

CHAPTER FOUR - *The Challenge of Modernisation*

Over the last few years the Danis, and the Dani church as a whole, have had to face a large number of challenges as various influences have penetrated their lives. Of these, the most pressing are Islamisation and modernisation. The situation that the Danis are facing today is unique. The Dani church has never before had to deal with these particular issues because of the simple fact that they have only recently found their way into the Dani community of the North Baliem Valley and amongst the Dani students. This applies to the coastal cities such as the capital of Jayapura too. While the coastal region has had a greater and longer exposure to outside influences, the changes that have been taking place recently have been so rapid that the entire Irianese population is facing new problems. As modernisation and Islam present the most pressing challenges and their influence pervades many other areas of the contemporary Dani experience, the discussion will be divided into two sections. This chapter will deal with modernisation while the threat Islam poses to the Dani church will be discussed in the final chapter.

Much of the information provided in this chapter will be from my own research in Irian Jaya and will reflect the views and comments of my informants who either completed a questionnaire or whom I interviewed. This information will not be footnoted as the informants choose that their identity remain confidential. The other major source that will be used in these two chapters is that of written Dani material, mainly unpublished papers. While personal comments may be added about particular situations, an attempt will be made to reflect as closely as possible the views of the Dani people regarding the challenges they are facing as individual Christians and as a Church. Views expressed in this thesis have been obtained both from those Danis who have remained in the North Baliem as well as from those who have been to the coast to study or are there currently.

Stone to Modern Age

The Danis have been propelled to their present situation at a dizzying speed from what others have termed a "Stone Age" existence, or rather as they would describe it, the "Dark Age" as illustrated by the words of the charismatic Yambonep. Also known as Yakya, he carried what he had heard of the Christian message back to Makki and even

down towards Pyramid. He was one of the early Christians and is now a leading and highly respected Baptist preacher. Yambonep states "As we look back on our ignorance, our mutual suspicion and traditional hatred, our dread of spirits, and our fear of our fellow men, we realise that we truly lived in a time of darkness, groping about without any light to show us our way."²⁶⁷ Within a period of less than forty years the Dani people have had their first contact with the outside world and experienced a miraculous mass conversion with the advent of Christianity in their Valley which included a certain amount of social development, especially with regard to health. They have sent out numerous missionaries of their own, gone from walking to flying and have learnt to read and write in Dani as well as Indonesian, the national language since Indonesia took control of Irian Jaya in the 1960s. The Danis have also had to learn to deal with Indonesian authorities who are totally different from the other foreigners the Danis had encountered with regard to their religion, skin colour and language as well as their attitude towards the Dani people themselves. Their contact with Indonesians began in the early sixties during the period of Indonesia's interim government of Irian Jaya. Indonesia was attempting to gain as much control as possible over the region before the vote took place in 1969 that would determine whether the government would retain its position in Irian Jaya and so they made their presence felt with military troops. Following the inclusion of Irian Jaya as the 23rd province of Indonesia, the attempt to gain and maintain control of the diverse land continued and political, social and economic development was undertaken by both the government and NGOs, increasing the presence of foreigners and their influence on the Danis.²⁶⁸

Although Irian Jaya is more accessible than it was even five years ago, the struggle to tame the region continues as the terrain, especially of the highlands, has made it a difficult and time consuming task.²⁶⁹ As the Indonesian government aims to transform Irian into a more readily habitable area, moves have been made towards urbanisation. Now the Danis are sending their children away to SMA schooling at Wamena or even as far as the coast.

²⁶⁷ N.&S.Draper *Daring to Believe*, (ABMS, 1990), p.258 quoting Yambonep This view was also expressed by a number of Dani Christians who were interviewed or completed questionnaires

²⁶⁸ The Provincial Government of Irian Jaya *Irian Jaya: A New Frontier for Trade, Investment and Tourism*, (1993), p.35

²⁶⁹ S.Rustam "Kebijakan Pembangunan Daerah Irian Jaya" in Kasiepo et al.(eds.) *Pembangunan Masyarakat Pedalaman Irian Jaya*, pp.15-16

In more recent years there have been Danis attending colleges and universities, writing theses and travelling to other parts of the Indonesian archipelago to study or work.

