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Sajak 1966 kampung Asmat Eer, telah mengalami suatu rangkaian pernyataan kepercayaan akan Tuhan Tanah, sampai sekarang. Selama delapan tahun kepercayaan itu ada, terjadilah perubahan secara lambat laun dalam makanan-buah-buahan kepercayaan tabu, tapi segala perubahan dapat disemperti sebagai bagian dalam rangka "gerakan seribu tahun" (allemarisme) suatu rangkaian perubatan2 yang direncanakan untuk menyebabkan beberapa perubahan pokok dalam cara hidup; setelah itu, perubatan2 "terpilih" akan menimbulkan amanggerah2 istimewa, seperti: menerima pengaruh (pengis) kusa, kakayan dan kebahagiaan.

Tahap pertama, dibawah pimpinan Karsellas Beworbi, ditandai oleh ilham2, bahwa roh yang laris "nemberu" (Tuhan Tanah) akan menganggerahkan harta benda, kemerdekaan1 dan kulit putih kepada masing yang meninggalkan cara hidup yang biasa kepercayaan tebal akan kakasan dan akan Gereja Katolik perlu juga. Mula2 ilham2 dilengkapi dengan barang yang secara diam2 dicuri dari masing. Kepercayaan ini berdasarkan beberapa kasus, dan orang menghentikan pekerjaannya, tapi pelatunan ini disebabkan oleh usaha seorang penduduk kampung, Gabriel Eeripitaj.

Tahap kedua, ketiga, keempat terjadi dibawah pimpinan Soctor Baptes.

Isa mempertahankan dan memperbaiki tata cara kepercayaan semula, tapi fungsi2 nya yang sesungguhnya berubah. Sedangkan Eeripitaj telah menjadi wakil dari pemerintah Indonesia, dengan diangkat menjadi penjabat tertinggi di Eer; berlaku sebagai sahabat masing dengan pekerjaan dan usahanya bagi mereka; dan seorang yang membaharu kampung dengan proyek2 pembangunan, dan karena itu sangat dihormati dan disegani (seorang yang berhubungan, "man of power"), Baptes menjadi seorang pengatur, seorang dukun yang penting dengan kakatan yang dianggap sebagai Tuhan Tanah, seorang yang pendiri berbicara (seorang yang berpengaruh, seorang Orang Beear secara adat Melanasia). Masing2 orang termasuk "fan" atau kelompok suku tertentu, yang berjua untuk menghadir ke-witbawen atau kuasa di kampung. Kepercayaan Tuhan Tanah menjadi jalan yang membawa wibawa kepada kelompok suku Beworbi dan Baptes, dan menyebabkan Baptes menjadi Orang Beear dengan pengaruh terkut di Eer. Daripada suatu pandangan orang Asmat, wajarlah secara intelektual dan rasionil, percaya kepada Baptes dan kepercayaan yang diwakilinya lebih dari pada percaya kepada Eeripitaj, walaupun suasan kebaasan yang dipaksakan dari atas.

Banyak pemuda2 sekarang sudah kurang percaya bahwa Tuhan Tanah akan menganggerahkan barang, kemerdekaan, dan kulit putih. Namun pengaruh Baptes

1Karsellas = kemerdekaan diantara orang2 Asmat yang berbicara bahasa Indonesia.

Since 1966 the Amat village of Eker has undergone a series of manifestations of cargo cult behavior. The latest was during the latter part of 1973, with lingering effects still being felt in early 1974. This paper details the developments surrounding the four major cargo cult manifestations, and then analyses this behavior in terms of (1) progressive functional transformations of a relatively stable cult structure, with a decreasing interest in cargo and concomitant increasing intra-village struggle for power; (2) Sign Man activity as broadly manifested throughout Melanesia; (3) economic and development problems in the Amat region. Following Labaree (1971: 26-7) we recognize that it is doubtful if any single explanation for cargo behavior will suffice. Rather, a cargo cult may best be interpreted as a complex of cultural responses to multicausal factors.

Analytical Background

In categorizing the activities in Eker, we follow Meggitt (1973: 1): A millenarian movement involves a series of actions designed to bring about certain existential changes, after which "the elect" participants will enjoy special benefits such as the acquisition of power, wealth, and happiness. A millenarian (or cargo) cult is that kind of millenarian movement which emphasizes and employs religious - magical doctrines and rituals to explain and achieve its purposes.

Hence it is crucial to recognize that a millenarian movement in its broadest interpretation can follow either Western-recognized processes of political and economic development, or non-Western yet locally recognized processes for achieving the same development status. Lawrence (1967: 274-5) states that an improvement in economic opportunities may lead to the acceptance of development as a satisfactory alternative to cargo cults. Similarly, Pinney (1969: 59-60) has found that cargo cult actions and market-oriented activities can be conceptualized as competing vies open to New Guineans to obtain wealth, and that where favorable preconditions exist commercial activities with their demonstrable returns may well be preferred to cargo cult activities. Fries (1972: personal communication to Frankeschuh) has made similar findings among peoples of southwest Irian Jaya, including the Marind and ‘Ngoppi. As will be shown, for many of Eker’s adult males such commercial and economic opportunities have not been readily accessible. In its earlier stages the cult members chose what to them seemed a more viable alternative: ritualistic methods to attain economic and even ethnic parity with whites. These ritual insights were offered by a few men striving to increase their own power and prestige.

Such a choice was intellectually viable as well. It followed traditionally accepted Amat practice. Lawrence (1970: 238) follows his earlier work in reiterating the importance of analyzing cargo cult behavior along rational - intellectual lines found in the society itself, rather than applying purely sociological analysis. This can be contrasted to the opinion of Durbridge (1960: xvii) that cargo cult participants act via their emotions rather than their intellect. In his comparative study of two New Britain societies Counts (1971) provides further data supportive of Lawrence’s "ethno-intellectual" thesis. Kandokans believes, consistent with a philosophy toward the value of certain long-term activities, that cash cropping and council activities will bring eventual development. These are "something true", whereas Kandokans assume cargo beliefs to be intellectually false because of the troubles which result. Bibinga Range villagers, on the other hand, following established religious - intellectual lines of reason found in their society, wanted immediate material satisfaction and saw cargo cult activities as the most viable alternative. Amat behavior regarding traditional economic opportunities and exploitation of resources is intellectually directed along these same short-term guidelines, and their initial cargo activities were
a logical consequence. After repeated failures to achieve their goals and the desired cargo, the cult leaders gradually modified the functions of the cult toward more political and nsengberg (traditional curer) ends.

**Other Millenarian Cults in Irian Jaya and Amat**

By far the large majority of millenarian cults in Melanesia have been reported in those areas east of Irian Jaya. Yet this seeming disparity in numbers may well be an artifact of research opportunities and reports available. Millenarian activity is probably as widespread in Irian Jaya as elsewhere in Melanesia, as evidenced by a relative increase in recent reports. The Bima area is most heavily represented in this literature (Kanis 1972; Power 1970; Worsley 1968: 78-9; Marin 1967), but other regions are also covered (e.g. Power 1970; van Beal 1969).

Some of Irian Jaya's earliest millenarian cults appeared in the Lake Sentani region in the 1920's (Worsley 1968: 98-9). These were in response to the combined effects of mission and government penetration. For southern Irian Jaya, to date but few published reports have appeared. Van der Kroef (1959) mentions Mesialean movements among the Muu, and Gerbrands (1967: 8) briefly notes a cargo cult among the Amat of the village of Amancai apparently dating back to about 1960. Gerbrands himself was taken to be the reincarnation of an important chief, who had predicted his own return after death with an unlimited supply of white man's goods.

Trenkeschuh (1972: personal communication) has provided the authors with unpublished information and letters relating to millenarian cults in several areas of Irian Jaya. These include cults among the peoples of Kimen, Mumi, and Minaka. In the case of Mumi manifestations in the area near Mindiptana, these began as early as 1949 with a festival whose singing was aimed at changing fruit into shell money. The shell money was then to be used for Western goods. There have been several other somewhat unrelated cult activities in Mumi since then.

Millenarian cults have appeared in several villages of Amat, although in most cases detailed information is lacking. In addition to that in

Amanakai, prior to the 1966 outbreak in Ewer cults were reported in Sjuru, Jepen, Amborep, Manep, and Jamatai. Based on reports from neighboring villages the influence of Ewer's cult has been more powerful than that of any other village. Yet Ewer people first became acquainted with cult activities from people in the other villages mentioned. Subsequent to 1966 cults have been reported in Atae and Ayna. The latter, the cult of the Crocodile Woman, has been described by Trenkeschuh (1970), as have the first three Ewer manifestations.

**Kepercayaan Tuhan Tanah: The "Lord of the Earth" Cult in Ewer**

**Phase I:** During October of 1966 a 27-year-old man named Marcello Beworhij broke into the Catholic pastor's storeroom in Ewer. As the pastor was frequently in Agate, the administrative center of Amat some 10 kilometers away, he did not initially miss the tobacco, money, and clothing which were stolen night after night.

Beworhij began dividing these goods (barang) with others in Ewer, telling them he had received the supplies from Tuhan Tanah, the "Lord of the Earth." Tuhan Tanah had appeared to him and presented a secret key, with which he was able to unlock a hole in the ground from which the barang appeared. It seems the people began to believe his story, and gladly accepted his gifts.

Our informants say that initially no one knew Beworhij was stealing the barang. He thus was able to gather a group of followers about him, all relatives, most of whom belonged to jeg (Amat fan, divided into two socialities) Jower. Central figures at that time included Marcus Jujip, who was Beworhij's younger brother, Soto Tapete, Donatus Duperas, Daniel Fairies, and Jacobus Jemia. All were young men, and most in the probable position of desiring to enhance their own power and prestige, as members of Ewer's most powerful jeg at that time.

Beworhij did in fact become a Big Man, a man of influence, in Ewer. His story was expanded to say that Christ, Mary, and the angels were giving him advice. They had also informed him that on a certain date there would
be a great happening. All believers in Tuhan Tanah would become white, each becoming a tuan⁵. They would receive meraaxa (freedom), and the hole would supply even more barang than before.

All these things would happen if Ewer's people believed in Tuhan Tanah, and rejected all that is traditionally Asmat. Bows, arrows, spears, etc., must be burned, proclaimed Bewornbij. No longer were they to use body paint or the traditional woman's garb (fibers wear). When each became a tuan with white skin such things would be unnecessary. Any such items hidden and not burned would rot; and since their food would come from cana, hunting and gathering would be unnecessary also. There was even a plan to cut down many of the sago palms as they would not be needed⁶.

These events all hinged, said Bewornbij, with the sincerity of the people's beliefs. As a majority of villagers were already baptized Catholics, they were to obtain rosaries and pray fervently each Sunday. In response church attendance shot up, many items were burned, work and sago chopping ground to a halt, and drumming and dancing began. About this time Bewornbij began to wear a star-shaped pin he had stolen. The people began calling him "President".

Also at about this time, Gabriel Eweripitaj returned to the village from the southern coast where he had been working for the Catholic mission. This man is presently Kapala Dasa of Ewer, the village's highest government-appointed position. Even then he was conversant in government activities and widely respected by outsiders as a potential innovator for mission and government programs. It is also extremely important to note that he is a member of Jay Jawi, Jover's chief rival for power in the village during the past decade. Eweripitaj heard of these activities and decided to investigate, as did the pastor who finally had discovered the missing supplies.

While the pastor was unable to pin down the thief due to lack of evidence, Eweripitaj had more success. He hid under the store room and caught Bewornbij stealing more supplies to supplement his revelation that the Virgin Mary would walk through Ewer later that night. Bewornbij begged Eweripitaj to allow him to perform fallatio, the traditional Asmat custom binding one to secrecy. Instead, Eweripitaj reported the incident to the pastor, the head teacher, and government officials in Agats. Bewornbij was arrested for theft and jailed in Agats. The pastor demanded that the people who had received the barang return it; slowly it was brought back.

Making one last attempt at retaining his prestige and power as "President", Bewornbij escaped from jail. He told the people that he had simply "reappeared" in Ewer. Some of the villagers believed him, and festivities quickly began again. However, several people found his canoe in a small river not far from Ewer, and traced his footprints back through the mud. Bewornbij was re-arrested, belief in the cult diminished, and he has since never regained any power or prestige whatsoever. He presently leads a non-descript life, occasionally bringing pig meat to sell to the pastor (not the same man present in 1966). When questioned during November, 1973, one informant stated that people thought it was foolish that Bewornbij had stolen the mission barang. However, this professed attitude has probably developed only recently.

PHASE II: During July of 1963 the teachers and new pastor of Ewer began to notice the villagers remaining home more than usual. Drumming was on the increase, and work was again slowing down. Being unwilling to leave the village, Ewer men refused to paddle the teachers to Agats or bring them food.

It was learned soon after that a middle-aged man named Leo Bejiji had been speaking to the villagers from a comatoso state--nenen gila (as if crazy). He was probably an epileptic, a condition further compounded by a case of Malaria Tropica. Among other things Bejiji had told the people to listen to his cousin Sotor Baptes, one of the ranking members of the faction Bewornbij had built up. Baptes, a cripple since his youth, was able to attract a following owing to his previous association with cult, his close family relationship with Jay Jawi (discussed more fully later), and his position as a medemo (traditional curer) with special contacts to the spirit world.

Through a series of dreams Baptes reported an old bearded man had appeared to him, and offered a key leading to numerous kinds of barang.
The old man also revealed that mendoa was imminent. Other dreams were of
dead people, which he not only reported to the villagers but to the pastor.
Although the pastor told him dreams were not to be feared, like other
primitive peoples Amatters believe dreams of spirits and the dead to be
extensions of reality.

For fear of missing the promised freedom and barang no one dared
leave Ever. However, Gabriel Beberitaj had by this time become Kepala Desa.
He heard rumors of the cult's re-emergence and again quickly reported it to
the government in Agats. Before the situation could develop further Baitjitji
and Baptes were called to Agats and warned of the consequences of such talk.
The village seemingly returned to normal, although secretive talk continued
until the next outbreak occurred.

Phase III: Actually a delayed continuation of the events of 1968,
this phase of the cult surfaced in July, 1969. At this time Beberitaj left
for Sarabaya, Java. Apparently his presence had kept talk underground because
shortly after he left both Baitjitji and Baptes began talking of Tuhan Tanah
more openly again. Baitjitji instructed the people: "What I got from Tuhan,
Mary, and Jesus is in the hands of Baptes. Later Baptes will open everything
and you will have much barang, white skins, and Ever will become a big city".
At this point Baptes began revealing his dreams again.

During early August, participation in the fish cooperative ceased,
and pig hunters no longer brought in pigs. Further belief in the cargo cult
was probably enhanced when Baitjitji died on August 15 due to complications
surrounding his chronic Malaria Tropicca. Baptes quickly emerged as the sole
cult leader, strengthening his position by proclaiming that Baitjitji had not
died at all but would return when Tuhan Tanah opened the hole in the ground
for the emerging barang. Traditional Amat mourning calls for prolonged
wailing and rolling in the mud by close relatives, women in particular.
Hence it was a marked contrast when, due to Baitjitji's supposed return, no
such mourning occurred at his burial. When questioned by the pastor, several
people responded that they had learned from the Catholic religion not to cry
at a funeral, but to pray.

Shortly after the burial, Baptes changed his tact and declared that
he was more powerful than Baitjitji had claimed. Through a dream he revealed
that he had been taken on a world tour. In Sarabaya he had learned Beberitaj
had been shot and killed. Baptes then said: "See what happens to people who
don't believe me. Whoever does not believe will get the same". This convinced
many people even more strongly that Baptes' power was real. Each Thursday they
began to meet at his house to hear further revelations.

