commentators have created the Kamoro in the image of other ethnic groups, real or imagined.

In view of the long history of presentation (and representation) of the Kamoro, contemporary examples situated with no regard to the historical past are merely a recent chapter in consistent descriptions of the Kamoro as passive and lazy. This thesis illuminates the contemporary representations and positions them with regard to those of the past. To this end, I propose that to better understand the nature of contemporary Kamoro sociality and the commentary it evokes, we must look extensively to the past practices that inform them. With Douglas, I agree that we should engage the past(s) and direct our gaze toward "...contemporary textual traces of past actions and to construe those traces in cultural and strategic contexts..." (Douglas 1996:177-178). The past neither pre-determines nor ornaments or situates the present; its practices condition it and are part of it. As this thesis demonstrates however, there are certainly patterns and ideas to be learned about Kamoro engagement with the present which can be better understood through an investigation of the "traces" of the past.

³⁹ On the other side of the political divide among commentators on Freeport's impacts, activists and academics alike often present the Kamoro as stereotypes of indigenous ecological nobility and solidarity, in support of their own opposition to major resource companies (see for example Banks and Ballard 1997:3; Banks 1997:17). Activist accounts continue to relegate the Kamoro to the margins of their support for the highland Amungme, unwittingly promoting an Amungme-centric outlook on the situation that often radically differs from and obscures Kamoro perspectives. In both cases, the Kamoro are presented as a "subsidiary" of other ethnic groups or are excluded from commentary altogether.

PRESENTING THE PAST

“Presenting the past” can mean a number of things. It has the theatrical connotation of presentation, of transforming the past into a dramatic unity. It has the socio-temporal sense of bringing the past into the present. The social and cultural forms of everyday life—gender, age, class, ethnic grouping—are made in the narratives we make of the past. Our present moments are made by making sense of what happened in the past. Finally, “presenting the past” can mean writing about the past as if it were a series of present moments, that is, not endowed with the hindsight clarity of the moment after, but still containing all the possibilities to come (Denning 1998:65-66).

Anthropology and its practitioners have often had an awkward relationship with history (cf Biersack 1991a). In the early days of the profession, the two were inextricably linked (as, for example, in the theoretical origins of anthropology as a history of mankind), though over the years history has ebbed and flowed in and out of fashion in the mainstream of the field. In many cases the past remains relegated to introductory “ethnographic background” chapters, which situate an a-temporal present, undermining the crucial linkages between past and present practice. In recent years, history has again edged toward the centre of anthropological discussions, though again in many cases it seems to evade meaningful integration into ethnographic descriptions. Indeed, Marcus, a figure central to key debates in contemporary ethnography, describes the contemporary trend of “massive historicization” as merely part of recent “movements of cultural critique” in ethnography (Marcus 1998:236). Marcus’ comment seems to depict history as ornamental to ethnography. I agree with Thomas that the foundations of the awkward relationship between history and anthropology are not oversights of the former’s import. Instead, they are due to “complex conceptual and discursive reasons” (1989:1).⁴⁰ Thomas’ most important

⁴⁰ Though I agree with his general conclusions, I do not fully support Thomas’ argument that the lack of historical perspective in anthropology is a direct consequence of the field’s positivistic origins. Citing Radcliffe-Brown as a key figure in the disciplinary chartering, Thomas outlines that the positivistic foundations of anthropology had two fatal “exclusions,” historical causality and pre-professional ethnographic research (Thomas 1989:17-20). Indeed, although Radcliffe-Brown (1958:598) in his assertion that history, most generally “does not really explain anything at all” fits rather neatly into Thomas’ argument, I don’t think that he is representative of other anthropologists who were examining the relationship between history and anthropology at the same time, including Evans-Pritchard (1950) and perhaps even more significant for contemporary

conclusion is the call for the “decentering of ethnographic fieldwork as the source of anthropological knowledge” (ibid:17).⁴¹

Several notable examples of anthropologically informed histories (or historically informed ethnographies) document distant pasts with little or no linkage to contemporary non-archival ethnographic fieldwork (e.g. Dening 1974, 1988, 1992; Douglas 1998; Sahlins 1981, 1985; Thomas 1990). At the same time, they frequently deal with specific historic moments or events.

Some notable exceptions among anthropologists have attempted to transcend the ethnographic present by studying the dialectics of myth, biography and history. In particular, Melanesia has proven to be particularly fertile in studies of this type. Most famous, of course, are the classic ethnographic descriptions by Burridge (1960) and Lawrence (1964) that analyze indigenous mechanisms for coping with change and history. Michael Young’s (1983) *Magicians of Manumanua* is a particularly inspiring work that builds on these earlier classics to describe how myth, biography, and history become blurred in a Melansian context.⁴²

Despite the evidence of a mixing of the fields, I find that the “mainstream” of anthropology remains uncomfortable with the ongoing dialectic between

anthropology, Lévi-Strauss. As Valeri points out, “...Lévi-Strauss has discussed the relationship between anthropology and history, and of structure and event, in the most radical way and has, paradoxically, inspired others...to use some of his ideas and interpretations...to transcend the very oppositions he sets up” (Valeri 1991:90-91). In a more recent concise chapter of *Myth and Meaning*, Lévi-Strauss demonstrated that history has consistently been a key consideration in his work, in particular with regards to the relationship between myth and history (1995[1978]:34-43). Most famously Lévi-Strauss has inspired Friedman, Sahlins, and Valeri, all anthropologists who in turn have influenced a number of historians (including for the Pacific, Dening and Douglas).

⁴¹ A host of other anthropologists and historians have been traversing the boundaries between anthropology and history with increasing frequency. In addition to those mentioned in the text, other notable contributions to the discussion have been made by Appadurai (1981a and 1981b), Borofsky (1987), Comaroff and Comaroff (1987); Friedman (1992), Taussig (1980, 1984), and Wolf (1982). For a good general overview of (the history of) the relationship between History and Anthropology see Fabian (1992) and Faubion (1993).

⁴² Although I see linkages in this tradition of investigation beginning with Burridge (1960) and Lawrence (1964) I think one could argue that the heritage of this sort of investigation perhaps even farther back to Evans-Pritchard with his comment that “if a knowledge of how a particular social system has come to be...helps one to understand its present condition” then it is most certainly of anthropological import (1950:121).

history and anthropology.⁴³ Indeed, during my post-fieldwork seminar, one comment was that I ought to decide whether I want to write a “straight ethnohistory” or a (contemporary) ethnography. The comment seemed to engender the general feeling that the two genres were mutually exclusive. Notwithstanding this critique, this thesis aims to forge a meaningful connection between the two, and at the same time to allow the past to contextualise our understandings of the present.

Indeed what I am proposing is perhaps not so radical, but it challenges antiquated notions of ethnohistory which seem to be most generally based in the non-reflexive study of “the history of peoples normally studied by anthropologists” (Sturtevant 1966:6-7). Schieffelin and Gewertz summarise this general understanding of ethnohistory, but suggest a path toward a more anthropologically informed version of ethnohistory:

For historians [and indeed many anthropologists, TH] “ethnohistory” has traditionally meant the reconstruction of the history of a people who previously had no written history...[We] find this notion of ethnohistory insufficient, if not faulty...ethnohistory...must fundamentally take into account the people’s own sense of how events are constituted, and their ways of culturally constructing the past.” (Schieffelin, E., Gewertz, D. 1985 as cited in Krech 1991:373).

Greg Dening, among others, has emerged as a key proponent of this style of ethnohistory. As I understand his work, draws on Bourdieu’s notion of practice and *habitus* (1977), Sahlins’ (1981) understandings of “structures of conjuncture” and perhaps less directly on deconstructionist and feminist techniques of “reading against the grain” (cf. Douglas 1998:159-191). With Dening I agree that past and present are bound together in the interpretation of history and that one cannot isolate history from the informed interpretive acts that create it (Dening 1996:44). I firmly agree with Dening’s conceptualisation of ethnohistory as:

...the focused conversation...about the ways in which historical consciousness is culturally distinct and socially specific and how, in whatever culture or social circumstance, the past constitutes the present in being known.

⁴³ And I would also note that mainstream historians are often uncomfortable with the dialectic as well. While both historians and anthropologists tend to “universalise the present” (Douglas 1998:8), they have different strategies for doing so.

Ethnohistory...has had other meanings. Ethnohistory has meant “history of primitive or traditional cultures”; it has meant the “anthropology of past primitive or traditional cultures”. But “ethno-” does not mean “primitive” any more than “anthro-” does, and I have objections to being thought to do ethnohistory of the “primitives” and history of the “civilised.” (Denning 1996:44-45).

In this thesis I present the “ethnohistory” of the Mimika area as my interpretation of events drawn from the perspectives of those who have commented on it (including myself). The ethnohistorical project of this thesis explores the contemporary cultural sphere of the Kamoro and situates it with respect to the cultural spheres of others with whom they interact(ed). In this I draw on Fabian’s notion of “shared time” as a condition of ethnography (see Chapter 5 in Fabian 1991).

TIME, PRACTICE, THE PAST AND PERSPECTIVE

According to Bourdieu, practice is temporally structured (1977:8). By extension, conceptions of time are also specific to practice and *habitus*. Although I argue that structure is detectable in cultural practices, I am well aware that my descriptions (and indeed the structures themselves) are only partial. Indeed, I am of the opinion that there are no coherent totalities of practice, but there are nonetheless coherent principles detectable in them. For many of the outsiders, notions of linear progression have structured their interpretations of the southwest coast of New Guinea. To them, the past often represents something that is backward, undeveloped, and primitive. In their descriptions, Mimika and its inhabitants are temporally displaced; they *are* the past (see Fabian 1991 Chapters 9 and 12; Fabian 1983). Most generally, outsiders interpret the Kamoro in terms of unilineal social evolution with the Kamoro, given their lifestyle as semi-nomads, resting solidly at the bottom.

I found the contemporary assessments of the Kamoro by Freeport consultants and by government officials intriguing, but problematic. All implied that the contemporary Kamoro were socially, economically, politically, and culturally disadvantaged as a direct result of Dutch colonial activity. The Catholic

Mission and the Dutch Administration continue to be held responsible for not “developing” the Kamoro, though when I confronted several of these authors, another trend emerged. While all found the Dutch culpable, none knew of concrete activities that supported their perceptions. True or not, for many contemporary authors the Dutch are convenient scapegoats for explaining continued failure of development activities and the destruction of Kamoro “culture”. The company and the Indonesian State are now portrayed as encouraging its rebirth. In any case, the Kamoro are portrayed as passive victims of colonial processes and as appreciative subjects of company and State “development” in the form of appreciation of their history and their culture—in accordance with politically-motivated outsider perceptions of it. I point out that the Kamoro are not entirely passive in the formulation of these perceptions, but for them, it is part of an opportunistic strategy related to local-level political and economic concerns. For the outsiders these representations primarily target company shareholders and to a lesser degree Indonesian citizens. In both cases, history and anthropology are applied in a manner that perverts representations of the past to fit into designated outcomes.

As I became more familiar with the historical material and began to correspond regularly with Jan Pouwer, however, I realised that there was continuity between Kamoro practice that he observed in the 1950s and that which I observed in the 1990s. Granted, much had changed including the arrival of the massive Freeport Mine, but Kamoro responses to the mine and the outsiders, while not necessarily predictable, are easily understood within a range of potential responses which can only be highlighted by an examination of historical trajectories of practice.

Although Pouwer’s primary field bases were in Kokonao and Yaraya in Central Mimika and I worked in East Mimika, I see parallels in our experiences. In the 1950s, Kokonao was the administrative centre of Mimika. The Netherlands New Guinea Petroleum Company (NNGPM) and other companies recruited Kamoro workers from Kokonao. The government dock serving Mimika was at the neighbouring village of Keakwa, and the Catholic Mission had been based in

Kokonao for nearly thirty years by the time of Pouwer's research. At the time, East Mimika was peripheral to the activities of commerce and administration.

My experience in the 1990s parallels Pouwer's in that Timika is now the administrative and economic centre and the important port facilities in Mimika serve it. Kokonao and Keakwa are now peripheral to the activities of East Mimika and Catholic Mission activities in the region seem to be more heavily influenced by the Timika Parish. One interesting aspect of Kokonao's former role, however is that there still seems to exist a bias in terms of education in favour of the Central and West Mimikans who were nearer to the administrative centre which ultimately facilitates their readiness to participate in foreign economies. In the field this equates to differential access to Freeport and government resources, which privileges Kamoro communities from outside of Freeport's Project Area over those communities indigenous to it.

SOCIAL RECIPROCITY AND ETHNO-HISTORICAL ORGANISATION

One could write a fascinating ethno-history of Mimika with reciprocity as a major organising principle (Jan Pouwer 1975:89)

In a 1975 article, which drew on his 1950s fieldwork, Jan Pouwer explicitly explored the boundaries between Kamoro myth and history. This article in many ways has inspired my own work. One of the key things it highlights is the underlying importance of social reciprocity, *aopao*, as a mode of constructing time, events, and ultimately reality. *Aopao* continues to play a central role in Kamoro myth and it informs the discourse of daily activity. Within Melanesian literature, I found a striking resemblance between Kamoro permutations of *aopao* and interpretations of social reciprocity among the Kaluli of the Bosavi rainforest area of Papua New Guinea described by Schieffelin (1976) and more explicitly in his 1980 article "Reciprocity and the Construction of Reality". In this article, Schieffelin demonstrates that the logic of exchange and the accompanying "norm of reciprocity" underlies Kaluli patterns of sociality and ultimately contributes to

the construction of reality. In both the Kamoro and the Kaluli cases, two kinds of reciprocity, one interpreted as an equivalent exchange (for the Kamoro *aopao*) and the other as compensation for wrong-doing (for the Kamoro *naware* or *nawara*) form the basis of a cultural logic grounded in symbolic exchange.⁴⁴ Although I make some use in this thesis of more general applications of exchange with regards to kinship, economy, and conflict, I am more concerned with the broader implications of these categories as constitutive of part of the foundation of Kamoro sociality and its impact on engagement with foreigners.

Against notions of linear time and progress promoted by twentieth century business and administration in Mimika, the cyclic reproduction of time and sociality imposed by *aopao* stands in almost complete opposition. This opposition often pits conventional interpretations of “traditional” practice (e.g. that of the Kamoro) against “modern” practice (e.g. that of the foreigners). Ultimately, the gap between the two forms part of the basis from which contemporary discussions of Kamoro inability to adapt to change (vis-à-vis modern practice) emerges.

A NOTE ON THE PRESENTATION OF “CONTEMPORANEOUS” DATA

All history is by nature a reconstruction of past events. The challenge of presenting the data is to be alert to the ways that contemporary concerns can inflect our evaluations of the past in order to effect a desired (or designated) teleology (cf. Douglas 1998). With the exception of the first chapter I endeavour to only present historical materials contemporaneous with the period I am introducing in that given chapter or material that pre-dates it. By this I mean for

⁴⁴ Mauss’ famous analysis of the meaning of gifts (1900 [1925]) exchange has played a central role anthropological understandings of exchange in indigenous communities, and particularly Melanesian ones. Recently Godelier (1999), drawing largely on the work of Annette Weiner (esp. 1992) has revived Mauss’ legendary study. Lévi-Strauss (1969[1949]), a strong critic of Mauss’s work, famously introduced exchange into his structural analysis of kinship and marriage. Though his structural analyses lend themselves particularly well to describing Kamoro marriage patterns (among other things) this thesis does not focus on social structure. For this I refer the reader to Pouwer (1955). I do however discuss contemporary marriage patterns in Chapter Seven.

example, that I do not apply Pouwer's findings on social structure from the 1950s to the representations of the Kamoro from the 1920s. I leave conjectures of this sort to the reader. Realising the potential weakness that tends to preference European accounts, in particular in the earlier historical chapters, I endeavour to juxtapose Kamoro representations of themselves in the form of *amoko-kwere* narratives, against events and circumstances contemporaneous with the lived experience of the narrators. To this I add that the presentation of this thesis, like the communities and processes that it examines, *does* apply cumulative knowledge of the past over time. For example, Chapters Five through the Conclusion all benefit from the ethnographically rich post-war Dutch period.

OUTLINE OF THESIS

Given the centrality of history to this thesis, I do not provide the standard "ethnographic background" chapter. In lieu of that however, Chapter One serves as a "cosmological background." It sketches the cosmological and spiritual constructs, drawn from a compilation of materials, that inform Kamoro practice. In particular it focuses on the primary Kamoro mechanism for interpretation of events, oral narratives, *amoko-kwere*, related to the cultural heroes, the *amoko-we*. The activities of the *amoko-we* are timeless; narratives describing their exploits constantly reshape the present and the past. *Amoko-kwere* outline Kamoro efficacy in the shaping of the world and its inhabitants, which conditions expectations of engagement with foreigners. At the same time, the social and cosmological landscapes they describe also inform Kamoro notions of sociality and social organisation. The underlying foundation of both is *aopao*, social reciprocity. This chapter is the only one in the thesis in which data and sources are explicitly presented apart from the contemporaneous period of their collection. I do this to allow the reader to independently make inferences over the course of the thesis without the lens of my own contemporary reconstructions.

Chapter Two examines the Kamoro world prior to the twentieth century. It situates the Mimika Coast as a fringe area to Moluccan and European politico-

economic spheres. It forms the baseline of Kamoro practices of engagement with outsiders by documenting engagements with agents from beyond the Mimika Coast prior to the twentieth century. It also examines the direct and indirect impacts of the activities of the Dutch East India Company and the later Dutch colonial administration on the Kamoro which were largely mediated by Moluccan trading empires and their representatives prior to the twentieth century.