The term "modernisation" or "modernity" can be, and has been, interpreted in various ways as scholarly and philosophical debates have centred on its various modes, contradictions and possible interpretations. Modernity, as Marshall Berman explains, has been attributed numerous meanings over time, though the "drive for free development" is a central theme to modernism,²⁷⁰. The first phase of modernism, according to Berman, occurred in the sixteenth to the eighteenth century leading up to the second phase following the French Revolution in the 1790s. The third phase that he discusses in his book *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, is the twentieth century which in itself offers diverse readings of modernism and has even created post-modernism, sometimes seen to be merely another form of modernism.²⁷¹ Numerous philosophers, writers and artists over the last two centuries have discussed and struggled with the concept of modernism and its meanings. According to Berman the "current thinking about modernity is broken into two different compartments... : 'modernization' in economics and politics, 'modernism' in art, culture and sensibility."²⁷²

Modernisation, with its history in the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, also refers to a secularisation and rationalisation of traditional views, which were often centred on the mystical spirit world. This rationalisation is related to education and results in an expanded world view, from local to universal. Modernisation also involves a change in the basis of social power, as high positions in society are no longer obtained through a relationship to former rulers or to the spirits, but rather through an individual's personal attributes. These alterations are outward signs of a basic change in social structure and mentality. "Modernisation" of this sort had already taken place amongst the Western Danis, although it did not result in the loss of religion, but rather followed the introduction and the acceptance of Christianity in 1960-1962. The acceptance of Christianity dispelled the power the spirit world was deemed to have over every aspect of life in the North Baliem.

²⁷⁰ M.Berman "Why Modernism Still Matters" in S.Lash & J.Friedman (eds.) *Modernity & Identity*, (Blackwell, 1992), p.36

²⁷¹ M.Berman *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, (Simon & Schuster, 1982), p.16

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p.88

As a belief in spirits was replaced by a belief in the Christian God, the people learnt through the introduction of medication that there were rational answers to issues such as illness. As education increased so too did rational thought. Increasingly the world was secularised, in contrast to the traditional Dani belief system where inanimate objects, such as stones and trees were believed to be animate. The world view of the Danis had also been expanded by the mere presence of the foreign missionaries, the education they received and by their moving to other areas of Irian Jaya to work or study.

Modernisation is also at times equated with westernisation or industrialisation, neither of which are applicable to this paper. Rather than attempting to deal with the scholarly concepts, the understanding of "modernisation" employed in this paper, will be that perceived by the Danis, namely, exposure to an urban lifestyle and with it a greater freedom of social behaviour. For the Danis this involves a move away from the traditional community lifestyle that has remained fairly constant through the mass conversions to Christianity, as urban and consumerist trends find their way into the lives of the Dani people of the North Baliem Valley. Those who have been directly challenged by these influences are the young people, although the non-Christian members of the Dani community have been most susceptible to the undesirable effects of modernisation or urbanisation. While these youths are included in the church's concern for the young people, it is the young people who have been brought up in the church who are its major concern, and hence the focus of the discussion in this paper. The older generations have had to deal with the influences of modernity in a different form but have not had to deal with modernisation as it is experienced today, as an urbanising process with increasing freedom.

Young people, separated from their families and home church while they are studying in Wamena or on the coast, are seen to be in danger of turning away from the church and Christ as they become involved in various aspects of urban living. Such trends are also beginning to influence those in the villages of the highlands as communication has been improved. The Dani community is facing issues that many communities throughout the world are having to deal with, such as the consumption of alcohol, smoking, gambling, free relationships between the sexes and the social problems resulting from these

phenomena.²⁷³ While these problems are causing real concern amongst the Western Dani population, they are also symptoms of more general changes in social lifestyle as more Danis are finding themselves in an urban situation, with its increased freedom and various forms of entertainment. It may be that the Dani people are fearful of such developments as they represent a major change in outlook that is inconsistent with their community centred lifestyle. Within the church itself there are also problems emerging that are claimed to result from "modernity". These include a certain degree of disunity and disagreement amongst leaders, as well as corruption.²⁷⁴ The Dani Christians and the Dani Church as a whole have faced many challenges during their short history and have generally taken them in their stride, but the stream of influences continues to grow and is seen in a more threatening light by both young and older members of the Dani church. The presence of Cargo Cults amongst the Dani people will be referred to and finally the response of the Dani church to these numerous challenges will be discussed.

Young People and Modernity

The higher formal education of Dani children, which requires them to live away from their home villages and their families is a cause of anxiety. One fear that was expressed by Dani sources was that these children and youths would rebel against the church and abandon their faith in Jesus Christ. According to a number of the younger informants who have studied either in Wamena or Jayapura, young people tend to lose contact with the church not as a result of a sudden rebelliousness but rather through a slow process of attraction to urban, non-church related activities. This process is generally assisted by non-Christian friends whom the young people have met through school or other activities.

Money was deemed to play a large role in the move of Dani youths away from the church. The difficulties faced by villages financing Danis living in the cities have already been mentioned, and often result in students having to take part time work to supplement the support of their church and family. In the city it would be expected that work colleagues

²⁷³ L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda di Jemaat Baptis Diakonia Sebagai Pola Bagi Pelayanan Pemuda se-Wilayah Perime*, (Unpublished paper, 1993), pp.5, 12 also corroborated by the Danis who completed questionnaires and also via interviews

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13 & K.Wakerkwa *Pertumbuhan Gereja Baptis di Wilayah Pirime*, (Unpublished paper, 1992), p.9 Corroborated by interviews and questionnaires

would be non-Christians and so this is one challenging and influential area for the Dani young people. Jobs are available for youths to work as conductors on a "*taksi*", a form of public transport similar to a small bus. In this instant it is certain that the work partner, the driver, would not be a Dani but rather a *pendatang*, and as such most probably not a Christian. This could result in pressure being placed upon the youth to work on Sundays and being ridiculed or threatened with job loss if he does not comply. The appreciation and desire for money increases as the youth experiences having and spending extra money, rather than possessing barely enough to survive on. Apparently the threat of losing a job or the thought of extra money from working an extra day may encourage the youth to work on Sunday.

