Chapter Seven

Engaging the Contemporary

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of this thesis I have demonstrated how the Kamoro have engaged the world around them through *amoko-kwere*. Clear patterns have emerged from this material, such as the explicit incorporation of the foreign and the protection of *kata* from theft. As this chapter reveals however, not all "foreign" events, ideas, people and things are incorporated in *amoko-kwere*; or at least their interpretation may in actuality be the first part of a more generalised mode of engagement which may then turn to a different kind of localised understanding. Contemporary evidence suggests that while Freeport and the Indonesian State have been explicitly incorporated via *amoko-kwere* among some communities, among others they have been reformulated in a different manner. Incorporation and transformation seem to relate to perceptions of actual and imagined relationships with the State and the Company. This chapter examines some aspects of the complex interface between the Indonesian State and individual Kamoro communities as a means to better understand this differential interpretation. It begins with an examination of the varied Kamoro usage of the Indonesian term *suku* in the contemporary context. Then I examine the interface between indigenous social organisation and the Indonesian system of village

administration. The chapter closes with considerations of how different Kamoro communities perceive Freeport. Ultimately it suggests why and how certain communities incorporate the company into *amoko-kwere* while others do not.

INSCRIBING THE TRIBE

In Chapters Two through Four I outlined the arrival of merchants, missionaries and explorers to the "Mimika Coast". Driven by commercial, religious, and political interests, these visitors progressively inscribed names on maps representing the region and its people. As these outsiders gradually advanced from the west, they began to use names such as Kowiai, Kapia, Oetanata, Mimika, and Timakowa either in reference to the totality of, or a part of the current Mimika region and its population at various moments prior to colonisation. Based solely on indirect or sporadic contact, Europeans also classified the indigenous populations of these areas according to perceived racial and linguistic similarities, the underlying ideas that inform the construction of the tribe.

Since entering academic and popular discourse, the tribe has emerged as a concept whose meaning appears deceptively simple, though it becomes problematic and unreliable as a static marker for a population under closer scrutiny. Lewis points out the fluidity of the concept of tribe and other monikers describing groups of people:

> Cultures, societies, communities, ethnic groups, tribes, and nations are coming to be viewed as contingent or even arbitrary creations rather than essential givens of human experience (Lewis 1991:605).

Fried's argument describing the tribe as a "secondary sociopolitical phenomenon brought about by the intercession of more complexly ordered societies" seems to be a logical precursor of the kind of contingency of social group definition outlined by Lewis (Fried 1975:114). Though Fried focuses on "complex sociopolitical order" his statement suggests the importance of differentials in cross-cultural relationships generally, and more specifically in the

mutual construction of identities. I see a correlation between Fried's "intercession," and Sahlins' notion of the "conjuncture" (Fried 1975; Sahlins 1981). Both of these concepts describe the processes of mutual reformulations that occur during cross-cultural engagement. Although Fried discusses the emergence of "secondary tribes" out of the initial classificatory "tribes" defined by outsiders he offers little elaboration on indigenous participation in its formulation. At the same time, he certainly recognised the contested and malleable nature of the tribe. According to him, "Tribe is a word that may be said to live in multiplex and changing real environments and its use is under constant adaptive pressure" (Fried 1975:9). To this I would add that multiple interpretations of tribe could be invoked with varying degrees of intended inclusivity and exclusivity in response to specific socio-political circumstances.[1] For the Kamoro, multiple invocations of the rough Indonesian equivalent of the tribe, the *suku*, signify complexly entwined indigenous and foreign ideas of relatedness.

The Ethnic Community as *Suku* (tribe)

In the contemporary context, my informants frequently used the Indonesian phrase *Suku*[2] *Kamoro* (literally, Kamoro Tribe) to describe the entire indigenous population residing on the 300-kilometre stretch of the south-west coast of New

---

[1] Defining and naming "tribes" appears to have been integral to the colonial process. At the same time, various authors have demonstrated that identities promoted during the colonial process were very much a construction of the coloniser. Hanson's (1989, 1991) argument that contemporary Maori identity is in part based on colonial constructions created a backlash among Maori authors and academics. They felt that Hanson's academic argument questioned the authenticity of contemporary "Maori-ness" (*Maoritanga*), which was not Hanson's intent. He was simply illustrating the process whereby culture is continually reformulated. Briggs (1996) however demonstrates that contemporary "academic" arguments surrounding the topic of indigenous authenticity may in fact have negative impacts on indigenous political struggles.

[2] According to the Indonesian-English Dictionary, the direct translation of *suku* is in relation to social groupings as "extended family, ethnic group" (Echols and Shadily 1994:531). Often remote populations of Irian Jaya (Papua), Sumatra and Sulawesi are defined by Western Indonesians as *suku-suku terasing*, literally "unacculturated tribal groups".

Guinea from Etna Bay to the Otakwa River.[3] This usage often signifies politically and economically motivated statements of relatedness to validate Kamoro-wide compensation from the impacts of the Freeport Mine. At the same time, it is invoked to describe cultural similarities within the region presently administered as the Mimika District or Regency (*Kabupaten Mimika*), which is divided into three sub-districts (*kecamatan*): New Mimika (*Mimika Baru*), East Mimika (*Mimika Timur*), and West Mimika (*Mimika Barat*).[4]

Significantly, Kamoro from outside of the areas most dramatically impacted by Freeport's operations are the ones who have, in my experience, most frequently invoked the notion of a collective Kamoro *suku*. These Kamoro, many of whom were now resident in the Freeport Project Area, had migrated (either officially or spontaneously) to the Timika area largely over the decade prior to my arrival in the field.[5] They use their broad identity as Kamoro as a tool to access Freeport development funding, work, or educational opportunities.[6]

Interestingly, there was also a radical contrast between the way the migrant Kamoro and those Kamoro indigenous to Freeport's Project Area perceived their relationship with Freeport, which relates to perceptions of the *suku*. Informants from outside of the immediate Freeport Project Area were more likely to incorporate Freeport via *amoko-kwere* than those communities most directly impacted by the mine. I shall return to this matter later in this chapter.

---

[3] This usage of "tribe" incorporates the earlier division discerned by Drabbe which juxtaposed *kamoro* as the word for living people of the region against spirit people and other Papuans.

[4] Prior to the Dutch creation of the Mimika subdivision (*onderafdeling*), the Kamoro seemed to consider communities throughout much of Etna Bay (beyond the boundaries of the contemporary district) as Kamoro.

[5] As a result of this influx of non-local Kamoro into the Freeport Project Area, at any given time roughly half of the 15,000 total Kamoro population resides near Timika.

[6] During the time of my fieldwork Freeport and the Indonesian Government had begun a push to favour the hiring and training of the "Seven Tribes" deemed "indigenous" to the project area. In addition to the Kamoro and the Amungme, the other "tribes" included the Dani, Me, Moni, Nduga, and the Lani. Of these only the Kamoro and the Amungme are documented as permanently residing in the region prior to Freeport's arrival. I also note that compared to other ethnic communities, Papuan and non-Papuan, the Kamoro as ranked among the lowest social, economic, and education levels in the Timika area. The point here is that those who benefited most from the Freeport Mine until quite recently were not those impacted by its operations.

The *Desa* as *Suku*

During my fieldwork, many Kamoro also used the word *suku* to describe the collective inhabitants of their individual *desa*, which translates generally as a village and is an Indonesian administrative unit. The contemporary usage of the *desa* as a *suku* appears to be based upon pre-and early-colonial settlement arrangements. According to Pouwer, multiple long-house communities sharing a common river formed larger, loosely knit social units. He defined these socio-political units as using the Dutch word *stammen*, or tribes, consisting of:

> … a separate group of semi-permanent settlements, having its own name, its own territory, and marked by a certain *esprit de corps*. Each tribe used to have an entire river, or part of one, at its disposal. (Pouwer 1955:272, from the English summary translated by Dr. P.E. Josselin de Jong)

Since the arrival of Chinese merchants and the initial colonial presence, these "tribes" began to be resettled (or resettle) into villages (D: *dorpen*) either alone or with other so-called tribes (Pouwer 1955:9, 282-287). Many of these villages formed the actual and metaphorical foundations of the contemporary Indonesian villages. There is no indigenous word that the Kamoro use to describe these sorts of communities outside of something that translates as "people of a particular river" or people from a particular direction.

The *desa* is also the most direct interface (structurally) between Kamoro communities and the Indonesian administration. Sometimes there are smooth linkages meeting between indigenous and state organisational structures at the *desa* level. At other times, however, it proves incompatible and underlies inter-village animosity.

According to Indonesian Law No. 5/1979, the primary government representative in every Indonesian village is the *Kepala Desa*, the village head. Prior to 1979, this position was "elected" for life, though since Law No. 5/1979, the position has been limited to an eight-year term. Despite the fact that they are elected by a popular village vote, candidates for the position of *Kepala Desa* are subject to a "political clearance test" by a committee of *kecamatan* (sub-district

or sub-regency) officials which is chaired by the head of the sub-regency, the *Camat* (Achmad 1999:26). Essentially, this places tighter central government control over the selection of *Kepala Desa*.

I see a striking resemblance between the Indonesian system of village administration and the Dutch system of administration, which established administration-chosen village heads as its local representatives. A considerable number of contemporary Kamoro *desa* are directly founded upon former Dutch *dorpen* (villages).[7] In turn, one could further suggest the linkages between the Dutch colonial system and the nineteenth century "paternal despotism" outlined in Chapter Three whereby the Dutch established direct relationships with the representatives of the Sultan of Tidore. At least anecdotal evidence that I collected during my fieldwork suggests that some Kamoro continue to rationalise their position (or rights to position) in village administration by their relationship to Moluccan kingdoms.[8]

Officially, the *Kepala Desa*'s roles include proposing and supervising development projects, maintaining stability and security in the village, sustaining regular contacts with higher levels of government and implementing central and regional government policies and programs (Achmad 1999:27). Everyday administrative duties in the village are carried out by the *Kepala Desa*'s staff whom he selects, though the *Camat* appoints them with confirmation from the *kabupaten* (regency or district) office, again allowing tight central control over the selection of village administration.

