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## PATER EN PAPOEA

ONTMOETING VAN DE MISSIONARISSEN VAN HET HEILIG HART  
MET DE CULTUUR DER PAPOEA'S VAN NEDERLANDS ZUID-NIEUW-GUINEA  
(1905-1963)

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## Summary

### Father and Papuan

#### Encounter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart with the culture of the Papuan of the Netherlands South New Guinea

In this thesis is examined how the encounter did happen of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart with the Papuan of the Netherlands South New Guinea (1905-1963). There are seven Papuan tribes in five districts paramount: The Marind-anim, The Papuan of the Frederik Hendrik Island, the Muju and the Mandobo, the Papuan of the Mappi district (Jahraj and Awju) and the Asmat. In the first fifteen years (1905-1920) the Mission at the south-coast of the Netherlands New Guinea had several problems: The area was very sparsely populated and the Mission was in want of money and personnel. Hunters of birds of paradise and merchants (barter) grinded down the Papuan and gave them a bad example. The Papuan of the Marind tribe were dying at a rapid rate of the venereal granulom and an epidemic of Spanish influenza (in 1918). In 1902 Papuan women of the Marind tribe were infected with the venereal granulom highly probable by Australian labourers. This venereal disease caused large, open wounds. Not until 1920 the disease was diagnosed by doctor Cnopius, a specialist on venereal diseases. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart nursed the diseased Papuan from the beginning (1905). In 1913 Father J. van der Kolk founded a model village; herewith the healthy Marind secluded themselves from the diseased Papuan. The model village was the heart of the rescueplan of Father P. Vertenten of 1919. He wanted to protect the healthy Papuan youth from the venereal granulom. With a press campaign Father P. Vertenten alarmed the government in the Netherlands. The campaign was successful; an interpellation and a Palace conference (29-1-1921) followed. The rescueplan was executed after 1921. The Dutch civil servants however went further than the original plan at the execution: The old Papuan villages disappeared, everything became a model village.

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart wanted to achieve evangelization by change of the Papuan culture for the better. The Papuan ought to unlearn their bad habits, but to retain their good qualities. The Mission continually pressed the Dutch government for dealing firmly with the head-hunting, the bloodrevenge, the burial alive and the infanticide of the Marind-anim. Not until 1913 the Dutch government dealt herewith.

It is remarkable how much time and trouble the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had spent from the beginning (1905) on the study of the languages and culture of the Papuan. A small group of Fathers continually were at work

herewith, while the rest of the missionaries could profit by the results of that study. The goal of the study was to obtain an insight in the range of ideas of the Papuan in order that the missionaries through that could provide better mission-work. The Fathers who did study, were all amateurs, with the exception of the ethnologist Father doctor J. Boelaars. Yet their work was certainly not without merit, because they were pioneers.

The bishop could stimulate or hinder the study that several Fathers made of the adat of the Papuan. Monseigneur H. Tillemans (1950-1970) urged on the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to devote themselves as much as possible to the acculturation. Monseigneur J. Aerts (1920-1942) on the other hand disapproved that Father H. Geurtjens spent so much time on the adat and language study just when the Protestant mission became active (since 1930) at the south-coast of the Netherlands New Guinea. Monseigneur H. Tillemans held conferences of a week at Merauke by which the convoked missionaries spoke about acculturation, economic projects a.o.. He visited every year each district of his apostolic vicariate to explore which mission-method was the best to be used. The education in the Netherlands South New Guinea was yet really started in 1921, when the rescueplan of Father P. Vertenten was executed. This success was connected with two factors: There was more money available by a special subsidy provision and compulsory education was introduced. The special subsidy was granted for a period of five years (1921-1926). In 1926 the five-year plan was continued with another five years (1926-1931). In those first ten years (1921-1931) agricultural education in the schoolgarden was an important part of the timetable. In 1931 the special position in which the education at the south-coast of the Netherlands New Guinea was, was abandoned. Henceforth the same scholastic timetable was in force of the Papuan schools as the schools had in the rest of the Dutch East Indies and they fell under the general subsidy provision. It was allowed to work in the schoolgarden only out of school-hours. This difficult situation came not until 1938 to an end, when the civilization schools (*beschavingsscholen*) were founded. It was proposed that the civilization schools should ripen the Papuan for the ordinary primary education. The working in the schoolgarden was put again on the timetable of the civilization school. After the Second Worldwar the standard of the education in the Netherlands South New Guinea was raised. Preparatory (*Vóórscholen*) and continuation schools (*Vervolgscholen*) were founded. The Mission wanted to form quickly a core of young Papuan. In co-operation with that core the Papuan community could be raised to a higher level of development.

The Mission and the Dutch government brought little Papuan groups, which lived scattered, together in villages along the large rivers. Particularly in the fifties the Mission spent in collaboration with the Dutch government a lot of time on economic projects. In 1956 they began with the Prosperity plan Mappi (*Welvaartsplan Mappi*); the goal of this plan was to raise the agricultural level of the Papuan of the Mappi district.

It lasted a long time till the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart could bring themselves to associate the Papuan with the administration, the education and the religious teaching. This was connected with the fact that the standard of the education was not raised until after the Second Worldwar. Also by that last worldwar the training of the first Papuan (who belonged to the Muju tribe) for (temporary) gurus (= teacher-catechists) was forced in 1942. The missionaries relied almost entirely on the gurus of the Kei and Tanimbar Islands (Moluccas), who had a dominating position in the Papuan villages. In 1953 the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart associated the first precursors (*voorlopers*) who belonged to the Jahraj tribe. These were Papuan from districts which were already missioned. They settled down with their families in the villages of the fringe areas where the gurus had not established themselves yet and with which the missionaries had made only very first contacts. Their task was to prepare the work of the Dutch government and the Mission. Because the celibacy made the priesthood unattractive for the Papuan youths, the Mission did not succeed in letting Papuan priests take over its work.

Also in the fifties the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart applied themselves to social contextualization. A case in point is the fact that Father A. Vriens let construct a wall in the new family huts of the Awju, when it appeared that the Papuan of the Awju tribe could not abolish the separation of sexes at once.

It is remarkable that the Fathers from the beginning (1905) translated sermons, religious lessons and hymns in the Marind language instead of the Malayan language which they also could have used. They did this in order that the religion could draw nearer to the Papuan. In the period between the two worldwars the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart could hardly find the time to accomplish religious contextualization. This was connected with several factors: The execution of the rescueplan of Father P. Vertenten in the twenties and the trial of strength with the Protestant mission (1930-1937) demanded a lot of energy and time of the Mission; the two Fathers who were important for accommodation left, Father P. Vertenten in 1925 and Father H. Geurtjens in 1932. Especially after ± 1950 the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart took great pains over the religious contextualization; Father G. Zegwaard for instance compared Christ with the 'moro-ipitsj' at the Asmat. This was an innocent man who took the guilt of a murder upon himself at a peace ritual.

In the period after the Second Worldwar the elder generation of the Papuan clinged to among other things polygamy. Because of this manner of life the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart could not baptize them. Yet they wanted to draw also those elders into the ecclesiastical festivals in the villages, because they always started from a collective approach of both the elder and the younger Papuan. The following way out was found: The elder generation was called 'agama je katoek' (people of the belief), while the baptized Papuan were addressed as 'serani je katoek' (Christians).