

Government, Church, and Millenarian Critique in The Imyan Tradition of the Religious Papua¹

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Around the same time as the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of Indonesia's independence (17 August 1945), after 34 years of New Order administration and 25 years of *Repelita* (Five-year Development Plans), Imyan speakers in the village of Haha (Terminabuan sub-district, South-western Kepala Burung, Papua) commemorated the 48th anniversary of the arrival of the missionary hero.² While the government stressed national victory,

¹ This Article is a based on the paper Presented at 1st the panel of *'Bhineka Tunggal Ika': Masih Mungkinkah* (Unity in Diversity: Is it still Possible)? At the International symposium of Journal ANTROPOLOGI INDONESIA 'The Beginning of the 21st Century: Endorsing Regional Autonomy, Understanding Local Cultures, Strengthening National Integration', Hasanuddin University, Makassar, 1-4 August 2000. This article was also published in Journal Anthropology Indonesia 26 (65): 40-59.

² Research for this article was conducted within the framework of the Netherlands Organization For Scientific Research (NWO) Priority Program *The Irian Jaya Studies: A Programme for Interdisciplinary Research (ISIR)*, financed by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). As part of the research, fieldwork was carried out among the Imyan and the Tehit of the Kepala Burung Peninsula, from November 1994 to June 1996. I am grateful to the people of the Terminabuan sub-district and the city of Sorong who befriended me and worked with me.

and local civil servants regularly gave speeches about the spectacular social and economic advancements (*pembangunan*)³ of Indonesia's New Order government and the goal of the development plans to bring welfare and industrial take off, Imyan appeared to be convinced that it was more important to dwell upon moral and Christian achievements since the Gospel was brought to them.

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

In another investigation of narratives of nation, Clark (1997:71) characterises Papua New Guinea Highlanders' worldview as 'Melanesia Gothic' to indicate the extent to which contemporary Melanesia worlds are 'based on the Bibel and its laws, morality and millennial prophecies'. Clark points out that in contrast to pre-nationalistic Europe, these worlds also comprise 'a universe in which computers, videos, Toyotas, and international flights are observable and available (if not to all!)' (Clark 1997:71). It is in this world that Highlanders imagine the state and the government, and new forms of consciousness arise. For Huli people, as Clark notices, these new forms of consciousness are as yet precursors no to nationalism, 'but merely to a form of ethnicity which unites Huli-an unity which was once expressed in the mythology and rituals of ground fertility...- in potential opposition to the state' (Clark 1997:89).

In Papua, the landing of the first missionaries on Mansinam Island in Cendrawasih Bay in 1855 (see Kamma 1976:53) is throughout the territory to become God's chosen land, reaffirming its ancient sacredness. Experiencing a history of oppressions and exploitation, many Papuans tend to relate the event to the glorification of their own territory as a Christian land opposed to Indonesia's Islamic majority (Timmer 2000:53-54). The Imyan case that I discuss in this article shows that such an Imyan unity is not only an instance of Melanesian Gothicism, but also leads to local political struggles that either strengthen or undermine positions

³ *Pembangunan* is that complex of top-down programs (village formation, development projects, resettlement programs) introduced by the New Order government with the aim of bringing welfare to Indonesia citizens. The programs come in the form of *Repelita* (Rencana Pembangunan Lima tahun) or Five-year Development Plans, which are year after brought to Imyan with the recurring promise that this new phase really pave the road to welfare and eventual industrial take off (*tinggal landas*).

of individuals and descent groups. Debates about village leadership, reflecting both local histories and people's reactions to the church and the government, mark the social conditions in which millenarian critique arises and the cultural forms it takes.

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

As cargo cults, millenarian belief and related religious movement continue to be important to Melanesians themselves and raise issues of power, inequality, and cultural change that interest anthropologists today. Robbins (1999) argues that there is no point in doing away with the category of cargo cults. Here he concurs with Otto (1999) who, in his critique of Lindstrom's (1993) focus on Western discourse about cargo cults and its roots in a western metadiscourse about desire, proposes to examine the immense archive on cargo cults for its power to raise fascinating question about the force of cultural models (see also Otto 1992).

