

Chapter One

Engaging the eternal: *Amoko-kwere* as Interpretive Strategy

If we are to play a believable role before an audience...we must produce or at least imply a history of ourselves: an informal account which indicates something of our origins and which justifies or perhaps excuses our present status and actions in relation to that audience. But this presentation of the self in everyday life is unnecessary when, as is the case in the life of a village, the gaps in shared memory are much fewer and slighter (Connerton 1989:17).

As actors, story-tellers must engage their audiences, as Connerton asserts, by developing a sense of familiarity, usually by sharing at least some part of their personal history. The underlying assumption that facilitates the most meaningful connection between a story-teller and an audience is shared notions of historical consciousness. Initial readings of the stories that Weare, a sixty-year-old Kamoro man, relayed to Father Petrus Drabbe in the 1930s, are almost incomprehensible. The reason is two-fold: first, during the 1930s, there was little shared history between the Europeans who recorded the stories and the Kamoro who told them. Refracted in European accounts, however, are traces of shared history between the Kamoro and various Moluccans with whom they interacted either directly or indirectly. Second, and equally important, there existed a radical difference in strategies for interpreting and presenting the experiences of the past and the present. While European notions of historical consciousness tended to be more

linear and teleological, Kamoro understandings seemed embedded in a logic of exchange.

The first part of this chapter outlines aspects of Kamoro historical consciousness which are grounded in *amoko-kwere*, narratives of the timeless era of the cultural heroes. It describes features of Kamoro cosmology intimately linked to the *Amoko* “period” which ultimately influence Kamoro social organisation and perceptions of lived experience.¹ Disjunction between Kamoro and foreign notions of historical consciousness is one of the key elements underlying misrepresentations of the Kamoro as passive, lazy and indolent. The second part of the chapter presents two accounts of widely known *amoko-kwere* to serve as generalised exemplars of the genre and as a starting point for the broader ethno-historical project of this thesis.

IMPLICIT CHRONOLOGICAL SCHEMES AND TEMPORAL PROGRESSION

In the broadest sense all societies have myths of creation and development, which imply temporal succession: first things were thus, then they changed thus (Hobsbawm 1997:30).

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; darkness was upon the face of the deep And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5).

The first book of the Bible could have been the model upon which historian Eric Hobsbawm posited the universality of chronological order with the implication of a teleological-oriented progression of events. It is pervasive in Western thought more generally, not only in Judeo-Christian forms of teleology, but also in, for example, Marxist and evolutionist frameworks (see Eliade 1971; Cullman 1962).

¹ I place “period” in quotations because the *Amoko* does not really represent a “period” in the temporal sense. It is boundless and panchronic. When I refer to it as this boundless, panchronic entity, I spell *Amoko* with a capital; otherwise I use the lower case.

Beginning with a creative starting point, these understandings interpret time as part of a progressive chronological order. Indeed, Stocking elaborates on the influence of the first chapters of Genesis and its broader implications for anthropology. According to him Genesis:

...may be interpreted as defining an anthropological paradigm whose temporal framework was both finite and confined, whose psychological and epistemological assumptions were innatist and a priori, whose principle of social order was patriarchal, whose principle of human diversification was genealogical, whose principle of temporal change was degenerationist, and whose privileged reconstructive data were those of linguistic relationship...(Stocking 1987:12).

As mechanisms for framing, ordering and documenting events, such “myths of creation and development” play a crucial role in social memory as part of a system of reference that links interpretations of contemporary experiences to our understandings of the past (cf. Connerton 1989). This is not to say that all western scientific inquiry is creationist at some level; instead I am arguing what I take to be Stocking’s underlying point that linear chronological order appears to be an almost universal construct in Western presentations of experience. Such understandings of historical consciousness as outlined have been inextricably implicated in outsider depictions of the Kamoro.

Many anthropologists have attempted to tackle this problem or at least account for culturally specific notions of temporality. With the exception of Gell (1992) however, perceptions of time seem to be only superficially dealt with among anthropologists (see Munn 1992). Gell’s interest in time seems to have developed from his earlier work. He explains indigenous notions of multiple ways of reckoning time. Among the Umeda for example, there exists both “symbolic” and “process” time (Gell 1975:335). Marilyn Strathern points out the inadequacy of western constructions of time:

It is too simple to talk of diachrony and synchrony [e.g. western notions of temporality, TH]: we also need a recursive metaphor, one that will indicate how time runs both backward and forward (1992:199-200).

One might extend Strathern's call for broader metaphors to cope with time that not only runs between diachrony and synchrony, but one that encompasses them--panchrony. Clearly societies have unique modes of conceptualising time and process (even if many are shared). Culturally specific interpretations of temporality not only shape understandings of the present but also perceptions of the past.

This chapter outlines aspects of Kamoro historical consciousness. The imposition of foreign teleological and temporal schemes (and languages) as interpretive reference points underlies colonial and post-colonial interpretations and representations of Kamoro practice (cf. Jonathan Hill (1996)). The disjuncture between indigenous strategies of historical consciousness and those of outsiders seems to be at the heart of negative and derogatory commentary about the Kamoro, and over time it has had broader implications than simply defining perceptions, but has overflowed into development ideology and other State and Freeport policy decisions.

During crisis and times of change, as in everyday life, the activities of *amoko-we* form an integral part of shaping Kamoro experiences of temporality. *Amoko-we*, cultural heroes, are regularly evoked, analysed and interpreted through narrative and ritual. This accords well with Kapferer's understanding that ritual and everyday practice form a continuing analysis of indigenous consciousness (1988:21). The basic concept that both informs and triggers the activities of the *amoko-we* is *aopao*, most generally defined as social reciprocity. Activities in the narratives are not necessarily driven by a chronological temporal sequence of events toward a particular outcome. Instead events described in *amoko-kwere*, stories about the *amoko-we*, are functions of continual "countering" activities bound into effecting the balance of social reciprocity and as such are somewhat cyclical in nature.² Although the events of *Amoko-kwere*

² Philosophers seem to broadly contrast two modes of time tied to a community's literacy. Based in the western traditions of Hegel and Jung, Kelly describes that "pre-literate" societies are characterised by what he labels "mythic time consciousness" and accordingly their perceptions of time are "...a-historical, aionological, oriented to the remote past or the time of the beginning. The present derives its meaning from the cyclical re-enactment of archetypal patterns..." (Kelly

are somewhat cyclical in nature, they do not culminate in an idealistic balance; instead, balance depends upon the socio-political intent of the narrator. In *amoko-kwere* that describe interactions and relationships with foreigners for example, reciprocal inequality almost always favours the foreigners, establishing a relationship of negative reciprocity between the Kamoro and foreigners.

Aside from being the “motor” of Kamoro narratives (Pouwer 1975), and more generally Kamoro understandings of the unfolding of everyday events, *aopao* is also embedded in social organisation, certain rituals, and ultimately social engagement. Settlements are typically arranged geographically and socially in binary pairs; one is considered the *aopao* of the other. Certain traditional feasts are counterparts, *aopao*, of one another. Even conversation and the exchange of words or knowledge can be explicitly interpreted as an exchange—*aopao*—of words for words, words for tobacco, etc. (Pouwer 1955:161-164). This chapter outlines the general characteristics of the *amoko-we* and sketches some of the cosmological underpinnings suggested by their activities. At the end of this chapter, I present two composite accounts of well-known *amoko-kwere*. These composite accounts are geared towards introducing the genre and demonstrating the characteristics of the *amoko-we* and the role of the logic of *aopao* in the narratives. I will discuss specific versions of these and other accounts of the *amoko-we* over the course of this thesis when I discuss periods contemporaneous with their collection. Just as the Kamoro refer to the *amoko-kwere* to interpret the world around them, this chapter is designed to serve as a basic understanding of the *amoko-we* and reference to be borne in mind when reading this thesis. Though I believe some of the connections are particularly striking, I only explicitly elaborate on them after these insights have been revealed in documentation.