Informants reported the following Baptes monologue from one of these
meetings: "We must stand by ourselves. Tuan says that if we stand by
ourselves, our lives will be changed and much better than now. We will undergo
a great change. Our skins will become white and we will have all types of
barang. This will happen only if you believe. Whoever does not believe will
become pigs, or dogs, or fish, or snakes. Also, we must keep this secret.
Whoever reports this to the pastor or to the government will become water".
During other meetings he added that the Amat must be free of Indonesian
influence, and that all the people of Irian Jaya must be prepared to fight for
their freedom 6.

It would therefore be necessary for Amat to have its own government,
and so the following offices were established: President of "Free Amat",
Sutor Baptes; Vice-President, Donatus Doperas (one of Biebowi's original
factions, a close relative of Baptes, and reputed to have special powers from
the spirit world); Governor, Amandus Aman (former Ever leader, presently a
mang leader); Bupati, Mattias Sateu (acting village leader during Beberitaj's
absence). Other offices, all following the established Indonesian government
hierarchy included K.P.S. (Kepala Pemerintahan Setempat), Kepala Distrik,
secretaries, and translators. Since Baptes spoke to the people in Indonesian,
which not all villagers could understand, the latter were deemed necessary.

During October and November, 1969, belief in Ever's millenarian cult
peaked at all-time high. This amount of favor has not apparently been
attained since. There was drumming every week, the pig and fish cooperatives
were dead, people refused to leave the village except when absolutely
necessary to get food, children showed no enthusiasm for school, teachers were
brought no food, and according to Baptes' orders the church was filled each Sunday.

There was a great deal of other activity in the Agas - Beer area during this period, as Catholic and government officials were making plans for the ordination of Father Alphonse Sowada, O.S.C., as first Bishop of Amat. It was general knowledge that many dignitaries would be arriving in Amat for the ordination, and numerous supplies were being brought by air. The central coastal region of Amat has only one airstrip, that being the one in Beer opened May 15, 1967. The bi-monthly flights over the past two years probably had increased the people's interest in barang, although ironically no statements to this effect were made by our informants. It does seem that this mission activity contributed to the high pitch of cult enthusiasm.

Baptes proclaimed that after the November 23rd feast of ordination a "great happening" would take place. He would approach the Archbishop of Merauke when he stepped out of the plane at Beer, and at that moment Amat's flag would arise from the ground. Its colors would be red, white, and blue with a cross. Immediately the ground would open and factories, machines, automobiles, airplanes, clothing, electric generators, boats, medicines, food, and kitchen utensils made from gold Install would appear. Each person would become a ham at that moment, and from then on would never work again. The barang would then be sent to the village of Ayam, which would become capital of Amat.

Word of this revelation spread to other villages, the coastal village of Ous apparently becoming especially convinced of the truth of the reports. Ayam was notified of the role it would play, although why it was chosen is not clear. It may have been an orchestrated attempt to improve upon the animosities between Beer and Ayam which stretch back to pre-contact headhunting times.

A few days prior to November 23, Eserpitaj (reported by Baptes to have been killed in Surabaya) returned to Beer. Baptes, Amat and Sateu quickly went to Agas and asked the government to remove him as Kapala Dene. When their request was refused rumors began spreading of a duel which would result in Eserpitaj's death. The more that Eserpitaj investigated the cult activities, the more vigorously the cult's leaders lobbied against him.

A great deal of excitement accompanied the November 23rd feast of ordination, but when Baptes' revelations were not realized he twice rescheduled the "great happening". However, during December the government demanded a full report on the cult. This was provided by Eserpitaj and two other villagers. The members of the cult's Amat "government" were called to Agas and warned of the consequences which continued cult activity would bring about. Baptes merely declared he had been aiding the Catholic mission by promoting better attendance at church. Yet this pressure by the government was enough to diminish enthusiasm in Keperoayauan Tuhan Tanah once again.

PHASE IV: Due to the fear of government reprisals and the continued presence of Eserpitaj in the village as Kapala Dene, little information surfaced about the relative strength of the cult from 1970 through 1972. However, enough information was obtained to indicate that cult beliefs persisted. Baptes was regularly consulted as one having special contacts with spirits, and was called on in his role as a nimbo to divine and cure illness. While the structure and organization of the Beer cult has remained essentially the same since 1966, it is in the increasing power and prestige gained by cult leaders in their developing roles as nimbo that functional transformations are evidenced.

Near the end of May, 1970, the wife of one of the villagers who had helped Eserpitaj prepare his report for the government died. Some recalled Baptes' earlier statement that anyone revealing cult secrets to the government would die. Others reported that an increase in illness in Beer at that time was due to Eserpitaj's continued reporting of the people's secrets to the government.

During late 1970 and 1971 an informal program of maternity aid was attempted in Beer. The wife of the pastor's assistant, a Kai Islander, volunteered to assist Beer women with childbirth. As part of the program she trained teenage Amat girls to assist in preparation, delivery, and disposal of the afterbirth. Eserpitaj also assisted. Shortly after one afterbirth
had been buried, a teenage assistant became ill. Baptes quickly spread the word that this had resulted from her work with the afterbirth. He added that Bawripitaj never became ill because of his special relationship to the Catholic mission and the various pastors he had helped. The girl soon thereafter quit as assistant, and despite Baptes’ proclamation that this resulted from her fear of the illness, it is likely that being a member of the Jem Jower she was pressured into quitting by Baptes’ supporters. Because of these incidents and a general lack of enthusiasm for the program, it was discontinued.

Even less information was available about cult undercurrents during 1972. Yet in some neighboring Asmat villages the phrase “Kepersayaran Tuhan Tanah” had been heard by 1973, and has recently been heard in connection with cult activities in the Mayu and Kimar areas. The emphasis in Bawer, although still paying lip-service to barang, has narrowed down to a power struggle between certain members of the three Jem Jowers, Jowijof, and Darkau; an emergence of a new generation of Big Men; and a general dislike for outside interventions by the government, missions, and non-Asmat teachers.

As a member of Jowijof, it was apparent by February, 1972, that Bawripitaj’s position as Kapala Dessa was still under bombardment by Jower. But only through hindsight can the connection be made with cult rumblings since the spokesman for Jower was Jacobus Bawripitaj. Serving as Kapala Kaping village he had never been linked to the cult although he had been openly resentful of Bawripitaj’s authority. He had been a powerful headhunter, in contrast to the younger Bawripitaj, and had retained prestige as a tampuspi (traditional man of importance) because of his war feats. During an open meeting Savri was said that Emmanuel Jimstraj, a Jower man who had recently died unexpectedly, had been working too hard as a result of Bawripitaj’s harsh orders. “All the people” wanted a younger, more flexible Kapala Dessa who would truly listen to everyone and consult them prior to giving orders, he said.

Such complaints continued, but further information about the cult per se did not surface again for fifteen months. Then on May 10, 1973, much to the teacher’s surprise, three students openly revealed to the class the new members of “government” in the cult. Sutor Bawrius remained as President, with a new man named Didimus Dukas as Baptes. Donatus Doperas had now assumed the title Kepala Dessa, with another new name being that of Julius Jirjan as Waid Dessa. A list of members had been drawn up which included the names of teenage boys, and children. It was stated that after years of unfulfilled revelations the group wanted results. Hence an asphalt airstrip would be needed, with young Bawer men becoming pilots. How this would be accomplished went unstated. It was also said the school must be made of cement, with a zinc roof.

The latest manifestation finally came more clearly to the surface during August, 1973. A man named Fajuru from the neighboring village of Pan died suddenly after a jungle trip. Before he died he told of a snake he had met in the jungle. The creature had a book and a key (both symbols used by cult leaders in Bawer during the three previous phases). The snake threatened Fajuru with death if he did not take the book and key, but as he was afraid he refused. Because of his death as the snake had predicted the story quickly reached Bawer. (One Asmat man who helped spread the story is a Catholic catechist and teacher in Pan, who originates from Bawer.)

During August and September, 1973, the non-Asmat teachers again reported that villagers were not bringing them food. The pastor’s Kai assistant was also not receiving the food which he normally purchased from the villagers. By October it was noted there was a general lack of enthusiasm for village projects and work. Some people believed the pastor should pay them for cleaning up the village, and others mentioned their desire for non-Asmat teachers to leave. Man complained that zinc roofing should not go on the new teacher’s house, but on the Dessa office instead (for a variety of reasons this request was met by the government and implemented in January, 1974). One evening after a small fight between the Kai assistant’s son and an Asmat boy, the latter’s father threatened the Kai boy and told him: “outsiders are not wanted in Bawer.”
Climbing for a new Kepala Desa peaked again in October, and once again in November. One of the men mentioned to fill Ekerpitaj's office was Paulus Potes of Jem Jower. It seems his name had been picked somewhat at random, as he himself had not been in Aga for some time. He had deserted his wife (as Asmat teacher) to hunt crocodiles, and although he later returned it was general belief even among the villagers that he was hard to get along with. Those pushing for Ekerpitaj's removal stated Potes would be able to argue for higher prices for native products sold in Aga. Ekerpitaj was always pushing for government projects and hard work, but was not able to arrange things to suit the people. He also does not know how to read or write, they pointed out, and does not sit in his office enough. Yet in November, when there was the opportunity for a village-wide vote to replace Ekerpitaj, the overt Jower/ covert cargo cult faction could not muster enough support for any of the men it had variously proposed.

On September 28, 1973, fifty Aga men had gone to Aga to sign up for wage labor with an oil exploration company that had recently opened operations in the interior Asmat region. Although these men repeatedly prepared to leave to begin their contract, they were time and again forced to wait owing to various company delays. Yet enthusiasm for the wage labor continued at a very high pitch. However, none of the cult's leaders signed up, nor expressed much interest in the possibilities of such work. When in early October a group of Aga men returned from an unsuccessful crocodile hunt to the Minika region, they were further frustrated to learn that they had missed their chance to sign up for wage labor. Baptes told them not to worry, as they would soon receive barang from Tuhan Tanah.

It was also during October, 1973, that Baptes spoke with Paulus Potes' wife. He told her that, although he appeared to be a cripple, the pastor had recently seen him with two perfectly good legs, walking normally. Thus the theme of the power of the church and the pastor, which was prevalent in the earlier cult manifestations, is still present.

Analysis and Conclusions

PROGRESSIVE FUNCTIONAL CULT TRANSFORMATIONS: Over a period of eight years Aga's millenarian cult has remained viable. Its four major manifestations indicate that belief in the cult has remained generally widespread, extending at times beyond the village. As of 1974, Sotor Baptes has become ever increasingly a strong Big Man, a man of influence. Several informants, both in Aga and its sister village Sjuru, state flatly that Baptes is now the most influential man in Aga. All this has taken place despite the fulfilment of not a single revelation, and despite the continued presence of Ekerpitaj as Kepala Desa. We propose that this can be explained in part by the progressive functional transformation of the cult while its structure and organization have remained essentially the same.

The first cult outbreak occurred in 1966. Jem Jower and Jem Jowijof were the two most powerful of the village's six fam at that time, but Jower had the edge. Its man held the highest government-appointed position, and both Sukai and his son Jacobus SakaPJaitaj were considered extremely influential based upon their war feats prior to 1953. Jowijof definitely wanted to increase its own power, but was unable to do so until Ekerpitaj became Kepala Desa in 1968. It is our contention that the inter-fam power struggle which has become increasingly pronounced since 1968 is one facet of the cargo cult's functional transformation.

But in 1966 this was not the motivation behind the cult. Bewombij is a member of Jower. Hence by first gathering a close-knit group of supporters from Jower and his own extended family he was in the ideal position to capitalize upon his membership in this fam. He has no particular Asmat-recognized charisma nor special attributes, so it is probable that he is a member of another fam the cult's success would have been uncertain.

That the people were extremely hopeful of receiving the promised barang was, of course, another factor in his favor.

Baitijiji and Baptes took over control of the cult at the most crucial period in its eight years existence. Belief in Tuhan Tanah as the provider of barang was still present, but after his failure of 1966 Bewombij
had no other personal attribute or influence with which to continue mustering
support in his drive to become a truly Big Man. It is probably no coincidence
that shortly after Bweripitaj became Kepala Desa, shifting the balance of
power toward Jowijof, that Saijitjii and Baptes revived interest in the cult.
From the viewpoint of cult leadership the functional transformation was in
full swing, because not only did Baptes want to become a Big Man, Jower was
now in a secondary power position. From the viewpoint of the villagers the
cult's structure (and apparent function) was the same as before.

Evidence is circumstantial but it appears that Sakarpitaj may have
been behind some of Baptes' maneuver. Both are members of the same extended
family and Baptes' wife is a member of Jower. Throughout Melanesia it is
rather unusual for a man as young as Baptes (c. 25 years) to command such
widespread influence; the older men often pay little attention to "young
upstarts". This would seem to be particularly so among the Amat since feats
of war and headhunting are no longer alternatives by which a young man can
gain prestige. With Sakarpitaj's support Baptes would have been assured of
solid village backing, and not merely among younger people or Jower members.
(Some members of Jowijof could also be included here since Sakarpitaj'
influence reaches across Jow lines into that fan as well.) Furthermore, as
became obvious during Phase IV Sakarpitaj would very much like to see
Bweripitaj removed as Kepala Desa.

Jener Darau, although not as powerful as Jower or Jowijof, commands
a unique position in the village. It has a large membership, among those
Baptes himself and Donatus Doperas. Its importance in the inter-jiw power
struggle can best be understood by digressing long enough to explain the
basic kinship organization pattern in Amat. It can be termed Hawaiian in
that it is broadly classificatory and generational, hence can be
conceptualized horizontally rather than vertically. Lineages and clans are
not recognized. A dualistic worldview is found in many aspects of Amat life,
including the division of each fan into moieties and the idea that each fan
is represented by a spirit world fan of the same name whose membership must
be kept in balance with the real-world fan via the proper number of births
and deaths. Another aspect of dualism and balance was the primary element of
revenge in traditional warfare and headhunting raids.

Complementing both the classificatory kin system and the dualistic
fan system is a spatial orientation regarding fan membership. In part this
means that, although one generally retains the ascribed membership in the fan
and moiety of one's father, this can be altered if the total village fan
system is perceived to be out of balance. The houses of any one fan tend to
be grouped in the same part of the village. However, a man of a different fan
can usually build his hut in a different fan's section if he has family ties
there, strong friendships, or intentions of improving his own position in the
village. Over time such a spatial orientation can be translated into a change
in fan membership. By requesting permission from the respective fan leaders
(who consult each other as well as spirit world fan leaders) a switch can be
made. Informants tell us that Baptes has come close to switching from Darau
to Jower on several occasions, and his hut is located in Jower's section. Yet
by maintaining Darau membership he is in a better position by which to
solicit extensive support from both Darau and Jower.

It is among the younger men of Jower that the balance of power is
being actively fought over, much of it by means of Kerpecyaan Tuhan Tanah.
What is reflected as power at the fan level is the result of striving for
influence at the individual level. Those belonging to Jowijof are less active
than those of Jower and Darau. Yet influential older men such as Sakarpitaj,
Bweripitaj, and some of the fan leaders play a strong role in what power
shifts actually do occur.

Politico-economic explanations for cargo cults have in recent years
been overshadowed by the status- and relative-deprivation theories advanced
by Burridge, Cochrane, and Aberle (the latter regarding peyote usage among
certain American Indians). The intellectual versus emotional aspect is yet
another approach as has already been mentioned, and will be detailed regarding
the Amat in the next section. Yet as Strathern (1971: 255) points out, in
many parts of Melanesia status actually depends on success in political and
economic ventures. Worsley (1968; 1977) is the principal advocate of politico-
economic explanations. He makes several points which are applicable to the present analysis. Cults usually occur among peoples divided into small, separate, narrow, and isolated social units (1960: 277), for the Asmat this being the village and its fans. Since such a highly segmented society is incapable of offering large-scale resistance to outside influence or takeover, a millenarian cult is one way by which this segmentation can be overcome and a common front presented. Worlley believes such millenarian movements usually take religious forms because jealousies and inter-segment rivalries can be more easily overcome if the leader projects his message onto a supernatural plane which transcends the effects of segmentation (1960: 237). Sotot Baptes has skillfully maneuvered his own fan membership such that inter-fan politics are working in his favor and against Beirptaj. This political leverage has enhanced his own status not only as cult leader but as an "organizer". In the latter role aspiring Big Men among the Asmat need not necessarily have their organized plan or activity implemented each time. It is often enough that other men listen to them and respect them. Specific economic factors relating to these political considerations are discussed in the final portion of this section.