It appears to Otto that 'the greatest theoretical promise lies in further sophistication of a praxis approach which combines the analysis of acting individuals with that of changing cultural models and historical circumstances' (Otto 1999:94). I aim to contribute to this approach by showing some recent shifts in the field of Imyan cultural domains or traditional of knowledge.⁴ I focus on the tradition of the religious that has taken on local notions since Imyan encountered mission Christianity, condemning 'traditional religion' and bringing new forms of guilt and fear in terms of sin and the fate of sinners. These notions have developed into a discrete realm of religious that Imyan gloss as *gereja*. *Gereja* comprises ideas and practices related to a clear church organisation, fixed Christian rituals, and a body of knowledge contained in a single

⁴ Local categories such as *gereja* and *pemerintah* result from decades of engagement with Christianity and the colonial and post-colonial governments. The resulting cultural changes have led to the emergence of the categories that in people's talk appear as recurring glosses with distinctive sources and histories and particular sets of meaning and moral guidelines. I see these sets of meaning as 'traditions of knowledge', following Barth's anthropology of knowledge, developed in *Cosmologies in the Making* (1987) and further elaborated in *Balinese Worlds* (1993). The categories I deal with in this article appear largely as expressions of heightened cultural self-consciousness that have emerged in confrontation with news institution and new external others (Foster 1995; Otto 1991; Otto and Borsboom 1997).

book, the Bible. The most significant aspect of the *gereja* tradition of knowledge is that many Imyan tend to take seriously the widespread rumours that materialisation of The Revelation of St John the Divine is imminent. Imyan scenarios of the end of all things not only suggest that tomorrow will not be a continuation of today, but they are also moral messages about Imyan people's own community.

The other tradition that I discuss in this article is *pemerintah* which, among other meanings, comprises local ideas about the state ideologies of *pembangunan* that classify Imyan as second-class citizens in particular in the context of development projects. In many respects, *pembangunan* condenses ideas about 'the state' and provides a discursive framework (*pemerintah*) for conceptualising and managing their relationship with the government.⁵ The *pembangunan* policy as it is executed most profoundly through the implementation of development projects takes hold and is instantiated in the local setting in terms of lack of sociality. Besides criticising themselves for lacking sociality, they blame the government for placing them as unequal subjects in the modern world. The latter form of critique assumes form that relate to feeling of dependence or inevitable threat from outside.⁶ As *pembangunan* promises wealth and better future, it gives shape to Imyan desires that are believed to be hard to realise because of the community's shortcomings. These beliefs sprout from a particular dynamics of negotiating difference that is triggered by decades of insults from government agents and condemnations by missionaries and present-day church leaders. Both the *pemerintah* and *gereja* traditions trace origins to outside influence but have developed distinctively in interaction with each other and with existing 'traditional' traditions of knowledge. In this complex dynamic of cultural practices of Imyan villagers in the context of local and global power relations, *gereja* and *pemerintah* have become specific conceptions of ways of modes of activity.

In the field of competing ontologies, a newer tradition called *agama* ('religion') is becoming increasingly powerful as it opposes or support the other tradition and is mainly perceived and lived by Imyan as cosmology that positions them in a personal, local, sacred (and largely secret or hidden) world. *Agama* in the fact belongs to the church but is perceived as originally Imyan. *Agama* is the pillar of the Pancasila state ideology and belongs to the New Order policy that promotes a double conversion. Indonesians must

⁵ 'The state' is also associated with vivid memories about the evil military operations in the 1960s and 1970s and the unsettling feelings that arise from the threat of military forces that are ever present in such Indonesian centres as Sorong, Fak-fak, Biak, Jayapura and Ambon.

⁶ Reminiscent of other constructions of risk and blame (Douglas 1992), these Imyan constructions of risk places blame on those different from themselves.

declare membership to one of the five religions recognised by government—Buddhism, Catholicism, Hindu-Bali, Islam, or Protestantism—and pledge allegiance as a citizen of the Indonesian State. As laid down in the first principle of Pancasila all citizens are expected to believe in a singular God (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*).⁷ If people convert to one of these five religions, they fulfil one of the main duties of every Indonesian citizen. The policy is especially designed for ‘underdevelopment primitive peoples’ in out-of-the-way places (Koentjaraningrat 1993). These peoples have yet to accept religion (*belum beragama*) because they still hold ‘superstitions’ (*kepercayaan*). Not surprisingly, most indigenous people in the Papua are considered *belum beragama*. Effectively opposing and undermining this classification, Imyan say that their ‘tradisional’ religion, in combination with another religion that is also marginal in Indonesia, is *agama*. Perhaps even more powerful is the fact that the Imyan *agama* arouses expectations for the Millennium.