Chapter Three addresses the period between the turn of the twentieth century and the arrival of the Dutch colonial administration in Mimika in 1926. It analyses the political, social, and economic changes brought about by the arrival of Chinese merchants, the *Tena-we*. The rapid expansion of their commercial success precipitated the establishment of an administrative post in Mimika in 1926 and a Catholic Mission post in 1927. This chapter examines Kamoro engagements with the *Tena-we* as reflected in community histories and *amoko-kwere*. It also describes how changes in Dutch administrative policy since the 1875-6 expedition of the Dutch Government steamer *Soerabaja* created an administrative vacuum on the Mimika Coast which was filled by the establishment, through the Raja of Namatote, of Naowa, the first Kamoro raja.

Chapter Four addresses the establishment of a Dutch colonial presence in Mimika as a means to tax the expanding trade of the Chinese. For the Kamoro, the foreigners were linked to the *Soreabaja* expedition and classified as *Turabaya-we*, literally Surabaya people. They were incorporated in *amoko-kwere* as having received their power and influence through Kamoro ancestors, which established expectations among the Kamoro of trading relationships. Kamoro disillusionment with the foreigners grew until the onset of World War II. The chapter closes with an overview of the Japanese Occupation of Mimika during World War II.

Chapter Five focuses on interactions between the Kamoro and the Dutch Administration in the process of rapid decolonisation that occurred after World War II but prior to the handover of West New Guinea to the United Nations and ultimately the Indonesian administration in 1962. It demonstrates explicit incorporation of the Catholic Mission and the Dutch Administration in *amoko-*

kwere that ultimately reformulate the two as descendants of Kamoro cultural heroes. It will also review in particular the increased knowledge about Kamoro social organisation and worldview gleaned from Pouwer's ethnographic fieldwork and the major contributions of two Catholic Missionaries, Gerardus Zegwaard and Jules Coenen. The chapter ends with a solemn prediction by a Kamoro that serves as a premonition for the radical social, economic, and administrative changes that would accompany the arrival of the Indonesian administration.

Chapter Six marks a change in geographic and temporal focus of the thesis. While the previous chapters have gradually accounted for Kamoro interactions with foreigners initially in the far west of Mimika, this chapter focuses explicitly on central and east Mimika. Almost synonymous with the arrival of the Indonesian administration in this region is the arrival and construction of the massive PT Freeport Indonesia Mine beginning in 1967. This chapter reviews Kamoro experiences of the period from the arrival of Freeport through the late 1980s, drawing from a combination of sources including my contemporary informants. It looks at the strategic usage of *amoko-kwere* among Kamoro to rationalise residence within another Kamoro group's territory. It briefly looks at the expansion of the Timika Township and subsequent resettlement and redistribution of Kamoro communities within the Freeport Project Area. Ultimately this chapter describes how the contemporary Timika Township was founded on a complex web of communities undermining other communities' land and resource rights.

Chapter Seven looks more closely at aspects of the contemporary relationships between the Kamoro, the Indonesian Government and Freeport. It addresses Kamoro adaptations of Indonesian administrative structures, land rights issues, and the impacts of Kamoro image management by "foreigners." It also addresses differential perceptions of Freeport and the Indonesian State among various Kamoro communities.

Through a discussion of the first annual Kamoro Arts Festival, the concluding chapter draws the past and present together. It examines

interpretations of current events surrounding the controversial presence of the PT Freeport Indonesia Mine and the Indonesian administration. At the same time, it demonstrates that despite “foreign” portrayals of the Kamoro as lazy, disengaged, and escapist, the Kamoro continue to explicitly attempt to engage and impact their relations with foreigners. They do so through indigenous understandings of sociality grounded in social reciprocity (*aopao*). Finally, the concluding chapter demonstrates that *amoko-kwere* remain central to contemporary Kamoro interpretations.

As a final note, I think it is appropriate to warn the reader about what this thesis does not describe. I do not include some of the traditional substance of anthropology theses such as extensive descriptions of social structure, kin terminology or exchange systems. These topics are covered, but only where they apply to either specific historical periods or where they are necessary to understanding my argument which addresses Kamoro engagement with foreigners. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, these were not the foci of my field research and conditions of research in Papua were not conducive to intensive village-based research. Pouwer’s thesis remains the most authoritative source on this subject matter and remains largely relevant. When I do engage with this particular information in this thesis, it reflects a comparison between what I observed and what Pouwer described. The second reason arises out of direct responsibility to my Kamoro informants. Most commentary about their contemporary situation bears little regard to the documented past (both authored by them and outsiders) and thereby subjects them to representation in line with contemporary tropes entangled in government, mining, and activist literature. These tropes often fabricate Kamoro pasts to support present political needs. The best way that I can facilitate a better understanding of their contemporary situation by making available a broad spectrum of information largely relegated to non-English sources and archives.

Chapter One

Engaging the eternal: *Amoko-kwere* as Interpretive Strategy

If we are to play a believable role before an audience...we must produce or at least imply a history of ourselves: an informal account which indicates something of our origins and which justifies or perhaps excuses our present status and actions in relation to that audience. But this presentation of the self in everyday life is unnecessary when, as is the case in the life of a village, the gaps in shared memory are much fewer and slighter (Connerton 1989:17).

As actors, story-tellers must engage their audiences, as Connerton asserts, by developing a sense of familiarity, usually by sharing at least some part of their personal history. The underlying assumption that facilitates the most meaningful connection between a story-teller and an audience is shared notions of historical consciousness. Initial readings of the stories that Weare, a sixty-year-old Kamoro man, relayed to Father Petrus Drabbe in the 1930s, are almost incomprehensible. The reason is two-fold: first, during the 1930s, there was little shared history between the Europeans who recorded the stories and the Kamoro who told them. Refracted in European accounts, however, are traces of shared history between the Kamoro and various Moluccans with whom they interacted either directly or indirectly. Second, and equally important, there existed a radical difference in strategies for interpreting and presenting the experiences of the past and the present. While European notions of historical consciousness tended to be more

linear and teleological, Kamoro understandings seemed embedded in a logic of exchange.

The first part of this chapter outlines aspects of Kamoro historical consciousness which are grounded in *amoko-kwere*, narratives of the timeless era of the cultural heroes. It describes features of Kamoro cosmology intimately linked to the *Amoko* “period” which ultimately influence Kamoro social organisation and perceptions of lived experience.¹ Disjunction between Kamoro and foreign notions of historical consciousness is one of the key elements underlying misrepresentations of the Kamoro as passive, lazy and indolent. The second part of the chapter presents two accounts of widely known *amoko-kwere* to serve as generalised exemplars of the genre and as a starting point for the broader ethno-historical project of this thesis.

IMPLICIT CHRONOLOGICAL SCHEMES AND TEMPORAL PROGRESSION

In the broadest sense all societies have myths of creation and development, which imply temporal succession: first things were thus, then they changed thus (Hobsbawm 1997:30).

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; darkness was upon the face of the deep And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5).

The first book of the Bible could have been the model upon which historian Eric Hobsbawm posited the universality of chronological order with the implication of a teleological-oriented progression of events. It is pervasive in Western thought more generally, not only in Judeo-Christian forms of teleology, but also in, for example, Marxist and evolutionist frameworks (see Eliade 1971; Cullman 1962).

¹ I place “period” in quotations because the *Amoko* does not really represent a “period” in the temporal sense. It is boundless and panchronic. When I refer to it as this boundless, panchronic entity, I spell *Amoko* with a capital; otherwise I use the lower case.

Beginning with a creative starting point, these understandings interpret time as part of a progressive chronological order. Indeed, Stocking elaborates on the influence of the first chapters of Genesis and its broader implications for anthropology. According to him Genesis:

...may be interpreted as defining an anthropological paradigm whose temporal framework was both finite and confined, whose psychological and epistemological assumptions were innatist and a priori, whose principle of social order was patriarchal, whose principle of human diversification was genealogical, whose principle of temporal change was degenerationist, and whose privileged reconstructive data were those of linguistic relationship...(Stocking 1987:12).

As mechanisms for framing, ordering and documenting events, such “myths of creation and development” play a crucial role in social memory as part of a system of reference that links interpretations of contemporary experiences to our understandings of the past (cf. Connerton 1989). This is not to say that all western scientific inquiry is creationist at some level; instead I am arguing what I take to be Stocking’s underlying point that linear chronological order appears to be an almost universal construct in Western presentations of experience. Such understandings of historical consciousness as outlined have been inextricably implicated in outsider depictions of the Kamoro.

Many anthropologists have attempted to tackle this problem or at least account for culturally specific notions of temporality. With the exception of Gell (1992) however, perceptions of time seem to be only superficially dealt with among anthropologists (see Munn 1992). Gell’s interest in time seems to have developed from his earlier work. He explains indigenous notions of multiple ways of reckoning time. Among the Umeda for example, there exists both “symbolic” and “process” time (Gell 1975:335). Marilyn Strathern points out the inadequacy of western constructions of time:

It is too simple to talk of diachrony and synchrony [e.g. western notions of temporality, TH]: we also need a recursive metaphor, one that will indicate how time runs both backward and forward (1992:199-200).

One might extend Strathern's call for broader metaphors to cope with time that not only runs between diachrony and synchrony, but one that encompasses them--panchrony. Clearly societies have unique modes of conceptualising time and process (even if many are shared). Culturally specific interpretations of temporality not only shape understandings of the present but also perceptions of the past.

This chapter outlines aspects of Kamoro historical consciousness. The imposition of foreign teleological and temporal schemes (and languages) as interpretive reference points underlies colonial and post-colonial interpretations and representations of Kamoro practice (cf. Jonathan Hill (1996)). The disjuncture between indigenous strategies of historical consciousness and those of outsiders seems to be at the heart of negative and derogatory commentary about the Kamoro, and over time it has had broader implications than simply defining perceptions, but has overflowed into development ideology and other State and Freeport policy decisions.

During crisis and times of change, as in everyday life, the activities of *amoko-we* form an integral part of shaping Kamoro experiences of temporality. *Amoko-we*, cultural heroes, are regularly evoked, analysed and interpreted through narrative and ritual. This accords well with Kapferer's understanding that ritual and everyday practice form a continuing analysis of indigenous consciousness (1988:21). The basic concept that both informs and triggers the activities of the *amoko-we* is *aopao*, most generally defined as social reciprocity. Activities in the narratives are not necessarily driven by a chronological temporal sequence of events toward a particular outcome. Instead events described in *amoko-kwere*, stories about the *amoko-we*, are functions of continual "countering" activities bound into effecting the balance of social reciprocity and as such are somewhat cyclical in nature.² Although the events of *Amoko-kwere*

² Philosophers seem to broadly contrast two modes of time tied to a community's literacy. Based in the western traditions of Hegel and Jung, Kelly describes that "pre-literate" societies are characterised by what he labels "mythic time consciousness" and accordingly their perceptions of time are "...a-historical, aionological, oriented to the remote past or the time of the beginning. The present derives its meaning from the cyclical re-enactment of archetypal patterns..." (Kelly

are somewhat cyclical in nature, they do not culminate in an idealistic balance; instead, balance depends upon the socio-political intent of the narrator. In *amoko-kwere* that describe interactions and relationships with foreigners for example, reciprocal inequality almost always favours the foreigners, establishing a relationship of negative reciprocity between the Kamoro and foreigners.

Aside from being the “motor” of Kamoro narratives (Pouwer 1975), and more generally Kamoro understandings of the unfolding of everyday events, *aopao* is also embedded in social organisation, certain rituals, and ultimately social engagement. Settlements are typically arranged geographically and socially in binary pairs; one is considered the *aopao* of the other. Certain traditional feasts are counterparts, *aopao*, of one another. Even conversation and the exchange of words or knowledge can be explicitly interpreted as an exchange—*aopao*—of words for words, words for tobacco, etc. (Pouwer 1955:161-164). This chapter outlines the general characteristics of the *amoko-we* and sketches some of the cosmological underpinnings suggested by their activities. At the end of this chapter, I present two composite accounts of well-known *amoko-kwere*. These composite accounts are geared towards introducing the genre and demonstrating the characteristics of the *amoko-we* and the role of the logic of *aopao* in the narratives. I will discuss specific versions of these and other accounts of the *amoko-we* over the course of this thesis when I discuss periods contemporaneous with their collection. Just as the Kamoro refer to the *amoko-kwere* to interpret the world around them, this chapter is designed to serve as a basic understanding of the *amoko-we* and reference to be borne in mind when reading this thesis. Though I believe some of the connections are particularly striking, I only explicitly elaborate on them after these insights have been revealed in documentation.

1993:151). In contrast, he describes historical time-consciousness (of literate societies) as “...linear and chronological, oriented to the future and some end or goal” (ibid). While I think the latter mode of time-consciousness most generally does characterise Western notions of historical consciousness, I think the former, restricts indigenous reflexivity with regards to time-consciousness.

SOURCING THE NARRATIVES

Kamoro narratives are surprisingly well documented, although perhaps not all in accessible locations. Keen observers with experience in Kamoro language, ethnography, and/or spirituality documented the vast majority of *amoko-kwere*. The primary recorders included three Catholic priests, Fathers Drabbe, Zegwaard and Coenen and a Dutch government anthropologist, Jan Pouwer. With the exception of Drabbe, the others all worked in Mimika during the Dutch post-war decolonisation of Netherlands New Guinea. Because Drabbe's work was done during the initial years of colonisation, this section introduces his work while the other sections of this chapter draw from the particular strengths and contributions to understandings of Kamoro cosmology of each of these men.

Our first insight into indigenous perspective drawn from the Kamoro themselves (i.e. not their observed reactions to the foreigners) exists in the form of oral narratives collected in the mid 1930s. This collection forms a point of departure for reconstructing Kamoro perspectives at the time of European contact and immediately before. It also reveals some aspects of Kamoro cosmology and sociality that are highly relevant for understanding indigenous forms of agency.

Between 1935 and 1938, an experienced and gifted missionary linguist Petrus Drabbe worked in Mimika. His two-and-a-half year assignment to the region was particularly fruitful from the standpoint of linguistic documentation. His impressive body of work includes Kamoro-language catechisms, prayer books, a dictionary (1937), a grammar (1953), and a collection of oral narratives (1947, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1950).

As Malay was only beginning to become the main medium of interaction with the Kamoro during the period of Drabbe's work, proficiency in the language was largely restricted to the youth attending mission and administration schools, in particular those nearest the mission stations in Kokonao and Uta.³ Thus, Drabbe documented Kamoro oral tradition in the vernacular. An outstanding

³ Even by the early 1940s, the majority of Kamoro who lived outside of the immediate spheres of the mission and administration still did not speak Malay (Sierat 1999:78).

collection of twenty-three of the narratives that he collected was later published in English with an interlinear translation from the vernacular in the journal *Oceania* between 1947 and 1950. The inclusion of the vernacular accounts enables an analysis of particular concepts and words that are lost in translation into the European languages.

Drabbe's informants were all men ranging in age from fifteen to sixty, with the average age of just under forty.⁴ Although there are no figures for life expectancy in West New Guinea for this time period, it is reasonable to assume that men of forty years of age would have been senior members of their communities.⁵ Thus, all of his informants were born prior to 1926, when the Dutch Administration established a permanent post in Mimika and the 1927 arrival of the Catholic Missions. Most of his informants would have been in their mid to late twenties at the time of permanent contact.

AMOKO-KWERE AND TATA-KWERE

The key commentators on Kamoro oral narratives differentiated two distinct categories, *amoko-kwere* and *tata-kwere*. Although both appear to describe events of the past, the former emphasises the creative activities of the cultural "heroes," the latter of more direct ancestors. They only fit into a chronological "temporal ordering" in that the activities of the *amoko-kwere* seem to precede those of the *tata-kwere*. But at the same time they encompass and inform them. And, within the *amoko-kwere*, the body of stories analogous to Hobsbawm's "myths of

⁴ The median age for the sixteen informants for whom ages are given is 40, while the average age of the same group is approximately thirty-seven years, ten months.

⁵ As a comparison to demonstrate the relative age of Drabbe's informants, the life expectancy in the United States in 1940 was just under sixty-three years (Peters, Kochanek, Murphy 1996:22). Though I have been unable to find information regarding life expectancy in Mimika during this period, Vogel reports that in 1954 in the Sentani area on the north coast of Netherlands New Guinea, close to the capital at Hollandia, sixty percent of people died before reaching ten years of age. According to his figures, only nine percent of the population reached ages above fifty (1965:81). The Indonesian Central Statistics Bureau claims that the average life expectancy in the entire province as late as 1986 was under fifty-eight years (<http://www.bps.go.id/profile/irja.shtml>).

creation and development,” there is no temporal succession that orders the creative activities of *amoko-we*. Although I acknowledge these differences between the stories, I hesitate to draw a sharp distinction between them, as *amoko-we* are often present in both.

While I was a consultant for Freeport, I often “entertained” Kamoro guests in the Freeport administrative office building in Kuala Kencana when the management was behind schedule and planned meetings with the Kamoro were delayed.⁶ Alo Nataiku Wania, the (I) *Kepala Suku Adat*⁷ of Tipuka was a frequent visitor. Initially I felt uneasy about being asked on short notice to look after *Bapak Alo*⁸ because I knew his concerns were serious and he usually worked hard to arrive in Kuala Kencana in accordance with pre-set meeting times. Although I empathised with his frustrations at having to wait and more generally with his personal and village situation, I did come to enjoy any opportunity to listen to and interact with *Bapak Alo*. He was among the most senior and gifted storytellers that I encountered in Mimika.⁹ In exchange for his animated recollections and stories I gave him personal photographs, photocopies of pictures of Kamoro that I had from Dutch publications and whatever “courtesy gifts” that were available through Freeport’s Public Relations department.¹⁰

In December of 1997, I expressed to *Bapak Alo* my confusion over some of the stories that I had read that were collected in the 1930s and the 1950s. Some of

⁶ On some occasions meetings were delayed by Freeport Management being behind schedule, but on other occasions, the Kamoro and other Papuan people would arrive long before or after scheduled meeting times due to uncertain access to transport to Kuala Kencana.