Political protest per se was clearly manifest during Phase III; as an alternative to Indonesian government cult leaders offered their own "Asmat government" and a plan to attain nereda. Dalton (1973: i-71-3) and Stalker (1963: 32, i-3-5) clearly illustrate that under the pressure of imposed development and modernisation processes degenerative or dysfunctional changes in socio-political organisation will occur unless acceptable alternative forms are provided by the change agents or the society itself. An acceptable alternative was Kerewayam Tuhan Tanah and the leadership offered by Baptes and his "government". While certainly not succeeding with their plan these organizers were able to unite most of Beir in a common front. This in itself provided a measure of success, and is one element in the cult's successful functional transformation.

A classic example of the progressive functional transformation of a social movement, while the structure and organization remained essentially the same, is provided by Heringer (1975). In the United States in the 1930's the Townsend Movement was begun to provide national pensions for the aged as a mechanism for alleviating economic dislocation. But within a few years social issues shifted such that the movement was deprived of the conditions necessary to continue operations. In order to maintain membership and perpetuate the organisation itself (not the Townsend Movement per se) new functions were introduced. Beir's cult leaders have done the same. During Phase III barang and mar disks obtained through Tuhan Tanah were stated functions of the cult, as were they during Phase IV but to a lesser extent. A progressive functional transformation has actually occurred, however, since Baptes first assumed control. Intra-village politics, traditional curing by ndemboro, and the concomitant rise of Baptes and Julius Jiriman as Big Men have emerged as primary functions. The following structural characteristics have remained essentially the same: The offices and titles held by the cult's leaders; the use of certain symbols, such as the book and the key; the special role of the Catholic pastor, prayer, and the church; dislike for outsiders and outside intervention; the belief in Tuhan Tanah as cult inspiration and provider. The continually stated functions of obtaining barang and nereda have become fixed structural rather than functional characteristics; the cult thrives despite a general belief today among younger people that Tuhan Tanah will not provide barang nor white skin, and that Bewormbij was a fraud.

THE ROLE OF THE BIG MAN IN ASMAT: We have used the term Big Man in a broad sense, as it has been applied to many Melanesian societies by various fieldworkers. Viewed broadly within the framework of transitional Asmat Society a Big Man is a man of influence, an organizer. Sahlin (1968: 166) summarises the characteristics of a Big Man, stating that in order to obtain the obedience of his followers he must "demonstrate that he possesses the kinds of skills that command respect—magical powers, gardening prowess,
mastery of oratorical style, perhaps bravery in war and feud. Typically
decisive is the deployment of one's skills and efforts in a certain direction:
towards amassed goods ... and distributing them in ways which build a name
for cavalier generosity ....". In Bwar various of these traits apply to
Bewormbijn, Baptes, Jirinian, and Sakarpitaj.

Gabriel Bwerpitaj does not display any of these skills. He commands
respect not because of traditionally recognized attributes or acts but due
to the office he holds. It is the missionaries and government officials,
more so than his fellow Asmatiers, who respect him for his Christian lifestyle,
dedication to job, persistence in carrying out government instructions, and
hard work. He is a man of power in that he is representative of power. This
in itself serves to clarify the interface between traditional and imposed
leadership patterns that he represents. It also points out that despite the
strong leadership he has offered it is only external to traditional Asmat
values. Power, as Wirking (1973) states, is an aspect of institutionalized
political hierarchies and functions best where information and authority
pass through a chain of internal command. Such does not exist in Asmat other
than that imposed by change agents; the chain of "internal" command is in
fact only internalized in the administrative center of Agats. Hayano's (1973:
306) generalization about the changes occurring among highland New Guinea's
Tanu villagers is applicable to the transitional Asmat as exemplified by
Bwerpitaj: "Perhaps the term 'Big Man' is no longer appropriate for men whose
political power and economic wealth extend far beyond traditional boundaries
..."

It is useful to briefly compare some of the types of Big Man studied
in other Melanesian societies. For the Tolai Epstein (1972: 152-3) has
summarized the main characteristics of the traditional Big Man system:
(1) absence of established political office; (2) achieved socio-political
status, deriving in large part from the Big Man's accumulation of shell money;
(3) well-rounded political expertise, the Big Man often having to be a
successful organizer, manager, arbitrator, innovator, financier, and war
leader all rolled into one; (4) egalitarianism, so that while a leader the
Big Man can still convince others he is one of them; (5) thriftiness versus
generosity, such that resources are managed well yet generosity shown when
necessary; (6) parochial powers, the Big Man's rise dependent upon the
support of a loyal faction. Later expansion of influence was dependent upon
effective utilization of established social and economic relations with
individuals and groups outside his own faction; (7) nature of personal
powers, such that regularized political groups and hereditary succession to
political power did not develop. Elements of all seven categories have
appeared in the development of Bwar's cult and leadership system, this
particularly worth emphasizing since Epstein's article focuses on the Big Man
system, not millenarian cults. Hence the real value in this comparison is the
illustration of the Bwer cult as a vehicle for the rise of transitional Big
Men.

A theory presented by Cochrane (1970: 11-14, 152-4) further
clarifies the relationship of the Big Man to society. Traditionally he was a
microcosm of his society and as such his status was a matter of concern for
everyone. His status was their status. But with European contact such status
was destroyed. Cargo cults, writes Cochrane, are attempts to remedy this
situation by making Europeans and other change agents recognize these
traditional status concepts. Furthermore, Europeans were to recognize that
Big Man were their equals, this being far more important than actually
acquiring European goods. To this we would agree regarding the Bwer situation
but must add two needed clarifications. First, the perceptions of the cult's
leaders and the cult's followers are very different, as are their motives for
participation. Status recognition among the cult's leaders is far more
important to them than it is to their followers, and conversely the
accumulation of barang is more important to the followers than it is to
leaders. The former is a traditional felt need while the latter is an induced
need; accumulation of wealth among the Asmat was not generally present nor a
means by which one could gain prestige. Second, the Bwer cult is not only
aimed at obtaining the proper recognition of change agents, it is more importantly a viable vehicle by which some men can attain Big Man status in a transitional society. Other villagers have chosen wage labor by which hopefully to attain such status, as is detailed in the final portion of this section.

As Beer's most influential Big Man, Soter Baptes does not accumulate and distribute wealth. His "cavalier generosity" is manifested in a very different and, for the Amat, more important manner. Baptes is a ndembero, the village's most influential curer, and in this role actively distributes advice and cures. To understand the ndembero is to understand a portion of the Amat system of spiritual beliefs. The traditional Amat universe; not surprisingly, is filled with a variety of spirits (piapia). Those of the spirit world jam have been described and there are numerous others associated with sago grounds, fishing areas, etc. But in the coastal region near Agats the most important spirit is the ndembero which is associated with the village as a whole. This spirit dwells in the earth. When rendered into Indonesian by Amat matters themselves it is called Tuhan Tanah—the Lord of the Earth.

In precontact times as today the ndembero was the provider of valuable advice (among other things), especially regarding ways to secure medicinal substances from the jungle and administer them. Such advice is transmitted to selected people at night when the spiritual ndembero chooses to enter the home. The first visitation is particularly important since prior to that night the person supposedly has no knowledge that he or she will be selected. While under a trance or in a dream the person is told of his role and receives some of the necessary information. At that point he becomes a ndembero himself although the spiritual ndembero does not enter his body. He will retain this role for the rest of his life in most cases. Sometimes subsequent visitations are frequent and sometimes years may pass before the spiritual ndembero returns to give further advice. In the interim the person is free to practice traditional cures (and apply cures as well, but this is not restricted to ndembero).

At any one time in a village there are several ndembero. Beer presently has about six to eight, its sister village Sjuru fifteen. Each has varying degrees of knowledge, ability, and experience and each has a concomitant degree of prestige which is recognized generally throughout the village. Baptes and Diriman are recognized as the most prestigious of Beer's ndembero at present, this going hand-in-hand with their roles as cargo cult leaders. Each role has served to solidify the other, and it seems certain that if either man were not prestigious in both roles he would not have become an influential Big Man. Were he to have relied solely on prestige derived from the cult Baptes may have met the same fate as Beworshij after repeated unfulfilled revelations. Were he to have relied solely on prestige derived from his role as ndembero he would not have been able to attain the type of Big Man status previously afforded tegeajip (cargo leaders), i.e., women can also gain prestige as ndembero.

The belief in Tuhan Tanah as provider of barang and mana is therefore a belief in the spiritual ndembero's ability to extend his powers such that not only advice but goods and freedom are provided from a hole in the earth. Following Lawrence (1970: 238) this is indeed rational—intellectual from the Amat point of view. Further, the belief in a spiritual ndembero is complemented by a belief in the curing powers of the village ndembero. Baptes followed Beworshij's lead by strongly advocating prayer and church attendance, therefore blending traditional and Christian spiritual beliefs into the cult's structure. He has also stressed the special powers held by the pastor. The Catholic church is recognized as a potential threat to the cult's existence as well as a source of belief (or power) with which to unite the village's segmented social order. While minimizing the threat by more fully incorporating elements of the church, Beworshij and Baptes were able to gain also access to elements by which to better maneuver in their drives to become more influential. The entire cargo cult belief complex is a rational, intellectualized, and orderly system. Traditional and non-traditional elements neatly complement one another.
The road for Baptes has not been lined entirely with wine and roses. He perceived the maternity aid program as a real threat and was instrumental in its loss of popularity. Beerpitaj and the Indonesian government have threatened the cult numerous times. As a cripple he has made extravagant claims of health ("the Pastor saw me walking normally with two good legs") countered at other times by explanations for his crippled condition. One informant from Baptes' fan, Darkau, related that his initial desire for cult leadership was a result of wishing to avenge his crippling. A man named Daumbui from jam Toso, along with his daughter, Hakever, secretly entered the house one night when Baptes (a young boy at the time) was sleeping. Both were powerful memberger and without disturbing him rubbed his legs with a jungle medicine. The next morning when he awoke his legs ached. Supposedly it was not long before they withered to their present shape. Whether Baptes later enacted a curse or applied malevolent medicine to anyone of fan Toso is not known, but the element of revenge in order to restore balance is common among memberger. Baptes likely invented this description of his crippling at a much later date and used it, in part, to justify his expanding memberger and Big Man influence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PATHS AND PROBLEMS: Baptes and Jiriman have strengthened the role of the Big Man in Beer. Prestigious attributes of a traditional nature are showing a resurgence. Village unity has been strengthened. But the functional transformation of the cult in this direction has left increasingly little room for accommodation to development programs and integration with mission and government policies. Furthermore, while it is now apparent that many young men in Beer would prefer to become men of influence rather than men of power, very few can take the path chosen by Baptes. There is "little room at the top". The cult has become oriented toward maintaining its own leaders in positions of influence.

With the arrival in Amat during August, 1973, of the I.S.S.A. (Indonesia Surveys S.A.), oil exploration company a viable alternative for attaining potential Big Man status was presented. Through a labor subcontractor I.S.S.A. on September 28 began registering men from Beer and most other central coastal villages for proposed three-month labor contracts in the interior. Many more wanted to be placed on the labor rolls but only 50 from each village were initially permitted to register. Once listed the men were told to return to their villages and wait to be called.

We surveyed the situation in four villages including Beer, and sampled attitudes toward the proposed labor activities. Nowhere did the enthusiasm for the labor reach the feverish pitch attained in Beer. Despite unforeseen delays that forced most of the various villages to wait over two months before many of their men could leave, Beer's enthusiasm remained extremely high. Most of the Beer men, in contrast to other villages, moved into small bivouacs in Agate to be as close to the source of labor information as possible. With this feverish enthusiasm came numerous rumors, particularly regarding the amount of money to be earned and the reasons for the delays. Of 16 Beer men sampled at random from the list of 50, four expected to earn 500 to 1100 rupiah (U.S. $1.22 to $2.68) per day. Actual starting pay was 125 rp. per day. All expected to be able to buy far more than even their wage expectations would permit. None of the delays was most frequently placed upon Beerpitaj for "not being able to arrange things with the company". In reality Beerpitaj had been granted no hand in such matters.

Labor positions were available for only nine Beer men during October. Each of the men who went has been identified as a younger man (less than 35 years) who had been previously striving to attain a position of influence and who had already succeeded to some extent. The 50 men decided among themselves who would fill these positions, hence those men used their prior influence to override the others. Due to problems with equipment and supplies a setback was made by I.S.S.A. in December, and the nine returned after completing only two months work. The men were paid only upon completion of the labor, each receiving about 8000 rp. (U.S. $19.50) cash. They also brought back mosquito nets, tennis shoes, towels, and blankets which had previously been deducted automatically from their wages.
Despite the discrepancy (recognized by many of the men) between their expected and actual earnings, all professed pleasure with the amount received. However, it was in the reactions of the villagers to the tems "badges", and the brash and boisterous manner by which the nine walked about the village, that their increased prestige could be observed. All had participated in a unique economic activity in a distant location, in itself a prestigious event (Hayano 1973: 305-6). We believe that at least one, and perhaps two, of the nine men has subsequently become widely recognized as a Big Man in Bwur.

Baptes, Jiriman, and the other "officials" of the cult did not participate in the waga labor nor show interest in it. They have chosen a successful though alternative path toward becoming Big Man; many of those who engaged in labor are hopeful of achieving similar results. In the analytical background to this study we presented findings from other research (Lawrence 1967: 274-5; Finney 1969: 59-60; Friens 1972; Counts 1971) which indicate that viable cultural alternatives are often chosen over potential cargo cult activity. The problem for change agents concerned with integrating these people into the mainstream of development, a path irrevocably chosen by the Indonesian government for the Amat, is in recognizing the pivotal position occupied by the Big Man in traditional as well as transitional society. Granted that cargo cult activity is not an acceptable alternative from a change agent's viewpoint, whereas wage labor is. Both alternatives share common ramifications which must be understood. The requirements for becoming a Big Man have not changed, nor should they necessarily, and we hope that our study has clarified the alternative paths available to the Amat people at whom development is aimed.

NOTES
1 Both authors have had first-hand contact with the cult and its members, one (D. E.G.) through mission activities and the other (F. N.W.) through anthropological fieldwork.
2 Kema's book is based on his original pioneering study of 1951, De Maleananse Koloniale Bewegingen in het Blasa - Noemfoorres Cultuur Gebied (The Hague: Voorhoeve). As quoted by Lalanne (1971: 32) Oostervald states that Kema provides "... a model anthropological study on cargo cults... especially the element of time... and the important 'mythological' explanation..." (emphasis Oostervald's).
3 We are indebted to Father Frank Frenkemadch, O. S. C., for his valuable insights and encouragement in the preparation of this article.
4 As simple Indonesian was widely understood in Bwur even at that time, it is very doubtful if confusion occurred between the two similar sounding words Tuhan and tuan. In local usage tuan is a term of respect applied to whites with the same connotations as the "master" (master) used by Pidgin-speaking peoples of Papua New Guinea (q.v. Finney 1969: 65). But tuan is also used to refer to any Amat man who is in charge of a household, fishing area, or sago palm—all areas of economic strength in Amat society.
5 Fortunately this was not done, as no scheme of reforestation was employed by the Amat, and the sago area under control of Bwur (a relatively large village with a population of 778 at that time) is less plentiful than those of neighboring coastal villages. Such an action would have caused a severe and prolonged food shortage since new sago palms do not mature for about six years.
6 These declarations were delivered just prior to Papera, Irian Jaya's "Act of Free Choice", in August, 1969. Papua-Papuan anti-Indonesian sentiments were strong in some areas of Irian Jaya at that time.
7 During early November a gold-plated paten was stolen from the Bwur church, along with a small gospel book and confessionals stole. All were returned two weeks later. Some people later reported that copies of the Bible were sent to practice with these items, which he claimed to have received from Tuhan Tunah, since after the "great happening" Amat people would need as pastors.
8 When questioned in November, 1973, one informant in Duas said only that he "had heard" (ndah dengar) of these activities of 1969.
We invariably found that informants initially responding this way knew a great deal of specific information, which they were willing to reveal after rapport had been established.