What millenarianism among Imyan shares with Melanesian cargo cults, cargo movements, or Melanesian religion in general, is a ‘keen awareness of limitation, a refusal of self-satisfied tendencies to cultural inertia’ (Jorgensen 1994:130). In the Imyan case, this keen awareness is reflected in question of renewal and redirection of group life values: a concern over deterioration of morals which obstruct the building of a good Christian community that is prepared for Christ’s coming (and related prosperity or ‘cargo’). Imyan expect the cargo to come when their relationship with the dead is restored after Jesus has inaugurated the Kingdom on Earth, that is, when the sky and the earth become one and Imyan can again engaged in direct exchange with sky deities and the dead. Imyan stories of power and divine forebears begin at the beginning of things and end at the end of time; godlike forebears maintained close relations with the other worlds of power and end with the return of Jesus Christ at the end of time.⁸

Below I address the question of human cultural practice in the context of power relations in order to ‘discover the social conditions in which millenarian critique arises, the cultural forms it takes, and the effects it has within societies it practised’ (Robbin 1999). I discuss Imyan people’s reac-

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

Mungbeans and autonomy

In 1996, the government implemented a new project within the framework of a national IDT program for ‘underdevelopment villages’ aiming to reduce the ‘social and economic disparity’ of Haha villagers whose lives are considered *tertinggal parah* (‘seriously left behind by progress’).⁹ The new project consisted of the production of mungbeans as a cash crop in Imyan villages. After several information and instruction sessions Haha villagers had slowly and without much complain begun to work for the project. The beans to be used as sowing seeds were provided free by the government. If this initial phase was successful, they would then continue using a part of the initial harvest as sowing seeds or buy new beans in the town of Teminabuan using the funds provided by the IDT program.

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

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

⁷ The Pancasila State ideology is intended to safeguard national unity. The first principle (belief in one god) is said to guarantee harmony between the different religious communities in the Indonesian archipelago. While this doctrine advocates religious tolerance, it masks a growing distrust between Christian Papua and Islamic immigrants from elsewhere in Indonesia.

⁸ Such new indigenous theologies resemble what Lattas, in his analysis of the incorporation and transformation of Western beliefs and practices in New Britain Bush Kalai narratives, has described as ‘attempts to develop new epochal principles, new ontological schemes for organizing human sociability; this is done by developing new practices for disclosing the world, for working secrecy, for understanding those absences that render the world present in a particular way’ (1998:xxvii).

⁹ IDT stands for *Inpres Desa Tertinggal* (‘Underdevelopment Village Presidential Instruction’), a World bank supported development program for ‘isolated’ or ‘backward’ villages. This three-year program provides the district government in Sorong with a substantial subsidy sent directly from Jakarta through the national banking system. The aim of the program is to encourage villagers in the Teminabuan sub-district to cultivate peanuts and mungbeans as cash crops. Despite the enormous money flows generated by the IDT program for the Imyan people, they hardly begin to solve the region’s problems. See Timmer and Visser (in press) for a discussion of the paradox of development involved in this program.

had decided to add ten percent to this price.¹⁰

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

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

Why should we sell this stuff for little money to people already have enough money to feed their children? Why feed the Indonesians in town and in the city of Sorong? We get very little money in return and stay hungry. If we collect the money then we have to walk back to town, buy beans, and rice at the market, thereby enriching the outsiders (*pendatang*). With their big salaries the government employees will buy the beans and feed their children. Forget about this project and feed the beans to your family. We have already eaten about a quarter of the harvest and our children love it. Over the past week my children eat beans every morning and they feel healthy. They do not fall asleep in class, as they tend to do when they only get some cold sago jelly for breakfast. Therefore, we should not feed the Indonesians but ourselves instead.¹¹

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

support the now widespread enthusiasm for making new gardens to get more beans.