1993:151). In contrast, he describes historical time-consciousness (of literate societies) as “...linear and chronological, oriented to the future and some end or goal” (ibid). While I think the latter mode of time-consciousness most generally does characterise Western notions of historical consciousness, I think the former, restricts indigenous reflexivity with regards to time-consciousness.

SOURCING THE NARRATIVES

Kamoro narratives are surprisingly well documented, although perhaps not all in accessible locations. Keen observers with experience in Kamoro language, ethnography, and/or spirituality documented the vast majority of *amoko-kwere*. The primary recorders included three Catholic priests, Fathers Drabbe, Zegwaard and Coenen and a Dutch government anthropologist, Jan Pouwer. With the exception of Drabbe, the others all worked in Mimika during the Dutch post-war decolonisation of Netherlands New Guinea. Because Drabbe's work was done during the initial years of colonisation, this section introduces his work while the other sections of this chapter draw from the particular strengths and contributions to understandings of Kamoro cosmology of each of these men.

Our first insight into indigenous perspective drawn from the Kamoro themselves (i.e. not their observed reactions to the foreigners) exists in the form of oral narratives collected in the mid 1930s. This collection forms a point of departure for reconstructing Kamoro perspectives at the time of European contact and immediately before. It also reveals some aspects of Kamoro cosmology and sociality that are highly relevant for understanding indigenous forms of agency.

Between 1935 and 1938, an experienced and gifted missionary linguist Petrus Drabbe worked in Mimika. His two-and-a-half year assignment to the region was particularly fruitful from the standpoint of linguistic documentation. His impressive body of work includes Kamoro-language catechisms, prayer books, a dictionary (1937), a grammar (1953), and a collection of oral narratives (1947, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1950).

As Malay was only beginning to become the main medium of interaction with the Kamoro during the period of Drabbe's work, proficiency in the language was largely restricted to the youth attending mission and administration schools, in particular those nearest the mission stations in Kokonao and Uta.³ Thus, Drabbe documented Kamoro oral tradition in the vernacular. An outstanding

³ Even by the early 1940s, the majority of Kamoro who lived outside of the immediate spheres of the mission and administration still did not speak Malay (Sierat 1999:78).

collection of twenty-three of the narratives that he collected was later published in English with an interlinear translation from the vernacular in the journal *Oceania* between 1947 and 1950. The inclusion of the vernacular accounts enables an analysis of particular concepts and words that are lost in translation into the European languages.

Drabbe's informants were all men ranging in age from fifteen to sixty, with the average age of just under forty.⁴ Although there are no figures for life expectancy in West New Guinea for this time period, it is reasonable to assume that men of forty years of age would have been senior members of their communities.⁵ Thus, all of his informants were born prior to 1926, when the Dutch Administration established a permanent post in Mimika and the 1927 arrival of the Catholic Missions. Most of his informants would have been in their mid to late twenties at the time of permanent contact.

AMOKO-KWERE AND TATA-KWERE

The key commentators on Kamoro oral narratives differentiated two distinct categories, *amoko-kwere* and *tata-kwere*. Although both appear to describe events of the past, the former emphasises the creative activities of the cultural "heroes," the latter of more direct ancestors. They only fit into a chronological "temporal ordering" in that the activities of the *amoko-kwere* seem to precede those of the *tata-kwere*. But at the same time they encompass and inform them. And, within the *amoko-kwere*, the body of stories analogous to Hobsbawm's "myths of

⁴ The median age for the sixteen informants for whom ages are given is 40, while the average age of the same group is approximately thirty-seven years, ten months.

⁵ As a comparison to demonstrate the relative age of Drabbe's informants, the life expectancy in the United States in 1940 was just under sixty-three years (Peters, Kochanek, Murphy 1996:22). Though I have been unable to find information regarding life expectancy in Mimika during this period, Vogel reports that in 1954 in the Sentani area on the north coast of Netherlands New Guinea, close to the capital at Hollandia, sixty percent of people died before reaching ten years of age. According to his figures, only nine percent of the population reached ages above fifty (1965:81). The Indonesian Central Statistics Bureau claims that the average life expectancy in the entire province as late as 1986 was under fifty-eight years (<http://www.bps.go.id/profile/irja.shtml>).

creation and development,” there is no temporal succession that orders the creative activities of *amoko-we*. Although I acknowledge these differences between the stories, I hesitate to draw a sharp distinction between them, as *amoko-we* are often present in both.

While I was a consultant for Freeport, I often “entertained” Kamoro guests in the Freeport administrative office building in Kuala Kencana when the management was behind schedule and planned meetings with the Kamoro were delayed.⁶ Alo Nataiku Wania, the (I) *Kepala Suku Adat*⁷ of Tipuka was a frequent visitor. Initially I felt uneasy about being asked on short notice to look after *Bapak Alo*⁸ because I knew his concerns were serious and he usually worked hard to arrive in Kuala Kencana in accordance with pre-set meeting times. Although I empathised with his frustrations at having to wait and more generally with his personal and village situation, I did come to enjoy any opportunity to listen to and interact with *Bapak Alo*. He was among the most senior and gifted storytellers that I encountered in Mimika.⁹ In exchange for his animated recollections and stories I gave him personal photographs, photocopies of pictures of Kamoro that I had from Dutch publications and whatever “courtesy gifts” that were available through Freeport’s Public Relations department.¹⁰

In December of 1997, I expressed to *Bapak Alo* my confusion over some of the stories that I had read that were collected in the 1930s and the 1950s. Some of

⁶ On some occasions meetings were delayed by Freeport Management being behind schedule, but on other occasions, the Kamoro and other Papuan people would arrive long before or after scheduled meeting times due to uncertain access to transport to Kuala Kencana.

⁷ *Kepala Suku Adat* is the Indonesian administration title for a customary ‘tribal’ chief. The title is largely ceremonial, but those carrying this title are respected as understanding local custom and are integral to ritual activity. Administratively, they are subordinate to the government village chief (*Kepala Desa*).

⁸ Referring to him as *Bapak Alo* is an Indonesian address of respect. *Bapak* literally means father.

⁹ I met Alo Nataiku Wania initially in 1996 in Tipuka Village while conducting cultural documentation on behalf of the Smithsonian. Although he was the “Customary Chief” of the village, he no longer resided there. With his health failing (tuberculosis) and after a marriage to a substantially younger woman from Sulawesi, he moved closer to the Timika Town. Alo Nataiku Wania died from an accidental fall in 1998.

the stories seemed to me to be more “historical” in that they accounted for specific village movements and histories of inter- and intra-village wars. Others appeared more “mythical” in that the activities often transcended the local environment, with characters more frequently capable of doing extraordinary things like drying up rivers and moving mountains. I asked *Bapak Alo* if there were different kinds of Kamoro narratives. He explained:

There are two kinds of story. One about the (I) “*Waktu dulu*” and the other about the (I) “*Waktu nenek moyang*.” “*Waktu dulu*” are the (K) *Amoko-kwere*, they explain the relationship between the (K) *Amoko-we* and the spiritual environment. The *Amoko* people [*amoko-we*] had powers. Stories about our ancestors, (K) *tata-kwere* usually deal with just the (K) *we-nata* [i.e. Kamoro/ “real” people as opposed to the *amoko* people] (8 December 1997).

Although *Bapak Alo*’s response outlined a dichotomy between two distinctly different kinds of stories, *amoko-kwere* and *tata-kwere*, he also left room for the two stories to overlap when he said that *usually* the *tata-kwere* deal with “real” people.¹¹ *Tata* generally means ancestor. Thus, *tata-kwere* would indicate talk or language, or by extension stories, related to the ancestors. Pouver’s description draws a similar differentiation in the classification of stories and offers a useful elaboration of *Bapak Alo*’s dichotomy. He defines *tata-kwere* as myths and accounts about one’s own tribe and not about the culture heroes (1955:307). Thus, *tata-kwere* are more localised while *amoko-kwere*, by implication, deal with more universal accounts of the *amoko-we*, the cultural heroes. With the exception of migration histories, which described the activities of known ancestors of particular villages, the line between *tata-kwere* and *amoko-kwere* was often blurred during my research, with cultural heroes and spirits impacting local village histories that transcended the rote listings of former village locations.