⁷ *Kepala Suku Adat* is the Indonesian administration title for a customary ‘tribal’ chief. The title is largely ceremonial, but those carrying this title are respected as understanding local custom and are integral to ritual activity. Administratively, they are subordinate to the government village chief (*Kepala Desa*).

⁸ Referring to him as *Bapak Alo* is an Indonesian address of respect. *Bapak* literally means father.

⁹ I met Alo Nataiku Wania initially in 1996 in Tipuka Village while conducting cultural documentation on behalf of the Smithsonian. Although he was the “Customary Chief” of the village, he no longer resided there. With his health failing (tuberculosis) and after a marriage to a substantially younger woman from Sulawesi, he moved closer to the Timika Town. Alo Nataiku Wania died from an accidental fall in 1998.

the stories seemed to me to be more “historical” in that they accounted for specific village movements and histories of inter- and intra-village wars. Others appeared more “mythical” in that the activities often transcended the local environment, with characters more frequently capable of doing extraordinary things like drying up rivers and moving mountains. I asked *Bapak Alo* if there were different kinds of Kamoro narratives. He explained:

There are two kinds of story. One about the (I) “*Waktu dulu*” and the other about the (I) “*Waktu nenek moyang*.” “*Waktu dulu*” are the (K) *Amoko-kwere*, they explain the relationship between the (K) *Amoko-we* and the spiritual environment. The *Amoko* people [*amoko-we*] had powers. Stories about our ancestors, (K) *tata-kwere* usually deal with just the (K) *we-nata* [i.e. Kamoro/ “real” people as opposed to the *amoko* people] (8 December 1997).

Although *Bapak Alo*’s response outlined a dichotomy between two distinctly different kinds of stories, *amoko-kwere* and *tata-kwere*, he also left room for the two stories to overlap when he said that *usually* the *tata-kwere* deal with “real” people.¹¹ *Tata* generally means ancestor. Thus, *tata-kwere* would indicate talk or language, or by extension stories, related to the ancestors. Pouver’s description draws a similar differentiation in the classification of stories and offers a useful elaboration of *Bapak Alo*’s dichotomy. He defines *tata-kwere* as myths and accounts about one’s own tribe and not about the culture heroes (1955:307). Thus, *tata-kwere* are more localised while *amoko-kwere*, by implication, deal with more universal accounts of the *amoko-we*, the cultural heroes. With the exception of migration histories, which described the activities of known ancestors of particular villages, the line between *tata-kwere* and *amoko-kwere* was often blurred during my research, with cultural heroes and spirits impacting local village histories that transcended the rote listings of former village locations.

¹⁰ Over time I had given him numerous of these goodies including date books, calendars, a paperweight, a coffee mug and even golf balls. Alo used to joke about these things saying that with my help he would acquire compensation from Freeport bit by bit.

¹¹ Both categories of stories outlined by *Bapak Alo* shared the suffix *-kwere*, which derives from the word *akwere*, which my informants defined most frequently as language (I: *bahasa*), but also

The earliest definitions for *amoko* I have found are in Drabbe's dictionary where there are two entries under this term. The first says:

Àmoko: something from earlier times; *àmoko ir*, to be from before, for example *àmoko aymàkate*, or *àmoko aimikàe*, or *àmoko –wénata aymàkate*, that is the people from before.

Drabbe's second definition differs slightly:

Àmoko: once and for all; *àmoko aaper*, to remain forever, reside (Drabbe 1937:5).

Pouwer's thesis defines *amòkò* (with slightly different diacritics) succinctly as “ ‘in the beginning,’ forever, paradisiacal” (1955:302). Both Pouwer's and Drabbe's definitions are linked by the fact that *amoko* refers to something that is at once in the beginning and eternal. Though this is perhaps contradictory to some sensibilities, I believe that for the Kamoro, both definitions are simultaneously invoked. The term *amoko* describes people or stories that both originate and encompass their notions of historical consciousness.

AMOKO AND COSMOLOGY

A large body of narratives spans nearly a century in Kamoro experience with the earliest accounts attributable to narrators born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From this collection, I am able to draw out strong similarities that help not only to sketch generalities of Kamoro cosmology and the place of *amoko-we* in it, but also ultimately to better understand Kamoro strategies of engagement. Though there are some accounts for the origins of particular aspects of the natural environment, over this large collection there are no accounts of an original genesis, a beginning of the physical world or mankind.

According to *amoko-kwere*, the Kamoro conceive the world to be composed of three distinct worlds: an underworld, an in-between world and an upperworld.

as to speak (I: *mengatakan*), voice (I: *suara*), and as words (I: *kata-kata*). *Akwere* merely connotes stories, voices or words.

Details of the former two are most pronounced in the collection of narratives.¹² The in-between world is the surface of the earth; it resembles exactly the environment of the south-west coast inhabited by the Kamoro. During the time of the *amoko* it is a place where *we-nata* (humans), *mbii-we* (spirit-people) and the *amoko-we* (cultural heroes) interact. There is no notion of who among this trio came first, and all three groups interacted freely.

Within this cosmological landscape, it is important for us to situate the *Amoko-we* and their defining characteristics. By virtue of their miraculously fast physical growth, from birth the *amoko-we* are well differentiated from the *we-nata*. Indeed, Drabbe describes how an *amoko-we* manages to stand up by the evening of his birthday, walk the following morning, and prove his prowess as a hunter before the next evening (Drabbe 1950:228). The *amoko-we* are often of enormous physical stature as well, described as being as tall as the rainforest trees in their environment. Sometimes during my fieldwork, this height was used allegorically to refer to influence or power.

Another trait of *amoko-we* is their extraordinary ability to shape and alter the physical landscape. Although the *amoko-kwere* take place predominantly along the Mimika Coast, as evidenced by the inclusion of specific beaches, swamps, interior forests and the flora and fauna that live therein, the landscape for the *amoko-we* is malleable. From it they shape feast houses, mountains, trees, animals, objects, and people. This of course bears some resemblance to examples of Aboriginal Australian “dreamings,” but other cultures on the south coast of New Guinea demonstrate even closer parallels (Knauft 1993:127-138). Not surprisingly, the Asmat, who are the closest geographic, cultural, and linguistic neighbours to the Kamoro, share with them a nearly identical notion of ancestral/ever present cultural heroes. For the Asmat, these are the cultural heroes of the *je atakam* narratives (Drabbe 1963:117). Further to the east, Marind-anim

¹² This tripartite cosmology is more strongly enunciated among the neighbouring Asmat. According to them, their living area is likened to the interior, bottom side of an enormous coconut, with the Sirec River coursing through it. At the top of the coconut is the entrance to the upperworld, at the bottom the entrance to the underworld. The area in between is the domain inhabited by men (Voorhoeve 1986:89n).

dema also bear strong similarities to the *amoko-we* in that they are at once ancestral and timeless creators of the universe (van Baal 1966; Knauff 1993:136-140). In some ways, the *dema* complex represents what one might liken to an elaborate extension of Kamoro *amoko-kwere*. While *amoko-kwere* demonstrate how the *amoko-we* created *many* aspects of Kamoro experience, van Baal describes a “bewildering multitude” of *dema* accounting most comprehensively for nearly every aspect of Marind-anim life, and their activities are extensively re-enacted by extravagantly costumed performers (1966:180). While there are some *amoko-kwere* that are re-enacted ritually, by no means are Kamoro cultural heroes represented comprehensively. Unlike the elaborate costumes of the Marind-anim, when a spirit relationship is depicted in Kamoro dance, the mask is usually one of only two varieties.

According to the *amoko-kwere*, objects, animals, people, and features of the landscape are potentially interchangeable. Indeed, animals often appear in the form of people, and vice versa, and in this way, everything is or can be imbued with spiritual energy, *ipu*. *Ipu* is the underlying life source that animates all motion and activity, and is often translated using the Indonesian word for soul or spirit, *jiwa*. In the narratives a creature may be referred to initially as a particular type of animal (e.g. *weko*, monitor lizard); in another place it may be addressed by a personal pronoun and treated as if it were human. There is not necessarily a certain separation between man, animal, or tree in the *Amoko*. Often storytellers intentionally create ambiguity in this sense, leaving the listener to question whether the figure is man or animal.

The medium, which allows *amoko-we* to effect these changes and demonstrate their superior abilities, is secret knowledge, (K) *kata*.¹³ *Kata* can be learned or obtained through explicit connections with the underworld where the *mbii-we* live. The *mbii-we* are not spirits of the dead, which are simply *mbii* or spirits, they are “spirit people” who live in the underworld, which is a mirrored,

¹³ Here I make explicit that although there is also an Indonesian word *kata*, meaning “word,” the *kata* in this circumstance in a Kamoro language word. Pronunciation is slightly different with the Kamoro version stressing the second vowel. The same word can be used to describe singular or plural. When I intend plural in the text, I adjust verb conjugation accordingly.

but idealistic, version of the world on the surface of the earth. The underworld has a more luxurious environment and resources. The *mbii-we* are also the possessors of *kata*, much sought-after ritual secrets and goods. The *mbii-we* used to live together on the surface of the earth with the *Amoko-we* and the *we-nata*. They formed the physical and social counterpart, the *aopao*, of *we-nata* settlements: they lived on the opposite side of a common river and they were partners in a sister-exchange marriage system.

These are just a few examples of the strong notions of dualism that underlie the *amoko-kwere*. The Kamoro perceive these bipartite organising principles as embedded in logic grounded in *aopao*, social reciprocity, which informs social and physical organisation. A failed exchange marriage between the *mbii-we* and the *we-nata*, a breach of this binary reciprocal logic, triggered a compensatory attack (*naware*), which ultimately led to the *mbii-we* moving permanently to the underworld. While interactions between *we-nata* and the *mbii-we* are antagonistic, they can also be beneficial in revealing *kata* to *we-nata*.

Ironically, passages between the worlds are most frequently revealed not as a result of good deeds of a *we-nata*, but as an indirect result of wrongdoing (murder and incest are common themes) or perceived wrong-doing, often interpreted in terms of reciprocal inequity. Usually one finds access to the “other worlds” as either a direct result of this illicit behaviour or during self-imposed banishment from the character’s home settlement. Thus, access to *kata*, secret knowledge and abilities, is frequently occasioned by bad behaviour. At the same time, *amoko-kwere* are full of accounts of deception and false accusation, so it is often difficult to determine precisely what act occasioned the revelation of access to the underworld (and the upperworld) and *kata*. Reflections in rivers, and holes beneath trees and in the earth, are all considered to be potential access points linking the underworld with the world of the *we-nata*.

Interestingly, while accounts of the underworld as a mirrored, but idealised, version of the earth are consistent throughout the collection of narratives, the few accounts of the upperworld that I know of are derived from the narratives collected during the most intensive period of research among the Kamoro in the

1950s. I personally have never documented stories describing the “upperworld” as set out in the earlier narratives. Indeed, my Kamoro informants were often a bit unclear about this, describing a (I) *dunia atas* and (I) *dunia bawah*, literally an upper world and a lower world. It was unclear if contemporary Kamoro in this scheme consider themselves to be living in the upperworld or between the two worlds, as implied by the narratives of the 1950s. My understanding is that they conceive of a bipartite, rather than a tripartite cosmos. My informants consistently emphasised the existence of two worlds without mentioning a notion of a “between world” by explaining quite simply (I) “*Ada dunia atas, ada dunia bawah,*” “There’s an upper world and there’s a lower world.” When questioned further, my informants consistently conceived of themselves as living on the upperworld.

Finally, all Kamoro narratives tend to be about travel. Each story details extensive movement along what appear to be opposing “cardinal” directions. Movement downstream (*kamuru*), or toward the coast (*emare*) opposes movement upstream (*erepao*) or toward the interior (*kapao*). Travel to the east or eastward (*karu*) opposes travel to the west or westward (*emaru*). Similar to what Bowden noted in the North Moluccan Taba language (1997:251-253), these English translations and indeed their Indonesian counterparts obscure more complex meanings of Kamoro directional terminology.¹⁴ Although I give some idea of these sorts of ideological associations below, a more detailed linguistic analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis.¹⁵ In some cases, travel in these directions is incorporated as part of a cyclic pattern of mundane activities: to the swamp to collect sago, to the coast to go fishing, to the interior with dogs to hunt pig and cassowary. Other cases suggest similar movements associated with ritual

¹⁴ In addition to the allegorical and literal usages of Kamoro directional terminology, there also seems to be indigenous utilisation of directional terminology that differs from what one might consider standard usage. For instance, wind directions were often described as being from one direction while on an interior river, while just off the coast the same wind (e.g. originating from the same direction) was described using the term for the wind originating from the opposite direction.

¹⁵ For a recent analysis of linguistic expressions of space and travel including “directional” terminology in Papuan and Austronesian languages see the volume edited by Senft (1997).

feasts. In both of these situations, the characters usually return to their home, either upstream or downstream.

Travel beyond the bounds of the Mimika coast also occurs, with main characters going to such places as Etna Bay, the Fak-Fak region, and the islands of Seram and Aru. Each of these locations is literally and metaphorically to the West. In the narratives, the West is often signified as the place from whence foreigners and their goods, also described as *kata*, are derived. The area to the East is often portrayed as the polar opposite: no foreigners, no *kata*. Other narratives of travel beyond the Mimika coast provide insight into Kamoro perceptions of the cosmos and its “boundaries”.

The narratives also demonstrate that travel and marriage between the two worlds also occurs. The spirits of the underworld, according to this collection, are not to be confused with the spirits of dead people. The narratives explain that spirits of the dead always go inland into the mountains. Drabbe notes that the dead are seen in opposition to the living not only for the obvious reason, but also in terms of lifestyle:

The dead always go inland, into the mountains, and busy themselves there with planting gardens, from which they live, in opposition to the living along the coast, who live chiefly on sago (Drabbe 1949:74n).

Interestingly, the lifestyle of the deceased appears remarkably similar to that of the mountain-dwellers, the *kapaoku*.¹⁶ *Kapaoku*, however, are not confused with spirits in the narratives. Most frequently, travel and indeed all activities are prompted by, and in response to, real or perceived deception, wrongdoing or mistaken identity.

¹⁶ Here I point out that the word *kapaoku*, though made famous by Pospisil, is actually a Kamoro word describing the inhabitants of the interior including the Me/Ekagi people to whom Pospisil was referring.

Ipu, Mbi, and Kao: Souls, Spirits, and their “Containers”

This section briefly outlines some aspects of Kamoro cosmology and spirituality that will be important to interpretations throughout the thesis. Most of this information is drawn from the writings and analysis of Father Coenen who spent more time among the Kamoro than any major contributor to Kamoro history and ethnography, and focused explicitly on spirituality. During his decade of work from 1953 to 1963, based largely in the eastern-most villages, he made use of Pouwer’s and Zegwaard’s work and his own fieldwork in the production of a 117-page unpublished manuscript dealing explicitly with the spiritual side of Kamoro culture and its impact on Kamoro worldview. Although Pouwer is wary of some of Coenen’s analyses (Pouwer 1987:14), he is however in agreement with the information that I draw from them for this discussion. This is particularly so with regard to the association of *ipu* with certain parts of the body, and the gendered division of the body into right (female) and left (male) *ipu* (ibid). As a result Coenen’s *Enkele facetten van de geestelijke cultuur van de Mimika [Some Aspects of the Spiritual Culture of the Mimika]*, forms the strongest point of reference for this section, though I emphasise that Coenen’s analysis was in large part predicated upon the work of Zegwaard and Pouwer.

Earlier in this chapter I introduced the concept of *ipu*, describing it as a life force or a soul. I also described the antagonistic yet complementary interactions between the *mbii-we*, the spirit people, and the *we-nata*. The *mbii-we* are not to be confused with the spirits of the dead, the *mbii*, who live in the interior. But the concepts of *mbii*, *mbii-we*, and *ipu* are integrally connected, and also important in understanding Kamoro notions of life. The body is conceived of as a *kao*, a wrapper, shell, or container. All life consists of an *ipu* contained inside of a *kao*. Most simply, *mbii* is the spirit of the deceased. More correctly, it is *ipu* that is released from a motionless body (*kao*) after death. But the *ipu*, like theories on energy explain, is not destroyed at death when the corporeal *kao* is discarded and the *ipu* is transformed into another form of spiritual energy.

Through a ritual process, the *mbii* is further transformed as it is converted to a *mbii-we*, a spirit person.¹⁷ Within the human body, all movement (including that of internal organs and joints) is animated by individual *ipu* (Pouwer 1987:14). Locales of *ipu* are most tangibly represented in Kamoro carvings by a lozenge-shaped design that adorns all places where motion (e.g. life or *ipu*) occurs: knees, shoulders, elbows, and so forth (Pouwer 1955:11).¹⁸ *Mbii* can be conceived of then as *ipu* outside of its wrapping. One way of harnessing *mbii* for ritual purposes is through a spirit mask, a *mbii-kao*. Often Kamoro narratives, dances and rituals highlight connections with the spirit world through the medium of a *mbii-kao*. Almost every masked performance that I observed involves the *mbii* being temporarily harnessed in a *kao*. When its function is finished, it is cast off by the dancer, and again released. All Kamoro rituals involve veneration of recently deceased and celebration of re-birth. The deceased are frequently depicted in the form of a *mbitoro*, a spirit pole. Again, the *mbitoro* functions as a temporary container, a *kao*. The *mbii* of the recently deceased is summoned into the *mbitoro*, which is discarded after its ritual use.¹⁹

Similar understandings of detachment and transformation, as Weiner explains, are more broadly part of Melanesian notions of personhood (Weiner 1995:4). Juillerat's description of the concepts of *hoofuk* and *roofuk* serve as a good general example of this kind of Melanesian personhood. Accordingly, *hoofuk* represents most generally an inner substance while *roofuk* is considered to

¹⁷ Here I rely solely on Coenen's insight (1963:22-23). My informants consistently described the spirit or soul of the living as *ipu* and that of the dead as *mbii*, but I was unable to elicit understandings of the relationship between *mbii* and *mbii-we* from them.