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

When others also joined the discussion, he again put emphasis on the threat of government harassment and warned villagers that they might not get any *pembangunan* support in the future. In an attempt to satisfy the government with the progress he was attempting to bring about in the village he simply forbade the sowing of mungbeans. During the session of the IDT-inspection-team a few weeks later, Amos had to really pull out the stops to explain to the officials in front of the villagers that the mungbeans project was too time-consuming. Haha villagers already had too much on their mind: harvesting sago to feed their families, getting their children to school, attending church services, hosting prayer services at their houses, and meeting such obligations as marriage payment and paying fines. None of the villagers wanted to let Amos down in front of the officials. Showing such deep-rooted discontent amongst them in front of the powerful 'others' was simply not done. The conclusion of the leader of the IDT team was as usual: Imyan villagers are too lazy to plant and harvest mungbeans and too dumb to understand that they would get *pembangunan* by merely selling beans at the market in Teminabuan. The Imyan villages would remain backward, no matter how great the efforts of the Indonesian government.¹²

The villagers' renunciation of selling mungbeans to Indonesians and their emphasis on the importance of consumption for their own physical and mental strength should first be seen as a negation of *pembangunan*. It is an example of tendency of closure, a negation of the confusing 'other', a turning away from separate world of Indonesians who come to Imyan land to ventilate insults or to allegedly carry out policies that culturally and economically deprive Papuans. Drawing on *pembangunan* cases elsewhere in Indonesia, Li (1999:316) illustrates that 'the separation of state and society produced through the exercise of planning enable a community to find new and stronger ways to define "itself" and contest state plans that threatened to appropri-

¹⁰ People' distrust of government initiatives prevailed. These emotions revolve around such things as government plans to construct a large coconuts plantation and bring immigrants from Java and Sulawesi, both of which the government believes will boost development activities in their region. Some villagers hope to free their region from isolation with the help of funds and large-scale projects, but most argue that the influx of in-migrants will threaten the less educated Papuans. In the light of the these kind of threats it is not surprising that people did not immediately believe that there were indeed ways from them to compete with the *pendatang* groups.

¹¹ Maclean (1994:675) notes a similar attitude among Papua New Guinea highlanders who do not want to grow peanuts to make others strong. He uses this example to introduce a discussion about a tension between freedom and autonomy, a theme that is also central in the present article.

¹² After the session I explained the situation to The IDT official in private but that did not keep him from arguing that he had to report to the government that these primitive villagers are good for nothing. He said, 'Jaap, you may be right about the culture of these people but believe me, after years of working with them I can see that there is no way that we can help them to raise money and to alleviate their poverty.'

ate crucial resources'. Li clearly shows that this capacity for action or agency is not constituted outside but within the framework of state and society. In that respect *pembangunan* (and *pemerintah*) should be seen as terrain of struggle, as the routine and intimate compromises through which relations of domination are lived.

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

If critique of the government and the church is widespread in the village of Haha, we still need to explore the reasons for the marked difference between the majority's withdrawal into autonomy and Amos' self-representation as someone who supports the power and promises of the government. What were Amos reasons for taking a position against his own people and does he in fact suggest that compliance with the rules of *pemerintah* will bring prosperity and wealth? A few months later, there were several individuals planting mungbeans in their gardens. They did not discuss this with Amos and told me that they wanted to produce something that is good for the society. In later collisions with villagers about other things such as the collection of money for upcoming Christmas celebration, Amos and others who support him continued to reiterate *pemerintah* and *gereja* dogmas to safeguard their position. The way they incorporate these new institutions in their lives suggest that the New Order and Christian doctrines are largely convincing to them. What is most obvious though is the way their appeal to *gereja* and *pe-merintah* is integral to their involvement in local politics, as I discuss below.

Competing ontologies

People's reaction to the actual practice of *pembangunan* and the villagers emphasis on local production and autonomy, brought about confusing and ontological dilemmas. In expressing the perceived disordered condition, Imyan distinguish between six traditions of knowledge: *adat* ('custom' or the bygone order), *wuon* (lore and imagery related to the now defunct male initiation cult), *lait* (pervasive death-dealing evil powers), *gereja* (church and mission), *pemerintah*

(colonial and post-colonial governments, modern world, Pancasila state ideology, media, school), and *agama* (cosmology informed by both mission Christianity and local myths and ideas about sky deities).

In peoples talk, there are some odd and incoherent connections between, for example, Imyan's own past and the meanings of the present-day Indonesian state and its ideology, or between the church and the *wuon* lore. These connections appear to reflect the fact that apparently different traditions of knowledge can assume similar contextual meanings, allowing alternation highlights a widespread and recurrently expressed concern with knowledge, in particular the powerful knowledge that was possessed by ritual leaders and employed during *wuon* rituals.