Villages are further divided into *dusun*. Literally translated, a *dusun* is an orchard, but its closest administrative equivalent would perhaps be labelled a hamlet. Each *dusun* has a *Kepala Dusun*, or hamlet head, chosen by the hamlet residents with the approval of the *Kepala Desa*. *Dusun* are further divided into *rukun tetangga* (abbreviated RT), neighbourhoods, with a head-person chosen by

---

[7] In Kokonao this metaphor also takes on a literal sense in that many buildings are literally built upon cement pilings set up by the Dutch.

[8] One informant from Timika Pantai went so far as to point out that his birthmark indicated both his relatedness to the *kerajaan*, the Moluccan "kingdom" and to his family's rights both to hold position in village administration and to be compensated by Freeport.

the people in the neighbourhood. The *Ketua* or *Kepala rukun tetangga* position is only an honorary administrative position.

In circumstances where a single more-or-less autonomous "tribe," using Pouwer's definition, in its entirety is administered within its own territory as a *desa*, the government organisational scheme is strikingly parallel to that of the Kamoro (except for the absence in the Kamoro unit of a singular leader). *Dusun* (hamlets) correspond to *taparu* pairs, or kampongs and RTs correspond loosely to individual *taparu* and/or *peraeko* divisions.[9] However, this situation, where tribe corresponds closely with *desa* is the exception to the rule. Instead, the majority of contemporary Kamoro villages in the greater Timika region display one or more of the following anomalies: the village is situated outside of all or part of the social group's territory, the village consists of just one kampong, or the village consists of two or more separate tribes.

INDONESIAN	*DESA* (VILLAGE)	*DUSUN* (HAMLET)	*RUKUN TETANGGA* (NEIGHBOURHOOD)
KAMORO	RIVER SYSTEM (TRIBE)	TAPARU PAIRS (KAMPONG)	PERAEKO/TAPARU

Figure 1: Comparison between Kamoro social organisation and local level State Administration.

For the Kamoro, each of these circumstances is interpreted as disruptive to the equilibrium of daily life. More explicitly they characterise the circumstances of unequal village representation as lacking *aopao*; they are foreign-derived ruptures in social reciprocity. In the first case, living outside of one's territory necessitates returning to a home area to secure and/or protect resources (e.g. food, hunting grounds, and wood). This often leads to a *defacto* forfeiture of a house or position in the *desa* through absence (as the case in the Koperapoka Baru settlement described in Chapter Seven). Alternatively, a group living outside of its territory could acquire resources either through theft or purchase from the

---

[9] The concepts of *taparu*, *peraeko*, and general village organisation were introduced in Chapter One and Chapter Five.

"host community" (as in the case of Nawaripi Baru). When the village contains just one kampong, relationships with the other (un-resettled) *kampong* tend to be stressed by unequal access to either traditional or "modern" resources such as Freeport and government funding and schooling on the one hand and locally owned sago on the other. Finally, when two tribes occupy the same village, difficulties seem to revolve around ownership and usage of local resources, with longer distances involved for one of the communities to access their resources.

Even in villages consisting of a single tribe, again following Pouwer's definition, government administration through one *Kepala Desa*, from one of the tribe's kampongs usually leads to either weak representation in government matters or worse, no representation at all for the other kampong. In these circumstances, unequal government participation and representation leads to what the Kamoro term kampong-ism (*kampungisme*) and *taparu*-ism (*taparuisme*). These are code words for indigenous systems of cronyism, which usually result in unequal gains of one *taparu* or kampong at the expense of another. Again this sort of a violation of *aopao* often leads to tribal splintering, a few examples of which I discuss below.

Beyond the structural difficulties in reckoning indigenous social organisation with village administration, another problem is the Indonesian system's marked gender inequality.[10] In my experience, women did not tend to occupy official government positions in village administration. Instead, women with "titles" in the village had acquired them as a result of their husband's position. For instance, the *Kepala Desa*'s wife is commonly known as *Ibu Kepala Desa* (Mrs. Village Head), or *Ibu Desa* for short.

However, among Kamoro, for whom matrilineal tendencies underlie social organisation, I discovered a definite contradiction to this pattern. In every

---

[10] No Kamoro man would outwardly say that women were in charge or ought to be. However, observed social relationships in village settings demonstrate the strong role women play in issues of land and resource use. An Indonesian reporter picked up on this when he wrote that by controlling the usage of canoes Kamoro women essentially control all of the resources; a canoe is needed to access the upstream hunting grounds, the sago stands, and of course the coast for fishing (Tebay 1987). Though I have not explicitly analysed it, I would suspect that some of the

Kamoro village surveyed, when asked about their title (*status*) or their work (*pekerjaan*) many women described themselves as *Ibu Rukun Tetangga*, or Mrs. Neighbourhood Association (henceforth referred to as IRT). The title in itself is not so extraordinary considering the nature of women's titles in other settings that reflect their husbands' position. What is striking however is that neither in my own field documentation (or that conducted by my Freeport staff) nor that conducted by the UABS team, was there any documentation of a *Kepala* or *Ketua Rukun Tetangga* (Head or Coordinator of the Neighbourhood Association). The implication is that there were no (male) *Bapak Rukun Tetangga* or "Mr. Neighbourhood Association".[11]

I was initially alerted to this trend while working with a small community living at the north end of the East Levee.[12] Known locally as *Nayaro* or *Kali Kopi Atas* (KKA), this settlement was one of three primary camps situated between the East Levee and the Kopi River immediately to the East.[13] The inhabitants of the KKA settlement all had access to housing in a joint Freeport-Indonesian Government resettlement project called Nawaripi Baru (New Nawaripi), but left the resettlement because it lacked access to their own resources. The other two

men who play central roles in at least the lower levels of village administration do so in some way as a proxy for their sisters or mothers.

[11] This is based on combined surveys that I conducted or participated in both prior to and during the UABS project covering some 4500 individuals. Strangely on official land-releases for the communities directly impacted by the Freeport Mine, a few men are listed as *Kepala* or *Ketua RT* (head or leader) despite not having claimed such a position during genealogical surveys.

[12] The East Levee forms part of a catchment that keeps the tailings from the mine within the Aikwa-Otomona River system. The entire area is known as the Aikwa Deposition Area or ADA. It is comprised of two roughly parallel levees of continually growing height that are meant to prevent the tailings, the ground-up by product of the mining process, from entering into either Timika in the West or into the Lorentz National Park in the East. There is a cross-levee near the southern end of the levee system that essentially slows (but does not prevent) the flow of tailings south of the ADA toward the coast. When I was last in the area Freeport was processing approximately 240,000 tonnes of ore per day. The majority of this (over ninety-five percent) is waste rock that becomes tailings.

[13] *Kali Kopi Atas* means "Top of the Kopi River" named for the location of the settlement as the most northerly or most interior—in Kamoro terminology highest or top—settlement along the Kopi river that runs parallel and to the East of the Freeport East Levee. Though referred to by the indigenous inhabitants colloquially as the Kopi (literally coffee) River, the indigenous name for the river is Uamiua. There were at least two other settlements emerging on the East Levee during my fieldwork related to arrivals of people from the West Sempan Communities of Omauga, Inauga and Otokwa, some of whom were related by marriage to the Nawaripi communities.

locations consisted primarily of people from the Waoneripi settlements who retained a connection with Koperapoka Baru in the Timika town, but lived on the levee either for access to resources or because their houses at Koperapoka Baru had been sold in their absence. These are both good examples of the kinds of splintering of Kamoro communities caused either by relocations or by incompatibilities with Indonesian village administration.[14]

The KKA settlement grew opportunistically out of an access road created for a "borrow pit" and a Freeport contractor workshop, and only people from the Neyeripi Kampong, composed of the Neyeripi and Amayeripi *taparu*(s) resided there.[15] A settlement of just under sixty individuals, this community had particularly strong connections not only to the land, but to an outspoken older woman named Augustina Operawiri, locally known simply as *Ibu* (Mrs. or Mother) Augustina.[16] She frequently led protests against Freeport activities, disrupted Freeport vehicles travelling on the East Levee and lodged complaints with the provincial government in Jayapura.

While consulting to Freeport, I frequently visited this settlement. Sometimes I would go just to chat and other times to document community grievances as well as to better understand their reluctance to abandon the temporary settlement in lieu of moving to one of the newer permanent villages. On one particular occasion, during genealogical interviews *Ibu* Augustina explained that she is the "elder" IRT of the settlement.[17] I recall jokingly asking her who the "Mr. RT" is and she replied that there wasn't one. Demurring, I provoked her, looking at her husband and saying that surely her husband was the real head of the RT. This brought laughter to the small crowd that had gathered to assist in the genealogical

---

[14] The combined Neyeripi and Waoneripi kampongs form the Nawaripi "tribe." Their relocations were discussed briefly in Chapter Six.

[15] A "borrow pit" is an area where the company acquires materials to maintain and increase the height of the levee. Most commonly "borrowed" materials were rocks taken from the Kali Kopi. The opening up of borrow pits without formal community consent was an issue of repeated confrontation between the communities living on the levee and Freeport.

[16] *Ibu* is a common Indonesian term of address for all women of childbearing age or older.