¹⁸ According to Coenen, the generic name of these points of *ipu* is *irane* or *irai* (1963:29). My informants also often made explicit connections between this motif, a vagina, and the navel. The navel motif is often referred to interchangeably as *mopere* (literally navel) and *mapare*, which means innermost or deepest. Interestingly, this motif is central not only to anthropomorphic carvings, but also abstract designs on *yamate* (ceremonial shields), *pekaro* (sago bowls), *po* (oars), and other carvings. Watching men fabricating these objects, just as Pouwer noted during his fieldwork, I observed that ornamental carving often begins with the lozenge-shaped motif and works out from it.

¹⁹ Although some older informants explained that the *mbitoro* in the past had been chopped up and burned or taken to the sago areas to rot, in both cases with the intent of releasing the spirit, most frequently I saw Kamoro either leaving the *mbitoro* in position in front of a *karapao* (feast) building until it rotted or selling it.

be a discardable outer casing, such as a skin or a bark (Juillerat 1992:26-27). I see a remarkable similarity between *hoofuk* and *roofuk* and several conceptions among the Kamoro including, but not limited to, the *ipu-kao* and *mbii-kao* relationships that I have described above. Examples of detachment and transformation, are pervasive in Kamoro conceptions of ritual and narratives which contain “essential” parts, the *mopere*, and parts that can be discarded, *epere*, which I take up later in this chapter. Weiner further posits that this kind of detachment, which transforms but does not diminish that which has been detached, captures “the essence of Melanesian sociality” as formulated by Marilyn Strathern (1988) in her landmark *The Gender of the Gift* (Weiner 1995:4).

Coenen’s analysis of gender among the Kamoro lends itself particularly well to other aspects of Marilyn Strathern’s (1988) elaborations on gender in Melanesia, in particular aspects that address internal gender composition. According to Coenen, the Kamoro conceive of the body as divided into right and left halves: the right side is symbolically linked to the mother and her ancestors, while the left half is associated with the father (and the living). For older storytellers, these understandings play an explicit role in their *amoko-kwere*. I remember pushing *Bapak Alo* as to why he insisted that a certain *amoko-we* used his right hand. I asked if he could have been left-handed, to which he responded “Impossible, he was using the power of his mother.” In other *amoko-kwere* explicit requests are made not to be killed on one side or the other.

Thus, an individual’s soul is comprised of a maternal *ipu* on the right side and its *aopao*, a paternal *ipu*, on the left. This gendered division even applies to the body’s internal organs (Coenen 1963:24-25). As Strathern points out, such divisions and even internal detachments are the foundation of Melanesia-wide understandings of gender. She remarks that:

Gender refers to the internal relations between parts of persons, as well as to their externalization as relations between persons (1988:185).

For the Kamoro, the concepts of right, *mbii*, and woman are conceived of as the symbolic counterparts (*aopao*) of the concepts left, *ipu*, and man (Coenen 1963:25). Right is considered to be superior to left, so in *this* respect, with regards to spiritual force, women are superior to men (Pouwer 1987:14), notwithstanding the fact that in other respects, particularly in the context of *Kaware* rituals, men perform the superior role. Both Pouwer and Coenen provide detailed lists of these binary schemes integral to Kamoro cosmology. Pouwer outlines that men are ideologically associated with the coast, fish (and animals), *Kaware* ritual, and the underworld, in opposition to women, who are associated with the interior, sago (and trees), *Emakame* or *Kiawa* ritual, and the upperworld (Pouwer 1973:93). Coenen also lists the concepts “living,” “progressive,” “feast,” “sun,” and men, and their *aopao* which are the concepts of “dead,” “conservative,” “work,” “moon,” and women (1963:81).

***Kata* and *Otepe*: Secret Knowledge and Its Owners and Practitioners**

Earlier in this chapter I described the link between superior abilities and secret knowledge or (K) *kata*. *Kata* are not relegated to the *Amoko-we* but can be “owned” and utilised by *we-nata*, the real people. Interestingly *kata*, whether owned by *we-nata* or *amoko-we*, often link the owner/practitioner not only with the supernatural but often explicitly with the *foreign*. Throughout Melanesia indigenous ontologies shape understandings of the foreign and articulations with the foreign seem to form an interesting nexus for articulations with the supernatural as well. This articulation with the supernatural/foreign is a strong theme throughout Melanesian belief systems and deserves at least some review here. Following Lawrence and Meggitt (1965), Melanesian cosmologies generally consist of two parts: a natural environment and an other-worldly or supernatural one. The former consists predominantly of humans and localized economic resources—trees, fish, and other natural resources. The latter is the realm of spirit beings and other unseen forces. For the Kamoro, as for many other Melanesian societies, the line between the two is often blurred and most

frequently the foreign is articulated in Melanesian cosmologies as being more related to the this second category than the first. The most central genre of literature that examines Melanesian interpretations of the supernatural or unseen—and the foreign—is that on cargo cults. The most significant sources in this category are Worsley (1957), Burridge (1960) and Lawrence (1964). With the exception of Lattas (1998) few (if any) have taken up the subject matter in as comprehensive of a manner as these original works (though there exists a huge body of work on this subject matter and in various edited volumes). In any case, the majority of material regarding Melanesian interpretations of the foreign appears to consist of responses or reactions to these key sources. I understand cargo cult behavior following the most salient part of Lattas' definition. According to him, "Cargo cults are attempts to develop new epochal principles, new ontological schemes for organizing human sociability; this is done by developing new practices for disclosing the world, for working secrecy, for understanding those absences that render the world present in a particular way" (1998:xxvii). Although I hesitate to link the usage of *kata* with cargo cult behaviour without further substantiation which could only be gleaned from further field research, the thesis will demonstrate that *amoko-kwere* and *kata* most definitely contribute to Kamoro organization of human sociability and for understanding the unseen in ways that render the world present and understandable, bearing on social, political, and economic organization and power.

Coenen reports that *kata* owned by the Kamoro are often called *otepe*. According to Coenen, the two words are synonyms (1963:30). Those who own *otepe* or *kata* are called *amako*, literally owners.²⁰ The word *otepe* derives from the words *ote* (tree) and *epe* (branch).

Otepe can be divided into two primary categories, collective and individual, and each can be further subdivided. Collective *otepe* are most generally

²⁰ Note the similarity between the words *amoko* and *amako*. During my field research, I had difficulty distinguishing the two. Lengthy discussions with Jan Pouver clarified the difference and the fact that they are closely associated.

associated with ritual matters. Within settlements, entire social groups, *taparu* (a land based social group discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Seven), or (I) *kampongs*, combined sets of allied *taparu*, can be the *amako* of particular rituals. If a *taparu* or a *kampong* is *amako*, they can hold the ritual independently. When a *taparu* or *kampong* or indeed entire settlement lacks ownership of parts of the ritual, they must unite with other *taparu* or *kampong* that are *amako* of either part or all of that ritual. In this respect, the groups are related to one another as *amako-aopao*, literally reciprocal owners. The group that leads the festival (i.e. the *amako* of the most pertinent *otepe*) is considered the *amako-mapare*, the essential owner, while the other group is considered the *amako-epere*, the assistant or non-essential owners, meaning that it owns parts of the ritual that are complementary to the essential part, but, unlike the *amako-mapare*, the *amako-epere* cannot hold the ritual independently (Coenen 1963:30-31). Coenen offers the following example from Atuka: The Margimare *kampong* of Atuka (which consists of three *taparu*) as an interior-associated group, can not hold the coastal-associated Kaware ritual by itself. On the other hand, the other two *kampong* of Atuka are *amako-mapare*, they are capable of holding the feast independently. In order to celebrate a combined feast, the Margimare *kampong* who are not *amako* of any of the *otepe* associated with Kaware, divides itself into two parts. One half assists the Mukuruwe *kampong* (comprised of two *taparu*), the other assists the Amaotiri *kampong* (comprised of two *taparu*). In this way, all three of the Atuka *kampongs* can celebrate Kaware, despite the fact that one entire *kampong* has no direct *amako* relationship to it (ibid).

Coenen also discusses another kind of collectively owned *otepe* and how it is related to certain powers and strengths over natural and supernatural events. Often individual *kampongs* and *taparu* are so closely associated with their *otepe* that they are even addressed by their *otepe* names. Groups call themselves *O-we* (pig people), *Miwi-we* (spirit people-people), *Ku-we* (canoe-people), *Ereka-we* (fish people) and so forth in accordance with their particular strength (Coenen 1963:32). The influence of various *otepe-amako* extends beyond the specific *otepe* to include associated plants and animals as well. For instance, the *O-we*

hold influence over a type of rattan, and over the black king cockatoo, among other things. The *Ku-we* hold ownership/influence over all trees suitable for making a canoe as well as a kind of swallow. The *Ereka-we* hold ownership/influence over a certain kind of trap for prawns and thrush. These relationships between humans and animals and aspects of nature do not entail that the Kamoro conceive of themselves as being derived from particular animals or things nor are there necessarily taboos or food prohibitions associated with them (see Zegwaard 1953).

The other kinds of *otepe* outlined by Coenen are ones that are individually held. One classification of these *otepe* is linked to hunting, food-gathering, control over environmental forces (e.g. in control over tides, fire, rain and other things during ritual events), and matters dealing with fertility, childbirth and bodily growth. Some of these *otepe* are associated with ritual activities while others are influential in everyday life (Coenen 1963:33-34).

Another variety of individual *otepe* is almost solely dedicated to medicinal purposes. These kinds of *otepe* can also be used as a form of sorcery to inflict illness on others. Among the long list of this sort of *otepe* documented by Coenen are treatments for headaches, deafness, swollen feet, paralysis, ulcers, coughs, and stiff joints (1963:34-35).

Although either men or women can own *otepe* the majority are owned by men. There are a few examples of *otepe* associated exclusively with women that are related to the Kiawa festival. As a general rule, *otepe* is inherited along gender lines: males receive *otepe* from their fathers, females from their mothers. Feast-functionary *otepe* are dealt with slightly differently as only one heir can perform as *amako* during ritual situations. As a result, only one heir is selected over other potential heirs. In the event of the death of a male *otepe-amako* with no adult male heir, a female descendent may “stand in” to continue the inheritance of the function until a satisfactory male candidate is found. Coenen remarks that disputes frequently erupted over the suitability of adopted children to inherit the *otepe* of their adoptive father. With regards to *otepe* owned by

women, brothers may stand in to pass on inheritance to female descendants should the need arise (Coenen 1963:35-41).

Interestingly, Coenen writes that given the Kamoro preference for matrilocality, only maternal inheritance of *otepe* is linked to place, while *otepe* inherited along paternal lines is not. If a man needs to perform his *otepe* during feasts, he simply returns to his home village. This exemplifies the strong matri-focus in Kamoro residence patterns and social organisation. Ideally a man enters his wife's settlement and social group after marriage, engaging in a close exchange relationship with his mother's father known as *kaokapaiti*. As Pouwer notes, a man's position in Kamoro society is explicitly described in terms of his relationship to female relatives. A man without a *kaokapaiti* (either a daughter's husband or a sister's husband) "is a social nobody, lacking security when growing old" (Pouwer 1987:20). Accordingly, maternally descended groupings uniquely tied to a specific place (and *otepe*) tend to have their own names, often that of a maternal grandmother, while paternal groups do not (Coenen 1963:41). These maternal descent groups called *peraeke* form the underlying structure of the *taparu*, a land-focused social group. These concepts will be taken up in more detail in the Chapter Five, which deals explicitly with the historical period of Pouwer's and Coenen's research, and in Chapter Seven which looks at the interface between contemporary Kamoro social organisation (of the late 1990s) and the Indonesian system of village administration.

THE EXAMPLES

Although some *amoko-kwere* are recognised as being the *amako* of a certain narrator, *taparu*, kampong, village or region, the majority of the *amoko-kwere* are universally known throughout Mimika. Out of all of the *amoko-kwere* however, the accounts of two narratives, Mirokoteyao and the Utakae War, are particularly well documented in the literature. These were also the most commonly told *amoko-kwere* during my fieldwork and they are exemplary of *amoko-kwere*. The Mirokoteyao story is often told in the guise of a "creation" myth while the Utakae

War is an account of a war that triggered a massive ancestral migration to the Mimika area from the East. These accounts will serve as a Kamoro version of an historical background before the 19th century.

Unlike many creation stories, there is no pre-supposition of a void or an original empty landscape. On the contrary, the land upon which contemporary Kamoro would later live was identical to their current environment. Drabbe, Pouwer, Zegwaard, and more recently Rahangiar and I myself all asked the same question of our Kamoro informants: “Where did you come from?” We all received the same story in response. In all of the versions, the essential elements are the same, though details are specific to narrator, village of origin, and the context of the telling. The narrative follows a structure common throughout Melanesia often classified as the “monster-killing” or the “ogre-killing” motif (see Young 1991; Chakravarti 1974).²¹ I present here a composite version incorporating the key elements from numerous Kamoro storytellers. Specific accounts will be presented elsewhere in the thesis when I am presenting the period contemporaneous with its telling.

Mirokoteyao

The story of Mirokoteyao is considered to be the essential part, the *mapare*, of the *Emakame* feast.²² Although parts of *Emakame* were prohibited during the Dutch administration, other aspects of the ritual including the telling of the story and

²¹ I know of at least eleven different accounts of the Mirokoteyao *amoko-kwere*: two from Drabbe (collected in the 1930s), three each from Zegwaard (1952) and Pouwer (1954), one each from a government report (Haryanto 1983) and Rahangiar (1994) and two that I collected (1996-1998). Kooijman offers an English-language version of the story, compiled from Zegwaard and Pouwer’s versions (1984:37-39). Pouwer presents a composite of his and Zegwaard’s versions in the context of a chapter in a book on gender (in Dutch 1984:127-67 and in a conference paper in English 1987:25-30). Also, two of Zegwaard’s versions of the myth are soon to be published in English (Pouwer forthcoming). Michael Young (1991:386-389) provides a survey and tabular summary of the so-called “monster-killing myth” throughout insular Melanesia and Chakravarti (1974) charts the myth across much of the southern half of Papua New Guinea.

²² *Emakame* literally means bone-house.

creative reenactments of it continue to take place.²³ As an indication of some degree of the importance and centrality of Mirokoteyao, the main character, Pouwer claims that his informants labelled him the *kata-amako* of *kata-amako*, literally the owner of the secret or the *otepe* to owning secrets.

The story begins when a child (or children) finds an egg in the forest and returns to the village with it. When the egg hatches, the villagers are surprised when a full-grown monster emerges from it (remember that rapid growth is a sign of an *amoko*).²⁴ Making terrifying sounds, the monster attacks and eats all of the villagers before retreating downstream to the coast. Mirokoata, a pregnant woman, managed to secretly evade the attack by hiding on the opposite side of the river from the settlement.²⁵ Before long, she bears a son, Mirokoteyao who, like the monster, grows up quickly, again a sign of an *amoko-we*.²⁶ Within days he becomes an accomplished hunter. Each day, as directed by his mother, he returns to the interior with his hunting bounty. His mother teaches him which animals are edible and which are not. One day, out of curiosity, he defies his mother's explicit instructions not to go toward the coast. There he is able to collect a variety of marine bounties, which he initially hides from his mother, but later reveals to her. His mother is forced to reveal to him what had happened to all of the other villagers. He resolved to take revenge on the behalf of his

²³ Coenen reported that the Mission and the Administration outlawed *Emakame* for hygienic reasons outlawed. The feast used to involve the placement of the recently deceased and/or their bones exposed inside of the feast-house and the interment and dis-interment of the bones within one's house outside of feast times. (Coenen 1963:11).

²⁴ Early versions explicitly say that the finder thought it was a *mambruk* or crown dove egg. In various versions the monster is a monitor lizard, a crocodile, a snake and most recently some of my informants labeled it a Komodo Dragon.

²⁵ The name Mirokoata is derived from the word *miroko*, literally a kind of terrestrial snake. In some of the western variants, the pregnant woman's name was given as Miregwata. My informants in East Mimika consistently called her Miroko. Although all of the versions state that the monster fled "downstream" some hold that he lived on the coast while others that he fled to an island just off of the coast. Some of my informants said that the island was variously off the coast of the Minar River while others mentioned Puriri Island as the possible location. In some of the versions the island was said to be on the south-east shore of Etna Bay in extreme West Mimika.

²⁶ In some western variants the child was called Aowemaro or Awamora. My informants called the son of Miroko Mirokoteyao, literally son of Miroko. In other eastern variants collected by Pouwer and Zegwaard, the woman was known as Payu, Payauta or Mokatafierewao.

ancestors. My informants explicitly described this revenge as *naware*, a manifestation of *aopao*, reciprocity, related to retaliation, revenge, or sanction for wrongdoing.