Wuon was a ritual central to conceptions of social relations, identity, and power and wealth. The idea of cargo or blessing (*berkat*) appears to be central in Imyan ideas about the powers of *wuon* and the sky beings. During rituals, a sky deity named Klen Tadyi takes the ritual leaders and the novices in a flying canoe (*kma sene*) to the other world where *ni mlasa* dwell. To ensure a safe return, the canoe is tied to a large tree with rope. Once contact is made with *ni mlasa*, the initiators and the novices bargain for the riches hidden in the forest, the waters and the palace of the sultan at Tidore (Timmer 2000). Through the offering of gifts of cloth (*kain timur*) the initiators conciliate the *ni mlasa* who control these riches or could bring them to the palace.

They exploit their contact with sky beings in a number of ways. They can, for example, ready all the fish in a river for easy capture by non-initiated men, women, and children. In the fishing ritual, still performed in the 1960s, the ritual leaders positioned themselves at the head-waters in preparation for a competitive struggle with Klen Tadyi. Others stood downstream along the banks of the river waiting for the loud sound of Klen Tadyi indicating his surrender to the ritual leaders. Klen Tadyi then prepared the catch for collection by cutting the fish tails and tying the shrimp feelers together to make neat bundles. Soon after they heard the sound, the people would see this yield float to the surface.

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

The parallels that Imyan establish between Christian lore and *wuon* are apparent if we realise that for them both doc-

trines are complex interplays of secrecy and sight. The teachers and novices depart into the woods to obey the 'unseen other', the sky beings of which Klen Tadyi, together with Bitik, is the most important. During their encounters with the sky beings, the lay people who have stayed behind only hear the spirits voices. Only upon return of the novices to the public grounds do the people get visible evidences of the presence and working of the sky deities. Of these, the signs drawn with chalk on the torsos of the newly initiated men are the most significant; they are seen as the signatures of Klen Tadyi and remind people of the first time Klen Tadyi left his mark on Bauk's body¹³. These signs, together with a range of stories about the hardships endured the rituals, create the recognition of the divine powers of the sky beings whose celestial salvation (*berkat*) will only come through offering cloths, lives and the integrity of people.

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

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

In these theories, the concerted efforts of missionaries and government agents to abolish 'pagan' practices including the *wuon* initiation cult are considered crucial. Reflecting, Imyan point out that the Dutch took no notice of the evil forces (*lait*). They regret this because as *wuon*'s counterpart and only controllable by *wuon*, *lait* has now full freedom of action. *Wuon* and *lait* are both forms of knowledge but differ in their moral content; *wuon* allows contact with benevolent sky beings while *lait* require 'evil' human sacrifices and kill-

ings. Therefore, *lait* far outweighs *wuon* as a dangerous force. Now that the *wuon* is seriously depleted, men are nostalgic about the times when ritual leaders contained *lait* through calling upon sky beings during trials that typical led to the execution of women found guilty. Current Christian ritual leaves these sinners unpunished. Due to the demise of ritual leaders and the abandonment of *lait* trials, many men feel that *lait* is now lurking everywhere and is slowly taking apart society.

Loss of knowledge has put Imyan society in predicament presently felt. The loss of knowledge is believed to have impoverished Imyan and has created a divide between Papuans and Whites and Indonesians. Only the recovery of that knowledge or regained access to powerful knowledge in general will reform the situation¹⁴. In line with this major concern, Imyan increasingly attach importance to effective knowledge in order to perform effective rituals and to uphold the ordering principles of *adat*, the traditional practices underpinned by the *wuon* lore. In particular *wuon* rituals are now considered effective if they result in the establishment of close contact with ancestral and non-ancestral spirits who may bring riches, food, and blessing (*berkat*) for the living. As *wuon* knowledge provided the most powerful means, it is thereby important to recognise that it is part of tendency to produce internal differences in Imyan society.

Village politics

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

To show how this conflict highlights some crucial aspects of the role of the traditions of *gereja*, *adat*, *pemerintah* and *wuon* in Imyan society, I need to briefly sketch the history and social structure of the village of Haha. The Dutch government and the missionaries in the late 1940s forced people to leave their settlements in they hilly interior and move to open spaces or to the coast. Some ten descent

¹³ Interestingly, the signs are now also taken as evidence that Imyan could already read and write long before the whites came to teach them these skills. Most informant added that Bauk was in possession of a book (the bible) which Olinado took to the West. They argued that after the book was lost did Imyan people lose of the novices with chalk.