9. This program was deemed vital because stringent Amat taboos prevent childbirth in the home. Except for those who give birth in Agas' hospital, women give birth in the nearby jungle, frequently unassisted. The afterbirth is believed to be very dangerous. Among those Amatis who speak Indonesian it is referred to only indirectly, as &lqom&grft (older sibling).

10. It is more likely that Sakuraytaj was maneuvering for his own advantage, recognizing that younger men do not have his advantage of being a teemajitic. The full extent of his deception was not uncovered until November, 1973, when we learned that Ranueal Jumtajitaj's death was commonly attributed to a curse cast by a powerful woman member of jaj Jowdogy, not to "overwork".

11. At about this same time a teenage boy who had graduated from elementary school in a neighboring village came to the pastor in Bwer. He presented his diploma and asked that he be enrolled in Bwer's new Amat pilot school.

12. The snake which speaks to Pajuru is a new symbol in the cult complex. One informant told us he believed it to be Tuhan Tanah or perhaps another spirit. Meggitt (1973: 23, 28-9) cites examples where snakes have served as aids in achieving millenarian goals. Worley (1968: 55-6) states that snakes have widespread importance in Melanesian cult doctrines, being commonly believed to be reincarnations of spirits of dead persons.

13. Informants clearly have repeated that Tuhan Tanah and the Christians' Tuhan Allah are not related. They are separate spirit entities.

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THE ASMAT BIS POLE: ITS BACKGROUND AND MEANING

Abraham Kuruwai

IKHTISAR:


Kat Mbi berasal dari Mbi atau nqat, yang berarti araw orang yang telah meninggal dunia. Mbi adalah perwujudan kenyataan daripada Mbi yang tak kelihatan.

Masyarakat orang Asmat, araw orang mati, terutama araw Kepala perang dapat ditemukan kembali melalui pengukiran dan upacara patung Mbi. Patung Mbi diukir dari kayu fisik dan sements. Patung itu diremas dan disucikan dalam masyarakat upacara dengan darah seorang mumi yang telah dipenggal kepala. Kemudian patung tersebut dicat dengan warna putih yang dibakar dari api, warna merah dari betu kapur, warna hitam dari arang.

Daser, arti dan makna patung Mbi dan ukiran lain dalam dunia Asmat, berpangkal pada keyakinan dan pandangan yang telah berakar dalam dirinya.

Sesuatu yang diyakininya itu merupakan jawaban atas pertanyaan2 manusia yang existensiil tentang dirinya sendiri. Pertanyaan2 itu timbul dari pengalaman peristiwa hidup se-hari2, yaitu "Dari manakah dan kemanakah manusia itu, dari manakah keselamatan, sengsara dan natau".

Sesuatu pertanyaan itu dirumuskan sebagai jawaban dan diyakininya sebagai sesuatu kekataan Allah yang bersedia dilihat bala kemuman manusia. Kesuatu Allah itu dijumpai Samu atau Namu.

Samu itu mempunyai hubungan yang sangat erat hubungannya dengan Mbi atau araw orang yang telah meninggal dunia. Mbu, dengan bantuan samu memperagai seluruh kegiatan hidup manusia. Karena itu, bila manusia mau hidup behagia, ia harus mengukir sebuah patung manusia (Mbi), agar araw orang yang telah meninggal dunia itu datang dan membahagiakan manusia.

Patung Mbi itu sendiri diukir diberi nama, sesuai dengan nama orang yang telah meninggal dunia. Dengan demikian patung Mbi mempunyai arti dan pengaruh yang besar dalam masyarakat Asmat:

1. Mbi sebagai lambang kehadiran nenek moyang. Arghen nenek moyang ditemukan kembali melalui Mbi dan mendapat pengaruh yang nyata dalam masyarakat.
2. Tanggung jawab dan balasan. Orang yang masih hidup harus mengukir Mbi dan membunuh seorang mumi sebagai ganti sedaran yang telah meninggal.
5. Kesinambungan dan kenangan. Untuk mengukirkan perasaan kebersamaan dan mengangkat kembali serta mendatangkan kebaikan yang telah meninggal dunia.

Kesemua ini hanya mempunyai satu tujuan, yaitu memperoleh hidup yang lebih bahagia.

Part I. The general basis, meaning and function of Asmat carvings and art

Although it is true that Asmat carvings have their own unique basis, meaning and function within Asmat society, it is just as true that their art shares the basic principles of art found anywhere in the world (e.g. they also follow the "canons" of beauty, the art also serves to evoke images from the mind and memory of the observer, etc.).

Various factors are at work in the urge for artistic expression and creativity. The most obvious element is simply a desire for self-expression and self-satisfaction of the artist himself. This can be said to be a basic human drive since without it man's life has no purpose as human, as unique from lower animal forms of life. The need for self-expression is uniquely human and therefore common to all mankind.

A part of this need for self-expression (and therefore an urge for self-fulfillment or, in other words, a desire for happiness) goes deeper than merely material forms. The creative drive finds its expression in the creation of myths. A myth, here, may simply be defined as an attempt of man to answer...
for himself and his fellows pressing questions which arise from the stark reality of life and death. The myth externalizes in artistic form the internal cohesion man evolves relative to his own existence. It is with "myth making" that men express their own understanding and grasp of their existence as finite and extremely limited.

In Asmat we find that there are two myths which encapsulate both the artistic urge and the painfully evolved awareness of their jungle existence. These are the myths concerning the origin of the Mars (as carving and as feast) and the Amusipit Myths or the story of human creation. These are intimately related to Asmat’s conception of life and death and their own cultural norms for present and ultimate happiness. It is possible to find in these stories the foundation for their culture and an expression of personal and communal awareness of the Asmat People.

Briefly this awareness is an expression of their conclusion that there must be something which transcends their own human limitations and adds power to ordinary existence (especially at the "crisis points" of existence such as birth and death). This transcendent power is attributed to their long-dead ancestors. It is believed that the souls of the ancestors remain present and active in daily life and so deserve and expect respect and attention from those still living in Asmat.

There is in the Asmat belief system an awareness that their ancestors (as described in their myths) are involved in every aspect of human existence: economic, social, political and religious. They express their reverence for the mythical (and, to them, real) ancestors by means of their carvings, their art. By their art they make a concrete act of faith in the abiding presence of the ancestors.

With this background it is obvious that they turn their artistic attention to material things basic to the daily existence of the Asmat people — the drum, the spear, the war shield, the large canoes and its paddles. If the ancestral world is involved in every aspect of mundane existence then their art testifies to this presence. For purposes of this general introduction I would like to briefly add six general comments:

1) Asmat carvings are symbols of the real presence of the ancestors in daily existence.

2) Carvings are signs to the ancestors and to the living that responsibility for un-avenged deaths has not been forgotten. They signify to the ancestors that they have not been forgotten and so avoid punishment by un-avenged ancestors. From this it is clear that their art is also part of their general "military strategy" of planning for warfare and revenge.

3) Asmat carvings are memorials to dead heroes which pay respect to these cultural heroes (especially the great war leaders) of the past.

4) Carvings promote both spiritual salvation and physical security of the Asmat people — since it is by means of these physical carvings that the ancestors are spiritually present and exercise their power to the advantage of the living.

5) Asmat carvings are expressions of beauty — intended by the artist to please the eye of the ancestral observers and so solicit their protective presence.

6) Carvings express the inner emotions and feelings of the Asmat people as well as their intellectual awareness of ancestral presence. This is especially clear in times of suffering, fear and joy when the emotions find concrete expression in artistic form.

Asmat Carvings as Symbols

Above I use the expressions "symbol" and "sign" which should be clarified for this discussion. If much of our conclusions hinge on the symbolic value of Asmat carvings and art it is essential to distinguish these symbolic concepts from the more common-place signs.
Briefly, and simply, a sign is always obvious in its meaning which is often not directly related to the sign itself. Red is a sign of danger. A red flashing light is a sign of danger on the highway. These, however, are arbitrary signs since red, in its essence, need not signify danger and does so only by convention. Natural signs are more obvious and essentially linked to their meanings ... smoke is naturally a sign of fire, the sun is naturally a sign of light.

Symbols are quite different. A concrete symbol is indeed visible and open to the five senses but what is symbolised is not obvious in itself and often difficult to discern. Usually a symbol's meaning is drawn from personal awareness and so has deep resonances. Briefly: A symbol is an expression of meaning without obvious relationship to its often hidden meaning.

Asmat art or carvings are in many ways signs but they are also symbolic expressions or symbols. What is produced has immediate sign value. The carving of a hornbill signifies that bird. What the carver symbolises, however, is the fact that the year-bird (i.e. hornbill) eats fruit the way the Asmat eats human flesh. The hornbill is therefore a symbol first of all Asmat (i.e. humans) and secondarily by application, a symbol of the war leaders. To grasp the signified meaning is easy. To grasp the symbolic concept the observer must be immersed in the daily existence and cultural dictates of the Asmat who alone possess and define this symbolic value. Understanding of the symbol requires no less than grasping the culture, the personality and the basis of living shared by those who "own" the symbol.

A non-Asmat example may help to illustrate this meaning. To the Christian the cross is a symbol because Jesus Christ died on the Cross. In itself the cross, to those knowing crucifixion as a way of punishment or death, is a sign of death but to the believer in Christ, the cross symbolises the Christian conception of life and death. Another example from the Christian tradition is the sharing of a meal — which in itself is a easily recognisable sign of fraternity. Only the Christian understands the symbolic value in the "breaking of the bread".

The same application within Asmat culture may be made of Asmat art and carvings. Like the Christian Cross, what is symbolised has sacred implications and is power-filled ... not so much in itself as in its relationship to or with the sources of power. This is true whether we speak of the Christian God or (in Asmat) the presence of the Ancestors.

Part II. The Bis Pole or Bis Ancestral Carving

The meaning of "bis"

The Asmat word "bis" is derived from the word abis or mist which is generally translated as the spirit or soul of the dead (this will be amplified later in the discussion of the Asmat concept of "spirit"). Bis itself defines a carving made of a person who has fallen in battle or even someone who has died under more normal circumstances.

In the Asmat belief system, the bis is the focal point for renewed contact with a dead person. In this sense the bis can be called a substitute for the dead person, thus associating the two words bis and mist ... or abis. Extending this sense, the word bis also comes to mean the identification of such a memorial with the dead person himself.

The Asmat language lends itself to multiple interpretations of a single word because the verb forms are often identical to noun forms. Thus, to illustrate, atakan is the verb "to speak". It also defines language (Asmat Atakan = Asmat language). It is also the noun form for "word". In a similar way the word ban means both "hand" and "to hold".

Within the cultural framework of Asmat, the Bis is defined as a memorial carving and a symbol of the abiding presence of the spirit(s) of the dead which effects a relationship between still-living and already-dead.

Physically the Bis consists of several figures of humans, animals and objects carved one atop another with a large protruding wing carved from the "flying" root of the tree used for the carving itself. The lower portion of the bis is tapered in order to facilitate planting it in the ground upon completion. The bis can reach an impressive height of six to eight meters although smaller ones are made (especially now for commercial rather than religious purposes).
If the big is classified by its external appearance or size there are two types:

1. The large/temporary big

The very large big (as above mentioned, it can be up to six or eight meters in height) is considered to be temporary due to its brief use within the village or men's house. Shortly after the feast is finished the big is removed from the village site to be placed to rot in the sago areas of the people and so to impregnate the sago with health through the power of the represented ancestral spirits. Occasionally such a pole is retained in the men's house (yew) which is the focal point of all village activities.1

2. The small/permanent big

Usually smaller versions of the big are carved to be used in the village itself, especially in the men's house (yew). This is called "permanent" because it is retained inside the building rather than placed outside where the soft wood quickly rots. In this capacity it is called upon to obtain the assistance of an abiding spirit, especially in times of need such as before a battle, before the hunt, etc.

Each of these two types share the basic meanings within the Amat culture. It is possible now to stress five points of meaning associated with the big.

1. Symbols of Ancestral Presence

As will be more clearly developed throughout this presentation, the awareness of the continued and active presence of ancestors among the Amat people gives rise to the big feast and the big carving or big pole. The actual physical carving (in human form or animal representations such as year bird, kuskus, crow, etc.) symbolizes this belief. Such symbols are also found in the carvings on more ordinary objects of daily usage such as the canoe and its paddles, etc.

2. Reminder of Revenge-Obligation

Amat society places great importance upon the obligation to revenge any death but especially the death of one killed in battle. The people feel a deep obligation to avenge a death by killing an enemy and so restoring the balance of their society. Failure in this obligation (especially in the cannibalistic feast following the killing) involves rendering the spirit impotent in his obligation to the ongoing renewal of life among the Amat people. Death becomes the seed of renewed life. This belief and sentiment is present especially in the carving and feast of the big.

3. Physical and Spiritual Health

As mentioned above, the spiritual and material welfare of the Amat people is associated with the presence of the spirits of the dead, especially the presence of mythical heroes among whom Pumuirits is the most important since he is the human creator of the visible world. The carving of the big, associated with revenge killings and the cannibalistic feast, opens the relationship with the spirit world (the ancestral world) and so assures physical and spiritual security. The various decorations on the carving testify to this relationship. The praying mantis, year bird and crocodile figures represent fruit and meat eating animals which come to symbolize cannibalism and its involvement with life-renewing forces.

4. Fertility

Fertility is not merely central and important to human continuity (i.e. to the Amat or "human") but is also essential to the animal world, to the sago areas and the abundant supply of sago within the trees. This association with fertility can be seen from the following:

a) In the big-cemen and the big cem with literally means the penis and vagina of the big.

b) At the closing of the big feast a general "celebration" of sexual intercourse is held by everyone participating in the feast.
c) The big is transported to the sago areas after the feast and implanted there to assure fertility of the sago trees.

d) The turtle is frequently represented in the carvings .... since to the Asmat the abundant turtle eggs symbolise ultimate fertility.

5. Beauty

As mentioned earlier the beauty-aspect of the carving appeals to the human need for beauty. In the big, however, the elaborate painting and decorating of the finished carving (often imitating decorations common to the ancestor being recalled by the carving) also attracts the attention and full compliment of spiritual powers so assuring the desired security and warding off non-desired evil forces.

The Distribution of the Big

According to researchers in the Asmat area, the Asmat people form at least three large groupings: the Rismen, the Sisai and the Serao. The big takes its origin from the Rismen group which lives between the Unir and Bata rivers including the villages of Beak, Sjuru, Yepen, Par, Wa, Bira-Lunt, Atay, Amasankai, Yow, Ambanu, Dannau, Atambay, Omasano and Oceans. The word big, as above mentioned, translates into both the carving and the spirits represented by the carvings. The word man means "to make" or "to work at".

Rismen = Carvers of the Big.