Arriving at the coast just before nightfall, the boy sleeps. During his sleep, he dreams about how he should kill the monster. Acting on his dream, he builds four structures, by drawing them in the sand, and he hangs weapons on the inside of them. My informants usually described the first two houses as being filled with wooden weapons, the third with stone, and the fourth as filled with metal or iron weapons.²⁷ Contemporary versions (Rahangiar's and my own) state that the boy lights a fire and begins to play the drum and act as if a feast was taking place. Lured by the smoke of the fire and the sound of the drum, and surprised that he has not killed all of the people, the monster is lured to the culture hero, and he attacks the houses. In all accounts, the monster succeeds in demolishing the first three structures before being impaled or attacked and killed in the fourth. After the hero attacks and kills the monster, he cuts it up. In the contemporary versions, he throws the meat and fat in each of the four directions of the compass. The meat then becomes the ancestral population of the world. Some versions have the meat forming the ancestors of more localised populations (e.g. the Asmat, the Arguni people, etc.). In a version collected by Pouwer, the fat becomes the ancestors of white people, the dark meat that of the coastal Papuans from the far east and far west and the skin of the beast formed the ancestors of the highland people. During the telling of this version, an albino was also present, prompting the story teller to state that attached to each piece which was thrown was a small piece of fat which became the albinos (Pouwer 1954:7). Thus, the ancestral population of the world is formed from the remains of Kamoro people devoured by a monster during the *Amoko*.

²⁷ These structures were in fact the various feast-houses of the Kamoro. Rahangiar recorded that his informants labeled the structures as the *Kiawa-Kame*, the *Tauri-Kame*, the *Kaware-Kame*, and the *Ema-kame* (each of these is a feast-house). Rahangiar's version explicitly states that only the *Ema-kame* had iron weapons while the others had wood. Though some of the versions collected in previous times do not explicitly name the houses, many do. The list of structures built includes the *Mirimu-kame* (nose (piercing)-house), *Tauri-kame*, *Oo-kame*, *Pota-kame*, *Yama-kame*, and *Ema-*

While contemporary variants of the story end here, many of the earlier versions include varieties of incest between Mirokoteyao and his mother. In some earlier versions, Mirokoteyao becomes his mother's husband (or his mother becomes his wife). As Pouwer points out, all seem to have tobacco leaves in common. In one of the versions collected by Zegwaard, after slaying the monster, Mirokoteyao asks his mother for some tobacco (Zegwaard 1952:13). She responds that the monster has eaten all of it. Although she knows how to obtain more tobacco, she doesn't tell Mirokoteyao. Instead, she praises his prowess in killing the monster and solicits sex from him.

This repulses Mirokoteyao, it is his own mother and incest is strictly forbidden. His mother doesn't relent, and eventually convinces him to have sex with her, but he does so reluctantly, averting his face. Soon after the act, the mother gives birth to leaves (used to roll cigars), fibre (used to bind cigars), tobacco seeds, and ultimately the leaves themselves.

The Utakae War

Before the Utakae War, the Mimika Coast was only thinly populated. Based on village histories, there appear to have been small population concentrations in Central and East Mimika, near the Ipiri River, along the Kamora River, and on the upper Wania River.²⁸ Beyond the Ipiri River to the west, the population was sparse. By far the largest population concentration, the Utakae "tribes", lived in the easternmost part of present day Mimika, near the mouth of the Mukamuga River. This river marks a major dialect boundary with the Western Sempan people and it is among the richest resource areas of Mimika. This is largely

kame. Rahangiar's version collected from an informant from Timika Pantai is a curious mix in that it lists *Kiawa* and *Ema-kame* (eastern and western variants of the same feast).

²⁸ Evidence of these population centres is drawn largely from Coenen's (1963) analysis of narratives collected by Zegwaard (1963:1-3). Only one *amoko-kwere*, from the Kamora River area explicitly mentions relations with the interior highlanders (in the form of marital exchanges) (Zegwaard 1952:27). Three other narratives in Zegwaard's collection indicate exchange marriage relationships with spirits who may in fact have been interior highlanders (see Zegwaard 1952:27,

attributable to the physical geography of the Mimika Coast, which broadens in a south-easterly direction from Etna Bay in the West to the broadest plain near the Otokwa River. Most of my informants named the location as Nawapinaro.²⁹

According to Coenen, the Western Sempan people of Otakwa, Omauga and Inauga, who presently reside on the next major river system to the east, claim that they have always resided in the border area (1963:2).

The story begins when a pregnant woman, Aoweya, after suffering repeated abuse at the hands of her husband, sets out for the East. Eventually she reaches the upper course of the Minar and Akimuga Rivers just in time to give birth to her child.³⁰ My informants called this place called Kurua or Uriwa.³¹ This area is situated on the boundary between the Eastern Sempan (Nafaripi) and north-western Asmat areas. At the time of her arrival, the ancestors of the contemporary Nawaripi-Koperapoka and Kaogapu populations inhabited it.

Upon arrival at this settlement, she encounters a pregnant spirit-woman who introduces herself as the real woman's younger sister. Both women give birth to boys. Before returning to the underworld, the spirit woman gives her spirit son, Mbiiminareyao,³² to Aoweya, asking if she could look after the boy along with her own son Aoweyao. Soon after the births Aoweya arrives in the village along the upper reaches of the Minar River with both children. Before long, it becomes

90, 91). In all of these cases, notions of reciprocal inequity terminated relationships between the two groups.

²⁹ Pouwer also notes the name of the location as Naowapinare (1955:94).

³⁰ The Minar is also referred to as the *Rawar Besar*, a direct translation from the Dutch *Groete Moeras*, which literally means "Great Marsh."

³¹ Although many Asmat and Kamoro myths and rituals appear to have originated in the Nafaripi area, the area remains largely undocumented. Aside from Father Coenen's sporadic travel accounts from 1953-1963 and a few more recent World Wide Fund For Nature survey assessments (Manembu 1991; Smith 1992) I know of no other documentation of the area.

³² Pouwer notes that the name Mbiiminareyao literally means son of the woman from beneath the water (Pouwer in press). Aoweyao literally means son of Aoweya.

clear that there is something different about the two boys.³³ They reach maturity rapidly and are soon ready to celebrate the feast associated with male puberty.³⁴

While the villagers are hard at work preparing food for the big feast they encounter a sago shortage. Sago is the most important food item, not only of the feast, but also of Kamoro subsistence. Hearing of this, Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao depart secretly for the west, to a settlement where the boys' uncle (explicitly described by my informants as the two characters' mother's brother) was living among the Utakae people. Both boys had regularly frequented this area, often travelling among the smaller hamlets, mischievously swiping bits of garden produce as they went. On their trip this time, they took special notice of the rich sago areas and gardens in the eastern area (the area that currently is dramatically impacted by the deposition of tailings from the Freeport Mine).

By the time Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao had reached the settlement where their uncle was staying, he was nowhere to be found. They eventually ascertained that his hosts had killed him as revenge (*naware*) for the petty thefts of the boys. Hearing this Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao secretly returned to their own settlement, making no mention of the death of their uncle.

When the *taori* began, the boys' uncle failed to appear to conduct his ritual duties in the feast; the act of performing these duties was described to me explicitly as *aopoma*, literally the ritual performance of a reciprocal duty.³⁵ Not knowing what had actually transpired in the East, Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao's

³³ Pouwer notes that in versions collected during the 1950s, the arrival of the women and their newborns caused panic in the villages, setting off disputes in which some people are killed and wounded (Pouwer in press).

³⁴ In most of the early versions *Mirimu-kame*, the nose-piercing feast, is explicitly mentioned while my informants often claimed it was *taori-kame*. *Mirimu-kame* was outlawed during the Dutch administration for sanitary reasons. *Taori-kame* appears to have been part of a series of rituals involved in *Mirimu-kame*.

³⁵ Interestingly, earlier versions of the story hinge explicitly on failure to perform ritual duties during the initiation feast, though in a slightly different manner. In these versions, those who avoid ritual duty do so consciously because Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao are not ordinary boys, ultimately leaving the duties to be done by an "elder brother," which was considered to be a serious insult. The shame of the insult forces the two brothers to flee to the west (Pouwer in press). Part of the reason for the discrepancy may stem from the fact that several of the versions of the story that I gathered were from the perspective of the attacking party, the Nawaripi-Koperapoka people, while Pouwer's informants were predominantly from central Mimika.

community sought to exact revenge (*naware*) on the absent uncle, in this case for the harm and shame that he caused the boys through his failure to conduct his ritual duty. At this point, the boys revealed that their uncle had been killed by his hosts at the western settlement (although they offered no explanation as to why). At the same time, they described the firm land of the area, as opposed to the swampy area of their current settlement, and reported that the sago groves were vast.

And so it was resolved that this group of people, ancestors of the modern-day Nawaripi-Koperapoka community, attacked the Utakae, ostensibly and erroneously seeking revenge (*naware*) on those responsible for the death of their kinsman. At the same time, this act of maintaining *aopao* would also be used to migrate to the more plentiful territory.³⁶ The “secret weapons” of the invading party area masks obtained by Mbiiminareyao from his mother’s brother in the underworld.³⁷ Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao wait until the invading party is on the brink of defeat before they enter into the battle. From the underworld, Mbiiminareyao attacks the opposing war leader while Aoweyao attacks from above. The boys succeed in killing the war leader, driving the Utakae to flee in panic and fear, sparking a migration that would re-shuffle the population of much of the Mimika coast and situate the ancestors of the present day Nawaripi-Koperapoka populations within their contemporary area.³⁸

These two *amoko-kwere* demonstrate the nature of activities in the *Amoko* and the centrality of *aopao* in shaping the sequencing of the stories. While there are many levels upon which one could analyse these narratives, for sake of this

³⁶ Pouwer reports that in some versions that he recorded, Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao actually incited the ancestors of the Nawaripi-Koperapoka people to attack and invade the eastern area (Pouwer forthcoming).

³⁷ Pouwer notes that the masks were actually those associated with Kaware, the feast associated with the coast and men (Pouwer interviewed by author, 12 February 1999).

³⁸ Interestingly, in versions of the story analysed by Pouwer, the host communities do not kill the boys’ mother’s brother (or there is another mother’s brother from farther west). During the turmoil of the final stages of the Utakae War, he kills Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao. According to Pouwer he is demonstrating his authority over his sister’s children (because he gave her away in marriage). The boys are unshaken by their deaths, however; they simply move to the underworld (Pouwer forthcoming).

discussion I focus only on the centrality of *aopao* as the driving force of the *amoko-kwere* (cf. Pouwer 1973). In the first story, *aopao* is manifest not only by the retaliatory attack by the culture hero on the monster, but it is also embedded into every step of the story and it drives the action in it. The hero Mirokoateyao's continual travels upstream and downstream as he learned to hunt serve to re-document the cyclic alternation between the reciprocal opposites: upstream and downstream. Mirokoateyao's creation of the feast houses on the coast establishes gender-related *aopao*: the coast is associated with men and men's secrets while the interior is the realm of women (e.g. his mother). These understandings of *aopao* and cosmology form aspects of the *mopere* of the narrative, the essential parts (Pouwer 1955: 159-160). Throughout the thesis we will find other notable examples of this narrative, but with different *epere*, added-on parts or interpretations or "dressing," that may alter and inform understandings of contemporary circumstances. In some cases, the additions then become part of the *mopere* of the narrative which are then passed on. Other inclusions may disappear. At certain moments in the field, it was clear that some stories with new inclusions were circulating; two of the most prominent ones that seemed to be gaining credence during my fieldwork accounted for the Kamoro origins of the highland Freeport Mine. Ironically, neither of these stories emerged from the two communities most directly (i.e. physically) impacted by the mine's operations.

According to the story of the Utakae War, one reciprocal violation (the nephews' theft of garden produce) ignites the fuse of *aopao*. Repeated attempts at maintaining *aopao* through acts of trickery and deceit (e.g., the nephews withholding the truth about why their uncle was killed) increased misunderstandings, fuelling a retaliatory attack which gave rise to further violations of *aopao*. The story and the wars take place within what is now the Freeport Project Area.³⁹ Thus, Nawapinaro, the main locus of the Utakae War served as an ancestral residence for many of the inhabitants of the Mimika Coast.

³⁹ All versions consistently place the major activities of the Utakae War at Nawapinaro. Thus, the area now within the Freeport Project Area has always been central to Kamoro history. Earlier versions of this myth demonstrate a stronger focus on a breakdown in notions of kinship and responsibility rather than revenge for theft. In both cases, violations of *aopao* underlie all activity.

Long before Freeport's arrival, the rich resources of the area were fought over. Versions of this story in later chapters will elaborate on individual village experiences of the Utae War from the perspective of both the attacker and the attacked. Links to Nawapinaro via the *amoko-kwere* may have played a role in certain villages' participation in the early construction phases of Freeport facilities in that area and will be addressed in Chapter Six.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I have outlined aspects of both *amoko-we* and *amoko-kwere*. This "era" and its "cultural heroes" exist both "in the beginning" and "eternally." The *Amoko* is at once past and present. It provides an interpretive schema which underlies a Kamoro cosmological sense which intimately links living Kamoro to the *amoko-we* and the spiritual world of deceased ancestors through *kata* or *otepe*, secrets. At the same time, temporality in the *Amoko* and indeed in everyday life is not necessarily teleological, conditioned by *aopao*, reciprocity. In other words, the cyclic rhythm of effecting the maintenance of reciprocity, *aopao*, in social, economic and spiritual relationships is the primary underlying feature of Kamoro temporal consciousness. Reciprocal acts grounded in understandings of the activities of *amoko-we* inform notions of social organisation (such as ritual counter-parts and marriage exchange relations) which also tend to be mapped physically onto Kamoro living space. Villages are composed of sets of settlements, which consist of sets of land-based social groups (*taparu*), which in turn have a complex foundation of matriline groupings (*peraeko*).

Though *kata* and *otepe* may be guarded and passed on only to initiates, *amoko-kwere* are passed on openly and informally. Contemporary and past (and future) events and experiences are reconciled with the *Amoko* and in terms of *aopao*.⁴⁰ In this way, the *Amoko* lies at the heart of historical consciousness as a

⁴⁰ Connerton supports my assertion with regards to the relevancy of oral tradition in informing contemporary consciousness and social memory "The production of more or less *informally* told

strategy for situating interpretations of the past, present and future. Ultimately, the following chapters of this thesis illustrate the nexus between these different modes of historical consciousness, focusing on the Kamoro strategy of interpreting the world around them through *amoko-kwere*.

narrative histories turns out to be a basic activity for characterisation of human actions. It is a feature of all communal memory” (Connerton 1989:16-17, emphasis from the original).

Chapter Two

Contextualising Colonisation on the “Fringe”

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary trends in anthropological research have increasingly challenged notions of the existence of small-scale, bounded societies (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:7). Perhaps inspired by diffusionary interpretations of the past fused with contemporary feminist and post-structuralist theories, emphasis has increasingly shifted to the “edges” or “fringes” of supposed “cultural areas” (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Clifford 1988), to globalisation (see Lederman 1998; Foster 1999) and to the resultant hybrid identities that emerge from them (Clifford 1992:101). Hays (1993) explicitly proposed an examination of the “boundaries and linkages” among and between cultures in “fringe” areas in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. Biersack and others (1995) took up this proposal in an edited volume examining the “borderlands” of Duna, Ipili and Huli areas in highland Papua New Guinea. I think the general point that each of these authors has made in some form, namely that “identities” and “cultures” are fluid and in some ways are indicative of the flow of ideas among and between communities is equally applicable to the south-west coast of New Guinea.

For centuries prior to the permanent arrival of Europeans in New Guinea, the Mimika Coast¹ was on the periphery of eastern Moluccan trading spheres, in particular those linked to Seram and the islands surrounding it.² Prior to the twentieth century the impact of European colonisation on the Kamoro was only secondary; Moluccan trading kingdoms and their representatives, with whom the Dutch were in more direct contact, mediated it. As a result, by the time the Dutch began to take an active interest in establishing permanent posts in West New Guinea, the Kamoro were already visibly influenced by Moluccan traders who were already frequenting their coast. The scant evidence available even suggests that some Kamoro may have been at least nominally Moslem as a result.

Another concept which Hays examined (and challenged) was the “culture area.” Although the notion of a “culture area” is indeed problematic, anthropologists have nonetheless generally agreed that Melanesia forms a distinctive region. While the precise boundaries of the Melanesian “Culture Area” are blurry and debated, it has been generally treated as describing a region with cultural and racial similarities extending from New Caledonia in the south-east to the western side of New Guinea in the west (cf. Knauff 1999:1-3).

Personal and political backgrounds have had a large effect on portrayals of Melanesia and Melanesian history and indeed the history of the discipline of anthropology. As Lederman points out, Melanesia is often considered as the “foundational scene of ‘real’ anthropology,” (1998:429). Academics and Western politicians have promoted New Guinea as the epitome of the Melanesian culture area.

¹ Here and throughout the thesis I refer to the area between Etna Bay and the Otakwa River as the Mimika Coast, though the area didn’t become known as the administrative sub-district of Mimika until the beginning of the twentieth century. I also refer its inhabitants as Kamoro, though the name “Kamoro” was not used as a descriptive categorisation of the population of this area until the 1930s. From colonial administration through the end of the Dutch administrative era in 1962, the population was referred to as Mimikans. Presently the communities along this coast use Kamoro as an ethnonymic modifier describing the population formerly known as Mimikans. The name Mimika still describes the geographic place on the south-west coast of New Guinea.

² Hereafter in this chapter I employ Seram to represent Moluccan traders, merchants, and rajas from Seram and all of the Seram Laut Islands (Goram, Geser, etc.) unless explicitly stated otherwise.