[17] She described this to me as "*Tetua* IRT." *Tetua* is the local pronunciation of the Indonesian word *tertua*, meaning "oldest."

work. Augustina responded by slapping her husband who was sitting beside her, exclaiming with a laugh that he could not possibly be the head of the RT because he is incapable of *doing* anything.[18]

Eventually *Ibu* Augustina explained that as the elder IRT she coordinated activities among her "neighbourhood" for utilisation of the region's resources. During these interviews, her specific role and degree of relatedness to others at the settlement remained unclear to me. At the same time, various other women in the settlement also identified themselves as IRTs. All of this seemed a bit strange considering that in what effectively was a local squatter settlement on their own land, the women still used terminology attached to official Indonesian village administration to describe their positions. Genealogical mapping provided insight into how *Ibu* Augustina and the other IRTs were positioned relative to one another and ultimately opened an interesting window onto a Kamoro adaptation of an Indonesian organisational scheme.

Within the KKA settlement, most of the IRTs were descendants of *Ibu* Augustina or her sisters. The genealogical structure relating them centres around two or three generations of women descended from a common woman or women (a woman and her sister(s)). In this case, after mapping the settlement genealogically, it became clear that the IRTs formed the central components in an organisational structure that placed Augustina at the top (as the senior member) and the younger IRTs, their female descendants, within what Augustina described as her "*kelompok*" beneath her. *Kelompok* is an Indonesian word meaning grouping or gathering (see Figure 2).

Though centred on women, the groupings were not sex-specific: IRTs assured me that male partners and children also fell into the system. In a system of symmetrical exchange marriage, *Ibu* Augustina's *kelompok* tended to overlap significantly within the two *taparu*s of the greater Neyeripi-Amayeripi Kampong, and to a lesser degree outside of it but remaining within the larger Nawaripi village/tribe. This is difficult to see in Figure 2 given that only a fragment of the

---

[18] This was Augustina's second husband (her first husband passed away) and he was from outside of the community.

greater Neyeripi Kampong resided at KKA. However, as the diagram below indicates, over half of the residents of KKA fall directly into Ibu Augustina's *kelompok*.

Pouwer identified similar generational groupings during his fieldwork in the 1950s. These were known as a *peraeko*. He described these groups as central to rights of collective possession within the *taparu* (Pouwer 1970:29, 1955:79-80). According to Pouwer, the matrilineal offspring of the central woman (or women) down to her grandchildren form a "stem group", which is commonly named after the grandmother (Pouwer 1970:25). In the case of KKA, the grouping was named after *Ibu* Augustina. As in the examples outlined by Pouwer, the women from whom the entire group claim shared lineage were often deceased.[19] During my fieldwork, the word *peraeko* rarely entered into conversation spontaneously. It arose only after I brought it up. Instead, people would describe their group as a certain older woman's *kelompok* (lit. group in Indonesian).[20] The fact that the majority of the inhabitants of the KKA settlement often referred to themselves as *Kelompok Augustina* and given the nature of their genealogical ties to her via the IRTs at the settlement provides a convincing argument that *kelompok* groupings correlate to the stem groups/*peraeko* described by Pouwer.
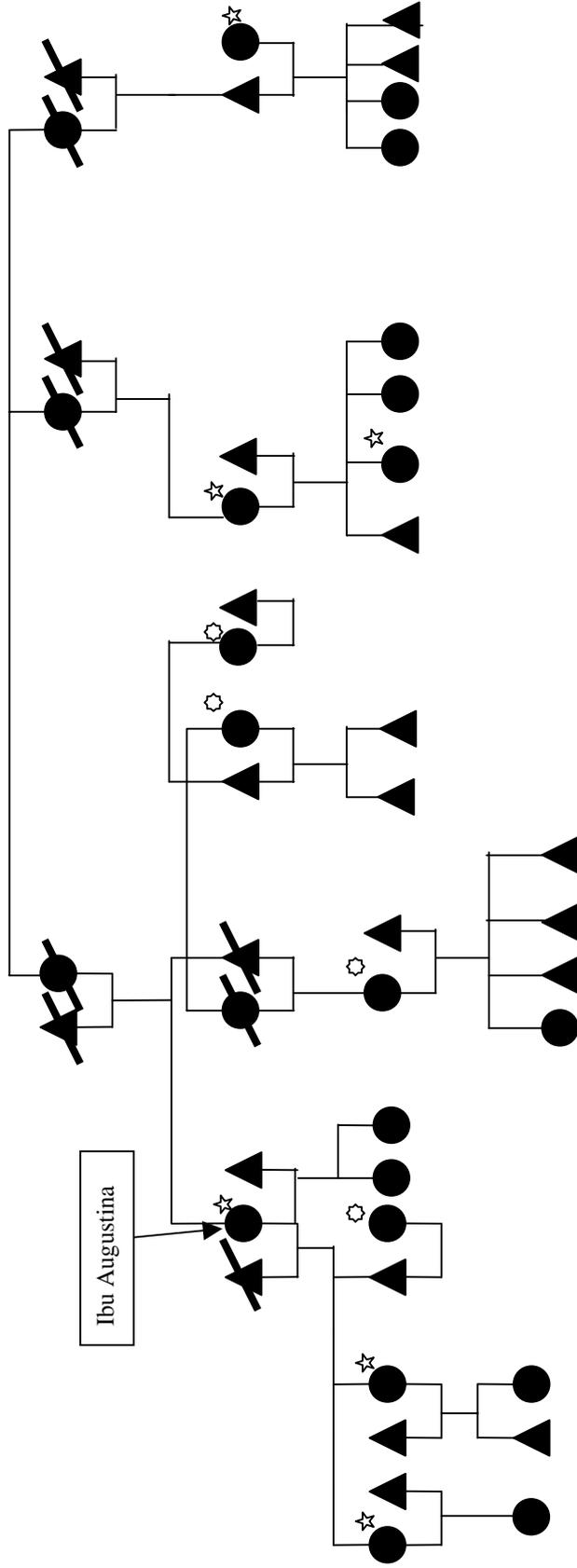
Pouwer elaborates that the notion of attachment to a senior female or mother figure was particularly strong during his fieldwork. He documented the way in which specific individuals are situated in the community through their biological mothers.[21] There is a striking parallel between this and the notion of the

---

[19] Within this system, Pouwer outlines that elder sons are often the representatives of *peraeko* rights of disposal over local resources including sago (Pouwer 1955:145-146).

[20] It should be noted here that among the Nawaripi populations, including the Neyeripi settlement on the East Levee, the 'k' sound is replaced with a glottal stop. Thus, when I asked about the concept at this settlement, the population corrected Pouwer's documentation of *peraeko* collected in a central Mimika dialect to *perae'o*.

[21] Although there are occasions where relationships are drawn with reference to one's father, even one's everyday identity appears to be directly determined by one's mother's name. One is referred to as the son (*ao*) or the daughter (*pa*) of a specific woman. For a few examples, the current regent of Mimika, a Kamoro, is named Potoreyao (e.g. son of Potore); an *amoko-we* is Aoweyao, that is the son of Aoweya (see accounts of the Utakae War in Chapter Two and Chapter Six). Kamoro family names (formed during the Dutch period by children taking on their father's first name as a family name) also reflect this pattern.

Figure 2: *Kelompok* Augustina: This figure demonstrates the links between all of the IRT's of KKA. All individuals marked with a ☆ are IRT's within Augustina's group which incudes their spouses and children. All descend from three sisters. Augustina is the eldest of the descendants.

Ibu Augustina

☆ *Kelompok* Augustina IRTs

✿ Non-Kelompok Augustina IRTs

inhabitants of the settlement defining themselves in terms of relatedness to *Ibu* Augustina. In the same discussion, Pouwer describes an important philosophical and cosmological concept related to the matriline: the mother's navel (*mopere or mapare*) as symbolic of the role of the mother as life-giver. The philosophical meaning of the *mopere* as the innermost, the deepest, or the essential is especially important (ibid:56-57). I frequently heard descriptions of the *mopere* of an *amoko-kwere* or a ritual. The *mopare* is also the dominant motif in woodcarvings from the earliest nineteenth century collections through contemporary examples.

During a joint project between the Australian National University, Universitas Cenderawasih (Cenderawasih University or UnCen) and Freeport (hereafter referred to as UABS, short for UnCen-ANU Baseline Studies) I had another opportunity to look more closely at local level social organisation. Our team set out to map (both physically and socially) the Kamoro populations in the Timika region. In our documentation of eight villages, our study generated well over 100 individual *taparu* names. Comparing the list with one compiled by Pouwer revealed some overlap, but the majority of the contemporary names were not in Pouwer's list. When we asked our Kamoro team member to review the list, he verified that all of the names were to the best of his knowledge *taparu* names.[22]

Given that prior to the joint project I had recorded names of *taparu* in these same villages which were nearly identical with Pouwer's list collected over forty years earlier, the new list confused me. On my own I visited with *Kepala Suku*(s) and elder *taparu* members (*tokoh taparu*) in each settlement.[23] Sitting with them, we outlined and documented the *taparu*(s) in the villages. The combination of a different survey methodology and the interviewers' lack of familiarity with Kamoro social organisation seem to be the source of the discrepancy. During the UABS project team members, most of whom were inexperienced in Kamoro research, visited each house individually. In retrospect, it appears that there may

---

[22] Here I note that during my fieldwork, *taparu* could also be variously invoked to mean the equivalent of kampong or *desa*, but most often this was only the case when the Kamoro were speaking (or thought they were speaking) with someone unfamiliar with their social organisation.

have been some confusion among the Kamoro as to what information the survey sought. Only after discussing the list during a visit with Jan Pouwer in Holland did I gain a new perspective on what appeared to be "erroneous" data. Discussing the UABS reports, Pouwer mentioned to me that he found the *taparu* list remarkable in its sheer size. However, after I had explained to him how we had asked our Kamoro team member to validate all of the names, he stated something that in retrospect appears obvious: many of the names on the list were likely *peraeko* names.