Although linguistically obvious, as well as clear from other factors, that the big originates with the above mentioned villages, the big and its feast also been adopted by the Sisai groupings as well as the Serao peoples of the deeper- interior. Due to differences in these territories there are also some variations in both the carving itself and the concomitant feast. In the latter two groups, a different type tree is used and the feast (and the carving itself) is explained by different mythical tales.

The diffusion of the big probably arises from the expansion of the Rismen people into the territories of the two other groupings through warfare.

On the other hand it seems clear that the people of the interior, usually of smaller villages, often came into contact with the coastal Rismen when they came to the sea to reap the more fertile area's bounty.

Although it is clear that the big has now extended to the villages of Yosaker, Kalmo, On, Apok, Beo, Fos and Warkai, this diffusion process still requires further research. Such investigation would be of great value since we have been trying to demonstrate how clearly the big is an indicator of Asmat cultural patterns, beliefs and customs.

Two Myths on the Origin of the Big

Although there are many variations in the myth of the big, I intend to use two main variants in this study. The first is that most closely associated with the villages of Ataj and Amasankai and the second originates from the villages of Beak and Sjuru. The first story is told by Budi (of Ataj) and basically repeated by Powos, Topoka and Namasak (of Amasankai) as well as Ommak (or Ona nesep).

BIG ATAJAN: The Story of the Big. (from Ataj area)

On the Siretey river there was long ago a place called Sitan where a man named Beworitis and his wife Teworaat and their two children lived. Far away from Sitan, at the mouth of the Siretey river, there lived two brothers whose names were Tewor and Seita. They lived in a difficult place where there was hunger and sicknesses as well as constant warfare.

Seita was a very outgoing and cheerful person who enjoyed causing excitement. Since their village was always in a real state of danger from attack, his brother Tewor constantly advised him to be more quiet. One day Tewor had hardly finished admonishing his brother to be quiet when both of

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1 The Siretey River derives its name from the word Surku which is a place of paradise without hunger or want. Beworitis is living in paradise while Seita does not.
then were confronted by the sudden appearance of a stranger. Beworpits had left Sitin to go hunting for some human flesh. As Beworpits quietly approached the two brothers he carefully observed his surroundings and knew that the village was empty except for the two brothers. At once he threw his spear and killed Sitakap. Tewar quickly escaped. Without delay Beworpits cut off Sitakap's head and sliced up his body. He loaded the head and the meat into his canoe and returned home toward Sitin. As he approached Sitin his wife saw him and welcomed him with great joy... throwing white lime into the air to demonstrate her excitement.

From all ends of the village the people came running. Everyone accompanied the head of Sitakap to their men's house and began the feast of human flesh. They carefully divided the meat and threw Sitakap's bones into the fire to burn. They then began beating their drums and dancing.

Suddenly they heard a strange voice coming from the bones of Sitakap which were burning in the fire. The voice asked Beworpits about the songs that they were singing as they celebrated. Beworpits replied that they were singing the Paiko Song which celebrates the successful hunt. Sitakap then told Beworpits that from now on they must sing as he would teach them. Beworpits said that he was ready to learn the new song.

Sitakap began explaining that he was really not dead but that he had already made the canoe trip to the village of his ancestors to live with them. The place was to the west beyond the sea. He told them that he had taken the trip by way of the river Ayi and so arrived in the place of his ancestors where everyone lived in peace and happiness.

The ancestors had instructed him, he explained, to return and give to the people a new custom, a way of life which would keep them in relation with their ancestors. He explained that he was bringing a way of life which must be followed to assure happiness. He also brought a new song which should be used at the feast of human flesh:

SEITIG - SEITIG MBABA-MBARE
AYA MBAPA, MBUEA MANO-MANO
SIREPA MBUEA MANO-MANO

Sitakap-Sitakap, you have been lost
You went by way of the Ayi River
You have returned, you have returned
For me you have returned

Sitakap explained that the song was strictly taboo and could only be used by male adults and then with great reverence. He promised that the ancestors would always aid, protect and strengthen those who remained on earth so long as they would prepare a place or means of meeting with these ancestors. To do this they must make a carving of those who had died and give it the same name as that of the dead. If the dead man's wife and children are also dead, they too must be included in this carving. This would be the Bia.

Following the directions of Sitakap, Beworpits immediately cut down a tree and began asking the first Bia carving. Is the carving progressing all of the women went into the main house and began drumming and dancing. When the men had returned from the jungle with the tree all of the women resisted their entry into the village just as they would ward off an attacking enemy. In this way did the large log enter the village and the men's house. All of the men were then instructed to sing another new song before beginning their work on the Bia.

MBEIS NDIA IPA MBISA WAIY PAIMATSI
YAKA NDIA IPA MBIS MEB, NDIA IPI WISAI NDIA
FINDINYI IPA PEONA FARIYA NDIA IPI YEU BAK-E
His! Dance and hide with a peaceful heart
His! You have proceeded me and are now hidden
You dance the dance that comes from your heart
The hair on your head moves and there is a union between seen and unseen.

When they had sung this song they began to rough out the carving using only a stone axe. They first carved Bewropsit's father who was already dead. Now on the command of the ancestors, Seitakap ordered them to sanctify the carving with human blood which they had drawn from the head and the body they had eaten. Seitakap told them that it was only with blood that the bis would become powerful and to their advantage.

From that day to this day the Amat People have always made carvings of the dead and named them bis. They also make other carvings of men but these are not called bis but Eave or Kavanak.

From the village of Ewer an alternate myth explaining the origin of the bis was told by Gabriel Bewropsit and Sahrpons. This account basically agrees with versions of the same story told by several carvers (i.e. now ipite) of the village of Sjuru (David Siand, Wof, Safaspo, Yakai and Seloem).

**HIS ATAKAM II: The Story of the Bis (Ewer-Sjuru area)**

On the upper reaches of the Siretry River there is a place called Kaimo. Long ago in Kaimo there lived a man named Darew and his wife, Mbis. They lived a contented and happy life. Mbis was an exceptionally beautiful woman who was very friendly and very kind. On the other hand, Darew had a terrible personality. Darew was very jealous and spiteful man who had a quick temper and was always angry. Darew married Mbis and from the first day of their marriage he, out of jealousy, absolutely forbade Mbis to leave their house. He covered his wife with a large sleeping mat and whenever he left the house he blocked shut the door.

Mbis' parents were named Bewropsit and Teveraut. Darew had forbidden Mbis' parents and relatives even to visit the house. Mbis' family and even everyone in the village resented this prohibition.

Mbis never was allowed outside the house. Darew himself went hunting and went out searching for food. He even prepared the food and gave it to Mbis. But in a short time Mbis grew more and more thin. Her health got worse and worse. The village people kept their distance from Darew and Mbis — partially because of this strange behavior and partially because Mbis' body was now terribly dirty and had a very foul odor because she could not go out to wash herself. The villagers advised Darew to change his ways but Darew merely gave them a cold shoulder and refused to pay any attention to them.

One day Darew went out fishing with some of the other people of the village. As usual Mbis had been left alone behind the closed door. Jumping at this occasion Mbis' relatives quickly opened the door and set her free. When they saw how very thin and weak she had become they all began to cry for her. Then they took her down to the river and gave her a good bath. Then they took her to their own house and gave her some new clothing.

After Mbis had eaten some good food they took her to the upper regions of the Siretry river. For the trip they took along their fishing supplies and covered Mbis with a large sleeping mat on the floor of the canoe so that nobody could see her. An observer would suppose that they were going fishing. Mbis' family paddled the canoe as swiftly as possible in the hope that they would not meet any others who were out fishing.

They continued rowing until they reached the mouth of a small river called Sitam. Mbis got out of the canoe and began walking along the shore of the Sitam river. Without any delay her family set out to return to their village.

When her family had gone Mbis continued to walk until she was suddenly confronted by a large cassowary bird. She asked the bird, "All you be my friend?" The Cassowary replied, "Yes, I will lead you and I will become your foster-sister .... I will lead the way and you will follow me". So Mbis and the Cassowary began their journey together.

By now Mbis' relatives had returned to Kaimo and saw that Darew had proceeded them to the village. From his canoe Darew saw that many trees had
just been cut down. He jumped out of his canoe and saw that the door to his house had been forced open. He was very excited and most unhappy. Slowly he entered his house and was surprised that Mbis was gone. He began to scream and to cry very loudly. Everyone heard his mourning and gathered around his house. They asked him what was the matter. He cried that his wife had gone and he didn't know where she was. The people began to mock him saying: "It's your own fault! Why did you lock her up in your own house?"

Mbis' family had come ashore and now told Daren that they themselves had set Mbis free. They told him that they had taken her upstream and released her at the Otten river. After that, they told him, they had no idea where she had gone. Daren made no attempt to reply and merely continued his weeping day and night. Finally he became very sick and his voice left him (because of his crying). He died in his house and the people left his body there to rot.

All this time Mbis and the Cassowary were walking day and night. Mbis began to feel very hungry and finally asked the bird for some Sago. The Cassowary offered some Sago to Mbis but refused to eat anything for itself. They then began to walk again until they heard some sort of a weak noise such as that made by a large boat. The sound was not clear but Mbis and the bird began walking toward its source. (They later found that the noise came from a man called Pupurpits who was blowing a bamboo horn.)

Mbis and the Cassowary rested for the night but at dawn they began to search for the source of the sound. They went for three days and for three nights and finally they knew that they were near to the sound of the sound. They saw that it was coming from the top of a very tall Timboot tree.

Near the tree they saw a man and his wife who were the parents of Pupurpits. They were gathering firewood. As Mbis and the Cassowaty saw this, Mbis hid behind a tree as the Cassowary approached Pupurpits' parents.

Teveraut saw the Cassowary and yelled to her husband who at once tried to spear the bird. The Cassowary fled into the jungle but then again returned and showed itself to Beworpirits, Pupurpits' father and his mother, Teveraut. Beworpirits again tried to spear the bird who again ran into the jungle for a second time. Beworpirits tried to circle behind the cassowary.

As soon as Beworpirits had gone in search of the bird, Mbis showed herself to Teveraut and told her that her name was Mbis. The woman replied, "My name is Teveraut and my husband's name is Beworpirits. He isn't here now. He is hunting a cassowary". A second time Mbis said, "My name is Mbis. My mother's name is also Teveraut but she is from Kaimo. The bird your husband is trying to kill is my foster mother."

At this Teveraut called to her husband and when he came she explained everything to him. They all sat down together and cried. Then they returned to their house. When they arrived in the village Teveraut and Mbis remained in the canoe while Beworpirits went toward the house. Everyone asked him, "Beworpirits ... where is your wife?" He replied, "She is sick and stayed in the canoe". Then the people left him alone and Beworpirits called to Teveraut and Mbis telling them to come ashore. They left the canoe and went straight into the house where they concealed Mbis beneath a sleeping mat.

Then they went and called Pupurpits for the evening meal. When Pupurpits came down from the tree Beworpirits replaced him and continued to blow the bamboo horn. As Pupurpits sat down to eat, his mother suddenly threw back the sleeping mat and exposed Mbis to his view. Thus Pupurpits and Mbis were married.

That night the village people continued to hear the sound of the bamboo horn. They knew that whoever was blowing the horn it couldn't be Pupurpits but had to be someone else. The next morning everyone gathered by Beworpirits' house and started to ask who was blowing the horn last night. Pupurpits replied that Beworpirits had been blowing the horn. At the same time he announced that his parents had given him a bride. She was a young beauty from the village of Kaimo whose name was Mbis. At once several women from the village who had hoped that they would marry Pupurpits came out and tried to drive Mbis from the village. Pupurpits drove them away from his house.

Some time later Mbis decided to go fishing. Pupurpits remained home and dreamed about the face of his beautiful wife. He tried to think of a way that this beautiful woman could always remain near him. To fulfill his wish, he found a piece of wood and carved a statue which looked just like Mbis.
He named the carving Mibis.

Everyone who saw what Fupupite had done at once began to imitate his actions. They all carved statues of those who were not present at that time. They called these carvings Mabis although each carver also gave a particular name to his own carving, recalling the name of the person remembered by the Mbis.

From that day to this very day the Asmat people carve the Mabis.

If we try to evaluate these two myths and view their respective differences, it seems clear that the first story is a more direct answer to the existential questions of the Asmat people. It seems to apply more concretely to the reality of the situation which confronts the Asmat people: it answers their fears, explains enemy situations, provides concrete regulations, provides for social cohesion and offers hope for the future of the people.

Obviously Seita is attempting to initiate and provide a tradition. He sets down regulations for a feast which is, at base, to provide a linkage between contemporary Asmat men and the ancestral world. In other words the Mibis and its feast intends to provide a transcendent relationship with the non-visible world.

If this is true than the first myth (Ataj-Awanakai) is for the Bismian group a central myth which provides a succinct formulation of man, his place and his life in this world. The second myth (Sjuru-Keer) is interesting but seems to be superimposed on an already existing pattern and so is not concerned with the definition of that pattern — which is the case of the first myth.

The Bis as a Human Figure

Within the complex of Asmat art we find many motifs such as recurrent animal themes, physical objects, etc. It is, however, in the human figure itself that we find Asmat art's central motif. It is in the Bis itself that both the external and internal expressions of "Asmat Anthropology" become evident. The actual human carving and its decorations is merely a testimonial to superficial evidence. There is, however, an implied meaning associated with the carving which is not externally or obviously present.

This is, as said above, the symbolic meaning, the integrated reply to the existential questions arising within Asmat society. This is, of course, more obvious in the actual execution of the carving and the essential celebration of the concomitant feast. The feast interprets the meaning of the concrete manifestation of the feast ... the Bis itself.

Within the complex of the feast the Asmatter affirms that man does indeed rule the world — both physical and spiritual. It affirms the relationship of these (i.e. spiritual and material) and the relationship or continuity of the present with the past. The feast is an exposition of these tenets of Asmat culture.

Identification of the Bis and its Various Parts

The Bis or carving consists of three distinct parts: the Bis-anakat or main body of the carving; the Bis oamen or penis of the Bis (the wing-like projection) and the ari and Bino or canoes and base portion used to "plant" the Bis in the ground. Each of these three main parts have many minor parts:

1. Bis-anakat, or body of the Bis which is the central figure or theme of the carving. Its most distinctive parts are:
   a) Bis or body hair including pubic regions as well as head-hair. This is always painted black (charcoal) associated with the color of many birds as well as the color of the Asmat's skin.
   b) Wakanget — the mark or ridge delineating the hair from the forehead. This is usually red in color.
   c) Dumbiyof — the decoration of the nasal area.
   d) Dikanew — wood or shell as nasal decoration.
   e) Dwi — ear decorations, usually made of the leaves of the sago palm.
f) Sep — this designates the arm itself but the word itself actually means the upper bone of the arm.
g) Lenter — the feet of the big carving.
h) Kiki — lines carved and colored to represent the location of the bones in the human body.
i) Tiriopin — semi-circular cuts which represent the breast/chest area.
j) Cenem — penis.
k) Cen — vagina.
l) Yipa — carving of a child placed above the main figures on the big.

Each of these, unless otherwise described, is usually painted red color (water mixed with red clay). The remainder, i.e., largest body portions, is made white by application of wet lime.

II. Big Cenem or Penis of the Big

This entire section, which appears as an ornate "wing" protruding forward from the top of the figure is called the Big Cenem (literally the carving's penis). It is basically a phallic/fertility symbol as the source of life-enriching forces. This is heavily decorated with human figures, birds, human heads, etc. Its various parts are:

a) Tir-Mhibicom — the head/beak of the Yearbird (Borneo). 
b) Okon — the lowest section of the "wing" which is usually triangular in shape.
c) Bis — the mouth which appears either as a circle or as a square (in which case it is called Mianam).
d) Donou — human head; often many heads are included in the carving, probably representing the enemies who were killed by the represented war leader.
e) Asukofesi — the tail of the Kuskus (marsupial opossum like animal), the spine of the crocodile or fish. These represent the bravery of the war leader.

f) Yannak — ears which are represented by carved circular figures.
g) Yampo — the lower portion of a bird's neck — usually carved in triangular form with the point upward.
h) Tanamo — the opposite side of the yampo (cf. above).
i) Yamsenkom — the point of contact between the main body of the carving (i.e. big-anakat) and this penis section (big-cenem).

