

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

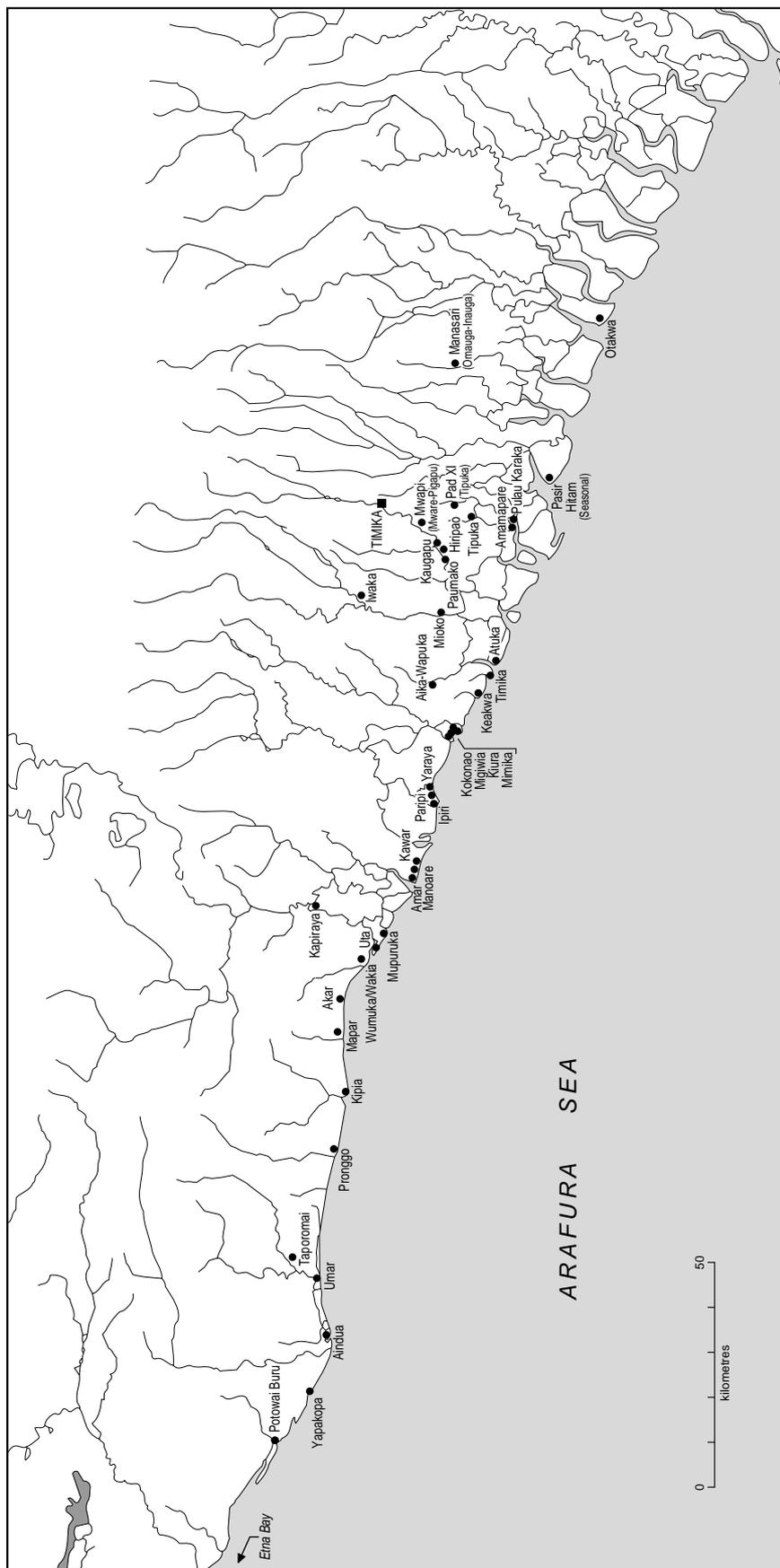
The word *kamoro* emphasizes rather—and we had the word in our vocabulary as—“living person,” in opposition to the dead, ghosts, things plants and animals.... If we ask them whether the mountain folk are also *kamoro*, they say, “No, they are *mii*,” i.e. ghosts, or *kapauku*, “inland dwellers.”