Combining Pouwer's input with my own discovery of the IRT yields considerable insight into contemporary Kamoro social organisation and how it is manifest both within and beyond official village administration. Within the village setting, these social units centred on the IRT can be mapped both genealogically as I did at KKA as well as geographically.[24] It appears that the IRT comprise the core members of contemporary kin-groups that form both the foundation of *taparu* as well as an underlying structure which links *taparu* of a common kampong together. Ultimately, this relates to on-going difficulties in village administration that I will briefly describe before showing a concrete example of the interface between IRT networks and village administration.

Village absenteeism is a constant frustration for the Indonesian Government (and the Dutch Government before them). Portions of the village are abandoned for extended periods, complicating administration, health, and education concerns. Most often, the reasons why the Kamoro leave their villages are to gather sago, go fishing, to attempt to secure Freeport funds or to seek medical attention from Freeport facilities; administration, health, and education officials are also guilty of abandoning their village posts for the latter reasons. Obviously, absenteeism results in significant setbacks for primary school education, which

---

[23] *Tokoh* is an Indonesian word referring to a prominent figure, in this case *taparu* elders.

[24] The settlement at the north end of the East Levee was not an official village (*desa*) but perhaps better described as a squatter settlement. This and the other settlements on the levee served as economically strategic locations allowing the Nawaripi population to access Timika via the Freeport Levee and use their resources which lay along the rivers and tributaries within and to the east of the levee system.

limits the ability of Kamoro children to progress academically, which ultimately precludes Kamoro from entering certain sectors of the workforce. When I questioned village teachers and government administrators about who leaves the village and when, the responses were often that there is no pattern, it's just *kehidupan Kamoro*, Kamoro lifestyle. At the same time derogatory comments regarding the backwardness of hunter-gatherer communities (*peramu*) were customarily added to undermine any notion of logic to the practice.[25] Village absenteeism however also holds an interesting insight into contemporary Kamoro social organisation, in particular the relationship between the Kamoro village and other notions of community, including the *suku* or tribe. The composition of the absentee groups tends to incorporate those people caught up in the networks of IRT. As an example I shall briefly consider the village of Iwaka, which lies just west of Kuala Kencana, the newly constructed town built primarily to house Freeport employees.

Located near the confluence of the Kamora and Iwaka Rivers, Iwaka village consists of neat rows of houses arranged along either side of a straight two-kilometre road. It is composed of two former settlements that consider themselves to be separate, but related tribes: Iwaka and Temare. During his fieldwork Pouwer documented a total of three *taparu* in each of the settlements arranged in both cases into complimentary sets at each location—two *taparu* in one, with its counterpart containing just one *taparu*. Development of Iwaka in its contemporary form was initiated as part of an *ABRI Masuk Desa* (AMD) resettlement project aiming to settle the smaller communities in a larger

---

[25] Usually the use of the Indonesian word *peramu* (lit. one who gathers, but used in discussion to mean "hunter-gatherer" or semi-nomadic) is employed colloquially in eastern Indonesia with derogatory connotations. *Peramu* are considered to be at the lowest rung of a linear social-evolutionary scale that works through small-scale farming/horticulture on the way to a pinnacle of large-scale farming. This seems to be incorporated in Indonesian State ideology and appears to be based in nineteenth century Dutch constructions of *adat* law which used Javanese wet-rice farming to develop land management laws favourable to the colonial administration. Accordingly, the Kamoro never list their subsistence style or occupation as *peramu*, but as *petani*, literally farmer despite the fact that few Kamoro do more than small garden horticulture and the majority of their food is derived from their semi-nomadic "gathering" lifestyle. For example, at Iwaka, of 114 respondents who listed their work, over half responded that they were *petani* though no appreciable gardens exist in or near the village.

permanent village in 1984. In 1995 after the government had determined that the Kuala Kencana townsite fell within the property rights of Iwaka, physical development was taken over by Freeport as part of a compensation package.[26]

During the course of the UABS project in 1998, we enumerated fourteen different *taparu*s and nineteen women listed themselves as IRTs at Iwaka. As in the Kali Kopi settlement, no males identified themselves as leaders of the RT. Of the women declaring themselves as IRT, three originated from outside of Iwaka village, and another three failed to list their *taparu* affiliation.[27] In either case, these women as well as the three women for whom we recorded no *taparu* affiliation were nonetheless caught within the genealogical web created around the other IRTs. Among the other thirteen women, seven can be easily reconciled with my earlier *taparu* list, with some naming what I have termed a kampong as their *taparu*, others listing the "tribal name" of their respective previous settlements. Six of them listed *taparu* affiliations did not seem to be conventional *taparu* names, something Pouwer noticed during my conversations with him. These women listed Mamiria or Mambuaya as their *taparu* affiliation. I shall return to our analysis of these women shortly.

As discussed above, the position of Neighbourhood Head (*Kepala* RT) is an honorary administrative position linked to representing a specific (geographic) part of a village. According to Indonesian Law, within each *rukun tetangga* (neighbourhood) there are ten to twenty families with a leader chosen by the people of that neighbourhood. This position is considered to be almost purely honorary and holds no political power. As an example of the types of duties carried out by an RT head-person, Anwar mentions that the formal process needed to acquire a new identity card begins with a letter of recommendation from the RT head-person where one's household is located (Achmad 1999:27).

---

[26] The government seems to have decided which community should be compensated based upon proximity "as the crow flies" of the nearest settlement to the proposed town area. Other Kamoro communities raised doubts that it belonged to Iwaka because of its great distance from any navigable river owned by the Iwaka people.
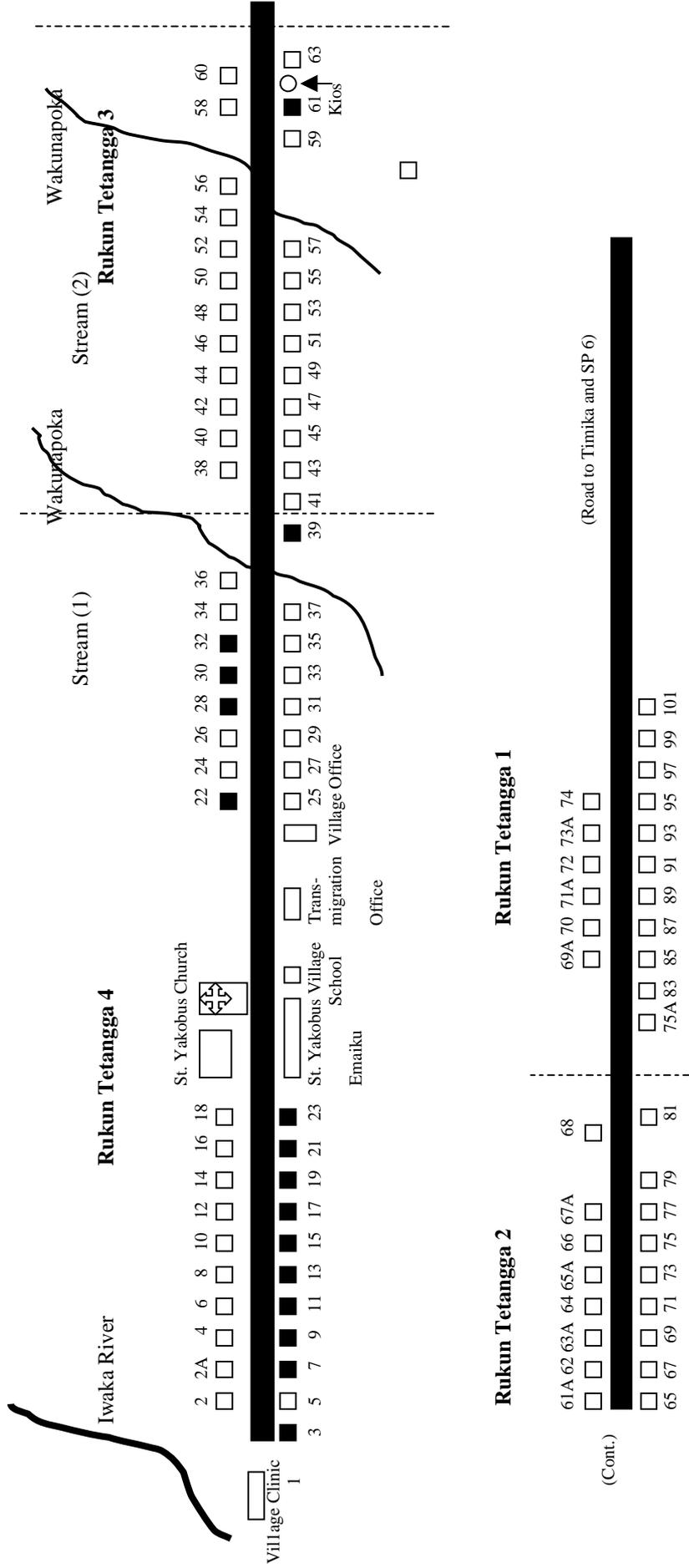
[27] Quite possibly the women from outside of the village holding the IRT title may have some level of access or inclusion in a social group in their home village as they listed their *taparu* affiliations from their home settlements, though this needs to be further investigated.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the official and common-sense connection here exists between neighbourhood (*rukun tetangga*) as a location and its head as a prominent resident.

The village of Iwaka is divided into four geographic divisions or neighbourhoods numbered one through four (abbreviated RT 1 through RT 4). When I mapped out the residence of the IRTs at Iwaka, I discovered that all but one of the IRTs lived in RT 1. Fourteen of them lived in eleven neighbouring houses on the same side of the road. Of course this is a most striking contradiction of the title and the supposed function of the neighbourhood head according to the Indonesian administration—the neighbourhood heads reside predominantly in the same neighbourhood (see Map 9). This is an indication that at least for the Kamoro of Iwaka, the IRT may not correspond directly to the function set out by Indonesian administrative practice.