III. Cj and Bino — The lower portion and canoe figure.

The word cj means "canoe" while bino merely designates the sharpened lowest portion of the big which is stuck into the ground to hold the big upright. Often within the small canoe (cj) a sago bowl is carved (mumus) as an offering of food to the ancestral world by the family of the newly deceased.

The Big-polombul or the Feast of the Big

The Big-polombul or Big Feast is celebrated at the request of a war leader and the concurrence of the family of the recently deceased in whose honour the feast is to be held. The feast develops in stages and usually lasts six or seven months from beginning to end. The stages of the feast are associated with the various phases of progress in the actual carving process of the big. Using these phases the feast can be divided into six more or less distinct units:

1. The Opening of the Feast

The feast actually begins at the time when there is agreement that a big should be carved. At that time the war leader blows the bamboo horn and gathers all the males together in front of the raw (men's house). He commands all the men to decorate their bodies and to re-paint their canoes. After this has been completed all of the men go into the jungle to search for the proper tree to be used for the carving. They depart from the village amid much shouting and excitement just as if they were going into battle. The women remain in the village and, contrary to normal times, enter the men's house to drum, dance and sing. The dance at this stage is called Ndi.
When the men have found and agreed upon the desired tree, they are divided into three groups. One group is sent to the sago area to gather young sago leaves. The second group goes ashore near the tree and begins to clear out the undergrowth in the area around the tree. The third group remains in their canoes to act as guards.

When the first group has returned with the bunches of young sago leaves, they begin to tie these leaves to the trunk of the tree. Once the tree is properly decked out in these leaves the men return to the village site where the war-leader orders everyone to go into the jungle to cut down sago trees which will then fill with sago grubs (i.e. the larvae of the capricorn beetle ... from the time the tree is cut until the larvae are properly developed takes from 30-40 days. Translator). This terminates the first phase of the feast.

2. The Transport of the Bis Tree

The second phase of the feast begins when the villagers have returned to the village from the sago areas. Again and the din typical before a battle and with full body decorations the men leave for the spot where the tree has been prepared. The women return to the men's house as soon as all the men leave the village and again begin drumming and dancing as before.

When the men have arrived in the place where the bis-tree has been singled out and decorated, some are again sent out to fish, others to gather more sago leaves and still others to hunt the bird Pakepoe (which is a type of yellow sparrow). The rest of the men who remain are further divided into two groupings coinciding with the two sections of the men's house. One group goes ashore to prepare to load the log and the others remain in their canoes in preparation for mock battle with those who will later load the log into the canoes.

Those who have gone ashore approach the tree as if they were approaching an enemy. The war leader, who is carried on the shoulders of his relatives, on a sign from his in-laws and relatives, climbs onto the tree.

He then lists the name of six enemies that he has personally killed. He then makes a few chops at the tree and comes down. He is immediately replaced by another war leader who recounts the name of five enemy that he has killed. He also chops at the tree with his axe. This process is repeated until the tree finally tumbles down.

Once the tree has fallen, those ashore simulate battle with those who have remained in their canoes. This "battle" continues until those who have gone fishing and hunting return to the site. At that time they place human and cassowary bones on the log and some spears. They then decorate the log with the sago leaves and tie the fish and birds to the log. When this decoration is completed the main war leader measures out the log for the bis carving and so determines at this point the carving's ultimate length. Another war leader then begins cutting at the designated spot but then stops and enumerates several more enemies who he has slain. The cutting is then turned over to another war leader who finishes the cut. Before they take a rest they cut off a portion of the very top of the tree to use in carving a small canoe and a sago dish (ambasoe).

3. The Return to the Village

After a brief rest period they drag the log to their canoes to carry it back to the village. If the bis will be a small carving it is placed inside the canoe itself for the trip. If it is to be a very large pole it must be tied to the canoe and towed to the village site. When they near the village they approach very quietly and slowly.

4. The Reception of the Bis in the Village

All during this period the women have remained drumming and dancing in the Pek. When they hear the approach of the men some of the women run from the men's house and hide themselves behind the reeds along the river bank. Once they see the men approaching they run from their hiding places and return to the Pek to report to those who had remained drumming. Everyone grabs for weapons (spears, knives, sticks, etc.) As the men approach the shore in front of the men's house the women initially pretend that they are unaware of
their arrival but finally they begin to throw ashes and lime into the air.

The war leader sees this display and shouts at the women, "Who is in our place?" The women refuse to answer and so the war leader repeats the question a second time. One of the main women comes from the yew and asks, "Who are you? This is the place of our ancestors!" When the men hear this reply they begin to beat the sides of their canoes with their paddles to frighten the women with the resulting din. The men withdraw a bit and allow the women to leave the men's house and then they come ashore. As they leave their canoes they are met by a fierce attack of the women using their sticks, spears, etc. During the "battle" some of the men frequently receive serious wounds.

When the attack has ended the women return to their own houses and the men drag the pole into the man's house and place it on the bark of a tree called yinembot.

5. The Carving Process within the Men's House

After properly positioning the log on the bark mat, the war leader himself begins to chip at the pole to form the rough outline of a human figure(s). He then enumerates ten enemy he has personally slain.

Once the rough outline of the figure(s) is finished the actual carving is turned over to an expert carver or carvers. The process of finishing out a rough outline of the finished project is then completed by these artists. When this phase is completed the log is carried into a specially prepared room partitioned off within the yew (men's house) which is called the sower. It is in the relative privacy of this room that the finishing touches are made section by section. Each section has its own ceremonial observances associated with the progress of the carving.

6. Rituals Observed During the Carving Process

Since the big is divided into three main sections, so there are separate rituals associated with the carving of each of these sections:

A. Ritual for the Bis-Cemen

The first area to be finished out is the bis-cemen (i.e., phallic section). At this point all of the men gather to give a proper name to the big itself. The name coincides with the name of the victim or dead person who is commemorated by the carving and the feast. When the formal name has been given all of the carvers and the guards are fed by the family of the person in whose honor the carving is being made.

When the naming process is completed the artists then finish the cemen-section in its final form. During this time the family of the remembered person hunts for a pig and brings it into the men's house. The women are invited to share the meat. This again becomes an occasion for a mock battle which lasts far into the night.

To close this portion of the feast the villagers go out to gather fish, sago, sago grubs, etc. The food is divided throughout the village and the cemen-phase of the feast is terminated.

B. Ritual for the Bis-Anakat

The trunk of the carving (i.e., bis anakat) is the next section to be completed. This usually consists of several carved human figures, both male and female. As the trunk nears completion the war leader summons the men to announce that the village should prepare for war. The men then leave in search of an enemy and the carvers continue to proceed with the final section of the carving (al and bino).

When the warriors return to the village with human flesh and the human heads taken in battle, they draw off all the blood from their victims and "sanctify" the entire carving by rubbing it with human blood. Special attention and care is given to the vital organs of the carved figures: eyes, mouth, sexual organs, etc.

When this feast is completed the war leader again orders everyone to the jungle to cut down more sago trees to prepare for sago grubs. From this time to the termination of the feast there is drumming and dancing every night. As before, from the time the tree is cut until the grubs are "ripe" takes 30-40 days. This determines the duration of this phase of the feast.
C. Ritual for the Ci and Biso

This is the closing phase of the entire feast, the war leader sends the people into the jungle to spend four days preparing sago. They return to the village and gather all the food inside the men's house. The next day they return to the sago area to "harvest" the sago grubs from the trees which had been cut a month earlier. These grubs are taken first to the individual homes and wrapped in the tawahirim leaves and then carried into the men's house.

On this same day as the grubs are being gathered the men finish the biso and paint it with the red, white and black paint, as described above.

Toward evening of that day everyone gathers in front of the yew and all the food is divided and carried back to the private homes. All again return to the men's house.

At this point the biso, newly completed and brilliant in fresh colors, is carried from its special room (ecawor) into the main section of the yew and placed on the floor. Several men rip off a section of the roofing of the house and partially elevate the pole to display it to those gathered in front of the yew. This results in a general mourning for the dead who are commemorated by the carving.

When the crying has stopped everyone returns to their houses to get their drums. They begin dancing and singing and drumming until daylight. At this time everyone has sexual intercourse.

After daybreak and the end of the drumming and intercourse session the biso is taken from the men's house and moved to its predetermined spot in the sago area. Before the men return to the village after erecting the biso in the sago grove, they break off the head of the carving so that the biso will be unable to obstruct anyone passing near the spot in his travels.

When this group returns to the village the feast of the biso is considered finished without further ado.

Part III. Interpretation of the Biso and its Background

Interpreting the Myths of Origin

When we generalize and say that the biso is a portrait of the over-all plan of the life and death of an ancestor, we also generalize and say that the biso myth is a portrait of the origins, life and destiny of man himself. As we have seen above, this is true because especially in traditional societies the myth is firmly implanted in the consciousness of the society and provides basic answers to the questions of man's limited existence.

In comparing the two biso myths (i.e. from Ataj area and from Buer area) we concluded that especially the first (i.e. Ataj area's) myth most clearly attempts to confront existential questions. Although we cannot point to or posit a scientific approach within the myth (i.e. the myth does not provide a systematic, sequential and logically patterned answer) we can conclude that the myths do embody an Amat philosophy or anthropology. In "interpretation" of the myths we are really looking for the Amat's life views: his cosmological, ontological and anthropological insights.

Initially it can be said that Seitaqap and Tewer, in the first myth, symbolize or represent all mankind. The earth itself is man's abode which, according to the Amat conception, has existed for man from eternity. Man arrives in an already existing universe. Man simply appears from Sefan through the cooperation of three forces: parents, ancestors and generalised life-giving powers (which could also be called "creative energy" or absolute power .... which will be discussed below).

Sefan is the world of those who formerly inhabited the earth (i.e. lived in Amat). It is also the "kingdom" of the ancestors which is situated simply across the sea, to the west. The cyclic existence is clear; man is born in Amat, he grows and dies to enter the stage of ancestral existence from which he returns in guise of "life giving power" for those still in Amat.

This is a continuous and cyclic process: man is born, lives and dies. At death he enters a second level of earthly existence prior to settlement in the place of the ancestors. Movement from this plane of existence
(intended to be temporary) depends upon the activity of those relatives who still live. They must celebrate a special sharing of food, etc. so that the departed soul can continue its journey through to the ancestral abode.

Once the soul has arrived in Safan he is "made complete" by the action of the ancestors and is enabled to return to the first level of existence at the time of the bis celebration. This return from the third level of existence to the first or earthly level of existence enables him to enrich and assist those still living. If no remembrance is made, no bis celebration is held, new life and happiness cannot flow into human existence from the ancestral world.

Interpretation of the background of the bis and its mythological setting leads us to conclude that for the Himan there are three levels (or phases or places) of existence:

1. The Contemporary World or Place of the Living

The world is typified in the myth by the place of Sitakap and Teweraut (Tower = Teweraut) which is located near the mouth of the Siretoy river. This is typified as a place of fearful existence, war, suffering, and finally death as the ultimate threat. These difficulties arise from the second level of existence which can be overcome by aid of those in the first and third levels of existence. However difficult a place this world may be, it is also a place with a potential for happiness due to the assistance of the ancestral beings.

2. The World of the Dead

The world of the dead is intended to be a very temporary place depending on the concern of a few people who continue as relatives at the first level of existence. Within the myths this is Sitan, the home of Beworpiris, which is considered an evil place. All spirits who are forced by neglect of the living to remain permanently in Sitan are considered dangerous — the cause of all the suffering and difficulties on level I (i.e. the contemporary world). These permanent dwellers also try to prevent new spirits from leaving, from progressing to the final level or the ancestral abode.

This shows the importance of the common meal which must be celebrated by the relatives in order to allow the dead to make the transition as swiftly as possible.

Death is personified by Beworpiris. Death is always present in the world. This is represented by the arrival of Beworpiris at the place of Sitakap and Tower. Death can be avoided or resisted only through the assistance of the ancestors. Man with his own means and efforts is helpless in the face of death. As Beworpiris follows Sitakap’s directions to celebrate the bis feast, the myth tells of the subjection of death to the higher powers of the ancestors who communicate the essential life forces for continued existence.

In the bis celebration, as in any communal feast, individual man must put aside his personal concerns and join with his fellow men — here to obey the commands of the ancestors. Although not directly found in these myths of the bis, it is clear that this communal effort does release life-forces in the myth of creation, the Pumeriritis Myth (cf. below). Pumeriritis cannot be seen or sensed by man’s five senses, but is represented as the sound of wind or the air around us (as described by his name ... Pum = wind or sound;iritis = man). Pumeriritis is the personification of the soul of man.

3. Ancestral World: Surku

The ancestral world is to the west across the sea. It is a place without any deprivation, without suffering or death. It is a place of permanent peace and happiness. All men are intended to enter this place but in order to reach the goal they require assistance of the life-forces accessible only through contact with those living in the ancestral world. This contact is made through the recent dead who act as mediators of this life-force. This is most clearly achieved through the bis feast.

The two myths recounted above contain, in addition to the pattern for the feast, the basics of an "Amat Ethics". Simply stated, all Amuts (i.e. humans) must resist evil and seek what is good. For that reason whatever occurs during the bis feasting cannot be considered evil, although from outside standards there may be elements which are considered evil.
This ethical view will be further developed later, but for the present it is important to observe that the big is part of the search for goodness, part of the means to the ultimate end.

To summarize the Amuat view of the world this drawing may be of some assistance in understanding graphically their conception:

1. The world of the living
2. The world of the dead
3. The world of the Ancestors
   a. Man is born into this world
   b. The Progression of life in this world
   c. Death - terminating human existence
   d. Life, usually temporary, in the world of the dead (may be permanent)
   e. Entry into the world of the Ancestors
   f. Relationship with the living by means of the recent dead.

2 + 3 "The other side of the sea" or safan.

Although most of the above conclusions are drawn from the first myth, it is also possible to see basically similar beliefs typified in the alternative account of the origin of the big (i.e. concerning Mias and Darel). These two personify again good and evil. The initial view of their situation is a happy one until their marriage where Darel comes to personify evil and Mias to personify goodness. Darel has a proud and possessive attitude which excludes and is mindless of others and their rights. He also desires goodness but, in fact, he resists its achievement by his own actions ... demonstrating that good and evil are mutually exclusive.

His is the personification of goodness. As the story opens it appears that evil could be a way to happiness (i.e. for Darel in keeping His to himself). But it quickly becomes apparent that Darel's grasp on His is impossible to maintain. Goodness, which was suppressed in His's imprisonment, comes to the fore and triumphs over evil (Darel). It is Darel and not His who dies of unhappiness. The moral is obvious: do not live as Darel did, but follow the example of His.

The story also demonstrates that goodness can be achieved only after initial suffering. The place of happiness is distant but with communal effort and assistance (i.e. the Cassowary Bird) it is possible to arrive there. Pupurpit is His ancient totem which is symbolic of the call of all that is good ... which His achieves in her marriage with Pupurpit.

To perpetuate this lesson the second myth enjoins the making of the big. When someone wishes to seek happiness, the story says, let them carve a big which will be an effective symbol of happiness. It is an effective symbol because it will attract the interest of the ancestral world which will make the goal possible.

