"Religion (...) constitutes the universal horizon and foundation of the nation’s existence. It is in terms of religion that a nation defines what it considers to be true”.

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. 
Abstract

In 1953 Aarne Koskinen’s book, The Missionary Influence as a Political Factor in the Pacific Islands, appeared on the shelves of the academic world, adding further fuel to the longstanding debate in anthropological and historical studies regarding the role and effects of missionary activity in colonial settings. Koskinen’s finding supported the general view amongst anthropologists and historians that missionary activity had a negative impact on non-Western populations, wiping away their cultural templates and disrupting their socio-economic and political systems. This attitude towards mission activity assumes that the contemporary non-Western world is the product of the ‘West’, and that what the ‘Rest’ believes and how it lives, its social, economic and political systems, as well as its values and beliefs, have derived from or have been implanted by the ‘West’. This postulate has led to the denial of the agency of non-Western or colonial people, deeming them ‘history-less’ and ‘nation-less’: as an entity devoid of identity. But is this postulate true? Have the non-Western populations really been passive recipients of Western commodities, ideas and values?

This dissertation examines the role that Christianity, the ideology of the West, the religion whose values underlies the semantics and structures of modernisation, has played in the genesis and rise of West Papuan nationalism.

The modernist and primordialist approaches to the study of the relation between nationalism and religion assume either structural-functionalist or intellectualist definitions of religion. This thesis rejects that view in postulating that religion plays a foundational role in the rise of both historical consciousness and nationalism.
Positioning itself in antithesis to traditional primitivist approaches to the study of West Papua, which have tended to study the Papuan people as a set of distinct tribes, each endowed with particular identity dynamics, this thesis attempts to provide a comprehensive study of West Papuan nationalism as a single ethnic and geographical entity. Breaking away from modular forms of nationalism, which consider such a phenomenon as a res ‘capable of being transplanted’, it attempts to recover the ‘eventful reconfigurations’ which have allowed for the rise of West Papuan national consciousness and identity. Sahlins’ structure of the conjuncture will be used as the basis for the articulation of a methodology to enable the recovery of the lost history of pre-literate peoples and the discarding of the interrelated myths of ‘history-less-ness’ and ‘nation-less-ness’.

This thesis argues that West Papua was a distinct ethnic identity long before the Europeans entered the region. This identity was shaped and defined by processes of adaptation to a particular ecosystem and by the longstanding relations that the Papuans had engaged in with the neighbouring Malay populations in, what can be regarded as, the ‘Maluku-Papuan-Ceramese’ zone. Consequently Papuan pre-colonial ethnic identity, authenticated by a series of myths and stories, acted as the prime mover in determining the relational dynamics and dialectics with the Europeans and Christianity.

It will be shown that Christianity did not create the Papuan nation and West Papuan nationalism, although, once Christianity was ‘inculturated’ into the Papuan cultural-religious template, Christian institutions acted as the structure and semantics by which the Papuans were able to communicate and articulate communal sentiments of belonging, coalescing into a unified entity. Papuan hermeneutics, known as cargoism, played an
important role in mediating and systemising Christian beliefs and values into Papuan cultural-religious templates, so that the *locus* of Papuan national identity came to reside in the intersection of Papuan stories and myths with Christian narratives.

In the aftermath of World War II, the Dutch nation-building program inculcated into the emerging Papuan intelligentsia an idea of nation and nationalism, which could serve their neo-colonial interests and resist Indonesian incorporation of the territory. This program came to clash with the autochthonous Papuan nationalism, which had manifested itself in the great *Koreri* movement of 1938-1942.
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**Introduction**

*Hai Tanahku Papua*

This dissertation examines the extent to which Christianity has contributed to the emergence and development of West Papuan national consciousness and identity. I will undertake a long-term inquiry into the pre-colonial history of the Papuan people in order to identify the roots of their ethnic identity, which was defined and shaped by their interactions with the neighbouring Malay populations and which acted both as a filter and catalyst of their colonial experience and as the foundation of their ‘modern’ national consciousness.