¹⁴ The knowledge with which Imyan are concerned is 'knowledge' in the non-restrictive sense. It comprises the information, beliefs, magic, ritual, and techniques need to fruitfully engage the world (cf. Barth 1993:306-8).

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

As part of New Order development, a *desa* system was introduced in the 1970s and the new *desa* of Haha comprised the village of Woloin, Tofot and the former Teltolo. In accordance with the national Village Law No.5 (*undang-undang No. 5 Tahun 1979 tentang Pemerintahan Desa*) (MacAndrews 1986:38) all settlements in the Teminabuan sub-district were grouped into ten *desa*. Teltolo became the seat of the new *kepala desa* (village leader). Lagging behind developments in other provinces of Indonesia, the regional *desa* system was reformed in the late 1980s. It was considered more effective if funds could be distributed over smaller units. Reorganisation resulted in 31 administrative more effective units for the Teminabuan sub-district. Woloin, Tofot and Haha became separated *desa*. Around the same time the settlements rearranged according to an image of a 'civilised' human society. Typical Indonesian village houses with iron sheet roofs and plank walls now line a main road passing through the village. The church, the school, an office, and a meeting hall are situated in the middle of this along layout.

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

The important figures of the Mejefat elite are Amos and his brother, Elias (47), who is the head of the school and holds a leading position in the church council. The traditional Kemesrar elite represented by Lourens Kemesrar (58), one of the remaining initiation leaders, and his son-in-law, Seppy Kemesrar (37), who traces his descent to some famous warman. Due to the pacification and the abolishment of male initia-

tion, the power vested in the possession of secret knowledge, the ability to stage powerful rituals and the capacity to communicate with sky beings to get access to 'cargo' (see below) has diminished significantly.

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

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

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

However deep and unsettling the regular disputes be-

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

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

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

Agama and the efficacy of rituals

The concern with lost *wuon* knowledge sustains the Kemesrars' distinctiveness and their superiority. I have indicated that the traditional differences between 'wuon related' and 'non-wuon related' clans in Imyan society are both maintained and undermined by using new forms of knowledge from outside (*pemerintah* and *gereja*), alongside the internal conflicts, another local concern is the decades long denial of Imyan people's competence in learning and performing in modern colonial and post-colonial contexts. This concern is

in fact a crucial part of a larger stories about the Millennium, Imyan refer to the ancient topographies that characterize the essence of their past lives. The core of this essence is the knowledge by which Imyan could get close to the cargo (*berkat*). Through interpreting, combining, and inventing new schemes of the past, Imyan attempt to both embrace and subvert the disciplining principles of the Indonesian government and the church. Both these foreign institution are undermined through the claim that although whites and Indonesians benefit from their ability to perform superior rituals, everything they do to become so wealthy is based in Imyan knowledge.

Informed by this major concern, Imyan often negotiate the differences and the powers of cultural others in search of lost elements of an (imagined) ancient order. Therefore, the dynamics of the traditions of knowledge among Imyans reflect openness to outside ideas and structures and an experimental approach to finding potent new customs. In that sense, everything that Imyan do is always provisional and regarded as perhaps closer to the solution, but not yet close enough. To illustrate this let me discuss a new tradition labeled *agama*, which is born out of the frustration sketched above and is driven by Imyan pre-occupations with the possibility of Jesus Christ's return.

Opposing the government and the church and in search of efficacious rituals, Imyan have labelled a new revolutionary doctrine as *agama* ('religion'), a safe term as it relates to one of the pillars of Pancasila (Timmer 2000). Significantly, *agama* also comes to the fore in Irianese cargo cults. For example, in the Tanah merah region, Simson called his movement *Agama Kubur* (Religion of the Graves). The movement was active in the early 1940s. Simsons doctrine explained that the gospel had been mutilated so that the Dutch could keep all the goods that they obtained from the Cyclop Mountains by an underground sea-route (see Kamma 1972:286). A leader of millennial movement in the Wandamen area claimed to have been in contact with the land of the spirits and called his doctrine *Agama Syariwari* (Kamma 1972:287).

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

Imyan *agama* never explicitly refers to any form of *pembangunan* and Indonesia does not play a role, even though the implicit suggestion is that all that is promised by

New Order *pembangunan* will at one go materialise in Imyan land. The 'cargo' that is part of this package comes from the west, Olinado's destination. Indonesia is edited out and as such the Millenium among Imyan can be read as a way to explore and define the political economy of their relationship with the west. By re-inscribing a sharp distinction between local and Indonesian perspective on *pembangunan*—a process triggered by the harsh and disrespectful presence of 'Indonesia'—Imyan prevent *pembangunan* from making sense. As belonging to what threatens their world's integrity, Imyan intentionally disregard Indonesians by relegating them to the hell scenario in the end time stories.