¹⁰ Over time I had given him numerous of these goodies including date books, calendars, a paperweight, a coffee mug and even golf balls. Alo used to joke about these things saying that with my help he would acquire compensation from Freeport bit by bit.

¹¹ Both categories of stories outlined by *Bapak Alo* shared the suffix-*kwere*, which derives from the word *akwere*, which my informants defined most frequently as language (I: *bahasa*), but also

The earliest definitions for *amoko* I have found are in Drabbe's dictionary where there are two entries under this term. The first says:

Àmoko: something from earlier times; *àmoko ir*, to be from before, for example *àmoko aymàkate*, or *àmoko aimikàe*, or *àmoko –wénata aymàkate*, that is the people from before.

Drabbe's second definition differs slightly:

Àmoko: once and for all; *àmoko aaper*, to remain forever, reside (Drabbe 1937:5).

Pouwer's thesis defines *amòkò* (with slightly different diacritics) succinctly as “ ‘in the beginning,’ forever, paradisiacal” (1955:302). Both Pouwer's and Drabbe's definitions are linked by the fact that *amoko* refers to something that is at once in the beginning and eternal. Though this is perhaps contradictory to some sensibilities, I believe that for the Kamoro, both definitions are simultaneously invoked. The term *amoko* describes people or stories that both originate and encompass their notions of historical consciousness.

AMOKO AND COSMOLOGY

A large body of narratives spans nearly a century in Kamoro experience with the earliest accounts attributable to narrators born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From this collection, I am able to draw out strong similarities that help not only to sketch generalities of Kamoro cosmology and the place of *amoko-we* in it, but also ultimately to better understand Kamoro strategies of engagement. Though there are some accounts for the origins of particular aspects of the natural environment, over this large collection there are no accounts of an original genesis, a beginning of the physical world or mankind.

According to *amoko-kwere*, the Kamoro conceive the world to be composed of three distinct worlds: an underworld, an in-between world and an upperworld.

as to speak (I: *mengatakan*), voice (I: *suara*), and as words (I: *kata-kata*). *Akwere* merely connotes stories, voices or words.

Details of the former two are most pronounced in the collection of narratives.¹² The in-between world is the surface of the earth; it resembles exactly the environment of the south-west coast inhabited by the Kamoro. During the time of the *amoko* it is a place where *we-nata* (humans), *mbii-we* (spirit-people) and the *amoko-we* (cultural heroes) interact. There is no notion of who among this trio came first, and all three groups interacted freely.

Within this cosmological landscape, it is important for us to situate the *Amoko-we* and their defining characteristics. By virtue of their miraculously fast physical growth, from birth the *amoko-we* are well differentiated from the *we-nata*. Indeed, Drabbe describes how an *amoko-we* manages to stand up by the evening of his birthday, walk the following morning, and prove his prowess as a hunter before the next evening (Drabbe 1950:228). The *amoko-we* are often of enormous physical stature as well, described as being as tall as the rainforest trees in their environment. Sometimes during my fieldwork, this height was used allegorically to refer to influence or power.

Another trait of *amoko-we* is their extraordinary ability to shape and alter the physical landscape. Although the *amoko-kwere* take place predominantly along the Mimika Coast, as evidenced by the inclusion of specific beaches, swamps, interior forests and the flora and fauna that live therein, the landscape for the *amoko-we* is malleable. From it they shape feast houses, mountains, trees, animals, objects, and people. This of course bears some resemblance to examples of Aboriginal Australian “dreamings,” but other cultures on the south coast of New Guinea demonstrate even closer parallels (Knauft 1993:127-138). Not surprisingly, the Asmat, who are the closest geographic, cultural, and linguistic neighbours to the Kamoro, share with them a nearly identical notion of ancestral/ever present cultural heroes. For the Asmat, these are the cultural heroes of the *je atakam* narratives (Drabbe 1963:117). Further to the east, Marind-anim

¹² This tripartite cosmology is more strongly enunciated among the neighbouring Asmat. According to them, their living area is likened to the interior, bottom side of an enormous coconut, with the Sirec River coursing through it. At the top of the coconut is the entrance to the upperworld, at the bottom the entrance to the underworld. The area in between is the domain inhabited by men (Voorhoeve 1986:89n).

dema also bear strong similarities to the *amoko-we* in that they are at once ancestral and timeless creators of the universe (van Baal 1966; Knauff 1993:136-140). In some ways, the *dema* complex represents what one might liken to an elaborate extension of Kamoro *amoko-kwere*. While *amoko-kwere* demonstrate how the *amoko-we* created *many* aspects of Kamoro experience, van Baal describes a “bewildering multitude” of *dema* accounting most comprehensively for nearly every aspect of Marind-anim life, and their activities are extensively re-enacted by extravagantly costumed performers (1966:180). While there are some *amoko-kwere* that are re-enacted ritually, by no means are Kamoro cultural heroes represented comprehensively. Unlike the elaborate costumes of the Marind-anim, when a spirit relationship is depicted in Kamoro dance, the mask is usually one of only two varieties.

According to the *amoko-kwere*, objects, animals, people, and features of the landscape are potentially interchangeable. Indeed, animals often appear in the form of people, and vice versa, and in this way, everything is or can be imbued with spiritual energy, *ipu*. *Ipu* is the underlying life source that animates all motion and activity, and is often translated using the Indonesian word for soul or spirit, *jiwa*. In the narratives a creature may be referred to initially as a particular type of animal (e.g. *weko*, monitor lizard); in another place it may be addressed by a personal pronoun and treated as if it were human. There is not necessarily a certain separation between man, animal, or tree in the *Amoko*. Often storytellers intentionally create ambiguity in this sense, leaving the listener to question whether the figure is man or animal.

The medium, which allows *amoko-we* to effect these changes and demonstrate their superior abilities, is secret knowledge, (K) *kata*.¹³ *Kata* can be learned or obtained through explicit connections with the underworld where the *mbii-we* live. The *mbii-we* are not spirits of the dead, which are simply *mbii* or spirits, they are “spirit people” who live in the underworld, which is a mirrored,

¹³ Here I make explicit that although there is also an Indonesian word *kata*, meaning “word,” the *kata* in this circumstance in a Kamoro language word. Pronunciation is slightly different with the Kamoro version stressing the second vowel. The same word can be used to describe singular or plural. When I intend plural in the text, I adjust verb conjugation accordingly.

but idealistic, version of the world on the surface of the earth. The underworld has a more luxurious environment and resources. The *mbii-we* are also the possessors of *kata*, much sought-after ritual secrets and goods. The *mbii-we* used to live together on the surface of the earth with the *Amoko-we* and the *we-nata*. They formed the physical and social counterpart, the *aopao*, of *we-nata* settlements: they lived on the opposite side of a common river and they were partners in a sister-exchange marriage system.

These are just a few examples of the strong notions of dualism that underlie the *amoko-kwere*. The Kamoro perceive these bipartite organising principles as embedded in logic grounded in *aopao*, social reciprocity, which informs social and physical organisation. A failed exchange marriage between the *mbii-we* and the *we-nata*, a breach of this binary reciprocal logic, triggered a compensatory attack (*naware*), which ultimately led to the *mbii-we* moving permanently to the underworld. While interactions between *we-nata* and the *mbii-we* are antagonistic, they can also be beneficial in revealing *kata* to *we-nata*.

Ironically, passages between the worlds are most frequently revealed not as a result of good deeds of a *we-nata*, but as an indirect result of wrongdoing (murder and incest are common themes) or perceived wrong-doing, often interpreted in terms of reciprocal inequity. Usually one finds access to the “other worlds” as either a direct result of this illicit behaviour or during self-imposed banishment from the character’s home settlement. Thus, access to *kata*, secret knowledge and abilities, is frequently occasioned by bad behaviour. At the same time, *amoko-kwere* are full of accounts of deception and false accusation, so it is often difficult to determine precisely what act occasioned the revelation of access to the underworld (and the upperworld) and *kata*. Reflections in rivers, and holes beneath trees and in the earth, are all considered to be potential access points linking the underworld with the world of the *we-nata*.