In the aftermath of World War II, Dutch politicians and scholars furthered the notion of New Guinea as a Melanesian “culture area”. For the Dutch, their explicit goal was the differentiation of New Guinea from the rest of its former colonial outpost in the East Indies as Melanesian as opposed to “Indonesian”. For many Melanesianists, this bias has obscured the historic linkages between the south-west coast of New Guinea and the Moluccas, essentially reifying and reinforcing the notion of abrupt “Culture Area” boundaries. Here I point out that Asianist scholars are beginning to reanalyse the nature of the historical connections between “Melanesian” New Guinea and Asia (notably Rutherford 1997). Knauff rightly points out that “history” in Melanesia is perhaps more commonly portrayed as Western representations of relationships between themselves and Melanesians (1999:7).

This chapter, in part, attempts to reconstruct Kamoro relationships with a variety of non-Western foreigners prior to the twentieth century. It situates the western part of the Mimika Coast as a fringe area of Moluccan and Asian trading networks. As early as the seventeenth century, Islamic Moluccan traders had frequented the south coast of New Guinea, driving not only economic exchange, but also nominally spreading the influence of Islam. Dutch agents, however, sought repeatedly to interrupt this commerce of ideas and resources, to seize economic profit and to explicitly halt the spread of Islam.

For the Kamoro, the economic, political and ideological battles going on between the Dutch and the Moluccan “kingdoms” in the nineteenth century were understood almost solely through the lens of Seramese traders. With the *Soerabaja* expedition of 1875-1876, however, the European foreigners had made strong inroads in the destabilisation of the Sultan of Tidore’s trade empire (which they had formerly supported). Though weather conditions prevented the *Soerabaja* expedition from reaching Kamoro settlements, the expedition’s impacts, filtered through the Moluccan traders, were certainly felt on the Mimika Coast. *Amoko-kwere* recorded from Kamoro men born during this period offer initial suggestions of an indigenous strategy of engagement. Using *amoko-kwere* as an interpretive mechanism, the Kamoro translated conjunctural events; they

reasoned that all of the foreigners had originated from their own territory. Accordingly, their possessions, foreign goods, were interpreted as the product of local indigenous agency, categorised as *kata*. Before presenting the *amoko-kwere* that support this interpretation, it is important to provide some background to the regional forces which established the Mimika Coast as a “fringe” area of Moluccan and Dutch political and economic interest.

SETTING THE STAGE: FLEETING INTERACTIONS WITH THE MIMIKA COAST

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sought to solidify its control over the expanding spice trade in the Moluccas. Crucial to their control of the spice trade, the Dutch needed to secure the Banda Islands.³ Consequently they staged a massive assault on Lonthor in the Banda Islands in March 1621. Though the Bandanese had officially capitulated, they continued to fight until Governor-General Jan Coen put a brutal end to their resistance. Some hostages were killed, at least 800 others were captured and transported to Jakarta. Of those who managed to evade the Dutch, some fled to the interior of the island or to other islands in the Moluccas; ultimately, the end result of the Dutch raids was the removal of the majority of indigenous Bandanese from the island (Masselman 1967:114-115). Swadling posits that those who fled to the nearby Seram Laut Islands were integral in expanding Moluccan trade into Asian markets, which were supported with resources from the south-west coast of New Guinea (1996:137).⁴

³ Chinese documentation of the Moluccas precedes European accounts. As far back as the T'ang dynasty (618-906), Chinese sources mention the Moluccas (under the name Miliku). However it was not until the Ming dynasty (1368-1643) that Chinese sources elaborated on the presence of spices in the area. By the Wan-li period (1573-1619), Chinese sources began to chronicle the battles between the Portuguese and the Dutch over the territory which were essentially played out through the establishment of local chiefs who were forced to pledge their allegiance to either side. By 1618, Chinese sources suggested that the Sultan of Tidore held the most influence of any of the “local” leaders in the region (Groeneveldt 1960:117-118).

⁴ After the expedition of Keyts in 1678, when the VOC had determined that trade with mainland New Guinea was not economical they gave permission to their “free subjects from Banda to deal with the Papuans” (Klein 1953:46).

Within a few years of the assault on Banda, Haga reports a strengthening of contacts between the “Seramese” and the Papuans of Onin on the southern part of the Bird’s Head Peninsula (Haga 1884:4-5). The seventeenth century historian Rumphius adds more detail, noting that eastern Moluccan merchants from Seram and the Seram-Laut Islands had already frequented this region, driving the trade in massoy-bark, slaves and later damar resin.⁵ Rumphius (1684) also described what he viewed as the positive, civilising impact of interactions between the merchants and the indigenous inhabitants at the primary island marketplaces of Namatote, Mawara, Aiduma, Kayu Merah and Lakahia, all on the periphery of the westernmost part of the Mimika coast:

Through their association with the Seram-Laut Islanders and through the massoy trade they became more human [*menschelijker*] and from them they obtained some clothing, whereby they could be soberly clad, but on the mainland it is a medley of fierce and barbaric people, most walking around naked (cited in Pouwer 1955:216 from Rouffaer 1908, my translation).

In response to the ever expanding trade of the Seramese merchants, van Speult, the Governor General of Amboina (Ambon), dispatched Jan Carstenz to survey the boundaries of the Moluccan trade networks. His task was to find a way to wrest the lucrative trade from the Seramese and others on behalf of the VOC (Haga 1884:4). At the time, the Mimika region was *terra incognita* for the Europeans, whose cartographic knowledge held that the mainland of New Guinea ended in the neighbourhood of Lakahia Island, at the base of the Bird’s Head Peninsula (Pouwer 1955:216).

With the yachts *Pera* and *Arnhem* under his command, Carstenz set out for the eastern-most boundaries of the Moluccan trade networks early in 1623. Travelling via the Kei and Aru Islands, he approached the Mimika Coast during the second week of February. His journal entry of 11 February reflects the first clearly documented interactions between the Kamoro and Europeans:

⁵ Relationships between other Papuan communities and Moluccan sultanates are well documented. In addition to Pouwer (1955) for Mimika, see Kamma (1947/1948, 1948/1949, 1972) and Rutherford (1997:83-88) for the islands of Biak and Serui, Miedema (1984) on the Kebar of the western Bird’s Head Peninsula, and van Logchem (1963) for Arguni Bay.

...the skipper of the yacht *Arnhem*, Dirck Meliszoon, without knowledge of myself or the subcargo or steersman of the said yacht, unadvisedly went ashore to the open beach in the pinnace, taking with him fifteen persons, both officers and common sailors, and no more than four muskets, for the purpose of fishing with a seine-net. There was great disorder in landing, the men running off in different directions, until at last a number of black savages came running forth from the wood, who first seized and tore to pieces an assistant named Jan Willemsz van den Briel who happened to be unarmed, after which they slew with arrows, callaways, and with the oars which they had snatched from the pinnace, no less than nine of our men, who were unable to defend themselves, at the same time wounding the remaining seven (among them the skipper, who was the first to take to his heels); these last seven men at last returned on board in a very sorry plight with the pinnace and one oar, the skipper loudly lamenting his great want of prudence, and entreating pardon for the fault he had committed. (Carstensz, cited in Wollaston 1912:28-29).

Carstensz aptly named the river where the event took place “*Doodslagers*” or “*Slayers*” River.⁶ Later entries in Carstensz’s journal suggest that either out of caution or perhaps out of realisation of his crew’s previous wrongdoing and its punishment, he explicitly instructed his crew not to touch racks of drying fish that they encountered elsewhere on the Mimika Coast (cited in Pouwer 1955:217). In terms of significance for future contacts with the Kamoro and the ultimate future of the region, Carstensz’s most important observation occurred five days later:

In the morning of the sixteenth, at about one and a half mile’s distance from the low-lying land...at a distance of about ten miles by estimation into the interior we saw a very high mountain range in many places white with snow, which we thought a very singular sight, being so near the line equinoctial. (Carstensz, cited and translated in Wollaston 1912:29-30).⁷

Pursuit of this “singular sight” later known as the “Snow” or “Carstensz” Mountains and what lies within the mountains around them is a recurrent theme in the history of the region.

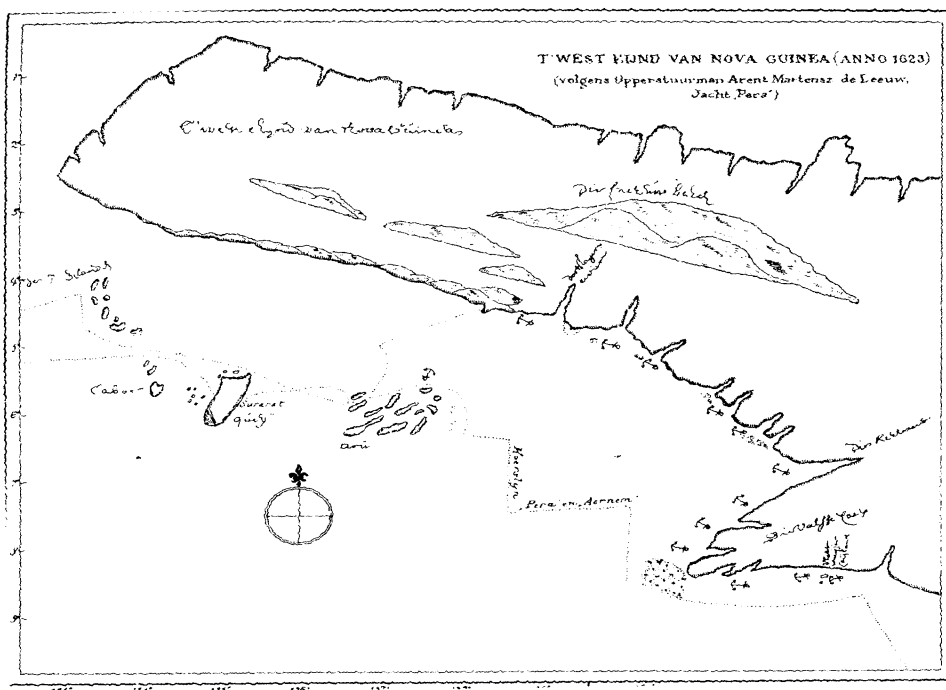
⁶ Carstensz’s accounts and maps place this river near the present-day Kamoro settlement of Mupuruka (Pouwer 1955:217).

⁷ After visiting the Mimika Coast, Carstensz proceeded toward Torres Straits. Determining that all of the reefs, small islands, and shallows were part of a bay (e.g. not an opening on the Pacific), he re-directed to the south-west, eventually following the west coast of Cape York. Around this point (April 25 1623), the *Arnhem*, who had lost members at Mimika, mutinied and set a new course away from Carstensz and the *Pera*. Eventually, after investigating the north coast of Australia for economic opportunities, Carstensz returned to Ambon. After departing from the *Pera*, the *Arnhem* was blown westward, where it then explored north and west across the top of the region called then (and still known now as) Arnhemland before returning to home (Information from Volunteers in Technical Assistance website at <http://pacific.vita.org/>).

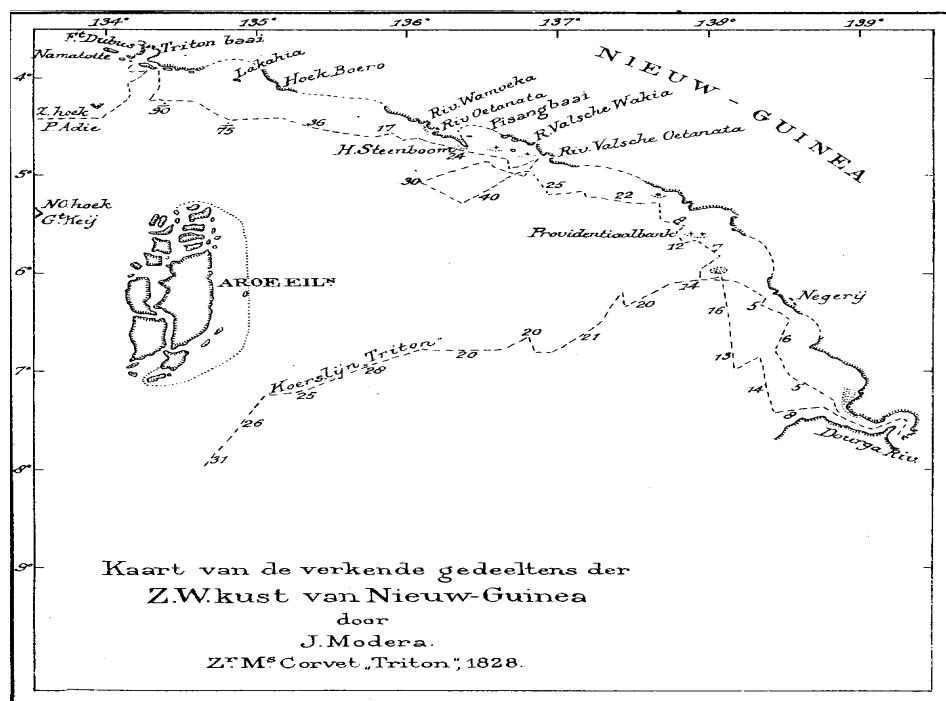
The VOC made another attempt to break the eastern Moluccan trade monopolies in 1636 when Gerrit Pool led an expedition along the same stretch of the south-west coast of New Guinea (Pouwer 1955:217; Wollaston 1912:30). Though Pool was murdered at Namatote, his successor, Pieter Pietersz, led the expedition further to the south-east, mapping the mouths of the Kupera Pukwa (Koperapoka), Inabuka, and Otakwa Rivers (Pouwer 1955:217; Wollaston 1912:30), essentially mapping the easternmost boundary of the territory of the Kamoro populations.⁸

Though there was at least one more attempt to effect entry into the rich trade in massoy-bark and later brown coal on the south-west coast in the seventeenth century, the VOC again failed, largely due to an indigenous accomplice of the Seramese and Gormase traders—the Raja of Namatote (Pouwer 1955:218). Assisted by a network of empowered cronies, the Raja of Namatote managed to protect the lucrative business for eastern Moluccan traders (*ibid*). The next documented interaction between outsiders and the Kamoro did not occur until nearly two centuries after Pool's expedition.

⁸ Pietersz never went ashore. The crew continued south and ultimately explored the region around the area currently named Melville Island (Information from Volunteers in Technical Assistance website at <http://pacific.vita.org/>).



Map 5: Carstenz's 1623 journey along the southwest coast of New Guinea. Near the centre is "Doodslagers" or "Slayers" River where several men from the *Arnhem* met their demise. Note the documentation of the snow-capped mountains (from Rouffaer et al. 1908).



Map 6: Route of the 1828 Triton Expedition which, after visiting the Dourga Strait (lower right corner) made several notations along what is now the Mimika Coast before calling at Uta which is left of centre and along the coast in the above map (from Rouffaer et al. 1908).

THE ENCOUNTER

Clad in a *kabaya* with a piece of cloth wrapped around his head like a turban, Abrau stood out among the villagers near the mouth of the Utanata River. One of the captains of the two vessels, which lay off the coast of the Utanata River, escorted Abrau to the foreign boats. To his fellow villagers, his clothing may have signified a special ability to interact with foreigners. On the tenth of June 1828, they witnessed his deployment of these abilities.

Several of his Kamoro followed him to the foreign vessels, they waited alongside the foreign vessels in their dugouts as they watched Abrau board the *Triton*. After he disappeared from sight into one of the vessel's interior cabins, the onlookers began to shout his name, perhaps wanting confirmation that he was safe. As it turned out, Abrau and the expedition's Seramese translator were well acquainted. Having spent time in Seram, Abrau spoke the translator's language far better than the translator spoke his (Modera 1830:62-3 as cited by Earl 1853:43-44). Once inside the cabin, Abrau carefully pulled a paper from his turban, as he had likely done in the past during his encounters with strangers. This paper was his hidden secret, and was perhaps perceived as the underlying source of his ability to interact with the outsiders. The foreigners perused the paper, which appears to have been inscribed with a "charm" from the Koran, previously presented to Abrau by a Seramese priest. The Dutch responded to his paper by lavishing Abrau with gifts. Thus, combined with his extravagant clothing and his knowledge of the foreign Seramese tongue, the paper appears to have been vital to his access to and control over foreign goods, a secret that few other men in this region seemed to hold (Modera 1830:62-3 as cited in Earl 1853:43-44).