One 22 year old Dani who has completed his schooling in Wamena and is currently studying in Jayapura, related a story of his experiences as a youth in Wamena. "I had absolutely no money to continue my schooling, so I got a job working with Muslims at the electricity department. Even on Sundays they would come in to work. They worked every Sunday, but I wanted to go to the church worship service. 'Ah! Just work. It is just a fraud, Jesus Christ is already dead. He is looking for food in the graveyard, under the ground. You have been deceived,' they would say things like that. I would reply 'Jesus Christ has died - he has also risen from the dead'".²⁷⁵ They challenged him consistently about working on Sunday and the reality of the Christian message but he claimed that he replied just as consistently that Sunday was his day of worship and so he would not work. They continued to confront him on this issue until one day he stated that he was certain of his salvation through Christ, were they certain of their salvation? "Those I was speaking to did not answer but turned around and walked to the market."²⁷⁶ Following this they no longer tested him and he was able to continue working there.

According to this youth, many of the young Danis actually do withstand the taunts and attempts to discourage their church involvement but there are also a number of susceptible Dani youths whose involvement in the church fades. Most, if not all these youths have been brought up in the church and a Christian community, have attended Sunday

²⁷⁵ Interview, Jayapura 28/7/1994

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

School diligently and have been close to making a personal commitment to God and accepting Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. Apparently as they have not made a final decision, they are more easily led away from the church and its influence upon their lives as they become involved in activities that their home church and their families would not appreciate or condone. Yet according to another young Dani man, this disapproval would not really worry them once they have moved away from the church as they become too involved in their new lifestyle and apparently no longer want or respect the guidance and admonition of their parents or other members of their church.²⁷⁷ Being away from home and in their teenage years would make them more vulnerable to these influences. During a time of personal insecurity and lack of self worth they could be dazzled by the modern, increasingly secular lifestyle that is greatly valued by the majority of the urban inhabitants. This upsets their parents, not only because their children do not respect them but also because they see their children turning away from the salvation that they are fully convinced is found only through Jesus Christ.

The parents of today's young people are first generation Christians who have brought their children up in a Christian and church environment. The parents were converted through the missionaries during the early years of the Dani church, and as such they are fully aware of the lifestyle that they left behind them when they chose Jesus Christ over their animistic beliefs. The Dani Christians describe their former lifestyle in various ways. Amonen, one of the early Christians who had formerly been an apprentice sorcerer but had become associated with the missionaries at Tiom at an early stage, states "We look back and realise that our entire social structure was sick - very sick - and because of that we were always wallowing in trouble of one sort or another."²⁷⁸ Yambonep, who was mentioned earlier in the chapter, is quoted as saying "As we look back ... we realise that we truly lived in a time of darkness, groping about without any light to show us our way." and continues on to contrast it with the post-conversion era where he claims "God's Holy Spirit has lit a light within hundreds and thousands of us, so that our whole environment has changed, passing out of darkness into light."²⁷⁹ At the same time they have attempted to

²⁷⁷ Interview, Jayapura 30/7/1994

²⁷⁸ Draper *Daring*, p.211

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 258

protect their children from knowing the full extent of the activities the Dani community was involved in prior to the presentation of the Gospel.²⁸⁰ As such, while the majority of the Dani young people make a commitment to Christ, there are apparently those who take Christianity for granted and do not realise the full significance of the salvation found through the Christian gospel.

Recreational activities that take place on Sundays were also mentioned as playing a part in distracting youths away from the church and their Christian faith. Cars and money were mentioned as they allowed the youths to travel further for recreation and as such consume a larger part of the day so that there is no chance to be involved in the Sunday church activities. Reportedly this is when the first step is taken away from the church and often as the Dani youths gradually lose contact with their friends from the church, they spend more time with, and are increasingly influenced by, work colleagues or school friends. As a result of the novelty of the entire experience, the Dani youths, who have never before experienced the freedom of an urban lifestyle can get carried away by the new influences and become immersed in the new way of living. This in turn leads not only to a move away from Sunday church services but also from the youth group activities that are provided for the young people of the church. While initially the move away from the church is gradual and the youths are most probably unaware of the full consequences, finally it leads to a total break from the church and even disrupts the family and village life when the student returns home for a holiday as influences from the city are brought into the valley by the youths.