Interestingly, while accounts of the underworld as a mirrored, but idealised, version of the earth are consistent throughout the collection of narratives, the few accounts of the upperworld that I know of are derived from the narratives collected during the most intensive period of research among the Kamoro in the

1950s. I personally have never documented stories describing the “upperworld” as set out in the earlier narratives. Indeed, my Kamoro informants were often a bit unclear about this, describing a (I) *dunia atas* and (I) *dunia bawah*, literally an upper world and a lower world. It was unclear if contemporary Kamoro in this scheme consider themselves to be living in the upperworld or between the two worlds, as implied by the narratives of the 1950s. My understanding is that they conceive of a bipartite, rather than a tripartite cosmos. My informants consistently emphasised the existence of two worlds without mentioning a notion of a “between world” by explaining quite simply (I) “*Ada dunia atas, ada dunia bawah,*” “There’s an upper world and there’s a lower world.” When questioned further, my informants consistently conceived of themselves as living on the upperworld.

Finally, all Kamoro narratives tend to be about travel. Each story details extensive movement along what appear to be opposing “cardinal” directions. Movement downstream (*kamuru*), or toward the coast (*emare*) opposes movement upstream (*erepao*) or toward the interior (*kapao*). Travel to the east or eastward (*karu*) opposes travel to the west or westward (*emaru*). Similar to what Bowden noted in the North Moluccan Taba language (1997:251-253), these English translations and indeed their Indonesian counterparts obscure more complex meanings of Kamoro directional terminology.¹⁴ Although I give some idea of these sorts of ideological associations below, a more detailed linguistic analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis.¹⁵ In some cases, travel in these directions is incorporated as part of a cyclic pattern of mundane activities: to the swamp to collect sago, to the coast to go fishing, to the interior with dogs to hunt pig and cassowary. Other cases suggest similar movements associated with ritual

¹⁴ In addition to the allegorical and literal usages of Kamoro directional terminology, there also seems to be indigenous utilisation of directional terminology that differs from what one might consider standard usage. For instance, wind directions were often described as being from one direction while on an interior river, while just off the coast the same wind (e.g. originating from the same direction) was described using the term for the wind originating from the opposite direction.

¹⁵ For a recent analysis of linguistic expressions of space and travel including “directional” terminology in Papuan and Austronesian languages see the volume edited by Senft (1997).

feasts. In both of these situations, the characters usually return to their home, either upstream or downstream.

Travel beyond the bounds of the Mimika coast also occurs, with main characters going to such places as Etna Bay, the Fak-Fak region, and the islands of Seram and Aru. Each of these locations is literally and metaphorically to the West. In the narratives, the West is often signified as the place from whence foreigners and their goods, also described as *kata*, are derived. The area to the East is often portrayed as the polar opposite: no foreigners, no *kata*. Other narratives of travel beyond the Mimika coast provide insight into Kamoro perceptions of the cosmos and its “boundaries”.

The narratives also demonstrate that travel and marriage between the two worlds also occurs. The spirits of the underworld, according to this collection, are not to be confused with the spirits of dead people. The narratives explain that spirits of the dead always go inland into the mountains. Drabbe notes that the dead are seen in opposition to the living not only for the obvious reason, but also in terms of lifestyle:

The dead always go inland, into the mountains, and busy themselves there with planting gardens, from which they live, in opposition to the living along the coast, who live chiefly on sago (Drabbe 1949:74n).

Interestingly, the lifestyle of the deceased appears remarkably similar to that of the mountain-dwellers, the *kapaoku*.¹⁶ *Kapaoku*, however, are not confused with spirits in the narratives. Most frequently, travel and indeed all activities are prompted by, and in response to, real or perceived deception, wrongdoing or mistaken identity.

¹⁶ Here I point out that the word *kapaoku*, though made famous by Pospisil, is actually a Kamoro word describing the inhabitants of the interior including the Me/Ekagi people to whom Pospisil was referring.

Ipu, Mbi, and Kao: Souls, Spirits, and their “Containers”

This section briefly outlines some aspects of Kamoro cosmology and spirituality that will be important to interpretations throughout the thesis. Most of this information is drawn from the writings and analysis of Father Coenen who spent more time among the Kamoro than any major contributor to Kamoro history and ethnography, and focused explicitly on spirituality. During his decade of work from 1953 to 1963, based largely in the eastern-most villages, he made use of Pouwer’s and Zegwaard’s work and his own fieldwork in the production of a 117-page unpublished manuscript dealing explicitly with the spiritual side of Kamoro culture and its impact on Kamoro worldview. Although Pouwer is wary of some of Coenen’s analyses (Pouwer 1987:14), he is however in agreement with the information that I draw from them for this discussion. This is particularly so with regard to the association of *ipu* with certain parts of the body, and the gendered division of the body into right (female) and left (male) *ipu* (ibid). As a result Coenen’s *Enkele facetten van de geestelijke cultuur van de Mimika [Some Aspects of the Spiritual Culture of the Mimika]*, forms the strongest point of reference for this section, though I emphasise that Coenen’s analysis was in large part predicated upon the work of Zegwaard and Pouwer.

Earlier in this chapter I introduced the concept of *ipu*, describing it as a life force or a soul. I also described the antagonistic yet complementary interactions between the *mbii-we*, the spirit people, and the *we-nata*. The *mbii-we* are not to be confused with the spirits of the dead, the *mbii*, who live in the interior. But the concepts of *mbii*, *mbii-we*, and *ipu* are integrally connected, and also important in understanding Kamoro notions of life. The body is conceived of as a *kao*, a wrapper, shell, or container. All life consists of an *ipu* contained inside of a *kao*. Most simply, *mbii* is the spirit of the deceased. More correctly, it is *ipu* that is released from a motionless body (*kao*) after death. But the *ipu*, like theories on energy explain, is not destroyed at death when the corporeal *kao* is discarded and the *ipu* is transformed into another form of spiritual energy.

Through a ritual process, the *mbii* is further transformed as it is converted to a *mbii-we*, a spirit person.¹⁷ Within the human body, all movement (including that of internal organs and joints) is animated by individual *ipu* (Pouwer 1987:14). Locales of *ipu* are most tangibly represented in Kamoro carvings by a lozenge-shaped design that adorns all places where motion (e.g. life or *ipu*) occurs: knees, shoulders, elbows, and so forth (Pouwer 1955:11).¹⁸ *Mbii* can be conceived of then as *ipu* outside of its wrapping. One way of harnessing *mbii* for ritual purposes is through a spirit mask, a *mbii-kao*. Often Kamoro narratives, dances and rituals highlight connections with the spirit world through the medium of a *mbii-kao*. Almost every masked performance that I observed involves the *mbii* being temporarily harnessed in a *kao*. When its function is finished, it is cast off by the dancer, and again released. All Kamoro rituals involve veneration of recently deceased and celebration of re-birth. The deceased are frequently depicted in the form of a *mbitoro*, a spirit pole. Again, the *mbitoro* functions as a temporary container, a *kao*. The *mbii* of the recently deceased is summoned into the *mbitoro*, which is discarded after its ritual use.¹⁹

Similar understandings of detachment and transformation, as Weiner explains, are more broadly part of Melanesian notions of personhood (Weiner 1995:4). Juillerat's description of the concepts of *hoofuk* and *roofuk* serve as a good general example of this kind of Melanesian personhood. Accordingly, *hoofuk* represents most generally an inner substance while *roofuk* is considered to

¹⁷ Here I rely solely on Coenen's insight (1963:22-23). My informants consistently described the spirit or soul of the living as *ipu* and that of the dead as *mbii*, but I was unable to elicit understandings of the relationship between *mbii* and *mbii-we* from them.