Closer inspection of those IRTs listed as belonging to the two anomalous *taparu*, Mambuaya and Mamiri, reveals that between the two of them they incorporate over twenty-four households in a village of just 100 households. A genealogical map, which includes members not only of both of the suspect *taparu*, but also other *taparu* revealed a number of significant factors underlying village-level social organisation.

Consistent with the importance of senior maternal figure(s) at the KKA settlement, the same lines of relatedness were evident in Iwaka. In addition to a three-generation structure like that uncovered at KKA, genealogical mapping built out from core Mambuaya and Mamiri IRTs revealed a complex web of marriage relations. On the surface, the relations appear somewhat confusing; it looks as if IRT titles can be transferred genealogically following either a

Iwaka River

Village Clinic 1

Rukun Tetangga 4

St. Yakobus Church

2 2A 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18

3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23

St. Yakobus Village
School

Emaiku

Office

Trans-
migration Village Office

25 27 29 31 33 35 37

22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36

Stream (1)

Stream 4

Wakunapoka

38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56 58 60

39 41 43 45 47 49 51 53 55 57 59 61 63

Kios

Stream (2)

Wakunapoka

Rukun Tetangga 3

Rukun Tetangga 2

61A 62 63A 64 65A 66 67A

65 67 69 71 73 75 77 79

68

81

75A 83 85 87 89 91 93 95 97 99 101

Rukun Tetangga 1

69A 70 71A 72 73A 74

(Road to Timika and SP 6)

(Cont.)

Map 9: Iwaka Village Map showing residential locations of IRTs (■). Map based on UABS village map.

matrilineal pattern like that at KKA or perhaps a patrilineal one. Even more confusing, it appears that their *taparu* affiliations all tend to overlap. However, more critical inspection and assistance from an Kamoro-authored analysis pertaining to the relationship between marriage and *aopao*, reveals a striking pattern of symmetrical alliance exchange marriages.

The complex pattern of marriage exchanges was clarified when Dr. Chris Ballard, the ANU lead representative for the UABS project, and I asked Methodius Mamapuku, the Kamoro representative on the UABS team, if he might be able to compose a short paper for a contribution to a potential project publication. The result was the essay *Ndaitita: Prinsip Aupao dan Keterkaitannya dengan PT.FIC* (*Ndaitita*: The Principle of *Aupao* [sic] and its Relationship to the PT Freeport Indonesia Company).[28] It outlines interpretations and applications of *aopao* from an indigenous perspective. Aspects of *aopao* outlined by Mamapuku that are the most salient to this discussion are those surrounding marriage.

Mamapuku outlines three distinct styles of exchange marriage which occur among the Kamoro and are classified as kinds of "*aopao* marriage." The ideal marriage pattern is symmetrical exchange between brother/sister sibling pairs. The underlying factor in these exchanges is that each family is both wife giver and wife receiver—literally a balanced (*aopao*) exchange.[29] An "*aopao* marriage" is deemed superior to a non-*aopao* marriage not only because it maintains balance, but because of the socio-economic impacts of strengthening ties between families while distributing resources.[30] Although these marriages are preferred and sought among the Kamoro they appear slightly less common than other types of exchange marriages.[31] Another style of "*aopao* marriage"

---

[28] *Ndaitita* is a Kamoro word that literally means lifeways.

[29] "Sister exchange" is commonplace in Melanesia. See M. Strathern (1984) for general overview of marriage exchange in Melanesia.

[30] See van Baal (1975) for examples of reciprocal marriage conceived of in terms of balance.

[31] As M. Strathern points out, this type of marriage in which the subject matter of exchange (e.g. *aopao*) is both included in the mechanism and characterises a type of relationship (e.g. an "*aopao*

Mamapuku outlines is one formed when one family has a brother/sister sibling pair while the other family has only one marriageable candidate. In these circumstances, the family with just one marriage candidate "adopts" (using Mamapuku's word) an eligible candidate from a third family to complete the exchange, again with the underlying importance of maintaining *aopao*.

The third style of "*aopao* marriage" outlined by Mamapuku explains the complex situation that arose from my genealogical mapping of Iwaka village IRTs. Mamapuku outlines an exchange marriage in which three or four families—in the form of two alliances, contribute candidates to an exchange (1998a:5). Using an example from Timika Pantai, he explains how this often occurs when families have siblings differing greatly in age. At the same time, his example explicitly outlines this style of exchange occurring across *peraeko* lines, but within the kampong—precisely the situation that I mapped at Iwaka. Cross-*peraeko* exchange forms the underlying fabric of the larger social unit, the *taparu*.

With respect to *aopao* marriages, close analysis of the illustration below reveals that in the generation of the parents of several of our IRT informants, balance was achieved through the cooperation of three different nuclear families: Kaware, Kanareyau and Arakopeyauta. Despite the fact that age differences prohibited direct exchange between two of the families, they form an alliance through which each of the three families were able to be both wife-givers and wife-receivers, achieving *aopao* (see Figures 4 and 5). The relationship between a wife-giver and a wife-receiver is characterised by life-long services rendered by a man to his in-laws under a relationship known as *kaokapaiti*. *Kaokapaiti* is composed of two Kamoro words, *kaoka* and *paiti*. Literally translated, the words mean woman and shame respectively and refer to feelings of obligation toward the woman's family as wife-giver. The Kamoro conceive of *kaokapaiti* as an aspect of *aopao* fundamental to the maintenance of social cohesion.

A brief example of *kaokapaiti* obligations: on a trip to the village of Inauga

---

marriage"), the " 'actors' interests as transactors are presumed. Thus we hold that they will be bound to seek some kind of 'balance' in their transactions" (Strathern 1984:42).
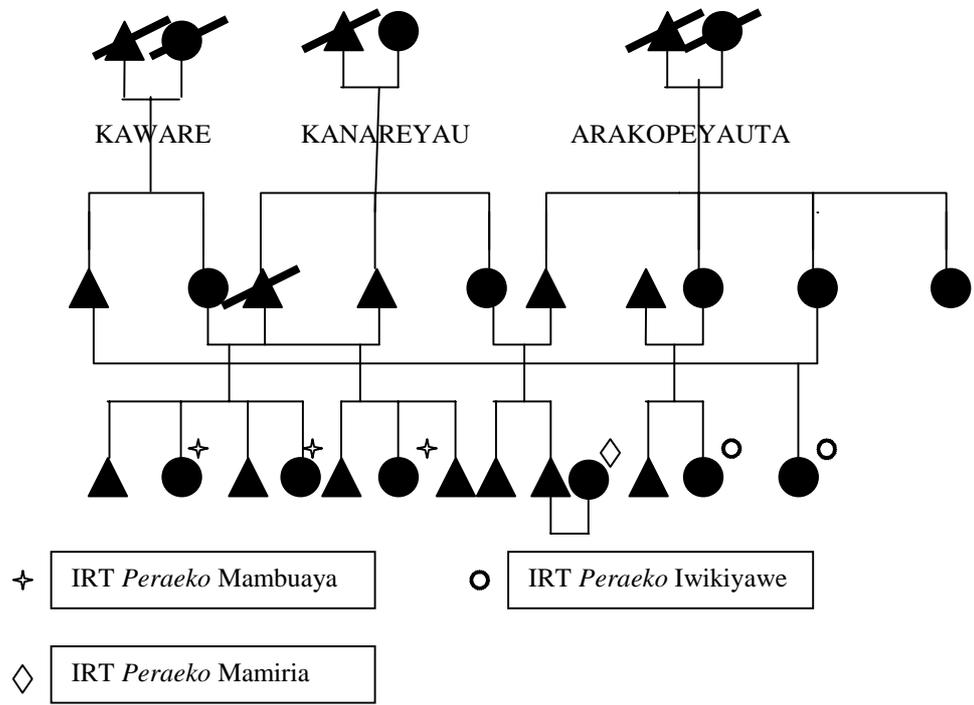
Figure 4: *Aopao* **marriages at Iwaka. With alliances between three families, each family is both wife-giver and wife-receiver.**
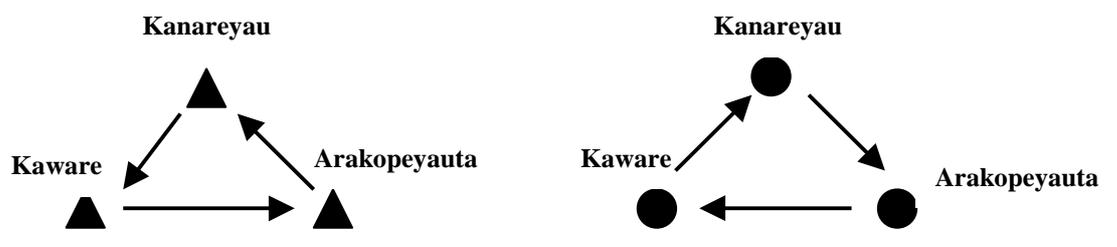

Figure 5: Flow of men and women in *aopao* marriages at Iwaka.

in 1997 I observed a man in the middle of the labour-intensive task of making a new dugout canoe. I asked him if his old canoe was worn out and he replied "No, my wife is pregnant." The implication was that the canoe would be a "payment" as part of *kaokapaiti* obligations to his wife's parents for the child that their daughter would give to him. This sort of payment of valuables (and work) from a man to his wife's family punctuates the life cycle of the marital union, particularly in its reproductive aspects. Payments like this among the Kamoro are common, and highlight the fact that *kaokapaiti* obligations are a tangible and ongoing part of a reciprocal relationship binding a man to his wife's family. This notion of ongoing payment is contrary to the notion of exchange as a one-off economic transaction, which characterises corporate, developmental, and state relationships with the Kamoro, which I shall return to below.