Besides being a potentially successful way of removal from outside forces, the Imyan search for community comes further into focus when we realize that it resembles the community of initiates that retreated in the forest for months in order to learn the *wuon* lore. The participants in this now defunct male cult were sworn to secrecy. Whatever the secrets maybe, the secrecy is the search for a community that excluded the others, the ones who do not know the secrets, or the ones who do not properly handle the secrets. The first are traditionally those members of society who were excluded from initiation: women, children and non-initiates; and whites who have received the secret core of *wuon* from Imyan but refuse to return it or shares the powers and wealth that it involves. The latter are the white missionaries and, by extension, all whites, as well as the Indonesians, in particular the Javanese elite, who elaborate on the knowledge and technologies development by whites on the basis of the kernel of power and knowledge (*kahan*) that came from Imyan land.

Imyan response to the government and the church discourses reflect their observation that the demands of both institution lead to chaos which can only be corrected by reversion to old traditional power and politic. This interpretation transform Imyan land and its people its powerful grounds and potentially powerful individuals. In this way Imyan built, maintain and defend boundaries in a world which they not only experience as confusing and threatening, but also shape as such in order to discriminate against 'the other'.

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

Triggered by frustration with the untrue exchange that *pembangunan* offers and the incomprehensible and post-

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

A concern about sociality is the basic reaction of Imyan people to the colonial and Indonesian governments which incessantly have told Imyan that they are backward and primitive, and that it is impossible for Imyan to build a communion mode of being-together, working-together, and being charitable. In their discussions about the ways to establish such a community, Imyan do not solely refer to the powers that come through successful contact with sky beings, but also express the feeling that since they started to disregard the 'other world' their own world appears to be forgotten by the rest of the world and disrespected by themselves.

It is like Roberto Calasso recently said, 'a life to which the gods are not invited is not worth living' (interview with NCR Handelsbad, 1 Oktober 1999). The gods have left and the people are in debt. All giving, all reciprocity, all exchange was make sense anymore now that the primordial and most essential exchange do not discontinued. Only through engaging in exchange with the dead through *wuon* rituals, could they be propitiated for the evil that had been done. Now that Imyan are not any longer able to correct things themselves because *wuon* ritual cannot be performed anymore, Christian doctrine allows them to powerlessly wait for the Last Judgement and watch their land getting screwed up. Yulianus Woloblé commented on the oblivion of the gods as follows,

Look, it are people like Reverend Marcus (the major first Mennonite missionary who worked in the are in 1950s) who urged us to do away with *wuon* and tell us our other world is not true but evil. Seems that he wanted us to lead us astray (*kasih sesat*) because those things were too powerful. He was lying to us. No problem. But the problem is that I don't even know where it is. It are the old people who know these things but me and my friends, let alone my children, wah, it's long past, it is sunk in oblivion (*dilupakan*). Because there are no gods anymore people stay at home when their diseases. The health centre is too far and to costly and will there be friends who care? Since we have left the gods behind us and believe in god, everybody feels alone and appears to get an attitude of need (*sikap minta*).

Indeed, in particular when people are ill they get frustrated about the lack of *wuon* specialists and the virtual impossibility of doing real effective rituals that involves their own ancestors, let alone the powerful sky beings. If on top of that a praying session doesn't help to improve the situation, uncertainty is blamed on what the others did and do: the Dutch who took and destroyed *wuon* and the Indone-

sians who further on putting Papuans in a structural state of oblivion so that they will be unable to come into power.¹⁵

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

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

The Imyan 'other' will be taken to heaven when Imyan themselves enjoy the greatness of Jesus Christ in their midst. We do not know how this drama will be lived out, but the overcodedness with a contest between good and evil promises no good. What will happen if eventually angels will join devils and devils join angels? In the light of recent massacres at cults that isolated themselves from 'the other' we should not even be surprised to see Imyan putting effort at making the world become flesh (compare Wernick 1999).