¹⁸ According to Coenen, the generic name of these points of *ipu* is *irane* or *irai* (1963:29). My informants also often made explicit connections between this motif, a vagina, and the navel. The navel motif is often referred to interchangeably as *mopere* (literally navel) and *mapare*, which means innermost or deepest. Interestingly, this motif is central not only to anthropomorphic carvings, but also abstract designs on *yamate* (ceremonial shields), *pekaro* (sago bowls), *po* (oars), and other carvings. Watching men fabricating these objects, just as Pouwer noted during his fieldwork, I observed that ornamental carving often begins with the lozenge-shaped motif and works out from it.

¹⁹ Although some older informants explained that the *mbitoro* in the past had been chopped up and burned or taken to the sago areas to rot, in both cases with the intent of releasing the spirit, most frequently I saw Kamoro either leaving the *mbitoro* in position in front of a *karapao* (feast) building until it rotted or selling it.

be a discardable outer casing, such as a skin or a bark (Juillerat 1992:26-27). I see a remarkable similarity between *hoofuk* and *roofuk* and several conceptions among the Kamoro including, but not limited to, the *ipu-kao* and *mbii-kao* relationships that I have described above. Examples of detachment and transformation, are pervasive in Kamoro conceptions of ritual and narratives which contain “essential” parts, the *mopere*, and parts that can be discarded, *epere*, which I take up later in this chapter. Weiner further posits that this kind of detachment, which transforms but does not diminish that which has been detached, captures “the essence of Melanesian sociality” as formulated by Marilyn Strathern (1988) in her landmark *The Gender of the Gift* (Weiner 1995:4).

Coenen’s analysis of gender among the Kamoro lends itself particularly well to other aspects of Marilyn Strathern’s (1988) elaborations on gender in Melanesia, in particular aspects that address internal gender composition. According to Coenen, the Kamoro conceive of the body as divided into right and left halves: the right side is symbolically linked to the mother and her ancestors, while the left half is associated with the father (and the living). For older storytellers, these understandings play an explicit role in their *amoko-kwere*. I remember pushing *Bapak Alo* as to why he insisted that a certain *amoko-we* used his right hand. I asked if he could have been left-handed, to which he responded “Impossible, he was using the power of his mother.” In other *amoko-kwere* explicit requests are made not to be killed on one side or the other.

Thus, an individual’s soul is comprised of a maternal *ipu* on the right side and its *aopao*, a paternal *ipu*, on the left. This gendered division even applies to the body’s internal organs (Coenen 1963:24-25). As Strathern points out, such divisions and even internal detachments are the foundation of Melanesia-wide understandings of gender. She remarks that:

Gender refers to the internal relations between parts of persons, as well as to their externalization as relations between persons (1988:185).

For the Kamoro, the concepts of right, *mbii*, and woman are conceived of as the symbolic counterparts (*aopao*) of the concepts left, *ipu*, and man (Coenen 1963:25). Right is considered to be superior to left, so in *this* respect, with regards to spiritual force, women are superior to men (Pouwer 1987:14), notwithstanding the fact that in other respects, particularly in the context of *Kaware* rituals, men perform the superior role. Both Pouwer and Coenen provide detailed lists of these binary schemes integral to Kamoro cosmology. Pouwer outlines that men are ideologically associated with the coast, fish (and animals), *Kaware* ritual, and the underworld, in opposition to women, who are associated with the interior, sago (and trees), *Emakame* or *Kiawa* ritual, and the upperworld (Pouwer 1973:93). Coenen also lists the concepts “living,” “progressive,” “feast,” “sun,” and men, and their *aopao* which are the concepts of “dead,” “conservative,” “work,” “moon,” and women (1963:81).

***Kata* and *Otepe*: Secret Knowledge and Its Owners and Practitioners**

Earlier in this chapter I described the link between superior abilities and secret knowledge or (K) *kata*. *Kata* are not relegated to the *Amoko-we* but can be “owned” and utilised by *we-nata*, the real people. Interestingly *kata*, whether owned by *we-nata* or *amoko-we*, often link the owner/practitioner not only with the supernatural but often explicitly with the *foreign*. Throughout Melanesia indigenous ontologies shape understandings of the foreign and articulations with the foreign seem to form an interesting nexus for articulations with the supernatural as well. This articulation with the supernatural/foreign is a strong theme throughout Melanesian belief systems and deserves at least some review here. Following Lawrence and Meggitt (1965), Melanesian cosmologies generally consist of two parts: a natural environment and an other-worldly or supernatural one. The former consists predominantly of humans and localized economic resources—trees, fish, and other natural resources. The latter is the realm of spirit beings and other unseen forces. For the Kamoro, as for many other Melanesian societies, the line between the two is often blurred and most

frequently the foreign is articulated in Melanesian cosmologies as being more related to the this second category than the first. The most central genre of literature that examines Melanesian interpretations of the supernatural or unseen—and the foreign—is that on cargo cults. The most significant sources in this category are Worsley (1957), Burridge (1960) and Lawrence (1964). With the exception of Lattas (1998) few (if any) have taken up the subject matter in as comprehensive of a manner as these original works (though there exists a huge body of work on this subject matter and in various edited volumes). In any case, the majority of material regarding Melanesian interpretations of the foreign appears to consist of responses or reactions to these key sources. I understand cargo cult behavior following the most salient part of Lattas' definition. According to him, "Cargo cults are attempts to develop new epochal principles, new ontological schemes for organizing human sociability; this is done by developing new practices for disclosing the world, for working secrecy, for understanding those absences that render the world present in a particular way" (1998:xxvii). Although I hesitate to link the usage of *kata* with cargo cult behaviour without further substantiation which could only be gleaned from further field research, the thesis will demonstrate that *amoko-kwere* and *kata* most definitely contribute to Kamoro organization of human sociability and for understanding the unseen in ways that render the world present and understandable, bearing on social, political, and economic organization and power.

Coenen reports that *kata* owned by the Kamoro are often called *otepe*. According to Coenen, the two words are synonyms (1963:30). Those who own *otepe* or *kata* are called *amako*, literally owners.²⁰ The word *otepe* derives from the words *ote* (tree) and *epe* (branch).

Otepe can be divided into two primary categories, collective and individual, and each can be further subdivided. Collective *otepe* are most generally

²⁰ Note the similarity between the words *amoko* and *amako*. During my field research, I had difficulty distinguishing the two. Lengthy discussions with Jan Pouver clarified the difference and the fact that they are closely associated.

associated with ritual matters. Within settlements, entire social groups, *taparu* (a land based social group discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Seven), or (I) *kampongs*, combined sets of allied *taparu*, can be the *amako* of particular rituals. If a *taparu* or a *kampong* is *amako*, they can hold the ritual independently. When a *taparu* or *kampong* or indeed entire settlement lacks ownership of parts of the ritual, they must unite with other *taparu* or *kampong* that are *amako* of either part or all of that ritual. In this respect, the groups are related to one another as *amako-aopao*, literally reciprocal owners. The group that leads the festival (i.e. the *amako* of the most pertinent *otepe*) is considered the *amako-mapare*, the essential owner, while the other group is considered the *amako-epere*, the assistant or non-essential owners, meaning that it owns parts of the ritual that are complementary to the essential part, but, unlike the *amako-mapare*, the *amako-epere* cannot hold the ritual independently (Coenen 1963:30-31). Coenen offers the following example from Atuka: The Margimare *kampong* of Atuka (which consists of three *taparu*) as an interior-associated group, can not hold the coastal-associated Kaware ritual by itself. On the other hand, the other two *kampong* of Atuka are *amako-mapare*, they are capable of holding the feast independently. In order to celebrate a combined feast, the Margimare *kampong* who are not *amako* of any of the *otepe* associated with Kaware, divides itself into two parts. One half assists the Mukuruwe *kampong* (comprised of two *taparu*), the other assists the Amaotiri *kampong* (comprised of two *taparu*). In this way, all three of the Atuka *kampongs* can celebrate Kaware, despite the fact that one entire *kampong* has no direct *amako* relationship to it (ibid).