I was also interested to find out whether any of the young people were being drawn back to animism. A coastal Irianese states that from his own observations young people have been returning to traditional beliefs as a result of attempting to deal with the transition period between traditional and modern society. A major discomfort of this transition is caused by the disjuncture between the young people's ability and training and a lack of opportunity to obtain access to further education.²⁸¹ As a result they are unable to achieve

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.230 quoting Miyaawarak

²⁸¹ The majority of the students who attend UNCEN, Universitas Cendrawasih in Abepura, Jayapura actually originate from other islands throughout the Indonesian archipelago, making it very difficult for the local Irianese to obtain places at the University to further their education.

in the modern world and so return to their traditional way of life and even in some cases to the traditional belief system. Another reason that was stated for the return of some Irianese to tradition was their fear of losing their identity as they are integrated into Indonesia. Miyaawarak, one of the early converts to Christianity, states that with the more peaceful lifestyle that has followed Christianity some youths seemed to feel that life was not exciting and that this excitement could be found in the former beliefs and traditions of the Western Danis.²⁸² This was seen by the Dani Christians to be a disadvantage of being second generation Christians, as the young people are not fully aware of what the pre-Christian Dani lifestyle actually entailed and they are taking the present situation for granted. A few of those I spoke to acknowledged that there may be a slight influence from this sector, yet the overwhelming reply was that unlike modernisation the traditional influence was negligible, largely because the community had been freed from its traditional lifestyle and beliefs. Another Dani man, about forty years of age from the Pyramid district, who is largely self-educated but has also undertaken some formal education and worked in both the urban and rural areas in Irian Jaya, drew a connection between the level of education and the influence of modernity as opposed to *adat-istiadat* or pre-Christian beliefs. He stated that "Not everyone is influenced by traditional beliefs but there are of course some. Those young people who are educated at junior high school or senior high school level have a greater understanding after their studies. But if their education is limited to primary school, then they are certainly open to be influenced. I mean the influence of traditional customs here. But those with a junior high school education or higher are open to outside influences like alcohol, smoking...".²⁸³

Five other Dani Christians who were interviewed, three men and two women ranging in age from 24 to 40, stated that the influence that traditional beliefs and lifestyle had on some youths came from their parents. It was claimed that while most of the Danis who professed to be Christians had truly accepted Christ personally, there were a few who had not made a full commitment but who nonetheless involved themselves in the church. Their children had grown up in the church and as such were involved in church activities

²⁸² Draper *Daring*, p.230 quoting Miyaawarak

²⁸³ Interview, Pyramid 13/8/1994

including youth group. An example was given by a young married man who lives and works in Pit River, of the way those who have not fully accepted Christianity attempt to direct their children. "There is an influence from parents who do not truly believe the Christian message. If they [the children] are male it does not matter as it is only the females whom they attempt to influence. For example if a young person, a female wants to attend a youth group activity in Ndugapaga then her parents may say 'Oh, you do not have to go'. There are many such occurrences of young people being told they need not attend or being forbidden from attending youth group. They only go to church. They listen but they do not hear what is said ... their parents continue to forbid any involvement in the youth group. So a young person may want to but is under the influence of his/her parents."²⁸⁴ While there are those who resist the influence of tradition, others succumb to it as their parents portray the "good old days" and relate stories of the former beliefs and lifestyle of the Western Dani community.²⁸⁵ "There are those young people who embrace the old beliefs. There are those who are a part of the church and then there are those, both male and female, who study the traditional culture and customs, who use and make black magic for traditional medicine."²⁸⁶ Yet the main influence in the village continues to be Christian as the majority of the parents are Christians themselves and have allowed their faith to influence their children. While the Dani church and its members are aware of the modern and traditional influences amongst the Dani people and those who accept them, it is claimed that "... in general they [young people] are faithful ...".²⁸⁷ It seemed that in some districts there are fewer Christian youths than in others and this could reflect a greater influence from traditional animistic beliefs as well as modernity. Meanwhile in other areas the youth group is extremely strong with its members having withstood the pressures of their contact with either modernity or traditional beliefs.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994

²⁸⁵ Interview, Makki 8/8/1994 A married, middle aged Dani woman who has lived on the coast for a short period and who is a leading figure in the community. One of her children is studying in Wamena at present.