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXAMINING THE BOUNDARIES OF POLITICAL SPACE IN WEST NEW GUINEA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The people are...easily frightened and cowardly. Practically all the young people now speak Malay. As to whether they are pro-Dutch or pro-Japanese, there is no definite answer. They will most likely follow the latest comer (Tillemans as cited in AGS 1943:5).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPROACHING THE PROBLEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

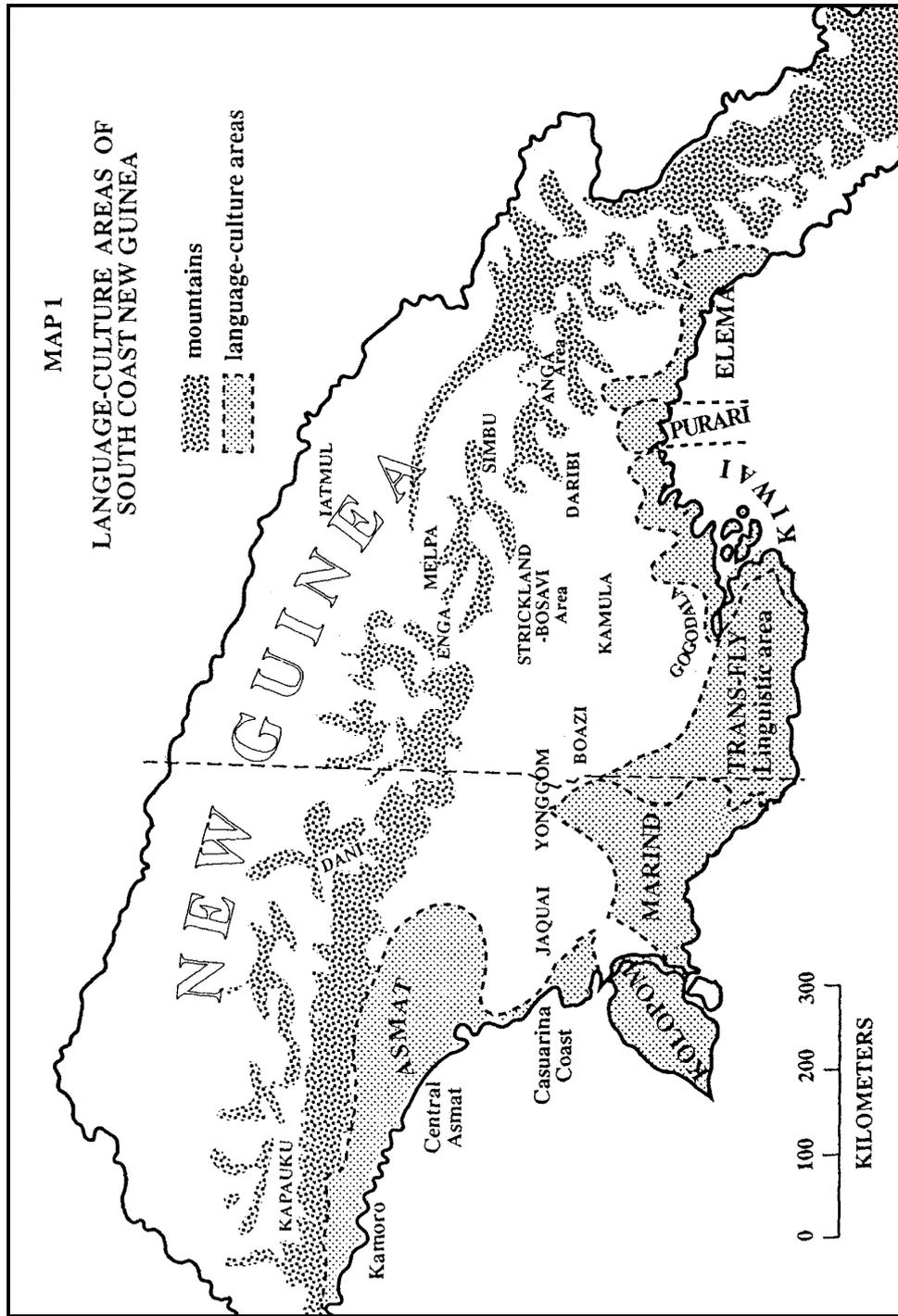
³⁰ For a review of the volume see Whitehead 1985. Herdt certainly has been a key proponent in emphasising the existence of homosexual practices on the south coast. In addition to the widely known 1984 edited volume, see also Herdt 1987a, 1987b, and 1991.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESENTING THE PAST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TIME, PRACTICE, THE PAST AND PERSPECTIVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIAL RECIPROCITY AND ETHNO-HISTORICAL ORGANISATION

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

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

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

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

A NOTE ON THE PRESENTATION OF “CONTEMPORANEOUS” DATA

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

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

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

OUTLINE OF THESIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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