Coenen also discusses another kind of collectively owned *otepe* and how it is related to certain powers and strengths over natural and supernatural events. Often individual *kampongs* and *taparu* are so closely associated with their *otepe* that they are even addressed by their *otepe* names. Groups call themselves *O-we* (pig people), *Miwi-we* (spirit people-people), *Ku-we* (canoe-people), *Ereka-we* (fish people) and so forth in accordance with their particular strength (Coenen 1963:32). The influence of various *otepe-amako* extends beyond the specific *otepe* to include associated plants and animals as well. For instance, the *O-we*

hold influence over a type of rattan, and over the black king cockatoo, among other things. The *Ku-we* hold ownership/influence over all trees suitable for making a canoe as well as a kind of swallow. The *Ereka-we* hold ownership/influence over a certain kind of trap for prawns and thrush. These relationships between humans and animals and aspects of nature do not entail that the Kamoro conceive of themselves as being derived from particular animals or things nor are there necessarily taboos or food prohibitions associated with them (see Zegwaard 1953).

The other kinds of *otepe* outlined by Coenen are ones that are individually held. One classification of these *otepe* is linked to hunting, food-gathering, control over environmental forces (e.g. in control over tides, fire, rain and other things during ritual events), and matters dealing with fertility, childbirth and bodily growth. Some of these *otepe* are associated with ritual activities while others are influential in everyday life (Coenen 1963:33-34).

Another variety of individual *otepe* is almost solely dedicated to medicinal purposes. These kinds of *otepe* can also be used as a form of sorcery to inflict illness on others. Among the long list of this sort of *otepe* documented by Coenen are treatments for headaches, deafness, swollen feet, paralysis, ulcers, coughs, and stiff joints (1963:34-35).

Although either men or women can own *otepe* the majority are owned by men. There are a few examples of *otepe* associated exclusively with women that are related to the Kiawa festival. As a general rule, *otepe* is inherited along gender lines: males receive *otepe* from their fathers, females from their mothers. Feast-functionary *otepe* are dealt with slightly differently as only one heir can perform as *amako* during ritual situations. As a result, only one heir is selected over other potential heirs. In the event of the death of a male *otepe-amako* with no adult male heir, a female descendent may “stand in” to continue the inheritance of the function until a satisfactory male candidate is found. Coenen remarks that disputes frequently erupted over the suitability of adopted children to inherit the *otepe* of their adoptive father. With regards to *otepe* owned by

women, brothers may stand in to pass on inheritance to female descendants should the need arise (Coenen 1963:35-41).

Interestingly, Coenen writes that given the Kamoro preference for matrilocality, only maternal inheritance of *otepe* is linked to place, while *otepe* inherited along paternal lines is not. If a man needs to perform his *otepe* during feasts, he simply returns to his home village. This exemplifies the strong matri-focus in Kamoro residence patterns and social organisation. Ideally a man enters his wife's settlement and social group after marriage, engaging in a close exchange relationship with his mother's father known as *kaokapaiti*. As Pouwer notes, a man's position in Kamoro society is explicitly described in terms of his relationship to female relatives. A man without a *kaokapaiti* (either a daughter's husband or a sister's husband) "is a social nobody, lacking security when growing old" (Pouwer 1987:20). Accordingly, maternally descended groupings uniquely tied to a specific place (and *otepe*) tend to have their own names, often that of a maternal grandmother, while paternal groups do not (Coenen 1963:41). These maternal descent groups called *peraeke* form the underlying structure of the *taparu*, a land-focused social group. These concepts will be taken up in more detail in the Chapter Five, which deals explicitly with the historical period of Pouwer's and Coenen's research, and in Chapter Seven which looks at the interface between contemporary Kamoro social organisation (of the late 1990s) and the Indonesian system of village administration.

THE EXAMPLES

Although some *amoko-kwere* are recognised as being the *amako* of a certain narrator, *taparu*, kampong, village or region, the majority of the *amoko-kwere* are universally known throughout Mimika. Out of all of the *amoko-kwere* however, the accounts of two narratives, Mirokoteyao and the Utakae War, are particularly well documented in the literature. These were also the most commonly told *amoko-kwere* during my fieldwork and they are exemplary of *amoko-kwere*. The Mirokoteyao story is often told in the guise of a "creation" myth while the Utakae

War is an account of a war that triggered a massive ancestral migration to the Mimika area from the East. These accounts will serve as a Kamoro version of an historical background before the 19th century.

Unlike many creation stories, there is no pre-supposition of a void or an original empty landscape. On the contrary, the land upon which contemporary Kamoro would later live was identical to their current environment. Drabbe, Pouwer, Zegwaard, and more recently Rahangiar and I myself all asked the same question of our Kamoro informants: “Where did you come from?” We all received the same story in response. In all of the versions, the essential elements are the same, though details are specific to narrator, village of origin, and the context of the telling. The narrative follows a structure common throughout Melanesia often classified as the “monster-killing” or the “ogre-killing” motif (see Young 1991; Chakravarti 1974).²¹ I present here a composite version incorporating the key elements from numerous Kamoro storytellers. Specific accounts will be presented elsewhere in the thesis when I am presenting the period contemporaneous with its telling.

Mirokoteyao

The story of Mirokoteyao is considered to be the essential part, the *mapare*, of the *Emakame* feast.²² Although parts of *Emakame* were prohibited during the Dutch administration, other aspects of the ritual including the telling of the story and

²¹ I know of at least eleven different accounts of the Mirokoteyao *amoko-kwere*: two from Drabbe (collected in the 1930s), three each from Zegwaard (1952) and Pouwer (1954), one each from a government report (Haryanto 1983) and Rahangiar (1994) and two that I collected (1996-1998). Kooijman offers an English-language version of the story, compiled from Zegwaard and Pouwer’s versions (1984:37-39). Pouwer presents a composite of his and Zegwaard’s versions in the context of a chapter in a book on gender (in Dutch 1984:127-67 and in a conference paper in English 1987:25-30). Also, two of Zegwaard’s versions of the myth are soon to be published in English (Pouwer forthcoming). Michael Young (1991:386-389) provides a survey and tabular summary of the so-called “monster-killing myth” throughout insular Melanesia and Chakravarti (1974) charts the myth across much of the southern half of Papua New Guinea.

²² *Emakame* literally means bone-house.

creative reenactments of it continue to take place.²³ As an indication of some degree of the importance and centrality of Mirokoteyao, the main character, Pouwer claims that his informants labelled him the *kata-amako* of *kata-amako*, literally the owner of the secret or the *otepe* to owning secrets.

The story begins when a child (or children) finds an egg in the forest and returns to the village with it. When the egg hatches, the villagers are surprised when a full-grown monster emerges from it (remember that rapid growth is a sign of an *amoko*).²⁴ Making terrifying sounds, the monster attacks and eats all of the villagers before retreating downstream to the coast. Mirokoata, a pregnant woman, managed to secretly evade the attack by hiding on the opposite side of the river from the settlement.²⁵ Before long, she bears a son, Mirokoteyao who, like the monster, grows up quickly, again a sign of an *amoko-we*.²⁶ Within days he becomes an accomplished hunter. Each day, as directed by his mother, he returns to the interior with his hunting bounty. His mother teaches him which animals are edible and which are not. One day, out of curiosity, he defies his mother's explicit instructions not to go toward the coast. There he is able to collect a variety of marine bounties, which he initially hides from his mother, but later reveals to her. His mother is forced to reveal to him what had happened to all of the other villagers. He resolved to take revenge on the behalf of his

²³ Coenen reported that the Mission and the Administration outlawed *Emakame* for hygienic reasons outlawed. The feast used to involve the placement of the recently deceased and/or their bones exposed inside of the feast-house and the interment and dis-interment of the bones within one's house outside of feast times. (Coenen 1963:11).

²⁴ Early versions explicitly say that the finder thought it was a *mambruk* or crown dove egg. In various versions the monster is a monitor lizard, a crocodile, a snake and most recently some of my informants labeled it a Komodo Dragon.