²⁸⁶ Interview, Makki 8/8/1994 A married, middle aged Dani man who has studied on the coast and who has a high standing in the community.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, p.30 & O.Kogoya *Perkembangan Gereja-Gereja Baptis di Wilayah Tiom*, (Unpublished paper, 1993), pp.23-25 & Wakerkwa *Pertumbuhan Gereja*, p.6

The issues the young people are facing are considered by both young and old members of the Dani church to be threatening as "the young people are the strength of the church." and their faithfulness to the church will determine its future.²⁸⁹ Each church is concerned for its own young people and the young people of the Christian church in general. The Dani church is facing the challenge of learning how to deal with the problem of the boredom and insecurity of the young people which could lead them to animism or attract them indiscriminately to every aspect of an urban, materialistic lifestyle. It is the latter which is seen to be the main challenge. Perceived "modernity" has become a problem in the church because many of the leaders and the older people, having never dealt with these particular issues before, are not sure how to handle them.²⁹⁰ Animism poses less of a problem as they grew up with it and were involved in it themselves either by merely joining in the rituals and beliefs or by being spiritual leaders and mediums, as a number were when the first missionaries arrived.²⁹¹ Yet since most of the older generations have never had the opportunity or desire to go to the towns where urban "modernity" flourishes, they are not aware of what exactly the young people are being exposed to. This unfamiliarity produces misunderstandings. See, for example, conflicts over the present fashion of having long hair. While this does not present a problem for the young people, it is seen by the older generations in the light of their animistic past which as Christians they broke with completely. Their long hair was a symbol of vanity and pride, it was all for show and was linked with their animistic lifestyle. For the young people it does not carry the implications that it does for their parents and so is a potential area of disagreement.²⁹² In most areas it seems to have been resolved fairly well but there is still an awareness amongst the church members, both from the youth group and the church leadership, of the need for a greater awareness, sensitivity and understanding between the two groups. "In the present situation the young generation are looking for something to hold on to. The church needs to open its eyes to the confusion of the young people in this present age and try to guide them ...

²⁸⁹ L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, p.5 This view was reflected in the interviews as well

²⁹⁰ B.Kogoya *Suatu Penilaian Terhadap Perkembangan Gereja-Gereja Baptis di Wilayah Danime*, (Unpublished paper, 1992), p.8 Corroborated by interviews

²⁹¹ Draper *Daring*, p.203

²⁹² D.Hayward *The Dani of Irian Jaya Before and After Conversion*, (Regions Press, 1980), p.165

spiritually so that they will have a firm belief ...".²⁹³ This confusion of the young people is the result of the transition they are making from a traditional society to a modern one. They are also asked to "... bring discipline and leadership with the aim of combating negative matters arising".²⁹⁴ Yet the young people have to be willing to help their parents and elders to understand the new influences that are entering the lives of both generations, whether directly or indirectly and affecting their lives either overtly or covertly.

While the influence of modernisation until recently was reaching the towns and cities directly and the villages indirectly, as students returned home for holidays, that situation is changing with the establishment of the road between Wamena and Tiom. It has already been mentioned how the road has provided more contact with the outside world for the government officials, and in so doing it is also exposing the Dani people to more of the influences from Wamena. Vehicles driven by Indonesians make their way along the road every day, bringing with them students returning home, *pendatang*, government personnel, goods and the odd tourist. Up until now the road has not brought a great many changes as the *taksi* are in general passing through. Yet recently urban influences, considered by the Dani Christians both young and old as undesirable, have begun to penetrate the relatively isolated villages carried in by the *taksi*. As such the road is viewed with distrust by the majority of the Dani community. A married couple living in Makki explained to me that they realise there is very little they can do about bringing to a halt the introduction of these influences that "...over time will become increasingly evident in the villages and so we just pray for strength..." to face and deal with them.

A number of specific issues will be discussed here that have, so far, largely affected the younger generation as they live and study in Wamena or Jayapura, but are now also beginning to become more prominent in the North Baliem Valley. The way in which certain members of the community are seen to succumb to urban influences may in itself result from feelings of inadequacy as they are confronted by a modern, sophisticated world which is perceived as a real threat to the structure, lifestyle and hence the beliefs of the Dani community as a whole.

²⁹³ B.Kogoya *Suatu Penilaian*, pp.8, 19, This request was also made by the younger Christians who were interviewed

²⁹⁴ L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, p.19

Smoking

One issue is that of smoking.²⁹⁵ It may seem surprising that this is an issue that the Dani people are concerned about today as it was a part of their former lifestyle. Now however, it is seen as an influence of "modernity" because of its promotion in the urban areas. Smoking was prevalent amongst the members, both male and female, of the traditional Dani community. In fact a smoking ritual was undertaken when the first missionaries entered the North Baliem Valley in order to determine whether these newcomers were humans or spirits. According to the Danis, spirits could not smoke but men could. They had not yet seen these white newcomers smoke and so in an attempt to determine their true status, they were ordered to take part in a ritual in which each mission member was asked to smoke, properly, one of the Dani cigarettes. They all managed to do so, although unaware until later of what this ritual was meant to accomplish. This convinced the Danis that the missionaries were indeed human beings.²⁹⁶ Following their conversion the practice of smoking disappeared, largely on the initiative of the Danis themselves as they pictured the smoke from the cigarette inside their bodies the way the smoke from their fires fills the huts.²⁹⁷