The idea for this thesis was born out of the consideration that nationalism has been, and still is, envisaged in modern and post-modern literature as an ‘ideology’ of the Christian West exported to the ‘Rest’ or the ‘Other’ during the colonial era. This ‘vision’ or ‘belief’, based on the implicit negation of both the historicity and identity of colonial and non-Western peoples, continued to foster both the (indirect) subjection of colonial peoples, and a World System in which the right of self-determination and independence is constantly held hostage or hijacked by the interests of a capitalist and Christian West. It also follows that the recognition of nationhood, which is the *condicio sine qua non* for self-rule, is determined more on the basis of political convenience or opportunism than on historical truth and ‘factuality’.

While Chinese and Indian civilisations partially escaped the obliterating and nullifying force embedded in such act of negation,¹ people lacking historical records or ‘archives’, that is ‘documents’ or the ‘fetishes of the written word’, became the victims of

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the ineluctable colonial nihilism of the West. The myth of the ‘people without history’ or ‘history-less people’, underlying the policies of dominance and acculturation of post-Enlightenment and Positivist XIX century colonialism, stood as the political and cultural paradigm of modernity. The omnipotence and superiority of the ‘West’ over the ‘Rest’ represented the undertow of social and cultural relations in colonial settings. If literate societies, such as the Indian and Chinese, came to be clustered into the ‘sensuous’ discourses and representations of Orientalism, pre-literate societies were hemmed in or harnessed by the ‘fossilising’ concept of Primitivism. The colonial enterprise thus found its ‘justification’ in its ‘just action’ against wretched barbarity and blasphemous heathenism.

Post-modern or post-colonial stances have done little to change such an approach. Heralding the deconstructionist manifesto, they stress the importance of the archive and the document or text in historical research. Deconstructionism and discourse formation and practices are the Trojan Horses post-modernists use to penetrate the stronghold or powerhouse of the archive. The prominence attributed to the written text tends inevitably to foster a latent regime of tautological dependencies by which colonial structures, discourses and representations are perpetuated since the colonised, lacking archival ownership, has to ‘necessarily’ rely on the ‘fetishes’ and ‘hermeneutics’ of the coloniser to reconstruct and structure its own history.

The recent trend in the field of humanities and social sciences of attempting to recover the ‘epistemologies of the other’, or to ‘decolonise methodologies and history’, continues to return, unabatedly and tautologically, to their ‘colonial premises’ because of

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their tendency to identify epistemology with hermeneutics. This confusion consequently results in the articulation of non-Western epistemologies and narratives according to Western categories.

The literature on West Papua has not escaped the post-colonial approach that has interpreted the reactions of the Papuans to Dutch and Indonesian development policies and rules and to missionary activity, as the product of primitivism and backwardness. Ethnographers and anthropologists, who have turned to the study of West Papuan culture and society, have contributed to prompting and perpetuating the primitivist approach and the ‘tribalisation’ of the West Papuans, fragmenting their identity and reality in a myriad of clan or tribal entities and identities, considered as ‘bounded realities’. It follows that the ‘study of the tribes’ perpetuates the notion of primitivism associated with the image and representation of the ‘Papuan’. Titles as *An Hour to Stone Age*, *Cannibal Valley*, or *Gardens of War: Life and Death in the New Guinea Stone Age*, which appeared on the bookshelves in the 1960s and 1970s, or documentaries such as *Dead Birds* about the Dani of the highlands, presenting (and representing) the Papuans as primitive cannibals and head-hunters living still at the dawn of civilisation, are evidence of the Primitivist approach and perception of the Papuan. This tendency still echoes in the titles and language of more recent writings such as *Modern Risks to Ancient Shangri-La*, *Playing