²⁵ The name Mirokoata is derived from the word *miroko*, literally a kind of terrestrial snake. In some of the western variants, the pregnant woman's name was given as Miregwata. My informants in East Mimika consistently called her Miroko. Although all of the versions state that the monster fled "downstream" some hold that he lived on the coast while others that he fled to an island just off of the coast. Some of my informants said that the island was variously off the coast of the Minar River while others mentioned Puriri Island as the possible location. In some of the versions the island was said to be on the south-east shore of Etna Bay in extreme West Mimika.

²⁶ In some western variants the child was called Aowemaro or Awamora. My informants called the son of Miroko Mirokoteyao, literally son of Miroko. In other eastern variants collected by Pouwer and Zegwaard, the woman was known as Payu, Payauta or Mokatafierewao.

ancestors. My informants explicitly described this revenge as *naware*, a manifestation of *aopao*, reciprocity, related to retaliation, revenge, or sanction for wrongdoing.

Arriving at the coast just before nightfall, the boy sleeps. During his sleep, he dreams about how he should kill the monster. Acting on his dream, he builds four structures, by drawing them in the sand, and he hangs weapons on the inside of them. My informants usually described the first two houses as being filled with wooden weapons, the third with stone, and the fourth as filled with metal or iron weapons.²⁷ Contemporary versions (Rahangiar's and my own) state that the boy lights a fire and begins to play the drum and act as if a feast was taking place. Lured by the smoke of the fire and the sound of the drum, and surprised that he has not killed all of the people, the monster is lured to the culture hero, and he attacks the houses. In all accounts, the monster succeeds in demolishing the first three structures before being impaled or attacked and killed in the fourth. After the hero attacks and kills the monster, he cuts it up. In the contemporary versions, he throws the meat and fat in each of the four directions of the compass. The meat then becomes the ancestral population of the world. Some versions have the meat forming the ancestors of more localised populations (e.g. the Asmat, the Arguni people, etc.). In a version collected by Pouwer, the fat becomes the ancestors of white people, the dark meat that of the coastal Papuans from the far east and far west and the skin of the beast formed the ancestors of the highland people. During the telling of this version, an albino was also present, prompting the story teller to state that attached to each piece which was thrown was a small piece of fat which became the albinos (Pouwer 1954:7). Thus, the ancestral population of the world is formed from the remains of Kamoro people devoured by a monster during the *Amoko*.

²⁷ These structures were in fact the various feast-houses of the Kamoro. Rahangiar recorded that his informants labeled the structures as the *Kiawa-Kame*, the *Tauri-Kame*, the *Kaware-Kame*, and the *Ema-kame* (each of these is a feast-house). Rahangiar's version explicitly states that only the *Ema-kame* had iron weapons while the others had wood. Though some of the versions collected in previous times do not explicitly name the houses, many do. The list of structures built includes the *Mirimu-kame* (nose (piercing)-house), *Tauri-kame*, *Oo-kame*, *Pota-kame*, *Yama-kame*, and *Ema-*

While contemporary variants of the story end here, many of the earlier versions include varieties of incest between Mirokoteyao and his mother. In some earlier versions, Mirokoteyao becomes his mother's husband (or his mother becomes his wife). As Pouwer points out, all seem to have tobacco leaves in common. In one of the versions collected by Zegwaard, after slaying the monster, Mirokoteyao asks his mother for some tobacco (Zegwaard 1952:13). She responds that the monster has eaten all of it. Although she knows how to obtain more tobacco, she doesn't tell Mirokoteyao. Instead, she praises his prowess in killing the monster and solicits sex from him.

This repulses Mirokoteyao, it is his own mother and incest is strictly forbidden. His mother doesn't relent, and eventually convinces him to have sex with her, but he does so reluctantly, averting his face. Soon after the act, the mother gives birth to leaves (used to roll cigars), fibre (used to bind cigars), tobacco seeds, and ultimately the leaves themselves.

The Utakae War

Before the Utakae War, the Mimika Coast was only thinly populated. Based on village histories, there appear to have been small population concentrations in Central and East Mimika, near the Ipiri River, along the Kamora River, and on the upper Wania River.²⁸ Beyond the Ipiri River to the west, the population was sparse. By far the largest population concentration, the Utakae "tribes", lived in the easternmost part of present day Mimika, near the mouth of the Mukamuga River. This river marks a major dialect boundary with the Western Sempan people and it is among the richest resource areas of Mimika. This is largely

kame. Rahangiar's version collected from an informant from Timika Pantai is a curious mix in that it lists *Kiawa* and *Ema-kame* (eastern and western variants of the same feast).

²⁸ Evidence of these population centres is drawn largely from Coenen's (1963) analysis of narratives collected by Zegwaard (1963:1-3). Only one *amoko-kwere*, from the Kamora River area explicitly mentions relations with the interior highlanders (in the form of marital exchanges) (Zegwaard 1952:27). Three other narratives in Zegwaard's collection indicate exchange marriage relationships with spirits who may in fact have been interior highlanders (see Zegwaard 1952:27,

attributable to the physical geography of the Mimika Coast, which broadens in a south-easterly direction from Etna Bay in the West to the broadest plain near the Otokwa River. Most of my informants named the location as Nawapinaro.²⁹

According to Coenen, the Western Sempan people of Otakwa, Omauga and Inauga, who presently reside on the next major river system to the east, claim that they have always resided in the border area (1963:2).

The story begins when a pregnant woman, Aoweya, after suffering repeated abuse at the hands of her husband, sets out for the East. Eventually she reaches the upper course of the Minar and Akimuga Rivers just in time to give birth to her child.³⁰ My informants called this place called Kurua or Uriwa.³¹ This area is situated on the boundary between the Eastern Sempan (Nafaripi) and north-western Asmat areas. At the time of her arrival, the ancestors of the contemporary Nawaripi-Koperapoka and Kaogapu populations inhabited it.

Upon arrival at this settlement, she encounters a pregnant spirit-woman who introduces herself as the real woman's younger sister. Both women give birth to boys. Before returning to the underworld, the spirit woman gives her spirit son, Mbiiminareyao,³² to Aoweya, asking if she could look after the boy along with her own son Aoweyao. Soon after the births Aoweya arrives in the village along the upper reaches of the Minar River with both children. Before long, it becomes

90, 91). In all of these cases, notions of reciprocal inequity terminated relationships between the two groups.

²⁹ Pouwer also notes the name of the location as Naowapinare (1955:94).

³⁰ The Minar is also referred to as the *Rawar Besar*, a direct translation from the Dutch *Groete Moeras*, which literally means "Great Marsh."

³¹ Although many Asmat and Kamoro myths and rituals appear to have originated in the Nafaripi area, the area remains largely undocumented. Aside from Father Coenen's sporadic travel accounts from 1953-1963 and a few more recent World Wide Fund For Nature survey assessments (Manembu 1991; Smith 1992) I know of no other documentation of the area.

³² Pouwer notes that the name Mbiiminareyao literally means son of the woman from beneath the water (Pouwer in press). Aoweyao literally means son of Aoweya.

clear that there is something different about the two boys.³³ They reach maturity rapidly and are soon ready to celebrate the feast associated with male puberty.³⁴

While the villagers are hard at work preparing food for the big feast they encounter a sago shortage. Sago is the most important food item, not only of the feast, but also of Kamoro subsistence. Hearing of this, Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao depart secretly for the west, to a settlement where the boys' uncle (explicitly described by my informants as the two characters' mother's brother) was living among the Utakae people. Both boys had regularly frequented this area, often travelling among the smaller hamlets, mischievously swiping bits of garden produce as they went. On their trip this time, they took special notice of the rich sago areas and gardens in the eastern area (the area that currently is dramatically impacted by the deposition of tailings from the Freeport Mine).