If the world does not become flesh, there are other, hopefully more likely options, which Imyan may choose in the future. I have shown that in two senses there is inequality between different traditions of knowledge. The first is inequality that grows from imbalances in the field of power: Haha society's internal struggle is fueled by Kemesrar attacks on the positions of power of certain Mejeffats and the Mejeffat elite's attempt to maintain their leadership positions; the other, directed towards outside, is a shared concern with knowledge and hope vested in the Millennium. In that sense, the precedence of *wuon* over *gereja* and *pemerintah* is a response to colonial and post-colonial incursions. The response is a

search for power and prestige in the 'foreign', and shows continuity with pre-colonial strategies, when Imyan searched for the elements of the foundations of wealth and health that was sought in the sultan's palace on Tidore.

The knowledge needed is out there and is not easily accessible. In the ancient *wuon*-related geography the search was oriented towards the power of *ni mlasa* and the cargo located in Tidore and in practice this meant close scrutiny of people, knowledge, and material items that came either directly from Tidore or through indirect trade lines. Presently, the outward search or attempt to grasp the other's system that is geographically and socially concealed from them encompasses the world and is thus seemingly targetless. Again though, those elements representing the powerful *topoi* in the modern geography and which come within reach of Imyan are subject to their scrutiny. The persuasiveness of the Kemesrar arguments also comes to the *topoi* of power. Having access to certain bodies of knowledge thus also determines the inequality traditions of knowledge.

Pemerintah (supporting Mejeffat power) and in the particular its *pembangunan* symbolism, money, and projects is still a candidate for hegemony among the traditions of knowledge. Oriented towards the church, the school and the government, many Mejeffats mimic the order that provides identities which bear Indonesia's seal of approval and, perhaps more of motivation, because it offers money and prestige. But beneath the cover of all the conversation about the past, the rules of *wuon* and the disciplining of *adat*, Kemesrar people tell of a truth that is grounded in the present day Indonesian sphere. In terms similar to *pemerintah* discourse and 'Mejeffat-speeches', they tend to talk more of the wrongs of tramps, rebels, thieves, Satan, witches, sinners, than of the practical matter of re-installing *wuon*. In this sense both *wuon* and *pemerintah* traditions of knowledge overlap and mutually inform each other.

This meshing exists because both parties hunger for change, that is, change that they themselves can control and therefore requires intervention based on 'traditional' principles. This shows the level of compliance achieved by decades of *pembangunan* (cf. Li 1999). The ontology of the *pemerintah* tradition at the village upholds in many respects the highly valued *adat* principles in much the same way as *wuon* ideologists. Both parties want order and in this longing they share the concern with *wuon*, in particular as it is now safely categorized as *agama*. It thus seems likely that in the future *wuon* will gain precedence over all other traditions. But, in line with the millennial movements among the Urapmin (Papua New Guinea), the Tupi (Brazil), and the Guarani (Paraguay) which Robbins (1999) discusses, *agama* among the Imyan appears not to lead easily to the wished for renewal of everyday life but to an increasing distancing from the government and the church. Change of government and government policy as it is unfolding under

¹⁵ Indonesian propaganda as if effectively works through schooling, books, newspapers, radio and television for decades has indeed put much effort at putting official positions on matters of any sensitivity and to suggest that the history of Papua is one age-old struggle for unity with Indonesia. In a situation in which the army plays a crucial role to control the population it is not surprising to see widespread written histories that tell of heroic military battles in which Papuans play heroic roles (see, for example, *Sejarah Perjuangan* 1989 and compare Ballard 1999:153)

Abdurrachman Wahid's presidency at the moment may well change this and, in particular when there is a chance that Indonesia's easternmost province will gain more autonomy, the tradition of *pemerintah* may again get to shape the ambitions of the youth.

The hegemony of particular traditions thus has to do with the frameworks people use to arrive at what they wish, to get what they want and, as such, reflects their concerns. As the concern is with knowledge, power, order and completion, under a new, perhaps extensively autonomous provincial government, the tradition of *pemerintah* among the Imyan may develop into an ontology that is compatible with present-day *agama*. People may begin to see significant overlaps between the two traditions that may become highlighted more frequently and may be further development along courses of reasoning driven by hope and new ambitions. On the other hand, the new political constellation of Papua may appear to Imyan to possess a large degrees of disorder. In that case, certain degrees of orderliness may be increasingly sought in the tradition of the *gereja*. I want to indicate with these speculations about future events how easily things can change, that the hegemony of a tradition can crumble and yet there is also a considerable degree of order in the foundations from which people select between these different ontological options.

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