ENGAGING FREEPORT:

Perspectives From the Perimeter

As this thesis has demonstrated, *amoko-kwere* and migration histories validate various Kamoro communities' rights to the land in the lowlands of the Freeport Project Area by virtue of past migrations *through* the regions presently impacted by the mine (as outlined in Chapter Six). More recently I have also recorded explicit examples of *amoko-kwere* which describe Kamoro ownership, partial ownership, or rights to the highland mine area and its contents in the homeland of the Amungme. All of the examples that I have heard which incorporate Freeport and their activities via *amoko-kwere* are from communities residing on the edge of or outside the area of direct impact of the mine's activities. A perspective from a directly-impacted community will be addressed at the end of this chapter. The first example that I present seems to exhibit a peculiar blend of highland Amungme cosmology with a Kamoro *amoko-kwere*; as far as I am aware, such a

blend of Kamoro and Amungme cosmological ideas is unprecedented in the extensive written record regarding both groups.

This *amoko-kwere* was collected from three older men from Timika (Pantai) who were at the time living in the urban Timika area.[32] The account is a succinct explanation of Kamoro tribal rights to the highland mine:

> The rocks that are currently being mined up there are the property of the Kamoro tribe. According to myth, the owner of the mine or the "*Ibu Tambang*" [Indonesian language, literally Mrs. or Mother Mine] is a Kamoro woman named Aopea. The mine was born of Aopea, who was captured in an abduction-marriage by a *kapauku* [Kamoro language, interior dweller, mountain person, in earlier times spirits were said to have lived in the interior] named Takomumameyau who was half human, half spirit. He abducted her while in the form of a *timako* [Kamoro, crocodile] and ran to the mountain where the mine now is. The two of them are the owners of the mine and the mountain being mined. From this myth it is clear that the mine is principally the property of the Amungme and the Kamoro tribes (in Mamapuku 1998a:15).[33]

While *amoko-kwere* abound with examples of men, women, and spirits changing into plants, animals, and features of the landscape, I have found no other examples of an *amoko-we* "giving birth" to part of the landscape. Further, while examples of highland physical features such as rock formations have sometimes been interpreted as *amoko-we*, the only Kamoro examples I know of are limited to West Mimika where the mountain range extends closer to the coast. Unfortunately on the occasion when I collected a version of this story I was unable to probe into a number of relevant questions. Perhaps the most important thematic connection between this story and other *amoko-kwere* is the underlying notion that outsiders are conceived of as thieves, *otomo-we*. In this case, non-

---

[32] Methodius Mamapuku and I independently documented nearly identical versions of this *amoko-kwere*. In keeping with understandings of "rightful ownership" of *amoko-kwere*, I defer to Methodius' version because it originated from his home village of Timika (Pantai).

[33] The text with the original story as recorded in Indonesian: *Batuan yang sedang ditambang adalah milik Kamoro. Karna sesuai mite bahwa pemilik atau Ibu Tambang itu adalah seorang naita Kamoro yang bernama Aopea. Tambang itu dilahirkan oleh wanita bernama Aopea, yang dibawa lari (kawin lari) oleh seorang kapauku bernama Takomumameyau (setengah manusia, setengah jin/roh halus yang menjelma dalam bentuk timako dan kemudian menyambar Aopea dan membawa lari kearah gunung yang ditambang sekarang ini. Mereka dua inilah sebagai pemilik tambang dan gunung yang ditambang. Dengan demikian tambang itu milik utama dari suku Amungme dan suku Kamoro (dalam mite Takomumaeyau dari* Timka *Pantai).* In a footnote to the story, Mamapuku further clarifies that Aopea was originally from Timika Pantai.

Kamoro are doubly implicated, with the Amungme abducting a Kamoro woman and then Freeport "stealing" her "offspring".

In the vast body of documented Kamoro oral tradition, only one story that I know of addresses the intermarriage between the Kamoro and the *kapauku*, the highlanders. Unlike the present story, the *amoko-kwere* regarding intermarriage with highlanders clearly hinges on an exchange (*aopao*) marriage (rather than an abduction marriage) between the Kamoro, Korane Ipukare and his sister, and *kapauku* (highlander) counterparts. In personal communications, I asked Pouwer about the Korane Ipukare *amoko-kwere*. He explained to me that the narrative:

> … seems to be a rationalization of a failure to exchange, to communicate with the *Kapaoko* [sic] socially apart from the usual barter: Korane exchanged his sister with a *Kapaoko* man. However the *Kapaoko* woman [whom he received in exchange] did not beget children. The Kamoro woman on the other hand begot many children; so the exchange turned out to be a failure in terms of offspring (for the Kamoro that is!). Also, the *Kapaoko* man beat up his Kamoro wife when her children kept asking for *keladi*-food [taro]. The angry father threw them in the river. The Kamoro mother put them in her canoe and made for their relatives downstream. The Kamoro retaliated by attacking the *Kapaoko* settlement and killing the angry father and his mother and pillaging the garden produce. So the exchange misfired on two counts. Korane and his men then left for *imuu*, the coast, and west where they found a colony of women…fought off their (absent and foreign) husband-sailors settled there and multiplied. In other words the communication and the search for wealth *imuu* [toward the west and the coast] succeeded while the communication and search for wealth *kapao* [toward the interior] with the *Kapaoko*, failed (Pouwer personal correspondence with author, 16 July 1999).

Although differences between the two stories are striking, given the complete absence of any other Kamoro story regarding marriage with highlanders, the structural similarities of the two stories leads me to suspect that the *mopere* of our present version is the same as that of Korane Ipukaro. Most basically, it involves a conjugal relationship between a highlander and a Kamoro. In both stories, a Kamoro woman proves fertile, producing offspring with her highland partner. At the same time, in the former version, wealth (in terms of women and offspring) is denied to the Kamoro in the interior and only discovered through the agency of the *amoko-we* who travel to the west. In both cases, a figurative failure to comply with *kaokapaiti* obligations is implicit, relegating the Kamoro to a socially and economically inferior position.

For the Amungme, explicit references to the personification of land in the form of a matriarchal figure are commonplace, and underlie some of the most emotional protests to mining activities. According to Tom Beanal, a key Amungme community leader:

> The Amungme perceived their living habitat through an analogy to a female which they believed to be their Mother. The vertical zone of their habitat reflects the erect body of a female creature. The part at the highest elevation is associated with the head of the Mother ('Ninggok'). This area is comprised of the tops of the highest mountains in their territory such as the Cartenz [Carstensz] Top, Ertsberg ('yel Segel Onggop Segel')[the initial Freeport Mine site], Grasberg [the present Freeport Mine Site] and many others. (Beanal 1997:xxx)

Here there is a striking overlap between the two otherwise differing cosmologies: the mountain from which Freeport obtains its wealth is personified as a maternal figure.

I documented another *amoko-kwere* that legitimates Kamoro ownership of the mine and its contents from informants from the villages of Mware and Pigapu on the Wania River. As contacts between outsiders and the Kamoro of the Wania River became more intense, *amoko-kwere* regarding the exploits of Mapurupiu have become increasingly common. In Chapter Five I described how Mapurupiu was interpreted as "the God that was over the people before Adam and Eve" and about how he was rumoured to have surfaced to give access to western wealth, *kata* during the post-war Dutch administration. In Chapter Six, Mapurupiu appears again when the "Mapuru tribes" are noted as the local landowners of the Timika area and the Indonesian government was named "Mapuru Jaya," victorious Mapuru, after him.

Egenius Atame from Pigapu and Thomas Iwitiu from Mware gave me a detailed contemporary account of Mapurupiu's adventures.[34] Their telling begins with a *Karapao* (a boy's initiation ceremony) on the coast near the mouth of the

---

[34] Egenius Atame is from the Kopoko *taparu* and Thomas Iwitiu is from the Makamaurupi *taparu*.

Wania River.[35] While Mapurupiu is with the men inside the Karapao building drumming and singing, his wife Maimero is trying to find food for their son. By four in the afternoon, she still had no luck:

> Maimero looked inside at the contents of her *etahe* [K: carrying bag]. She inspected the bag and found nothing…There was no food in the *etahe*. "*Ama apakona.*" "*Ama Apakona*" [K: literally, "There is no sago, There is no Sago"]. She was upset because one of her children was crying because he was hungry.

When word finally reached Mapurupiu that his children were crying with hunger, he resolved that at high tide that night, he and Maimero would travel towards the interior to get some food. By one in the morning, the couple departed. Before too long they reached a juncture in the river. Mapurupiu's sago area was more distant up the one branch of the river while Maimero knew of sago that was along the other branch of the river and much closer:

> Maimero she said to Mapurupiu "Don't worry about going to your stream, it's too far from here. Let's just row to my stream, it's much closer."…Maimero explained that there were large stands of sago right at the edge of the stream…She went on: "So it's decided. We'll just go to [your] *kaukapaiti*'s river…to the place where my father made a *para*."[36]…They went to the tree…Mapurupiu cut into it. It was right at the edge of the river…The tree was felled…[and they worked the tree] until around three or four in the morning. Finally they were finished…They filled several *tumangs* of sago.[37] The two of them overnighted on the river waiting for tide to rise again.

With the high tide, Mapurupiu and Maimero set out toward the coast again. Their journey was interrupted when at the place where the salt water meets the fresh water there were so many fish that the river was literally blocked. As it

---

[35] My informants listed the location explicitly as Karauwa, near Marauka. Recall in Chapter Six the discussion of the ritual and political significance of Marauka as a place where a door to the underworld was said to exist.

[36] A *para* is a sign, usually a clearing around the base of a sago tree, to tell others that the tree belongs to someone and is soon to be cut. This is particularly common when a sago stand is close to the edge of a river.