Today, as young Danis go to the urban areas, they enter a culture that is vastly different to their own and one in which smoking amongst males is widespread and where cigarettes are readily accessible. The appeal of cigarettes may lie in their social role and their novelty but also in the warming affect they would have on the body, particularly in Wamena which, situated in the highlands, has cool weather. Dani youths living in the cities and towns, buy cigarettes and then take them home to the villages and share them around. Recently cigarettes have been brought in by *taksi* to be sold in the villages. It challenges the Dani church as a move away from the stand the early Christians made, and thus a possible threat to the existing structure and culture of Dani society based on Christianity. There is also a perception of smoking as a threat to health, with the analogy of the hut and a

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.12, 18

²⁹⁶ N.Draper "ABFM Becomes Involved" p.29 & I.Gruber "A Personal Account" pp.57-58 in *Baliem Beginnings* (Camden Baptist Church, 1976)

²⁹⁷ L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, p.18

person's body, and the association of smoking with other undesirable forms of behaviour such as gambling.²⁹⁸

Alcohol

Another symptom of the disruption caused by modernity is the presence and consumption of alcohol, resulting in drunkenness. This too has found its way into the lives of young people while living on the coast or in Wamena. According to the Danis, this is as far as it has penetrated, as it has not yet entered the villages. In recent years alcoholic drinks were not readily available. Unfortunately though this did not stop the youths from drinking *minuman keras* or strong drinks, alcohol. "Here alcohol was banned by the government but when the government banned it the people were able to make their own from methylated spirits, from bananas - very potent. Finally the government thought that rather than even more potent drinks being made it would be better to have alcohol brought in and so it has been arranged."²⁹⁹ Some villages may be influenced by alcohol as youths return home and make it for their friends, and while it is a problem that the Dani church is keeping an eye on, at present it is not particularly influential amongst the Dani people of the North Baliem.³⁰⁰

Gambling

One young, married man who works in an administrative position in Pit River portrayed gambling as a major problem the church is facing as it enters the Dani community and influences its members, especially the young people. "Youths here just gamble, gamble while smoking."³⁰¹ Other respondents throughout the district confirmed that it is quite a large problem amongst the young men. On a trek from Makki to Tiom we passed a group of fairly young Dani men, around two in the afternoon, who during their afternoon break were smoking and concentrating deeply on their gambling. Gambling is an issue that not only challenges the church as members come under its influence, but is also beginning to have a detrimental affect on community and family life. This activity not only involves the loss of money but also includes smoking and possibly drinking and according to Dani

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* & Corroborated by interviews

²⁹⁹ Interview, Pyramid 13/8/1994

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* & Corroborated by interviews and questionnaires

³⁰¹ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994

sources it can also lead to involvement in things like black magic, stealing and violence, not to mention neglecting wives and families.³⁰² It was seen by one informant from the Pyramid district to be a result of idle hands, as the young people have nothing to occupy them. "The young people have to be active. Like the coffee gardens over there. The youths are taken and assigned to work there. That will make them spend more time working in the coffee garden than gambling. ... Now gambling has decreased here. Previously it was out of control. They would forget their wives, forget everyone."³⁰³ Meanwhile a young man from Makki described the affect that gambling is having on the youths there who formerly attended the church. "They only want to gamble and so do not go to church. On Sunday they gamble. The youths enter one hut early in the morning to gamble and do not leave until about four in the afternoon. ... friends are invited to 'come to my house to gamble'. They stay in there all day, eat and drink and so do not go to church."³⁰⁴ While only a small number of Dani youths are involved in gambling, this young Dani man saw it as the foremost influence amongst the young men at present.

These practices have only just started to make their way into the lives of the Dani people living in the remote villages in the North Baliem Valley, brought back by the students, and now by the road going through. As a result the road is viewed with mixed feelings, and increasingly with distrust by many members of the Dani villages. Villages relatively shielded from these problems at present are those that are not situated close to the road or whose children have not gone on to high school education.

Sexual Relations

Another problem which both young people and the older generation are having to face is that of relations between the sexes. There have been numerous instances of pre-marital relations between young girls from the churches and either youths from the church or acquaintances from outside the church, the latter being the most common. This has led to unexpected pregnancies as well as the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. This whole situation is becoming more apparent, especially on the coast and reportedly is most

³⁰² L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, pp.12-18 & Wakerkwa *Pertumbuhan Gereja Baptis*, p.9 Also corroborated by interviews and questionnaires