The Big Carving

As repeated above, all mankind questions human existence. No single or complete answer can ever be formulated (not even from our sciences) that will be universally and entirely satisfactory. The questions are asked by all men everywhere and, accordingly, the answers vary from one group to another. Gradually answers emerge within any given area or grouping which are generally accepted and so enter into the cultural framework. The Big carving and its feast is part of Amuat's answer in their quest for an intelligible universe.
The celebration of the big feast is religious in character. It provides an opportunity and occasion for the Asmat to see himself as clearly as possible. During the feast the Asmat's human identity, physical and spiritual, is again promulgated and clarified.

To help clarify the Asmat outlook it would be helpful to consider briefly the role of the Fumeripi myth within the general framework of which the big is integrated. The Asmat believe that Fumeripits, their "creator" is the primary source of life-giving power. It is Fumeripits who shares some small portion of his personal powers with the "lower" ancestors at the time of his celebrations. A brief summary of the basic Asmat creation myth is as follows.

The first men were created from wood by the creator whose name is Fumeripits. At that time there was nobody on the face of the earth. Fumeripits saw this and then gathered together his tools to carve wooden figures of human form ... both male and female. He then placed these carvings in a yew which he had personally built. He then sat down again and carved an am (drum) which he began to beat as he danced to and fro in the men's house. At the beat of the drum all his wooden carvings began to move and finally to follow the dance to the beat of Fumeripits' drum. As these carvings danced they began to become flesh and blood, to become Anmat or Human Beings. These first humans became the original ancestors of the Anmat people. They moved to the sea and still live there in a place of happiness and continue to assist in the process of creation of new human life.

To understand this continual process of creation — in the context of the big and Fumeripi myths — it is important to understand Asmat's "psychology" or analysis of the soul-life principle.

In Asmat analysis man consists of the visible, solid, matter. He also has a soul (ndat) and a human "essence" which is sami or ndam/sami. The body is formed by intercourse of male and female partners. The body becomes the focal point of unity between ndat and ndam (soul and essence). The body also serves as the visible point of contact with the ancestors. The human body is considered no more than matter and so can be identified with a tree. This is clearly related to the Fumeripi account which attributes the origin of the human race to wooden figures.

At death of this material body, life, for the Asmat, continues in the form of a shadow or spirit called ndat. The ndat depends upon a deeper principle of life which is designated ndau or sami. There is a more commonly used word jumus which roughly translates as life principle-life essence just as ndam or sami. To simplify the discussion I will use the more common term, jumus, for this life-essence.

Only human beings have jumus as well as ndat. The uniqueness of the human being lies not in the ndat but in the co-existence (with ndat) of jumus in a living human being. Material things and other creatures do not possess jumus. Although man is identified with a tree, especially the sago palm tree, the tree is never considered to have jumus. All living and growing objects (such as a tree) have their own spirit (ndat). They do not have, or are exclusive of the presence of jumus which differentiates the human from non-human forms. The increase and decrease of ndat in non-human forms follows its own rules so that the death of such an object (animal or plant) occurs as ndat decreases and finally is "used up".

Following another set of rules, the same increase-decrease principle is at work in human beings. A man is said to be healthy when there is a strong bond or relationship uniting the jumus and the ndat. When the relationship weakens or is totally broken for brief periods of time a person is said to be sick. When jumus completely leaves the body for a long period, and so confuses the ndat, a person is said to be unconscious. Finally, if jumus leaves completely and manages to extract with it the ndat, then a person dies. Jumus rejoins a generalized "life force" from which it originated and ndat becomes the shade or spirit. It is this spirit (ndat) which is contacted by means of the big feast. Jumus cannot be represented in carvings by man or reached by means of these carvings.

Jumus seems to be but one small part of the "generalized life force" which is transcendent, which cannot be approached by humans (not even by the powerful ancestors). This provides another reason why the big cannot assist in contacting the jumus. The inaccessibility of jumus explains why it is
technically impossible for the ancestors to raise from the dead someone who has already died.

Jwuj and ndat are united only in the process of conception. When a woman has already conceived -- i.e., is obviously pregnant -- the ndat and jwuj join together and enter the woman's body by way of the vagina under the guise of a spirit. They take up residence in the body already prepared in the womb of the woman. The Amatters believe that this spirit (i.e., ndat-jwuj combination) come from the spirit world -- for example, from the jungle where many spirits are in daily evidence.

Although not immediately evident from the above, it seems that the principle that from death there emerges life is also active in this understanding of the "soul". This becomes clear in daily Amat life as they interpret it. When a breadfruit fruit rots or a bean dries it becomes seed. The planted seed which has "died" becomes the occasion for new life. It is with this line of reasoning that the Amatter concludes the big feast with human killings -- through death to gain strength and receive life. This concept shoots through all of Amat cultural understanding.

What is evident to the Amat people is that life does seem to grow and then to weaken, to weaken and finally to disappear. The principle of life can be strengthened -- as in the big feast and in the killing and cannibalistic feasting -- increased and intensified.

Although the above is not unique to Amat and some such belief is shared by many traditional societies, they see the hierarchy of life. Life is multileveled. Man holds the highest form of the life forces. Other living and also inanimate objects hold lesser grasp on these life forces.

Bis Poknub: An Analysis of the Bis Feast

To understand the big-feast there are two areas of analysis possible -- first the rituals or celebrations themselves and secondly the bis as a portrait of man's ongoing struggle.

1. The Celebration-Rituals of the Bis Feast

The Ancestors have two main obligations in their relationship with the living. They must maintain the spiritual bond existing between the living and the dead and they must protect the continuity of the people and their way of life. It is because of this relational obligation on the side of the ancestors that the people approach the feasting with serious and reverent attitudes. To disregard the cultural regulations would place in jeopardy the existence of the world by threatening the relationship with those whose obligation it is to maintain existence.

Since the word religion comes from religio -- basically relationship -- this is a religious attitude. In some instances the request for aid from an ancestor takes on an almost prayer-like character. Their songs and dances also have many prayer-like characteristics. These formulations are directed to the ancestors. The accompanying actions (feasting) makes possible the real contact and so become religious ritual.

Ritual is defined as sacred actions which bring man into a relationship with a power which he believes in, in order to obtain favors or grace in his search for happiness. Dr. J. Verhaver defines ritual as "a sacred action of religious man with which he receives invisible grace hidden in visible signs". The Amat feasting, especially the bis feast, is such a religious ritual of religious man.

The bis feast is extremely long and actually consists of a series of rituals or celebrations. Within these related (temporally and thematically) rituals the Amat express their belief in the ancestors as the source of health and happiness -- and actuate the relationship which makes this possible. The central ritual or its meaning is (in a liturgical fashion) one of praise and honor for the ancestors which will elicit their favour.

2. The Bis as a Portrait of Human Struggle

By interpretation of the various phases of the feast and the groupings involved (and their interactions) we are afforded an insight into the Amat view of the human struggle.
The first primal grouping is that of male and female. When the men go to the jungle to find the log for their carving, the women move into the men’s house (yam). They both come to represent two principles found in every society and every individual: good and evil. The men represent the good elements while the women represent the evil. Good always strives to resist evil but it is an ongoing struggle. This identification of woman with evil is not unique to Amat since, again, many of our traditional societies make this equation. Woman is dangerous, insignificant and lacking in all real ability.

Several times throughout the feast the women simulate battle with the men. They act out this struggle between good and evil. The men who represent the good in man and the world approach the women, retreat again, fall back, attack again. Ultimately it is the men who win and who force the women to retreat. One loss is celebrated for evil and one win is celebrated for goodness.

When the women have been defeated, progress on the carving begins. This is progress on the “road to salvation”. It is because of the men’s victory that the feast can continue. As if to demonstrate that one victory is not the final victory over evil, other mock battles do the celebration as reminders that the struggle must be constant. Through man’s life and the history of the world the struggle continues. The ultimate completion of the bia forshadows the ultimate victory.

In contrapunto to this motif is the theme that from death life emerges. This is clearly the case in the final intercourse. Victorious man (good) unites with killed/defeated woman (evil) to bring forth a new generation of mankind. This is also associated with the Amat belief that the continuity of the society depends upon the death of the enemy. It is in the defeat of evil (death) that life is possible.

Part IV. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

From all the above it is sufficiently clear that in this one feast and its mythical basis the Amat people encapsulate their outlook on life and their own limited existence. The explanations that the Amat people offer through the bia feast are actually the result of deep reflection and are clearly rooted in the concrete reality of the Amat’s daily existence. By confronting the real world the Amat people gradually evolved conclusions which became formulations of belief. These formulations, in myth and ritual, entered into the cultural dynamics to form the nucleus of their way of life.

In the above study I have attempted to demonstrate that the bia (ceremony or feast as well as resulting carving) is a concrete answer to existential questions concerning man’s nature, his life, his sufferings and death. The answers emerged only gradually, it is presumed, but did eventually emerge in their own history to form a fundamental outlook and system of belief.

This system of belief includes the central concept of a universal life force which is the origin of all which lives, all that is good, and of all strength and health of the living. This is the Junas. This life force, associated with the continual support from the ancestral world, is worked into the framework of daily Amat life by way of laws and customs. So is Amat continuity and survival assured.

Thus was Amat when outsiders arrived 20 years ago. It is important that we outsiders be aware of this background. The Amatiers are not a blank page on which we are “invited” to write. They have a complex cultural pattern which has worked for them and which has guaranteed their continuity. If we seriously hope to offer the Amat people a new system of education, a new type of economic system, a new religion and basis for daily existence and a new world-view, then we must try to do so on the basis of what they have personally and painfully evolved and believed.

Our methods of communication should be in harmony with their view of a universal and supreme life force. This must be so because it is by means of their belief in this power-force that they are judging us and our teachings. If we choose to ignore their fundamental beliefs in our attempts at innovations, then the Amat people will, in their own wisdom and insight, and most secretly, define their own way. The result will be that we enlarge the chaos already exists between ourselves as non-Amat and the Amat people.
If, on the other hand, we try to act on the level of the existing cultural substratum (as the basis of our relationship, then the Asmat people will deepen their awareness and belief that whatever we offer from "outside" is basically on the side of goodness and is part of their own struggle as well as ours. If what we offer is recognized as already existing in weak images in their own beliefs, the possibility of rejection is obviated. If they see no relationship between their beliefs and our conceptions and introductions, they must resist us for they would be, in their view, accepting evil and endangering continuity of their existence if they accepted us and our beliefs.

When this is a matter of Christian evangelization we know that God himself is the core of truth, goodness, strength and power. He has sent his Son to bear witness to this truth and to the greatness and power of his Father. To the Asmat the core of truth, goodness, strength and power is a supreme life power. It is inconceivable to a Christian that anything which is good and true could arise from some evil source or from a source isolated from God's presence. Thus we can accept the good in the Asmat beliefs.

With this background it is possible to teach that the Asmat belief in a supreme source of life -- which seems to have many of the attributes of the Christian God -- is in fact a revelation of God himself. This provides a focal point which makes possible a dialogue between the Christian and the Asmat.

Again it is a Christian belief that Christ came to earth to forgive sin and to set all men free. This does not mean that he came to forgive sin and relieve man only in a spiritual sense. In fact his task was to set free all of creation. He came to bring a wholeness to the universe and to man himself, spiritually and materially.

Their own beliefs sought this goal. If we are to bring the "good news" to them we should help them to understand that the intention of God for them is just as they understood in their own culture ... but with new emphasis and new dignity and new understandings. Thus we help them search for the health and salvation of body and soul. We help them stand on their own feet, emerging into our contemporary world with Asmat contributions and Asmat dignity. This will obviously be a great contribution not only to Asmat but to our Indonesian nation.

There are many concrete suggestions which I could make as one personally interested in the development and Christianization of Irian Jaya and, in particular, in the Asmat area's successful integration into the Christian and Indonesian world. I am of Irian Jaya myself and so I know this is important and that it is my task and vocation -- as well as that of all who are interested in Irian Jaya and Asmat.

To the missionaries I suggest that we delve more and more into the fundamental beliefs of the Asmat people. In this we will find the deep basis of their beliefs so that we can teach them how to relate to the human and Christian norms ... many of which are existing in germ-form in their own culture. This means that we must intensify our efforts to pay real attention to the daily life of Asmat and the background/explanations from their society for their lives.

This means that we must go to the people with real respect. Often we must accept their whims and activities and then search for their own explanation for their behavior. Through this we can isolate focal points of truth central both to Asmat beliefs and the Christian Gospel and tradition. From this basis of agreement we could begin again in evangelization, could publish our own catechism, etc.

The Catholic Mission is responsible for seventeen grade schools and the junior high School in Asmat. This is an obligation given to the mission by the government of Indonesia and it is a deep obligation. We must see to it that we provide a system of education which is practical and which will actually prepare the students for village life. We should try not to isolate their education from the realities of their social life, from the hard economic facts and from Asmat culture itself. It is true, however, that those in the high school who are candidates for higher education must be related to differently ... better preparing them to see beyond Asmat limitations and so on.
To assure that this is realistically possible it is suggested that in such areas as mathematics (which is one of the most difficult subjects for the Amat) the teachers accompany their students to the village cooperatives to work with these men in concrete problems (e.g. calculating cubic meters, salary payment, etc). We should strive to draw the local and regional cooperative leaders into this educational process.

The schools should also try to inculcate respect for traditional art forms. Parents and artists should be invited into the schools to explain traditional forms, the meaning of motifs, etc. This not only relates to village life, but also helps the parents really become co-responsible for the education of their children.

Although beyond the scope of the Mission's responsibility or ability to intervene, business and trade development in Amat should not be an obstacle to human development and dignity but should promote this no less than education does. Those involved in work here in Amat as businessmen should not tolerate a situation where their efforts degrade the Amat people and result in a degeneration rather than growth.

In the logging/lumber industry now being promoted (e.g. Ataj, Yow, Komor, etc.) there has often been a total disregard of the rights of the Amat people. Wives and children remain for long periods without their fathers or husbands. Education suffers. The sick are left without assistance. This only destroys future hopes for the Amat people and the Amat area. There are real questions as to just payment for logging and for work. These are problems which must be confronted by those in responsible government positions.

For our part, again, we must always have a completely open and honest approach to every developmental project and effort (co-operatives, schools, etc.) realising that these are matters of supreme importance for the people and that, accordingly, they have every right to know what is being done and why.

Those trusted with dissemination of information as well as the Health Officials and teachers should make every effort to promote understanding of the advantages of hygiene, cleanliness, the purpose of hospitals or clinics. The health of the body is an essential ingredient to the health of soul and the total development of the people.

While we eventually continue the search for diversification of developmental projects (e.g. gardens, fishing co-operatives, etc.) we should also see that mentality building is co-existent with these efforts. Our preaching in church, for example, should be related to actual projects which are underway in the area.

If these efforts are made then, and with this paper's minor contribution, it can hoped that the development of the Amat people will be along balanced and healthy lines which will benefit all of Irian Jaya and all of the Indonesian nation.
GLOSSARY OF MAIN ASMAT OR INDONESIAN WORDS RECURRING IN TEXT

ANAKAT  Body of carving (i.e. his anakat). Also used for stalk of bananas, etc.

ASMAT  (Asio spelled Asmat) Human Being. The name of the people and area in central south coast of Irian Jaya between Mimika and Napu areas.

ATAKAM  Jord; to speak; language. His atakam = The Story of the Bis.

BAH  Hand.

BIS  (1) Tall elaborately carved pole representing those relatives who recently have been killed in battle or died normally.
(2) The Mythical Heroin of the Bis Myth.
(3) The Spirit represented by the bis carvings.
(4) The feast surrounding the execution of the bis carving.

BISAN  Largest grouping of the Asmat people -- mainly coastal or along rivers near the coast. From BIS and MAN (to make), therefore termed the BIS Makers.

CELEN  Penis; Bis Celen (lit. The Penis of the Bis Pole), the complex carved wing-like protrusion upward from the uppermost figure on the bis-pole.

ECADOR  Special room prepared in the Yew for the carving of the bis pole during the bis feast.