[37] *Tumang* is an Indonesian word for a leaf container for sago. Generally they contain about ten to fifteen kilograms of processed sago. One *tumang* of sago lasts for approximately two weeks among a family of four or five people, even longer when the diet is substantially supplemented with fish, molluscs, pork or cassowary. The fact that they were able to get several *tumangs* out of one tree emphasises how rich of a tree it was. Generally one tree produces about two *tumangs*.

Image 21: *Karapao Kame* **(boy's initiation building), Mioko (along the Kamora River, just outside of Freeport's Project Area), April 1997 (photo by author).**

Image 22: Detail of upper left side of the front of the above building showing conspicuous representation/incorporation of the foreign. Positioned above the *oto* **(the strips of bark and leaves) representing** *otepe* **held by the various** *taparu* **in Mioko, are the words** *"Untukmu Indonesiaku,"* **"For you my Indonesia" (photo by author).**

Image 23: Two initiates are painted with *taparu*-specific designs as part of *Taori / Karapao* (boy's initiation) . The imported red-cloth sarong has replaced the sago-leaf fibre skirt in the ceremony. Both of these are decorated with indigenous designs, most prominently the *mopere* motif, the lozenge-shaped image (Photo by Gretchen Black Harple, Timika Pantai 1996).

Image 24: Detail of initiate from same feast. Note the very conspicuous incorporation of "foreign" elements with his *taparu*-specific body paint. In particular the Islamic "*kopiah*" with Arabic script that reads "Mohammed" combined with the crucifix and the *taparu* paint. Photo by Gretchen Black Harple, Timika Pantai 1996. Translation of Arabic by Father Philipus Tule, SVD.

turned out, the fish were easy to catch, and Mapurupiu speared one after the other, filling his canoe with a bounty of any kind of fish that he wanted.

Arriving back at the village, they went straight to their house, taking only a small portion of the sago and fish with them. After putting some of the sago and fish in the family's house, Mapurupiu took some sago and an *ehako* fish[38] to the feast house where the men were still drumming and singing. At the feast house, something happened:

> Mapurupiu cooked some sago and fish. He ate and ate and ate. When he finished, he asked his son to put the leftovers beside the hearth. He left them there. Mapurupiu ate again that night…he ate the fish and the sago. He ate it until there was no more left. He cooked sago balls. After he finished all of the food, he had a drink then a smoke. After he finished his cigarette, he felt drowsy…he just slept in the middle of everything—while men were singing and playing the drums…But this sleep wasn't sleep at all. He was dead! He was dead! He had already died.[39]

In the midst of the drumming and singing, the men around him failed to realise that he was dead until the next morning when the celebration ended when everyone except for Mapurupiu rose to leave the festival building. When Miamero found out she and the other villagers cried, mourning Mapurupiu's death.

But, unknown to the people in the village, when Mapurupiu died during the night, his soul had already begun to ascend the Wania River.[40] For three days Mapurupiu's soul travelled along the Wania River, looking for other souls of dead people. He found nothing until eventually he met Ekoworupi and Enamakorupi, a frog and a small lizard, who were in the process of making a *karapao* at a place called Kahawatia, near Mapuru Jaya. Mapurupiu approached the sounds:

---

[38] In Indonesian this fish is described as *ikan sembilang*, a kind of catfish.

[39] Though not explicitly stated, there was an implication that his death was either the result of eating sago that was already marked as "owned" amounting to theft from his *kaokapaiti*, a serious infringement or that his death was somehow related to the fish that he had consumed. Also, there are similarities with an account collected by Zegwaard during the Dutch era. In his account, Mapurupiu dies because he consumed a fish that was taboo during a particular ritual (1952:75)

[40] The narrators initially used the Indonesian word *nyawa*, which literally means "soul" (Echols and Shadily 1994:392). The implication is that his soul (*ipu*) or its converted form (*mbii*) was travelling around outside of the body.

He could hear that something was going on, so he moved closer to hear. He thought to himself "Who could this be?" Whose kampong is here? Then he pulled his canoe to the edge of the river and climbed the bank…He asked the frog man and the lizard man "Who are you?"[41]

Then Mapurupiu, asked them if they could make him a "Johnson-canoe" for him the next day.[42] Ekoworupi and Enamakorupi, the frog and the lizard, responded that they could do this for him.[43] After telling them that he would return the following day to pick up the "Johnson-canoe," Mapurupiu again set out again going upstream looking for other spirits:

In his canoe he had already prepared a lime-stick. Inside of it he mixed fish-bones from his last meal in with the lime. Upstream he made the mountains emerge by throwing lime. Near where Tembagapura is, he planted the fish bones in the ground. Then he shook the lime-stick again and a shower of blue-colour mixed with white came out [lime is generally white, TH]. That's how Mapurupiu put the gold in the mountain and made it so that his grandchildren could see it.

The story concludes with Mapurupiu returning to the frog and the lizard where he collects his "Johnson-canoe" which he uses to travel downstream in search of his wife. Eventually he discovers that she is collecting materials to make a mourning bonnet, but when he goes to find her, he finds his children waiting at the edge of the forest in their canoe. Maimero had already gone to collect the materials *with* Mapurupiu's younger brother. The insinuation here is that with the full knowledge of her children, Maimero has engaged in a sexual relationship, effectively remarrying, with Mapurpiu's younger brother too soon after his death. He scolds his younger brother for marrying his wife, before asking Maimero why she did not wait for him to come back.

When Mapurupiu started his engine to leave, Maimero and her children reached for their paddles, they wanted to follow him. He grabbed his daughter

---

[41] Here I asked the men "Was it people with animal names or animals?" In Indonesian they had said "*Orang kodok dan orang cicak*," literally a frog-person and a small lizard-person. They responded "They were animals, but with human voices!"

[42] Johnson is the generic name for an outboard motor.

[43] There is a strong implication of the frog and the lizard's connection to the spiritual world not only because they were talking reptiles, but also because they were able to carve a canoe and an

and shouted at them "You stay, I'm going to the interior."[44] Following the Mioko River[45] Mapurupiu and his daughter went to the interior where. He left his daughter (a person) stay there while his spirit went up the mountain. When I asked if Mapurupiu and his daughter were responsible for the mine, I received a matter-of-fact answer "Yes, of course." Thus, the gold in the mountain was a direct result of Kamoro agency. There was also a conversation that followed their telling of the story during which they implied that taking (mining) the gold amounts to theft from the descendants of Mapurupiu. Freeport, were *otomo-we*, thieves.

The Bad Son-in-Law

As the examples above from Mware-Pigapu and Timika Pantai suggest, Kamoro informants from the periphery or outside of Freeport's Project Area appear to use *amoko-kwere* to formulate understandings of the Mine. In contrast, the communities most directly impacted by Freeport seem to have a far more complex engagement with the company for which a more detailed study is certainly necessary to better understand. From my experiences with the Nawaripi and Tipuka communities, I can offer at least some rudimentary comments regarding the engagement of these communities with Freeport.

While I think *amoko-kwere* certainly are brought to bear on all kinds of Kamoro engagements with the world around them, the contemporary relationship between Freeport and the communities directly impacted by their operations is most directly conceived of by the Kamoro in terms of social and economic reciprocity. When I asked Leo Urumami, a community leader from the Neyripi-Ameyeripi kampong if the relationship between his community and Freeport had

---

outboard motor in just one day. The narrators explained to me that if real men tried to make a canoe alone it would take at least two or three days.

[44] Here the narrator explicitly said "*Kamu tinggal, saya naik*," "You stay, I'm going up." Up could mean upstream, but could also mean to the mountains.

[45] Presumably the narrators meant either the Kamora River or one of its tributaries.

something to do with *aopao*, the Kamoro term, which most broadly defines social reciprocity, he seemed, a bit surprised by my question. Then he responded:

> *Aopao*? You mean like repayment or revenge? Of course there's a connection [between their situation and *aopao*, TH]. However, if there is no relationship at all [between them and Freeport, TH] how can one effect balance? There has to be a relationship first, right? Along with the government [Freeport, TH] always takes and takes without paying.[46]

While Leo was being a bit facetious to make his point (in the sense that there *was* regular contact between certain Freeport workers and his community), he was alluding to the fact that the Company, and by this he meant top management, the decision-makers in Jakarta and New Orleans, never responded directly to the community's concerns. According to him, it was impossible to effect *aopao* because at its most basic level *aopao* requires a relationship. On several occasions I sat in on meetings with Freeport Management in Kuala Kencana, listening to Leo and others from his community and from Tipuka, the other directly impacted community. During these meetings, the messages were consistent: We are happy to work with people from Freeport's Community Affairs Department, but we know that they do not make the decisions. They would even take things a step farther, by saying that they did not have problems with the Vice-Presidents of Community Affairs who attended the meetings either. I remember them explicitly saying that they realised that they (the Vice Presidents) were powerless and only the "dogs" of Jakarta and New Orleans, Freeport's corporate offices.

Indeed, when Freeport helped to bring in a Non-Governmental Organisation from Jakarta to help "facilitate" a recognition package with the community, the Nawaripi's first reaction was to protest. They perceived that the Non-Governmental Organisation was a way for Freeport to further distance themselves from the Community (driving away any hope for a proper relationship) and that the NGO was going to "eat" the community's funds (which Freeport owed them).