³⁰³ Interview, Pyramid 13/8/1994

³⁰⁴ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994

noticeable amongst the daughters of ministers or church leaders. Instances of teenage pre-marital sex in the villages are extremely rare. It is more prominent amongst the young people when they are not in the village but are away in Wamena or Jayapura at school. Here they are no longer under the continual watch of their parents or other members of their village and so there are less restraints placed upon them to act according to the accepted cultural mores or within the Christian morals they have been brought up with. The traditional lifestyle of the Dani community provides an example of the restraints upon young people within the village. Girls remained with their parents until they were married and the men remained with their parents ideally for life, so that following the marriage the girl became a part of the man's family.³⁰⁵ According to Dani students, their exposure to influences such as movies and magazines that portray the practice of free sexual relations between young people, and the presence of prostitutes, encourages free sexual relations.³⁰⁶ Apparently this is an issue that the Dani church community on the coast has been facing for a number of years now and they are still not quite sure how to handle it. According to one highly educated Dani man the Dani youths "accept the foreign, modern culture very quickly because they think their own culture is inferior."³⁰⁷ This may reflect the general lack of self-confidence that many teenagers experience elsewhere in the modern world, as well as being an example of a society being presented with the technology and sophistication of modernity which contrasts with their relatively basic lifestyle.

The Dani people love their children and instruct them in Christian morals and yet some still manage to get themselves involved with the opposite sex before marriage, becoming pregnant, or as one informant stated "damaged or tainted"³⁰⁸ in the process. From my observations, while the church does not agree with or condone the way in which the baby was conceived, neither do they allow the child to suffer for its parents' indiscretions. Rather the child is brought up in the village with the other children, and in many cases is adopted by the mother's parents as their own child. It is interesting to note that the Danis traditionally have not really had to deal with this issue. Many of the first

³⁰⁵ W.Wenda *Suatu Tinjauan Alkitabiah Terhadap Tradisi Pemilihan Pasangan Hidup Dalam Kebudayaan Suku Lani*, (Unpublished paper, 1993), p.10

³⁰⁶ B.Kogoya *Suatu Penilaian*, p.19 & L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, p.5

³⁰⁷ Interview, Jayapura 30/7/1994 A young man who furthered his studies in Manado

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

generation of converts were either married or of marrying age when they accepted Christianity and with it, Christian morals, and so they had relatively few problems with pre-marital relations. Meanwhile today's generation is facing a situation where unlike the girls of their parent's generation, they are not married off once they reach puberty.³⁰⁹ The age difference between married couples is decreasing with the average marrying age for both sexes being around 19 years. Previously, with the marrying age for girls being so young there was no opportunity for pre-marital relations as the available females were married off once they emerged from childhood, and the men were afforded little chance to become sexually involved before they themselves were married, once able to afford the bride price.³¹⁰

The Danis claim that the problem the church is facing with regard to sexual relations is exacerbated by the presence of tourists both in Wamena and to a lesser extent in the villages. The tourists seem to be the main source of STDs or Sexually Transmitted Diseases, which are introduced initially through their relationships with Dani girls and are spread either as the tourists travel around or through the infected Dani girl. While most of this, to date has apparently been occurring in the tourist centres such as Wamena, with the road now leading from Wamena to Pit River, a few are making their way off the general tourist track into the villages around the government posts situated along this road, villages such as Makki and Pit River. When I arrived at Makki there were two Swedish male tourists who had spent the night in Makki, waiting for the next *taksi* to return to Wamena. Apparently when tourists make their way into the villages they often "*main perempuan*" or "become involved with girls here with the result that they [Dani girls] have contracted diseases. Diseases that previously were not present among us, now are."³¹¹

Apart from the problems faced by the church and the Dani community with sexual relations between tourists and local Dani girls, there is also the general lifestyle portrayed by these white tourists. "Many people here think that people with white skin, westerners are all believers. But they come here, on Sunday they go on treks so that people say 'Ah, why are

³⁰⁹ Hayward *The Dani of Irian Jaya*, p.53

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.182-183

³¹¹ Interview, Makki 7/8/1994 A married man, 31 years old who has studied on the coast and been a lecturer

these westerners not attending church.' They do not want to come to church."³¹² Not only do they not attend church but they "always smoke, they do not let water enter their bodies, only alcohol ... they have the same skin, the same hair, the same language as the missionaries who came but are not the same."³¹³ Both young people and the older generation of the Dani church community are well aware of the modern lifestyle these tourists are portraying and the example it is providing for the Dani people especially, although not exclusively, the younger generation.

Influence on Leaders

While the majority of those members of the Dani church who have been influenced by modern changes have been the young people, such influences have not been confined to this age group. Members of the older generations too have been found to be susceptible to the undesirable influences of modernity. The Dani church has had to deal with the problems that emerge as certain church leaders have succumbed to and involved themselves in extra-marital relations. While most of the church leaders who have become involved in these relationships work on the coast and are not Danis, they are still church leaders in the Western Dani church. As such their actions create a challenge that the Dani church is having to deal with and that a number of Dani Christians claim to be having a difficult time coming to terms with.