FUM  Wind. (Cf. text on Fullerips ... the Creator in Creation Myth).

IPITIS  Man; wle; Pumeripitis = the Creator in Asmat Mythology.

JUNUS  Human life principle flowing from common source. Coexists in man with ndat till death; when it returns to common source and ndat survives as human shade.

KAVE  Ancestor; human being; ancestral carving.

KUSKUS  (Indonesian Language). Small marsupial (in Asmat, Pap) opossum-type, used for decorations (especially fur) especially for 'hat-like' apparel.

KALINAK  Alternative for "Asmat" or human being.

NISLS  Alternate spelling for BIS.

MEVI  (alternate = Bad) Water. Interpreted by author as spirit in sense of BIS as well as root word for BIS.


NDAT  (Nat) Spirit of all living things. The element of human beings which survives after death (departure of Junus) but disintegrates at death of non-human forms.

POKESBAT  Feast or celebration. Bis Pokesbat = Bis Feast.

SAPAN  World of those who formerly lived on earth (ancestors). Found to the west, across the sea.

SAGU  (Indonesian Language). A Type of palm tree (sago palm). The food (a starch residue) prepared by baking the pulp of the sago palm. The basic staple of the Asmat Diet. In Asmat (sago) also a generic term for all food.

SITAN  Mythical site in Bis story where devorints lived, an evil place.

SUKU  (Probably borrowed from Indonesian SUMA - heaven). The Asmat word for paradise ... probably only since contact with missions.

WAMIPITIS  Artist; Asmat wood carver.

YAM  Men's or Bachelors' House which serves as the focal point of the social structure and is used as the center for all planning, as well as a feast house. Usually women are excluded from the Yam except on especially determined occasions. The building of the Yam has been prohibited by the Government since 1961.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

AND

SOURCE MATERIALS


Geisen, P. Lecture Notes S.T.T.K. 1972
THE PARTS OF THE BISPÖLE

The whole bispöle is divided into three parts:

1. Bisanakat or the body of the bispöle

   Bisanakat means the flesh of a fruit or core of ironwood. But anakat also means the stem from ground to top. So, bisanakat means the whole manfigure from feet to head. On anakat and other parts of the bispöle, we could find lines, scratches or incisions made by bisscarvers.

   a. Pin or hair

      Pin means the hair of the head and the body. Pin is paint with black colour. Black is the symbol of headhunter. That's why, every black, fruit eating bird is a symbol of headhunter. Black must be the bird predominant colour, because the Amat himself is dark skinned.

   b. Wakanbali

      Wakanbali means clean shaven circle around the head. This round circle is usually paint with red colour.

   c. Bumblisis or nosepin

      This nosepin is made of wood.

   d. Bisanakaw

      Bisanakaw is made from pieces of the shell, worn in the nose. We can call this noseornament.

   e. N'ti or earornament, made from green sago leaf.

   f. Sep or arm

      Sep is the arm of the bispöle. Sep really means the both bones in forearm.

2. Kantu

   Kantu is the leg of the manfigure of the bispöle in its entirely including the foot.

3. Fid. These are straight incisions or scarifications on the bispöle. Also means figure produced on the skin by incisions or scarifications.

4. Fipin. These are incisions in the form of comma or half circle. With these signs the cheek, breast are shown.

5. Cem and penis

   Cem or vagina. Cem and cem are symbols of fertility.

6. Tipi. This means the figure of a child on the shoulder of a manfigure. This the meaning of bravery of a warleader, who ever had carried a living anizy at his lifetime, specially during the war. Tipi is also a figure of a child alone, not including a part of bispöle.

The whole bispöle is always paint with red, white and black colour. White colour is made from ash of burned shell. Red colour is made from a kind of red coloured stone and black colour is made of charcoal.

2. Biseeman or penis of the bispöle

   The whole biseeman is a symbol of fertility. Biseeman consists of some figures of animals as symbols of headhunter, warleader, strength etc. Biseeman itself into:

   a. Yirishibikokem or the head of hornbill.

   b. Gkon

      Lower cheek bone of hornbill. Gkon is shown by making a triangle with the top to left or to right.
c. Bua

Bua is a figure of mouth of human or animal. Bua is shown by
round circle or square. The people from southern Asmat called
this round circle bisanak or buanam.

d. Boukus or the skull

How much skull must be carved, hang up the numbers of antlers
were been kill by the man, whose figure is carved.

e. Asukfoifi

This is the tail of a snake or another animal, but also means
the backbone of crocodile or fish. Asukfoifi is a symbol of the
strength and bravery of a warleader.

f. Yanvak or the ear.

It is show by double round circle.

g. Yanpo is the lower part of neck.

h. Tanambo is the upper part of the neck.

1. Yanesken

This is the meeting point between bisanakat and bisceman.

3. Ci and Bino

a. Ci means the canoe. Ci is carved as symbol of relationship
   between this world and the world here after (ancestor world).
   In this canoe usually made suwunus or an. Suwunus or an is the
   same thing as trough.

b. Bino is the lower end of the bispole. With this part the
   bispole is put into the ground.

c. Suwunus or an is the same thing as trough, within food,
   specially sago been put.

Bram Kuruwai B.A.
Museum Curator of Asmat

Shield (Yemes) [Asmat].
Wood, paint. Sago leaves and raton leaves.
Height: 107 cm. Width: 43.5 cm.
Donated by John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund.
Collected by Herman Kenwarin

This shield was probably used in the shield feast to remember the ancestors killed by
enemies or died naturally. The figure on the top of the shield represents the
ancestor of the owner of the shield. The three double "S"s" form represents other
close relatives.
The colors of this shield are white, red and black.
Shield (Yemes) [Asmat].
Wood, paint.
Height: 195.5 cm. Width: 46.5 cm.
Donated by Kabin Permuseum Perwakilan
Departemen P. D. & K. Propinsi
Irian Jaya.

This type of shield is used in fighting. The
five double "E" form figures are symbols of
the flying fox and represent the ancestors
and relatives of the owner of this shield.
The colors are white, red and black.

Shield (Yemes) [Asmat].
Wood, paint. Saga leaves.
Height: 181 cm. Width: 36 cm.
Donated by Kabin Permuseum Perwakilan
Departemen P. D. & K. Propinsi
Irian Jaya.
Collector unknown.

This shield was probably used for shield
ceremonies. The figure on the top
represents the ancestor of the owner of the
shield and the upper figure represents the
penis of ancestor. The three double "C's"
are a symbol of nose ornament (bi pane) and
represents people and the two dots represent
human heads. Usually in the Asmat culture
these figures represent the relatives and
ancestors of the owner of the shield.
The colors are white, red and black.
Canoe Perahu (Cicemen) [Asmat].
Length: 126.5 cm. Height: 35 cm.

This canoe perahu is used as decoration of the front part of a canoe.
The two human figures usually represent the ancestor of the owner of the canoe. The two "E" forms are symbols of the flying fox. The other figures are a cockatoo's head and a horn bird's head.
The colors are white, red and black.

Canoe Perahu (Cicemen) [Asmat].
Wood, paint.
Length: 104 cm. Width: 36 cm.
Donated by John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund.
Collector unknown.

The figures of this canoe perahu represent birds, men and the other "S" forms symbolise men.
The colors are white and red.
Woman skirt (Awer Ans enem) [Asmat].
Sago leaves, pandanus and rattan leaves.
Height: 90 cm. Length: 112 cm.
Donated by John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund.

Male and female figures (Kawenok) [Asmat].
Wood, paint.
Height: 110 cm. Width: 15.5 cm.
Donated by Kabin Permuseum Perwakilan
Departemen P.D. & K. Propinsi
Irian Jaya.
Collector unknown.

The bottom figure represents man and the top
woman. The figure between the legs and the
hands of the two human figures represents a
horn bird.
The color is white.

Belt (Awer) [Asmat].
Sago leaves, pandanus, rattan leaves
and grass sheet.
Donated by John D. Rockefeller 3rd
Fund.
This belt is especially used by women
during dancing.
Human figure (Kawenak) [Asmat].
Wood, paint.
Height: 102 cm. Width: 15 cm.
Donated by John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund.
Collector unknown.
This human figure is female.
The color is white.

Human figure (Mbis) [Asmat].
Wood, paint.
Height: 122 cm. Width: 10.5 cm.
Donated by Kabin Permuseuman Perwakilan
Departemen P.D. & K. Propinsi
Irian Jaya.
Collector unknown.

The top figure is male and the body of the bottom one is symbol of the root of the Banyan tree but has been carved to two snakes. The head of the snakes represent the hands and the tails represent the feet of the bottom figure.
The colors are white and red.

Male and female figures (Kawenak) [Asmat].
Wood, paint.
Length: 69.5 cm. Width: 12.5 cm.
Collected by Lembaga Anthropologi
Universitas Cenderawasih.
Collector unknown.
The bottom figure is female and the top is male.
The colors are white and red.
Recent Development in Asmat Art

As part of the University of Gendamkauri research project in the Asmat, a short study on the above topic is being carried out in the Asmat by Arie Yen Kowxa. Funds for this study have been made available from a previous grant to the Institute for Anthropology by the Asia Foundation, Jakarta.

Arie Yen Kowxa
Curator,
University Museum
University of Gendamkauri

Potential Modernization Among the Asmat

This research was conducted in Indonesia, primarily among the coastal Asmat tribesmen of Irian Jaya (Western New Guinea) from August, 1973, to April, 1974. The primary data base was derived from open-ended behavior oriented questionnaires administered to a random sample of 30 married men and members of their households in the villages of Beer, Ower, Sjuru, and Jepen. Existence research was also conducted in Asmat's administrative - economic center, Agats. Supplementary data was obtained in a number of other villages.

1. Oral history of coastal area prior to first permanent contact in 1953
   a. village formation, movements, warfare (dating to late 1800's)
   b. effects of Japanese occupation during World War II
2. Changes in social organisation since 1953
   a. family and society growth, conflicts, divisions, stability
   b. interaction of dualistic worldview, traditional conceptions of
      spirit realms, and social organisation
   c. development of semi-permanent villages
   d. leadership patterns and attitudes
   e. maps of four major villages, indicating clan affiliation by
      household and homes of random sample subjects
3. Changes in resource utilization patterns
   a. survey of Asmat edible and material resources: scientific
      name, English name, Indonesian name, Asmat name, various uses
      and relative abundance
   b. economic interaction of villagers with stores, traders, government, tourists, and missionaries in Agats
      (1) Goods and materials purchased, sold, traded
      (2) Sources of income
   c. resource utilization index: selected food, household, and
      craft items scored according to how and where obtained, how
      used (both traditional and modern items)
   d. utilization patterns by fan of sago and fishing areas (Beer
      only)
   e. introduction of horticulture and gardens
   f. development prospects in Asmat
   g. yearly climatic patterns (rainfall, temperature, cloud
      formations, tides)
4. Changes in communication patterns
   a. traditional communication channels
   b. travel between villages and Agats, purposes
   c. Asmat - government - mission interaction
      (1) Government reorganization program
   d. government, Catholic, Protestant education programs and
      school curricula
5. Demographic characteristics
   a. entire village - 1973
      (1) Census by age and sex
      (2) Birth and death statistics
   b. random samples (30 households each village)
      (1) Pregnancy and fertility data
      (2) Household composition
      (3) Marital and internal migration patterns
   c. census by family, tribal or area affiliation, and religion
   for all residents of Agats.

6. Time-budget analysis of all daily activities (Ewer only)
   a. over continuous three week period Sept. - Oct., 1973
   b. analyzed and scored by behavior category for two small, two
      medium, and two large nuclear families and their households

7. Asmat society wage labor with oil exploration crews
   a. wage labor decision survey
      (1) administered to 16 men in each of Ewer, Onas, Sjuru prior
      to beginning labor contract work
   b. open-ended interviews with 30 men (Jepem's random sample)
      after completion of contract
   c. operational framework used by oil exploration company and its
      two labor sub-contractors
      (1) Map of completed seismic exploration lines
   d. oil and development prospects for Irian Jaya
   e. overview of Indonesian economic development policies

8. Health and medical care
   a. traditional medical and curing practices
      (1) Role of traditional curer; sorcery
      (2) Mental health as exemplified by "madman syndrome"
      (3) Child care
   b. hospital operations in Agats
   c. records of all illnesses and injuries treated in Ewer and Onas
      by F.V. (Sept. - Nov., 1973)
      (1) Results of Asmat-run clinic begun in Onas Nov., 1973
   d. epidemics and major diseases in Asmat since 1952, with some
      casualty figures

9. "The 'Lord of the Earth' Cult Among the Asmat: Prestige, Power,
   and Politics in a Transitional Society" (article co-authored
   with David Gallus to appear in IRIAN: Bulletin of Irian Jaya
   a. based upon research by the authors into the Ewer cargo cult
      since its inception in 1966
   b. analyzed according to:
      (1) Progressive functional transformations of a relatively
          stable cult structure
      (2) Big Man activity as broadly manifested in Malanesia
      (3) Economic and development problems in Asmat

10. Expedition to previously unexplored stretches of Catalina and
     Friendship Rivers of the interior Asmat region
     a. comparison of data with earlier expeditions to Brausa River

Peter W. van Asdale
Department of Anthropology
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

NOTE: Supplementing this research is a 500 photograph collection of 35 mm
color slides, four 30 minute tapes of Asmat and Indonesian music, and a
collection of ornamental and carved artifacts.
Peter W. van Arendale:

Peter W. van Arendale is a Ph. D. candidate in cultural anthropology at the University of Colorado. The data upon which the present article is based was gathered in Indonesia and the Amat region from August, 1973, to April, 1974, as part of dissertation research on the potential for modernization among the Amat. van Arendale received a B.A. cum laude in psychology from the University of Colorado and an M.A. in general anthropology from the University of Maryland. As a member of the Research Training Program in Culture Change in the University of Colorado's Institute of Behavioral Sciences, he holds a fellowship from the National Institute of Mental Health.

David E. Gallus, O.S.C.:

David E. Gallus, O.S.C., is a Crozier priest ordained in the United States in 1966. Following ordination he completed a year of graduate study in anthropology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in preparation for his work among the Amat. Upon his arrival in the Amat region in June, 1967, Fr. Gallus began work as a missionary pastor and continues at present. Since 1970 he has been coordinator of Catholic mission aviation for the Amat region, and is auditor of the central cooperative office.

Abraham Kurumaip:

Abraham Kurumaip was born in Upetetik, Wayu, Irian Jaya. After completing primary school in 1962 he attended seminary for seven years and then commenced four years of theological and philosophical study at the higher theological seminary in Jayapura, where he gained his B.A. Towards the end of 1973 he took up duties in the Amat where he worked first as a deacon in the Catholic church and then as assistant parish pastor at Sjuru. Abraham Kurumaip is also the curator of the Museum of Amat Culture and Development, at Agats and he also teaches courses in the Junior High School and Teacher Training School in Agats.

G. Zegwaard, M.S.C.:

Fr. G. Zegwaard, a Dutchman, was ordained a priest in 1951. He came to Irian Jaya as a missionary in 1946 and first worked among the Minaka people. In 1952 he opened the first Amat mission station in Agats. Subsequently Fr. Zegwaard moved to Merauke and then to Jayapura. At the present time he is the Director of the Catholic Mission Institute for the Advance of Social Research.
Manuscripts:

The editors of the IRIAN welcome manuscripts of a theoretical or practical nature that directly or indirectly bear on Irian Jaya. Manuscripts should be typed, double spaced and may be submitted in either Indonesian or English. If articles are submitted in Dutch the editors will endeavour to have the material translated into one of the above languages. Two copies of articles are required. Each article must be accompanied by an abstract of 200-400 words which, if possible, should be in the language other than that in which the manuscript is written. Articles should be accompanied by a brief biographical note on the author.

Note:

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