By the time Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao had reached the settlement where their uncle was staying, he was nowhere to be found. They eventually ascertained that his hosts had killed him as revenge (*naware*) for the petty thefts of the boys. Hearing this Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao secretly returned to their own settlement, making no mention of the death of their uncle.

When the *taori* began, the boys' uncle failed to appear to conduct his ritual duties in the feast; the act of performing these duties was described to me explicitly as *aopoma*, literally the ritual performance of a reciprocal duty.³⁵ Not knowing what had actually transpired in the East, Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao's

³³ Pouwer notes that in versions collected during the 1950s, the arrival of the women and their newborns caused panic in the villages, setting off disputes in which some people are killed and wounded (Pouwer in press).

³⁴ In most of the early versions *Mirimu-kame*, the nose-piercing feast, is explicitly mentioned while my informants often claimed it was *taori-kame*. *Mirimu-kame* was outlawed during the Dutch administration for sanitary reasons. *Taori-kame* appears to have been part of a series of rituals involved in *Mirimu-kame*.

³⁵ Interestingly, earlier versions of the story hinge explicitly on failure to perform ritual duties during the initiation feast, though in a slightly different manner. In these versions, those who avoid ritual duty do so consciously because Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao are not ordinary boys, ultimately leaving the duties to be done by an "elder brother," which was considered to be a serious insult. The shame of the insult forces the two brothers to flee to the west (Pouwer in press). Part of the reason for the discrepancy may stem from the fact that several of the versions of the story that I gathered were from the perspective of the attacking party, the Nawaripi-Koperapoka people, while Pouwer's informants were predominantly from central Mimika.

community sought to exact revenge (*naware*) on the absent uncle, in this case for the harm and shame that he caused the boys through his failure to conduct his ritual duty. At this point, the boys revealed that their uncle had been killed by his hosts at the western settlement (although they offered no explanation as to why). At the same time, they described the firm land of the area, as opposed to the swampy area of their current settlement, and reported that the sago groves were vast.

And so it was resolved that this group of people, ancestors of the modern-day Nawaripi-Koperapoka community, attacked the Utakae, ostensibly and erroneously seeking revenge (*naware*) on those responsible for the death of their kinsman. At the same time, this act of maintaining *aopao* would also be used to migrate to the more plentiful territory.³⁶ The “secret weapons” of the invading party area masks obtained by Mbiiminareyao from his mother’s brother in the underworld.³⁷ Aoweyao and Mbiminareyao wait until the invading party is on the brink of defeat before they enter into the battle. From the underworld, Mbiiminareyao attacks the opposing war leader while Aoweyao attacks from above. The boys succeed in killing the war leader, driving the Utakae to flee in panic and fear, sparking a migration that would re-shuffle the population of much of the Mimika coast and situate the ancestors of the present day Nawaripi-Koperapoka populations within their contemporary area.³⁸

These two *amoko-kwere* demonstrate the nature of activities in the *Amoko* and the centrality of *aopao* in shaping the sequencing of the stories. While there are many levels upon which one could analyse these narratives, for sake of this

³⁶ Pouwer reports that in some versions that he recorded, Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao actually incited the ancestors of the Nawaripi-Koperapoka people to attack and invade the eastern area (Pouwer forthcoming).

³⁷ Pouwer notes that the masks were actually those associated with Kaware, the feast associated with the coast and men (Pouwer interviewed by author, 12 February 1999).

³⁸ Interestingly, in versions of the story analysed by Pouwer, the host communities do not kill the boys’ mother’s brother (or there is another mother’s brother from farther west). During the turmoil of the final stages of the Utakae War, he kills Aoweyao and Mbiiminareyao. According to Pouwer he is demonstrating his authority over his sister’s children (because he gave her away in marriage). The boys are unshaken by their deaths, however; they simply move to the underworld (Pouwer forthcoming).

discussion I focus only on the centrality of *aopao* as the driving force of the *amoko-kwere* (cf. Pouwer 1973). In the first story, *aopao* is manifest not only by the retaliatory attack by the culture hero on the monster, but it is also embedded into every step of the story and it drives the action in it. The hero Mirokoateyao's continual travels upstream and downstream as he learned to hunt serve to re-document the cyclic alternation between the reciprocal opposites: upstream and downstream. Mirokoateyao's creation of the feast houses on the coast establishes gender-related *aopao*: the coast is associated with men and men's secrets while the interior is the realm of women (e.g. his mother). These understandings of *aopao* and cosmology form aspects of the *mopere* of the narrative, the essential parts (Pouwer 1955: 159-160). Throughout the thesis we will find other notable examples of this narrative, but with different *epere*, added-on parts or interpretations or "dressing," that may alter and inform understandings of contemporary circumstances. In some cases, the additions then become part of the *mopere* of the narrative which are then passed on. Other inclusions may disappear. At certain moments in the field, it was clear that some stories with new inclusions were circulating; two of the most prominent ones that seemed to be gaining credence during my fieldwork accounted for the Kamoro origins of the highland Freeport Mine. Ironically, neither of these stories emerged from the two communities most directly (i.e. physically) impacted by the mine's operations.

According to the story of the Utakae War, one reciprocal violation (the nephews' theft of garden produce) ignites the fuse of *aopao*. Repeated attempts at maintaining *aopao* through acts of trickery and deceit (e.g., the nephews withholding the truth about why their uncle was killed) increased misunderstandings, fuelling a retaliatory attack which gave rise to further violations of *aopao*. The story and the wars take place within what is now the Freeport Project Area.³⁹ Thus, Nawapinaro, the main locus of the Utakae War served as an ancestral residence for many of the inhabitants of the Mimika Coast.

³⁹ All versions consistently place the major activities of the Utakae War at Nawapinaro. Thus, the area now within the Freeport Project Area has always been central to Kamoro history. Earlier versions of this myth demonstrate a stronger focus on a breakdown in notions of kinship and responsibility rather than revenge for theft. In both cases, violations of *aopao* underlie all activity.

Long before Freeport's arrival, the rich resources of the area were fought over. Versions of this story in later chapters will elaborate on individual village experiences of the Utae War from the perspective of both the attacker and the attacked. Links to Nawapinaro via the *amoko-kwere* may have played a role in certain villages' participation in the early construction phases of Freeport facilities in that area and will be addressed in Chapter Six.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I have outlined aspects of both *amoko-we* and *amoko-kwere*. This "era" and its "cultural heroes" exist both "in the beginning" and "eternally." The *Amoko* is at once past and present. It provides an interpretive schema which underlies a Kamoro cosmological sense which intimately links living Kamoro to the *amoko-we* and the spiritual world of deceased ancestors through *kata* or *otepe*, secrets. At the same time, temporality in the *Amoko* and indeed in everyday life is not necessarily teleological, conditioned by *aopao*, reciprocity. In other words, the cyclic rhythm of effecting the maintenance of reciprocity, *aopao*, in social, economic and spiritual relationships is the primary underlying feature of Kamoro temporal consciousness. Reciprocal acts grounded in understandings of the activities of *amoko-we* inform notions of social organisation (such as ritual counter-parts and marriage exchange relations) which also tend to be mapped physically onto Kamoro living space. Villages are composed of sets of settlements, which consist of sets of land-based social groups (*taparu*), which in turn have a complex foundation of matriline groupings (*peraeko*).

Though *kata* and *otepe* may be guarded and passed on only to initiates, *amoko-kwere* are passed on openly and informally. Contemporary and past (and future) events and experiences are reconciled with the *Amoko* and in terms of *aopao*.⁴⁰ In this way, the *Amoko* lies at the heart of historical consciousness as a

⁴⁰ Connerton supports my assertion with regards to the relevancy of oral tradition in informing contemporary consciousness and social memory "The production of more or less *informally* told

strategy for situating interpretations of the past, present and future. Ultimately, the following chapters of this thesis illustrate the nexus between these different modes of historical consciousness, focusing on the Kamoro strategy of interpreting the world around them through *amoko-kwere*.

narrative histories turns out to be a basic activity for characterisation of human actions. It is a feature of all communal memory” (Connerton 1989:16-17, emphasis from the original).