---

[46] The original Indonesian text: *Aopao? Maksudnya balas-membalas dan balas dendam? Memang ada hubungan. Tapi, kalau tidak ada hubungan sama-sekali bagaimana bisa dapat balas? Harus ada hubungan dulu, ka? Terus dengan pemerintah, mereka selalu ambil, ambil terus tampa pembayaran.*

Freeport's gestures of re-assigning employees who were working with the Nawaripi and the Tipuka symbolically supported their fears of a Freeport withdrawal from the relationship. Eventually, the community did accept assistance from the NGO, but only with the urging of Freeport Management and with the proviso that they would be welcome to continue to talk directly with Freeport.[47]

As a researcher and a consultant to Freeport, I was placed in a precarious position when I was asked to attend a meeting at the *Bupati*'s office on behalf of Freeport's Vice President for Community Affairs. After chatting briefly with friends from the Nawaripi community prior to the meeting while we waited outside, we filed into the somewhat cramped meeting room. Upon entering the room, I immediately moved for a chair to the right of the entrance, where I sat beside Leo, one of the Nawaripi leaders. We were soon joined by the Village head from Tipuka, another village directly impacted by Freeport's operations.

On numerous occasions I had sat in this area of the meeting room which was set up as an audience area opposite a U-shaped "speakers" area on the other side. The *Bupati* and his staff, and sometimes military leaders, sat at the apex of the U, facing toward us. To his right, there was an empty space, to his left, government officials. I informed the Bupati that I had been asked to attend this meeting on behalf of the Freeport Vice President. Unfortunately my misunderstanding of an Indonesian word turned out to totally change my perspective on the meeting.

---

[47] In practice however, this direct communication with Freeport was not welcomed. It aggravated both the NGO and Freeport management. The NGO felt betrayed that the community brought problems directly to Freeport rather than working through them. This also brought on complaints by the NGO that Freeport employees (in particular my entire research office) were undermining their efforts and threatening their ability to work independently, which ultimately would damage both the "recognition" process that they were facilitating and at the same time damage their reputation. Continued close relationships between members of the Nawaripi community and one of my staff in particular brought about allegations of spying against him from the NGO. This staff member's entanglement with the community was based on a number of issues, including that fact that he had been born and raised in Mimika and had forged a relationship with this community over a period of at least five years by the time the NGO had arrived. His undergraduate thesis analysed Nawaripi resettlements at Koperapoka Baru. The combination of reports from my staff and Nawaripi community leader visits to my office prompted my conveyance of their concerns to Freeport management directly. Ultimately, I believe that this played a role in the termination of my contract. Achieving a "recognition" and land-release "facilitated" by a third party was absolutely critical to Freeport obtaining permission to increase their production capacity.

Earlier that morning, the Vice President had asked me to "*mewakili*" him at this meeting. I interpreted his instruction, in particular the way he contextualised it by telling me to take notes and to report back, to mean that I should sit in as his observer to take minutes of the meeting. This was not the *Bupati*'s understanding.

To my horror the *Bupati* asked me to occupy a seat to his right, placing me alone opposite the other government representatives and distanced from the communities. After my change in position, the *Bupati* opened the meeting, which was to discuss the implementation of a land rights recognition package for the Nawaripi. Until that date, the dispersal of the benefits of this package had been dismally slow for a number of reasons, both pragmatic and political. For most of the meeting, I responded without much difficulty to questions; I had heard the same questions fielded by Freeport Management on a number of occasions and I knew the company's official position.

Eventually an older Nawaripi man for whom I have great respect as an informant and story-teller rose. Almost in tears he began to cry "*Tapare apokona, Ameta apokona*" in the Nawaripi dialect of the Kamoro language.[48] With some knowledge of Kamoro, I knew exactly what this meant: "[Our] Land is gone, [our] food is gone." Through a translator he went on to describe that any hope for his generation and that of his children for a better future is gone. He then questioned if it would be possible for Freeport to help to make the situation better for his grandchildren. He ended his plea with the words "*Aopao apokona*." This last statement hit home. Literally it translates as "There is no reciprocity," but its meaning is far more multivalent as I shall discuss.

I fought back my emotions as I listened. It seemed like I was the only non-Nawaripi in the room who understood the man (and perhaps I was). I could do no more than respond that I would pass the information on to Freeport management, as I was not empowered to respond to his concerns on their behalf. Resentful of the position that I had been placed in, I seriously considered resigning my consultancy right then.

---

[48] In his dialect "*Tapare amuna, Ama amuna*."

I couldn't help but notice what I perceived as a look of satisfaction on the faces of the NGO representatives. If I had read about this on the Internet a year earlier, I too would have been pleased that the Kamoro had fought back, expressing their opinion eloquently. I imagined them writing up the whole experience for an Internet news group or a press release. The headline would mirror the mission statements of a host of NGOs involved in environmental and human rights campaigning. It would read "Kamoro elder says 'We have no land, we have no food, and no reciprocity.'" In this case, such a report would have been entirely accurate. What's more, fit perfectly with my own analysis, but I had never been on this side of such a statement.

Outside the meeting I approached the man who had made the passionate statements. Much to my surprise, he turned to me and apologised! He said, "I'm not mad at you, I'm mad at Freeport" before inviting me to lunch with him and the rest of the Nawaripi representatives. Clearly this was another example of where the Kamoro differentiated between individual personalities and the reified company.

During interviews both in Timika (town) and at the settlements on the East Levee prior to the arrival of the NGO, several older Nawaripi people explained their "relationship" with Freeport to me. Reviewing my notes, I realised that while all of the explanations shared notions of conceptualising the relationship in terms of *aopao*, several of them also offered insight into their expectations grounded in indigenous social obligations. David, an older man whom I met initially at the KKA settlement explained it best to me one day in Timika (town):

> Child [addressing me, TH], it's like this. We gave that land [that is being used for tailings disposal, TH] to Freeport and the government long ago. For them, there is always a "yield." There are products from the mine, there is the "product" of the destruction of our sago. Via our land, Freeport is like our *kaokapaiti*, but not a good one. For decades they have obtained[49] from us, but they still have not payed us. How long must we wait? [50]

---

[49] Here I translated the verb *dapat* as obtained rather than taken. This seems to alter the moral intent of the relationship. Had the author wished to say "taken" he would likely have used the verb *ambil*, which means to take rather than *dapat*, which in this case means to obtain. "Obtaining" from them insinuates a moral obligation to engage in communications, to compensate. There is no inherent moral obligation for a thief toward his victims.

I think David's analogy sums up well the general feeling of the Nawaripi and Tipuka people with regards to Freeport. Both groups feel that they have given land and resources (even if they were not freely "given") to Freeport and the government. Of course this "gift" has certain moral obligations attached to it, as made explicit by the *kaokapaiti* analogy.[51] The implication is that Freeport, as the receiver of a "wife" in the *kaokapaiti* relationship is morally obliged to life-long services to their "in-laws" (the Nawaripi and Tipuka).[52] Indeed, as Pouwer notes, among the Kamoro, social and economic status is intimately bound into the *kaokapaiti* relationship. As Pouwer aptly notes, 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). With David's reference to his children and grandchildren, he implied that Freeport, in their failure to fulfil the *kaokapaiti* role has taken away his own future.

Kaokapaiti then is perceived as an aspect of *aopao* that is fundamental to the maintenance of social cohesion and social welfare. For the Nawaripi and Tipuka, one-time payments from the company and the government (e.g. "recognition" payments) seem to be perceived as something that Freeport and the government owed to the communities *in addition to* their *kaokapaiti* obligations.

---

[50] *Anak begini. Tanah itu kami sudah lamah kasih kepada Freeport dan Pemerintah. Untuk mereka selalu ada hasil. Ada hasil tambang ada hasil merusakan tanah kami, dan merusakan sagu kami. Lewat tanah, Freeport sebagai kaokapaiti kami, tetapi kaokapaiti yang jelek. Mereka selama puluan tahun dapat dari kami, tapi masih belum bayar. Berapa lama kami harus tunggu mereka?*

[51] Ironically, Freeport has published material demonstrating that they knew that the highland Amungme perceived their relationship to the company along similar lines. Accordingly "The Amungme had shared their land, and this gesture was not reciprocated" (Mealey 1996:299).

[52] To the best of my knowledge, there is no other reference among the Kamoro to a company or any other non-person being interpreted, even allegorically, as a wife. When I discussed this with Jan Pouwer, he said that during his fieldwork this never occurred. I suspect this is related to the comparatively limited engagements that Kamoro communities had had with outside companies before Freeport. During Pouwer's field research only a limited number of Kamoro worked for the NNGPM, and most often this was outside of Mimika.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The contemporary articulation between Kamoro social organisation and the Indonesian State takes a number of different forms. On a regional/ethnic level, State-level decisions regarding the sharing of proceeds from Freeport artificially unites disparate communities for access to funding and other opportunities. Most often, this occurs under the banner of a single Kamoro tribe, though there is evidence that there could be a growing notion of a closer connection between two "tribes" who formerly had little contact, as I discuss briefly in the next chapter. On the local village level, unique patterns emerge through structural similarities that show the potential for smooth incorporation of indigenous Kamoro social structure within the Indonesian system of village administration. Unfortunately, smooth incorporation rarely happens. Instead the relationship is marred by cronyism manifest in unbalanced access to State and private resources—*aopao apokona*.

At the same time, there appears to be a fundamental contrast between the way that Kamoro who are not directly impacted by Freeport's operations formulate their understandings of the company and the way that at least some of the communities who are directly impacted perceive the relationship. For the former, *amoko-kwere* served to reformulate the company, the mine, and its contents as products of Kamoro agency, which have been stolen (metaphorically or actually) from them. For the communities most directly impacted by the mine, Freeport is perceived in terms of having an actual social relationship—through their use of land—with the communities. For some members of the impacted communities the company's ongoing usage of the land is perceived as analogous to the communities being wife-givers, expecting the company to live up to their moral obligations of an ongoing relationship with the "parents" of the land. In both of these styles of engagement with Freeport, the underlying similarity is that the Kamoro are on the unrequited end of supposed reciprocal relationships, perceiving that their contribution to the relationships has ultimately been "stolen" by the State and by Freeport.