Financial corruption is another issue that the Dani church is dealing with,³¹⁴ although reportedly the offenders are mainly situated in churches on the coast, rather than in the villages where there is less opportunity for such corruption. While some Danis have been overwhelmed by the temptations that confront them when they move into an urban community, they tend to be of the younger generation "but those who are old like Milliluk, Wendana, Yakya are excellent."³¹⁵ In their discussion of this issue, while the Dani Christians obviously regarded it as a challenge the church is facing, they also felt that they were already doing what they could to deal with it. Those leaders who are found to be corrupt in their use of the church finances are reprimanded by the church and are then

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994

³¹⁴ L.Kogoya *Pelayanan Pemuda*, p.13 Discussed and corroborated in the interviews

³¹⁵ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994

required to step down from their leadership position for a period. Otherwise, if they are truly sorry for their actions and are willing to repay the church, they are required to continue to lead the church without receiving a wage as they do on the coast, until the entire amount of money has been compensated for. Not only does corruption challenge the church as it weakens its moral validity and "divides the church"³¹⁶ but it also weakens its financial stability. We have already discussed the way in which the church is financed, and it would seem fairly obvious that while the church is able to run on the finance it does receive it cannot afford to have money continually removed from its funds.

One area which seemed to concern those Danis involved in the survey was that of disunity amongst certain church leaders.³¹⁷ It has already been mentioned that as an organisation the church in Irian Jaya is fairly co-operative, as are the various denominations, particularly amongst the Dani church in the North Baliem Valley. Yet "Leaders lack unity with the result that the Christian church has begun to weaken."³¹⁸ This in turn is believed to decrease the effectiveness of the church body within Irian Jaya at present. This is not to say that the entire leadership of the Dani church is in disagreement but rather there are a few whose words and actions are making the lack of leadership cohesion quite obvious. The situations that certain church leaders have found themselves in with regard to corruption and sexual promiscuity have not helped matters, but have rather exacerbated them. The disunity of certain leaders also divides some congregations.

Cargo Cults

Another possible reaction to modernisation with its consumer values which might have been expected, is the emergence of Cargo Cults which have surfaced intermittently amongst certain Dani communities since the mass conversions to Christianity. In Cargo Cults, Christian beliefs are mixed with traditional expectations of a golden, idyllic age here on earth, when the people will be happy and will lack for nothing. Apparently this has not been a problem for the church in recent years as the Danis in the North Baliem Valley have managed to steer clear of the emergence of distortions in the form of Cargo Cults. One

³¹⁶ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994 A young widowed woman who has trained as a teacher & Interview, Jayapura 30/7/1994

³¹⁷ Wakerkwa *Pertumbuhan Gereja Baptis*, p.9 Also corroborated by interviews and questionnaires

³¹⁸ Questionnaire completed by a young student in Jayapura, 22/7/1994

young man from Makki looked at me in horror when I asked him if they were in existence in that area. He stated "No, we have left that behind us."³¹⁹ Other Dani groups such as those around Mulia have had Cargo Cults surface as late as 1988, but in general they have been short lived as the leaders of the movements cannot live up to the claims they make and the expectations of their followers.³²⁰ While I expected Cargo Cults to be an issue for the Western Dani church, this was not so. The Danis claimed that these types of movements tend to be more prominent amongst the coastal people of Irian Jaya. This is probably due to them being more aware of ships and the cargo they carry, so that movements built around the coming of plenty of cargo along with a golden age of plenty and freedom from illness and sorrow find easier targets here. Also, according to one Dani youth studying in Jayapura, the emergence of Cargo Cults amongst a number of groups on the coast results from them not yet being reached directly by the Gospel message and so having confused various aspects of the Christian message with their own expectations.

These are the issues that emerged in the discussions of challenges that the church is facing today and which are linked to the disruptive affect of modernisation amongst the Danis in their villages and to a greater degree its influence on the Danis studying or working in the urban areas. The picture that has been painted so far seems fairly bleak. But while the church members claim to be challenged by these issues, they are not yet proving to be a serious problem within the church. For example the problems amongst the youth with regard to turning their backs on Christianity and turning to alcohol, gambling and sex are more apparent in some Dani villages than in others and even then, according to one lady who holds leadership positions in Makki and has a couple of teenage children, approximately 2% of the young people are falling away.³²¹ The leadership is in the same situation. The majority are standing firm in their faith and maintaining their moral standards, but a few are abusing their position in the community. It is those few who are having an impact on the church. Those who remain faithful are concerned for their friends and

³¹⁹ Personal conversation, Makki 9/8/1994

³²⁰ J.A.Godschalk & A.E.Dumatubun *Bangunan Baru dan Fondasi Tua: Suatu Studi Kasus Tentang Kargoisme di Dani Barat*, (UNCEN/Bapeda Tingkat I Irian Jaya, 1989), p.82 & Hayward *The Dani of Irian Jaya*, p.150

³²¹ Interview, Makki 8/8/1994

become more aware of the temptations that lie ahead of students moving away from home, and for leaders in the cities, both from modernisation and the second major issue of Islam.

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