

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

Chap. 1. A high degree of uncertainty, even with regard to the most elementary requirements of life, appears to be characteristic of Biak society. This is primarily the result of the infertile soil conditions and the geographical position of the Biak Islands, which hinders communications internally and with the Geelvink Bay area which is important for the supply of food. The isolated position and the poor communications, often only along seaways endangered by gales from the west or from the south-east, facilitated the development of a strong regionalism. The subcultural centers, the dialect-groups, villages and clans predominated. Frequent emigrations, contacts with the outer world on their distant raids in earlier times and later during their voyages to Tidore and as travelling blacksmiths, introduced foreign goods into the ceremonial exchange. An increasing amount of prestige became attached to the acquisition of these valuables, which were of such vital importance to the community. Marriages and the formation of groups were determined by offensive and defensive motives, and in later years by economic factors. Social classes could not maintain themselves due to the absence of class endogamy and the adoption of slaves on the one hand, and to the emphasis laid on personally gained prestige (achieved status versus ascribed status) on the other.

A strong feeling of dependence caused by the adverse natural environment was compensated for by the knowledge of magic spells, ancestor-worship and a total ritual connected with their Supreme Being (The Sky (Firmament) or the Sun). There is a great difference for the Biak people between the "real" and the "ideal" world.

The founders of clans and recent ancestors take the place of the mythical demons and demi gods because there is a tendency to attribute the recovery of the secret of life and death to the ancestors. They even allow them to replace the Supreme Being (Manseren *Nanggi*) in the

myths as a sign of their reduced dependence resulting from their knowledge of the secret, which is a condition of real power.

Only in the ritual connected with the offering to the Sky (*Fan Nanggi*) does the Biak tribe acquire a unity which transcends the subcultural borders. The unity of the Biak people is therefore determined by religion and not by politics and bears the character of a ritual community. The Utopian ideal, however, aims at the restoration of the original community and the suppression of rivalry.

Chap. 2. In the principal myth of Manarmakeri a traditional or a real ancestor appears in whom many mythical heroes are embodied. That which appears scattered everywhere in the whole mythology of Biak is concentrated in him. He appears in the disguise of an Old Man. He is a hero with a genealogy who recaptured the secret of the land of the dead and was thereby enabled to revive the mythical primaeval time. He finds out that the true nature of things is hidden but by recovering the secret he succeeds in discovering it. This put him in possession of the "treasures and the food", the principal elements of the ceremonial exchange and of the functioning of the community. By this reconquest he could have put an end to roaming, dissension, insecurity and death, but neither in the disguise of the Old Man nor in that of a youth rejuvenated by the baptism by fire is he recognized as the Lord of the Utopia (Manseren Koreri). Therefore he departed westward, after having promised, however, that one day he would return.

Chap. 3. The myths in which a return is told date back to the first contacts with the Numfor and Biak people. The time perspective can be clearly observed and shows in which way these myths were enlarged with new elements.

Chap. 4. The various versions of the principal myth owe their origin to subcultural factors, because the integration of a new element can be recognized by the degree to which each subcultural group has introduced the new element in its own version. Four principal centers for the myths were found in each of which the events of the principal myth are said to have taken place. It also appeared that relationship to or even local connection with the principal figure were motive for having a particular version of the principal myth and for taking the initiative in starting a movement.

Chap. 5. All the elements which form the principal myth are frequently found in the Biak-Numfor mythology, to wit:

1. The disguised figure, accepted or rejected.
2. The contact with the ancestors and the "land of the dead".
3. The important function of the coconut palm.
4. The voyages from the West to the East and the grouping into generations.
5. The function of the moon, the sun and the Morning Star.
6. Various animals which appear in the myths.
7. The acts of creation by the principal figures.
8. The function of the clan sanctuary as a center of mythical power and its moveability.

The identification of the mythical and the geographical West created the possibility to transport the West and everything connected with it into the mythical sphere and to subject it to a mythical interpretation.

Chap. 6. In the nights preceding the expected return of their Messiah instructions were given on how contact with the dead and the return of the *Koreri* could be brought about. This was to be achieved by reaching an organized climax by the performance of appropriate songs and dances and by the use of imitative magic. Mass-psychosis, artificially achieved visions, possession and glossolaly are attendant phenomena.

Chap. 7. In the historical survey of the movements dating back to 1855 45 movements are described. Even though the data for some of the movements are extremely scanty, their character could be made out by analogy with other movements.

Except for the one of 1855, in which resistance to the payment of tribute to Tidore (which dominated the northwestern part of New Guinea) is apparent, there is no reaction to foreigners in the earliest movements. It is apparent from the further course of events that not only in the myths but also in the proclamations of the forerunners of the movements foreigners and their goods were interpreted in a mythical way. The discovery of the West and contact with Europeans, who at first were regarded as ancestors returned to life, led to the introduction of various foreigners in the myths. Gradually, however, a demythologization took place and the increasing acculturation gave rise to mental resistance, the results of which are becoming increasingly apparent

in the myths and the movements. In the movements the various mythical centers of power make themselves felt. Kinship, sometimes even via the matrilineal line, with the Old Man, appears to be very important to the function of a *konoor* (the herald of the returning Messiah).