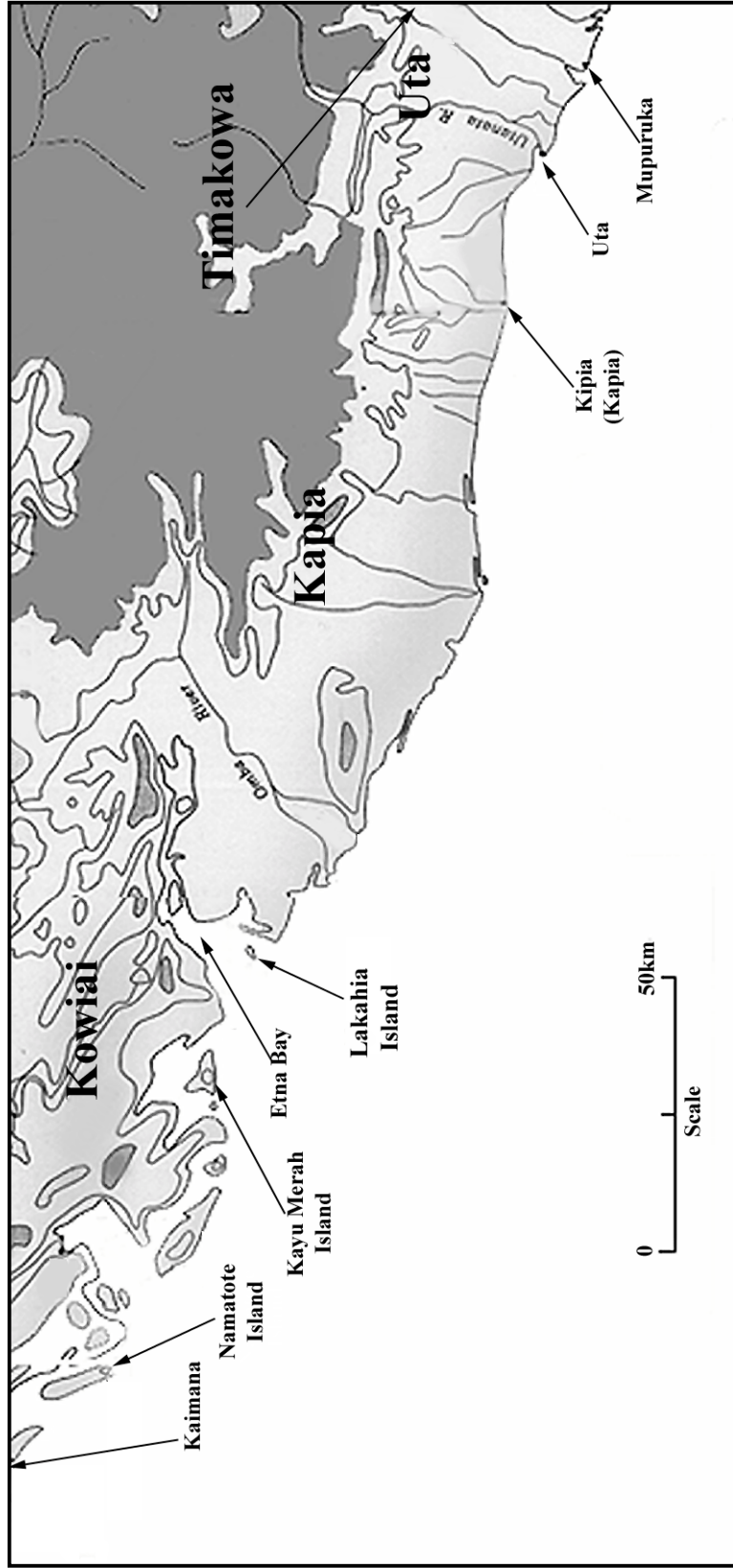
Tri-partite Translations aboard the *Triton*

The physical space aboard the Dutch naval vessel *Triton* in June of 1828 became an interesting site of translation, marking a symbolically important moment in the history of the Mimika Coast. For Abrauw, the Europeans and their vessel were an anomaly, made familiar only through the Seramese “translator” with whom he appeared quite familiar (Earl 1853:44). Permanent Seramese structures stood in marked contrast to the temporary indigenous shelters at the mouth of the Utanata River, and were testament to the regularity of their trading visits to the region and perhaps more specifically to Abrauw’s relationship with them.

Given his familiarity with the coast and its inhabitants, the Seramese intermediary was probably linked to broader Moluccan exchange networks that controlled trade along this coastline. By the turn of the nineteenth century they had already forged a close relationship with the Mimika Coast, visiting the area approximately thirty times per year (Pouwer 1955:218). Abrauw was among the indigenous trading contacts empowered by the Moluccans, who they adorned then with ornamental titles such as *Raja*, *Major*, *Kapitan*, *Orang Tua*, and *Hakim*. While outsiders may have seen the Mimika Coast at this time as perhaps a unified culture area, their Kamoro informants identified three major spheres of influence that may have reflected indigenous cultural or linguistic districts. Timakowa¹, Oetanata [Utanata], and Koiwajij [Koiwiai] encompassed the area from the western side of the Atuka River in the East to Tarara [Tarira] and Waijmeta in the vicinity of Etna Bay in the west, corresponding almost precisely with the contemporary boundaries of the Mimika Coast (Modera 1830:73).²

¹ Also listed as Timakawa and Timoraka. See Chapter Six for a discussion of these names.

¹⁰ Later descriptions describe a fourth district, Karua for unspecified areas east of Timakowa. *Karua* literally means of the East or eastward in Kamoro.



Map 7: Approximate Kōwhiri, Kāpia, and Uta “Districts” during the Nineteenth Century (map adapted from Swadling 1996, figures 28 and 29).

Predominantly through their Seramese connections, these districts along the Mimika Coast were linked westward to Lakahia and Namatote, and thence to the larger trading centres on the southern part of the Onin Peninsula and beyond. Over the course of the next century, desire for natural resources from the Mimika “districts” spurred increasingly frequent contacts with the south-west coast of New Guinea. Through local contacts such as Abrauw, the Moluccan merchants enjoyed lucrative trade in massoy-bark, damar-resin, and slaves, all extracted from the Mimika Coast. In turn, these items fuelled a market linking the south-west coast of New Guinea to the Moluccas, Java, and beyond.

For the Dutch, the nineteenth century marked a period of transition in the administration of their East Indian archipelago. For a brief period the Netherlands East Indies were transferred to British administration via the Napoleonic Wars. After they regained control of them, in 1816, the Dutch became increasingly protective of their colonial empire.¹ Reactions to rumours that the British had already established a post on the south coast of New Guinea dominated Dutch administrative policy. For the Dutch, English activity in the region not only posed a potential challenge to their monopoly over the spice trade in the East Indies, but perhaps equally serious, to their imperial sovereignty.² Although the Dutch were the first Europeans to assert sovereignty over New Guinea, with claims dating to the seventeenth century, they were the last to establish a physical presence on the

¹ On January 1, 1800, the Dutch East India Company was dissolved, and all of its debts and possessions were transferred to the Dutch government. The British obtained the Indies from the French who had acquired them after Napoleon’s armies had defeated the Netherlands. This period was influential in terms of its impact on Dutch colonial administrative policy. In line with the thinking of Stamford Raffles, who served as Lieutenant Governor for much of the English period of administration of the Indies, new consumers were to be found among the indigenous occupants of the possessions. Thus, ‘consumer’ knowledge in support of economic ventures resulted in some of the initial documentation of indigenous customs for administrative purposes. Raffles had commissioned a land-tenure report on Java to this end (Bastin 1954:2). The period of English rule proved to be short-lived with the Dutch regaining control of the East Indies in 1816 (Ellen 1976:305-309).

² While inaccurate, the rumours were not unfounded. The British had attempted to establish a post at Melville Island off the north coast of the Australian mainland. The choice was made explicitly to stake a claim to the as yet unclaimed northern coast of Australia (before the Dutch could) and to lure Indonesian traders involved in the Moluccan spice trade (Gordon 1951:46-48).

ground.³ The threat of English imposition motivated the Dutch to exercise their “rights” over West New Guinea (van der Veur 1966:9). Although physical inspection of the supposed site of the British post proved the rumours to be false, the Governor of the Moluccas, Pieter Merkus, seized upon the opportunity to permanently quell British threats. Based on his two-fold strategy, the Netherlands moved to establish sovereignty over the western half of the island. The initial step involved securing a statement from the Sultan of Tidore declaring that all of West New Guinea was a Tidorese possession (Woltring 1961:155).⁴ The second step of Merkus’ plan was to then exercise control over the territory as a cession from the Sultan of Tidore. Merkus also convinced the King of the Netherlands of the vital importance of establishing a physical presence in New Guinea. Accordingly, the King placed Merkus in charge of carrying out his proclamation:

To take possession of the west coast of New Guinea, from the Cape of Good Hope (north coast) to Cape Valsch or further southward; while leaving it to the discretion of the Governor-General to place a small establishment on the coast of New Guinea, if His Excellency considered this absolutely necessary...(Woltring 1961:158)

As a result, the King placed the naval corvette *Triton* and the schooner *Iris* at Merkus’ disposal to launch an expedition to the south coast of New Guinea (Müller 1857:13). Though he had suggested the banks of the “Dourga River” as a likely spot for settlement, he left open the possibility that the expedition might in

³ As early as 1660 the Dutch East India Company (the VOC) had already entered into agreements with the Moluccan Sultanates of Tidore, Ternate and Bacan. According to an eighteenth century Dutch report, “the Papuan islands in general were placed under the King [Sultan] of Tidore without being specifically enumerated but on this question it is noted by the Government in a letter of January 14, 1671, that the Papuans [Papuan Islands] begin with the corner of Onin westward along the land” (as cited in Souter 1963:127-128n).

⁴ According to Haga, Merkus was inclined to claim the entirety of New Guinea. However, the central government continued to question Dutch sovereignty over the island, especially using the rather flimsy claim of the Sultan of Tidore. As far back as 1678 after an expedition along the south-west coast of New Guinea on behalf of the VOC, Keyts observed that the Sultan of Tidore had no influence in the region (Pouwer 1955:216). Indeed, in a report of 1824 it appears that the Governor General of the East Indies, van der Capellen may have made some of the initial formal claims that New Guinea was part of the realm of the Sultan of Tidore. Prior to this, both Valentyn and Forrest claimed that the Sultan of Tidore had no right over New Guinea (Haga 1884:54).

fact find a better location.⁵ Mindful of the Moluccan trading spheres and not wishing to confront them, at least for the time being, he recommended that the post should be located outside of the immediate region frequented by Moluccan traders (van der Veur 1966:10). The initial focus was to protect Holland's economic interests; dismantling Moluccan trade dominance in the eastern parts of the archipelago would come later. After a harsh "welcome" by the indigenous inhabitants of the Dourga Strait, the *Triton* and the *Iris* travelled to the north-east in search of a more suitable location for a permanent settlement. In the process, the expedition came into contact with Abrauw and the Kamoro near the mouth of the Utanata River.

To the expedition members, Abrauw and the other inhabitants living at the Uta settlement were depicted as noble savages in direct contrast to the more arboreal and animal-like depictions of the inhabitants of the Dourga Strait. Although a heavy sandbar at the entrance to the Utanata River prevented the selection of Uta for a settlement, the Dutch did ultimately establish a settlement on the south coast, but further to the west. After christening the settlement Fort du Bus, the Dutch claimed West New Guinea on behalf of the Dutch King (Hovenkamp 1937:449). Poor understanding of tropical diseases, an unhealthy climate, and inadequate supplies were only some of the reasons why Fort du Bus was destined to failure.⁶ Most significantly, feeling threatened by the European imposition, Seramese traders, allied to the various rajas from these islands, incited and supported the local population to attack the foreigners to preserve their own monopolies on trade in the region. Just eight years after its establishment, in 1836

⁵ The Dourga River, named after Kolff's ship which visited the area in 1826, was later renamed the Princess Marianne Strait by members of this expedition in honour of the fact that their passage through this area coincided with the King's daughter's birthday. The strait is located between Frederik Hendrik Island also named during this expedition in honour of the King's grandson (later known as Kolopom, and presently known as Yos Sudarso Island) and the mainland of New Guinea north-west of present-day Merauke (Müller 1857:15).

⁶ According to one account, "In the course of eight days there were fifty odd sick aboard and another twenty among the garrison" during the initial days of clearing the new settlement (Modera 1830:109-111). Despite "hot, long-lasting swamp fevers" the members of the expedition blamed their illnesses on hard work rather than on the ill climate of Merkusoord (Müller 1857:111).

the Dutch settlers abandoned Fort du Bus (Sentinella 1975:226; van der Veur 1966:11).⁷

ABSTINENCE AND PATERNAL DESPOTISM

After the failure of Fort du Bus, the Dutch moved to establish a nominal presence in the more “developed” westernmost parts of the island.⁸ In 1848 the Netherlands Indies Government officially claimed the whole of West New Guinea up to the 141st parallel in the name of the Sultan of Tidore, establishing sovereignty over the western side of New Guinea, if only nominally.⁹ This act initiated a Dutch administrative approach that would eventually be described at the turn of the twentieth century as an official “policy of abstinence” (Hovenkamp 1937:449). Basically this meant that by maintaining closer connections to the Moluccan kingdoms, the Dutch would do little administrative work on the ground. This approach appears to have been an outgrowth of the former

⁷ This part of the coast, then known broadly as the western extent of Koviari, Kowiai, or Papua-Kowiyee, was notorious for its particularly aggressive population. According to Alfred Russell Wallace who was collecting in the adjacent islands in the 1860s “...the south-west part of New Guinea, known to the natives as “Papua-Kowiyee” and “Papua Onen,” is inhabited by the most treacherous and bloodthirsty tribes. It is in these districts that the commanders and portions of the crews of many of the early discovery ships were murdered, and scarcely a year now passes but some lives are lost.” (Wallace 1962 [1869]:286). At the same time, the populations were likely hostile as a direct result of the brutal *hong*i or slave raids carried out against the populations in this territory by representatives of the Sultans of Ternate and Tidore.

⁸ By 1830 Dutch administration in the western parts of the archipelago, in particular Java, was becoming more regularised. With the institution of the *cultuur-stelsel*, the cultural system, the administration sought to understand Javanese land-tenure for the benefit of government control over agricultural organisation, which in turn would allow the villagers to pay taxes in the form of produce and compulsory labour (Ellen 1976:308). The Moluccas and New Guinea continued to lie at the farthest periphery of these practices. In 1870 the Agrarian Law was passed which attempted to formalise land tenure laws while at the same time recognising the uniqueness of various *adat*, customary law, regulations (ibid:310). Eventually *adat* law gave way to European or Islamic law as understood by the Dutch administrators, regardless of whether or not the populations of the Indies preferred customary law (ibid:311).

⁹ Only some thirty-five years later was the eastern half of New Guinea claimed: the south-western portion was claimed by the Premier of Queensland in 1883 (though not confirmed by the British crown until the following year) and Germany officially claimed the north-eastern portion in 1884 (Rawling 1913:23).

relationship between the Dutch East India Company and the region based more on economic exploitation than on civil administration (Ellen 1976:305).

The policy of “abstinence” or indirect rule in the daily matters of West New Guinea might better be understood in line with more general Dutch policies on the administration of the East Indies and in contrast to English colonial thought of the same period. During the first half of the nineteenth century a considerable body of British literature emerged concerned with the “progress of civilisation” (Stocking 1987:9). This literature (and to large degree the Continental traditions that influenced it), conditioned the way that notions of social evolution, then described as “progress in civilisation,” was conceived. In particular:

...ideas about non-European ‘savages,’ who defined ‘civilization’ by contrast; ideas about the physical nature and differentiation of man, which raised the problem of its universality; ideas about the nature of social order, which defined the specific content of civilization; and ideas about the methods appropriate to the study of human life and history, which defined the extent to which it might be subsumed within the rubric of natural science. (Stocking 1987:9-10).

As an Englishmen working in the Dutch East Indies in the middle of the nineteenth century, the famous naturalist A.R. Wallace explicitly considered the application of the fashionable European thought of the era to colonial administration. He states:

If there is one thing rather than another to which the grand law of continuity or development will apply, it is to human progress. There are certain stages through which society must pass in its onward march from barbarism to civilization. Now one of these stages has always been some form or another of despotism, such as feudalism or servitude...and we have every reason to believe that it is not possible for humanity to leap over this transition epoch, and pass at once from pure savagery to free civilization...we (the English) try to force upon them [higher civilization] at once (Wallace 1962[1869]:197).

Wallace draws a stark contrast between English and Dutch colonial administration. According to Wallace, the English system which “forces higher civilisation” tends to “demoralize and extirpate” without civilising (Wallace 1962[1869]:197). On the contrary, he reasons, many of the “advances” of the East Indies are due to a Dutch policy of “paternal despotism” (ibid:195).



Image 1: Settlement at the mouth of the Uta River drawn during the 1828 *Triton* Expedition (from Muller 1857, opposite page 50).

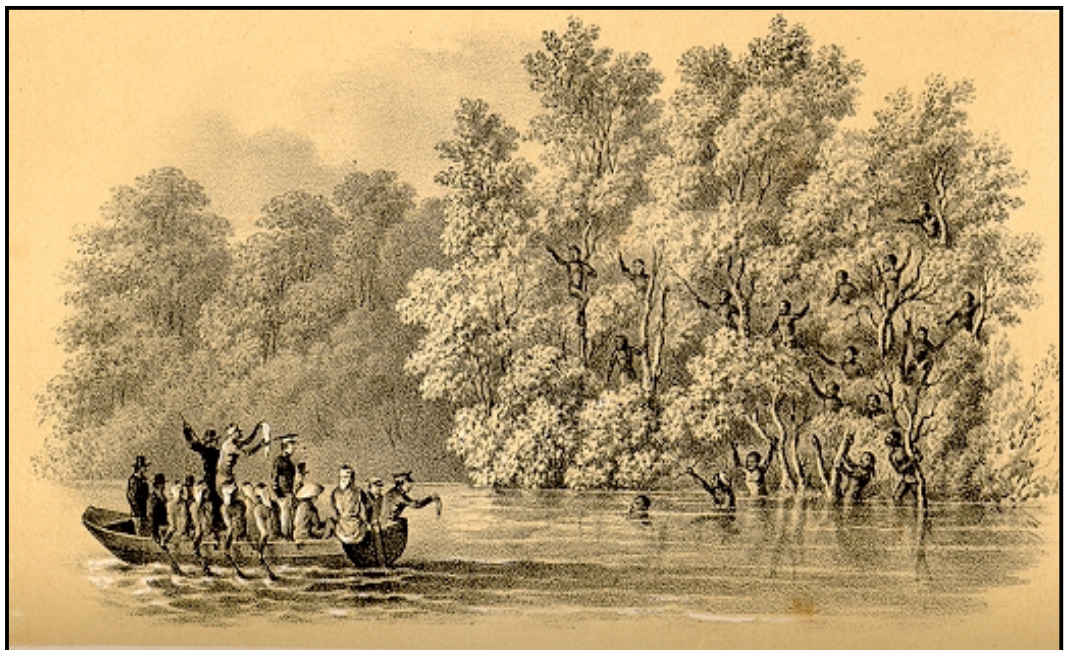


Image 2: “Interviews with Dourga Strait natives” drawn during the 1828 *Triton* Expedition. Note the contrast between the tranquil scene at Uta and the arboreal “natives” at Dourga Strait (Plate 3 from Earl 1853).