There are various areas, even some peopled by Biak emigrants, which keep aloof from them, though the movements transcend the cultural and linguistic frontiers. The determining factor here appears to be that the background and actual content of the culture adopted by the emigrants were not compatible with the nature of the movement.

Chap. 8. The big movement of 1938-1943 shows a movement in all its aspects. Data received from informants who participated in it made it possible to explain how intensely a movement is experienced, how heterogeneous the expectations and motives are, and even that this difference is realized by the participants themselves.

At first a centralization took place, principally influenced by political motives; later on Biak regionalism asserted itself.

Assimilation and the use of Christian elements gave the movement an appearance of syncretism. The use of modern western economic products and means of communication, along with a craving for European goods, laid a stress on the economic aspect in the myths. The frustrated feelings now came with full force to the surface. Resistance to suppression and tutelage in every form ventilated itself now in vehement criticism against foreigners (*amberi*) still in reach and they were treated accordingly. Revolt against the Japanese forces led to the dramatic end.

Chap. 9. In a survey of the historical factors which could have influenced the movements it is evident that in the first place the crisis arose from objective data: the geographic environment, sickness and death, but along with them the socio-economic factors of food and ceremonial exchange. At first contact with foreigners did not affect the movements. Even though submission to Tidore meant serious interference, the supposition is justified that the insecure situation brought about by the abovementioned causes, aggravated by acute rivalry and the lack of internal security among the Biak people, contributed more to the origin of crises than the influence of far-away Tidore.

Then the acculturation process gradually starts. A positive appreciation of the achievements of western technology is accompanied by an opposition to tutelage. Even though neither the Protestant Mission (est. 1855) nor the Government (est. 1898) gave rise to an acute crisis in the

Biak community by resorting to drastic measures, artificial efforts to introduce foreign elements (even if desired) naturally aroused resistance.

To live truly means in the first place to be able to be one's self.

Conclusion.

1. The *Koreri* movements in the Biak-Numfor group of the Geelvink Bay culture area are in general reactions to the negative aspects of life wherein the "manifest rupture between ideal and actual reality" (151, 189) expresses itself.

2. The high degree of insecurity, due to the geographical character and the position of the islands, has often been the cause of many crises. The Biak people have no explanation for the phenomenon of death through which they can reconcile themselves with the unavoidable. The crises of their existence (the inevitability of sorrow and death) which make them painfully aware of their dependence constantly remind them of the relativity of their knowledge and ability and even of their whole culture.

3. Resistance to these crises is founded in the conviction of the possibility of breaking through the actual to the mythical reality and thus bringing the *Koreri* (Utopia) to this world.

4. The coming of the *Koreri* is closely connected with the figure of Manseren Manggundi who embodied in his person the possibility of its attainment. This ancestor figure, who as a human being recovered the lost secret, combined in himself all the characteristics of the mythical heroes of the past. Because of the absolute bond between Manggundi and *Koreri* he may be considered as a mediator. The *Koreri* movements are consequently messianic movements. The movements have a totalitarian character because they are founded on the mythology calling for the complete reversal of the actual reality in which all aspects of culture are involved.

5. The movements, being founded on the conviction of the possible bridging of the gap between the actual and the ideal reality, direct themselves against any situation in which the dependence of the human being and this gap are demonstrated.

At first the movements were directed against sickness and death, as is apparent from a historical survey, and further against everything which entered their range of vision and accentuated the negative and dependent character of mankind.

6. The movements have a genuine Biak character. There was no need

for the movement to adopt a single foreign element to give them the form which they have displayed in the hundred and ten years during which they have been observed.

They fit exactly into the mythological sphere and only render in a modified form that which is described in exuberant detail in the myths as a method of recovering the mythical *primaeva* time. The comparison of the two shows that in these movements the people have placed certain restrictions on themselves, probably arising from a conception of the fundamental opposition between mythical *primaeva* time and the real world in which they themselves still live. It is also particularly due, however, to the danger one knows to be connected with an arbitrary removal of boundaries, as the return of *Koreri* cannot be allowed to lose the character of mercy.

7. The so-called syncretic character of the movements is only of secondary importance. The character of the movements is not determined by the elements derived from Christianity, but rather the reverse is true; the form of these borrowed elements led to their adoption as they offered "points of contact for identification" (283, 296) in the mythical sphere.

8. The reason why the new cultural elements were subjected to a mythical interpretation, a fact which is generally ascribed to credulity, unlimited phantasy or imaginary projection and satisfaction, is really not only psychologically but foremost culturally determined.

This is perfectly in line with the character of myth as already indicated by De Josselin de Jong: "Myth supports and stabilizes the view of life and must account for everything which this life may offer, hence also for recent happenings and modern conditions. Archaic myth really appears to possess the ability to absorb and assimilate all of this" (173, 217).

As the historical survey shows, the Biak myths were expanded in this sense around the principal figure and the *Koreri* expectations. The selective character of the adoption of foreign goods and ideas is determined by what, according to the standards of the community, is considered of vital importance.

9. Consequently it is a misconception to ascribe what has been called "new and bizarre ideas" (152, 95) or has been considered as a tragic derailment or as "short circuit reactions" (12, 247) to "primitive mentality". This is much more due to what has been called by Van Baal in another connection "*mentalité religieuse*" (6, 27), and consequently is in the first instance culturally and not psychologically determined.

10. The position of the forerunner (*konoor*) was often a natural