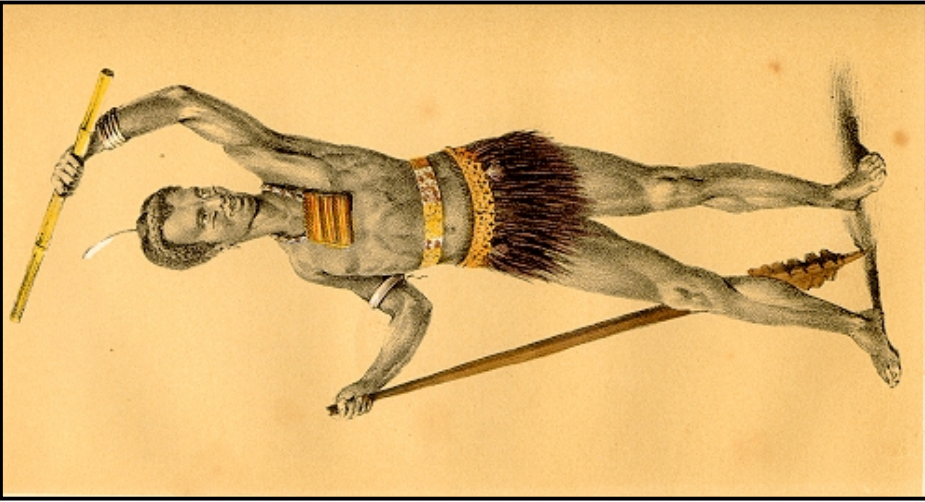


Image 3: "Uta Native" drawn during the 1828 Triton Expedition (Plate 4 from Earl 1853).



Image 4: "Dourga Strait Native" drawn during the 1828 Triton Expedition. Note the contrast with the "noble" figure from Uta. (Plate 1 from Earl 1853)

In Wallace's opinion, "mild despotism" serves as one of the best forms of education, whether in the case of parent/child relations or in the case of the relationship between an uncivilised "race" and its rulers (ibid). In his interpretation, the Dutch policy actually encouraged a more natural progressive path from savagery via despotism toward civilisation. Wallace even outlined how the Dutch operationalised this in their administration of the East Indies:

The Dutch have shown much good policy in the means by which they have done this. They have in most cases upheld and strengthened the authority of the native chiefs, to whom the people have been accustomed to render a voluntary obedience; and by acting on the intelligence and *self-interest of these chiefs*, have brought about changes in the manners and customs of the people, which would have excited ill-feeling and perhaps revolt had they been directly enforced by foreigners (Wallace 1962[1869]:196, my emphasis).

Whether one labels it despotism or abstinence, Dutch administrative policy in West New Guinea in the latter half of the nineteenth century resembled Wallace's description of upholding and strengthening localised exploitative relationships. However, this style of administration, which promoted selected trade-partners as "leaders," would have serious implications for the future administration of the region. On the south-west coast in particular this style of rule was initiated with the establishment of the sovereignty of the Sultan of Tidore. Although Dutch motives were to protect their interests from the British, they did so by legitimising and extending by decree the Sultan of Tidore's influence. Although the Sultan may not have previously held influence outside the easternmost parts of the Bird's Head Peninsula, he now had a legal right within the Dutch Administrative system to levy taxes over a much broader region. He enforced this entitlement via brutal punitive raids known as *hong*i (Pouwer 1955:218).

Soon after the Dutch proclamation of 1848, the Sultan of Tidore began sending out *hong*i fleets to areas where the eastern Moluccan and other traders were less firmly established. Increasingly he put pressure on the rajas near the south coast, beginning at the island of Misool, to pay tribute to him, largely in the form of massoy-bark and slaves (Miklouho-Maclay 1982:441). Intensified contact with the Sultan of Tidore forced rajas to successively exert more pressure on

neighbouring rajas on the mainland at Ati-Ati [Fak-Fak] and Rumbati on the Onin Peninsula, ultimately pushing the rajas further to the south-east. As part of the Sultan of Tidore's expansive activities, in 1850, Prince Ali of Tidore carried out a brutal attack on the Sultan's behalf at Lakahia Island, a former centre for the massoy-bark and the slave trade. His raiders captured over one hundred Papuan slaves before razing the settlement (Pouwer 1955:218-219).

Where rajas did not exist, the Sultan of Tidore appointed them. At Namatote he installed a man of Goramese (Seram-Laut Islands) descent named Wolungtua (Pouwer 1953:5). Wolungtua expanded his sphere of influence eastward, installing rajas at Adi, Aiduma and Lakahia as well as a *major* at Wanggita (the Arguni Bay area), before establishing a raja for the area east of Lakahia at Kipia (Kipia), the first Kamoro raja (Pouwer 1955:219).

Before long the excesses of the Sultan of Tidore and his nominal delegates became known to the Dutch Administration (Kamma 1948/1949:268). The 1858 Etna Bay Expedition was largely a reconnaissance mission to again try to select a location for a Government post. By 1875-76 another expedition set out, that of the Government Steamer *Soerabaja* [Surabaya]. This expedition seemed explicitly geared towards the destabilisation of the power of the Sultan of Tidore. By establishing direct contacts with the rajas to whom they issued with legitimating "letters of appointment," the Dutch broke up the Sultan's chain of indirect rule by terror over the south coast of New Guinea (Pouwer 1953:14). Formerly only indirect representatives of the Dutch Administration via the Moluccan Sultan of Tidore, the rajas were now directly associated with the administration.¹ The Sultan's exploitative trade networks now served the Dutch. The expedition failed, however, to actually reach the Mimika Coast due to bad weather. This allowed the Mimika Coast to remain largely on the periphery of administrative influence, causing an efflorescence of illegitimate and exploitative activity. The conduit for this activity appears to have been Naowa, the ruthless warrior who had recently been named Raja of Kipia by the Seramese Raja of Namatote.

SKETCHING THE KAMORO WORLD IN THE AGE OF SAIL

Throughout much of the world where oral traditions serve as the primary mode of knowledge transmission, it is difficult to estimate or consider indigenous agency prior to colonial contact. A narrative told by Weare, a man from the Wumuka River west of Uta, who was born during the mid-1870s, provides our best point of entry into an understanding of Kamoro conceptualisations of the world prior to permanent colonial contact (Drabbe 1950:228). Assuming a broad margin of error for age calculation, he was clearly an adult of over twenty years by the turn of the twentieth century, nearly three decades prior to the permanent arrival of the Dutch colonial administration in 1926.

In the last chapter I provided a generalised version of the Mirokoateyao *amoko-kwere*, a sort of explanation of Kamoro “creation.” Here I present Weare’s account, which explains the origins of the known populations of his nineteenth century Kamoro world:

Two boys [*mutapoka*]² went out and found a varanus³ [*weko*] egg, and thought it to be a bird’s egg, and put it in their shoulder-bag. The varanus grew. The man [their father, TH] for some time went pounding sago, the two alone stayed behind. When the varanus had grown big, it broke open the egg, and it had wings like a bird. It ate the two who stayed behind, and their father [*aiku*] and mother [*a-ote*] it ate up, all the people to the last one it ate up.

The houses were all empty. Then it went to lie down on the sloping bank of the river [*mi-a*, lit. towards the water, TH]. When the people returned from pounding sago, it devoured them too. A great many came in the one canoe, a great many in the other, it devoured them all. Still a canoe-full he devoured, and then still one more. In one canoe there sat a pregnant woman, named Mirokota; she fled away, and dived into the river, and fled away from Takaray [the location of the settlement, TH]. The varanus was lying with his tail westward [*emaru-miri-a*], with his head turned to the dry land [lit. head groundwards, TH]. He broke wind: pu, pu; it was like the sound of a triton’s horn. The young woman [*kaoaoro*] went on and brought forth a child, a boy. “Awomora” was his name, and towards the evening he began already to crawl about, and in the morning he could already stand up. (Drabbe 1950:224, 228)

¹ As “employees,” around this time many of the rajas began to receive salaries from the Dutch Administration.

² *Mutapoka* literally means “with balls” and is defined by Drabbe as “boys whose noses have not been pierced, but whose genitals are already developed” (1937:83, 8).

³ *Varanus* is the genus of the monitor lizard family. The most famous of the monitor lizards in the region is the Komodo Dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*).

The story then elaborates on how Awomora, after learning to stand up within a day of his birth, continues to grow quite rapidly, a sign that he was a cultural hero, an *amoko-we*. Before long he proves his proficiency as a hunter by bringing back various animals that he has shot with his bow and arrow to his mother. On each hunt, he goes in the direction of the interior (*ama-ke-amo-naw-mure*) and returns with his bounty; first a lizard, then a woodhen, a crown-dove, a pig, and a cassowary. Each time he returns “in the direction of the sea” (*ama-ki-mire*) to his mother. Eventually Awomora decides to set out on a hunting expedition toward the coast, knowingly disobeying his mother’s instructions:

Next morning he went to the beach; he looked round and said: “What is that? Ah, that must be the waves, and this sand. Mother has never told me that; she has deceived me always,”⁴ he said there near the sea. Then he seized a turtle, stabbed a sawfish, a *waiki*-fish and a rayfish. Then he scooped some sand, broke off some casuarina-branches and some twigs of a *iokotia*-shrub. Of all that he made a small bundle, went to the house with it and hid it there. “Son,” said the mother, “where is your hunting-booty?”⁵ “I have not got any,” he said. In the evening in the dark he went to get the bundle and gave it to his mother. His mother said: “Ah! What did you do on the beach, why had you to go to the seaside?” “Ah, mother,” he said, “the shore is nearby.” And he gave her the sawfish, the turtle, the rayfish. “Son,” she said, “this is sawfish, and this turtle and that a rayfish. And that is a *waiki*-fish,” she taught him, “and that is sand, and that is casuarina and that is a *iokotia*-shrub” (Drabbe 1950:229)

Finally, Awomora and his mother decide to go together to the coast, ostensibly to avenge the murder of all of the other people; his mother cries (*make*) all along the way.⁶ Upon arriving at the beach, they construct a small fire. Next, Awomora constructs numerous buildings, both ritual and non-ritual. First he makes a dwelling house (*kame*), then a pig-feast building (*oo-kame*), a nose-piercing feast

⁴ In the vernacular he says “*Enea kay-mi kine-ne, ama-pura-mu-kine, ama-puru-mu-kine...*” Literally, “Mother has informed she not, did cheat she me, did cheat she me”. The word translated in the text presentation as “deceived” is *puru*. In the interlinear translation it is translated as “cheat.” Based on the context in which this is used within Drabbe’s collection of narratives, it does appear that there was an intended moral weight placed on *puru* as wrong-doing, cheating, or intentional deception rather than as a form of trickery, which is a common motif throughout Melanesia.

⁵ In the original, *ereka* is the word translated by Drabbe as “booty.” *Ereka* literally means fish, but is used to describe all edible animals. Similarly, the words for sago (*ameta, amota, and ama*) are also used to describe all (non-animal) edibles.

⁶ Drabbe translates *make* as weeping or lament. It is also a word that describes a certain style of men’s songs (see Drabbe 1937:66). Later in this story and in other narratives, the word recurs with various translations including singing, weeping, lamenting, and crying.

building (*mirimu-kame*)⁷, a “bones” house (*emae kame*)⁸, a “shed” house (*we-kame*), and a temporary house (*kapiri kame*). He then adorns the houses with weapons, rigging a trap for the monster:

On top, in the buildings he put axes [*pokani*], chopping-knives [*tai*], lances [*uruna*], knives [*turaki*], big axes [*marati*], daggers [*kiriti*]. And he, Awamora, the young man of Paj, made a fire, and the smoke rose on high and the smoke penetrated into the nostrils of the varanus, and the varanus bellowed: hm, hm. And the man with his mother mounted into the mountains. With the water of the river the varanus came to the small buildings and destroyed them, and the chopping knives and the stabbing weapons hurt him⁹; then he came back and destroyed a house and was hit, and he went to the sea again, and after having done so several times, and again with the river-water was near a small building, at once the water had disappeared and he died.

With the monster lizard now slain, the mother and son again return to the coast, where Awamora destroys the dead beast:

And Awamora cut him into small pieces and began to sing [*tao*]. Then he threw the varanus-flesh away and went to sleep, but first he put two pieces of meat on top in the house, [which became] his wife [*a-eamo*] and his father [*A-iku*]. And when he had just slept a while, a woman was lying by his side, and men were beating the drum [*eme*] and singing [*make*]. They were alive and were now nothing but men. In the morning he made himself known and said: “I am Awamora, a man of Paiy.” Then they hoisted their sails [*kapokay*] and some went towards the west [*emaru*], others went to the east [*karu*], the men of Paumuku went to the inland [*amaika-a-p-mere*], and he remained behind alone, and he settled down at Paiy. And his mother was Mirokoto. I have said (Drabbe 1950:227-229).

Thus, various nondescript populations arise from the flesh of the monster lizard, who himself had previously eaten the entire Kamoro population save the pregnant woman who managed to escape. These other populations *sail* to the east and west from a Mimika centre.

While this story invites numerous lines of inquiry for interpretation and analysis, as elsewhere in the thesis, my focus is on Kamoro engagements with the foreign. Remarkable in this story is the inclusion of what very well may have been

⁷ Here Drabbe notes that this building is “the same as [a] *karapao*, a festival house built for nose-piercing ceremonies, with one roof-side, and the door opening on the higher side” (1950:226n).

⁸ Drabbe notes “Literally bones-house: a long building with two roof-sides; after the feasts held here the bones of the dead are thrown inside it, which have been dug up since the last similar feast and meantime kept in the dwelling house” (1950:226n).

⁹ Drabbe notes “The varanus is here called ‘man’ [*we-nata*, TH]; in the legends the animals appear as people” (Drabbe 1950:227n).

some of the initial trade goods available or at least known to the Kamoro during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The names of the items also offer some insight into the places of origin of the trade goods, allowing us to make some inferences regarding the social and economic networks of the Mimika Coast around this time.

According to Drabbe's dictionary, for at least three of the objects, the names describing them are Kamoro adaptations of foreign words. All of these were iron items: chopping knives (*tai*), big axes (*marati*), and daggers (*kiriti*). The first two words according to Drabbe are of Moluccan derivation (possibly Seramese, Goramese, or Gisser).¹⁰ The last of the foreign words, *kiriti*, is definitely of Malay derivation. Following *akwere Kamoro* conventions of substitution of a letter "t" for the letter "s" and ending words with a vowel, the word is clearly the Kamoro equivalent of the Malay *kris*, a sword or dagger.

These borrowed words reflect at least some connection between the Kamoro and Malay and Eastern Moluccan traders by the latter years of the nineteenth century. Further, among the accounts for the period with which we are concerned here, there is no documentation of Kamoro using sails. Indeed, the European accounts are very explicit in describing Kamoro dugout canoes. Only "foreigners" arrived in the region under the power of the sail. From this follows the implication that those who were formed from the flesh of the monster and who "sailed away" are foreigners. Interestingly, in this account the only "traces" of foreigners are Malay and Moluccan words and sails. Given that a main feature of the *amoko-kwere* is often the incorporation and reformulation of the known world, this narrative suggests that "foreign" for the Kamoro of the nineteenth century consisted predominantly of eastern Moluccan and Malay-speaking traders with whom they traded, either directly or through intermediaries. Contemporary European accounts from the *Triton* expedition verify and reinforce these suggestions.

¹⁰ Even with the assistance of Dr. John Bowden, a linguist specialising in Eastern Indonesian languages, I have not been able to more precisely situate the origins of these words. If they follow

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By the turn of the twentieth century, Islamic Moluccan traders had enjoyed at least two centuries of trade dominance on the south-west coast of New Guinea. Dutch attempts to seize the trade from the Moluccans as far back as the seventeenth century met with continued failure and loss of life. During this same period, Moluccan traders gradually expanded their activities further to the east. By the turn of the nineteenth century, they had established regular trade with the western part of the Mimika Coast. Kamoro *amoko-kwere* presented in this chapter, suggest that Kamoro communities on the “fringe” of the Moluccan trading empires were at least superficially influenced by the traders in their incorporation of foreign trade items. The European-authored evidence supports this notion and adds colour to it as it shows how Abrauw was visibly influenced by his Moluccan trading partners in dress and perhaps even religion.

Eventually, after establishing direct links with the Sultan of Tidore’s trading partners, the Dutch managed to disrupt his influence. At the same time, they initiated an unwritten policy of discrimination against Islam, and created a “gold rush” mentality along the unadministered Mimika Coast, which lay at the border of the Moluccan trading networks. The Dutch Administration’s severing of the Sultan of Tidore’s influence over trade smoothed the way for competing mercantile activity along the Mimika Coast, which, as I outline in the next chapter, appears to have been dominated by Chinese merchants. The next chapter explores the influence of the Chinese traders and the arrival of the Dutch Administration in Mimika that it brought about. At the same time, the chapter will demonstrate that, as was the case with the Moluccan traders, the Kamoro appear to have rationalised, reformulated, and localised the foreigners and their trade goods through *amoko-kwere*.

the general pattern of other archival linkages that I have uncovered, they would likely be from Goram or Geser as Drabbe suggested.