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6 The documentary *Dead Birds* was filmed by Robert Gardner and released by Contemporary Films and Mutual Distributors in 1963.
up the Primitive\textsuperscript{8} or Lost Mountain: Plunged into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Tribes struggle to cope.\textsuperscript{9} Furthermore post-war literature on the nationalist movement of West Papua has spread the idea that Papuan history is of recent vintage and began only in 1945, 1962 or 1969.\textsuperscript{10} It ignores or denies the existence of a previous pre-colonial and post-colonial ‘ethno-national’ history and presents Papuan nationalism as a product of the Dutch nation-building program enacted between 1945 and 1962. The process of ‘rectification of Papuan history’, currently in progress, is paradigmatic in this regard and well illustrates the persistence of latent primitivist approaches.

This thesis is an attempt to break away from both colonial and post-colonial historiographical traditions, which have served and still serve colonial and neo-colonial ambitions, to unveil the parallel and neglected historiography and history of the colonised Papuans, that history and historiography which shaped the trajectory and configuration of Papuan ethnic and national identity. This perspective will lead to an exploration of how alien ideas and ideologies, such as nation and Christianity, were interpreted and systemised in the Papuan worldview. I attempt to examine the outcomes of such an hermeneutical-structuring process and systemisation. I will argue that Christianity did not ‘create’ West Papuan nationalism, although it contributed to institutionalise latent feelings of ‘nation-ness’ and nationhood, thus informing the quest for statehood with a clear purpose in a World System ‘regulated’ by the interests of the Christian West.

\textsuperscript{8} Kirksey E., ‘Playing up the Primitive, New Internationalist, April 2002.
This dissertation consequently comes to challenge previous theories, approaches and myths, which have characterised the study of pre-literate societies, and of West Papua in particular. First it refuses the ‘tribalisation’ of the Papuan socio-cultural world and, more recently, of Papuan nationalism, produced by anthropological studies, to adopt a comprehensive approach to the study of West Papuan nationalism in which ‘West Papua’ is assumed or postulated as an entity in and for itself in the geographical area of what is today Eastern Indonesia. Secondly it confutes and rejects the myth of ‘historylessness’ associated with pre-literate peoples arguing that the West Papuans had an historical consciousness, visible in the religious domain, already evident in pre-colonial times, onto which Christianity came to be grafted. It is for this reason that this thesis will undertake a long-term historical inquiry into the pre-colonial history of West Papua and will not be a political analysis of West Papuan nationalism, which was structured and defined by colonial policies only in the aftermath of World War II. I believe, in fact, that the latter cannot be analysed and understood without a full understanding of West Papuan pre-colonial and colonial history and the modes by which the Papuans articulated their historical experience. Only the final section of the thesis will briefly integrate the historical analysis with contemporary events and processes of West Papuan nationalism.

Studies of nationalism unanimously appear to agree that historical consciousness and/or history (it would be more appropriate to say historiography) are related either ‘functionally’ or ‘structurally’ to the formation of nationalism and ethnic or national identity. Instead, I postulate that historical and religious consciousness plays a ‘foundational’ role in the rise of ethnic and national consciousness and identity. I argue that it is because of the existence of an historical-religious consciousness, expressed in an
autochthonous protology, that in pre-colonial times the Papuans had already developed a clear perception of their identity, defined in ethnic terms. This identity derived from their longstanding relations with and within the neighbouring Malay world of Maluku and Ceram. The Papuans of the coast spread this self-identity to the Papuans of the interior with whom they had particular ceremonial or commercial relations.

Existing Papuan narratives testify to the existence of some sort of autochthonous pre-colonial history. The stories reveal the existence of a particular narrative mode and of a hermeneutics, commonly referred to as cargoism or cargo cultism. This term was coined by the Europeans to designate or indicate a phenomenon they observed in Melanesian settings. Missionary accounts often report episodes of cargo cultism they witnessed, but considered them only as the mere product of an ‘erring acculturation’, a misunderstanding by the ‘natives’ of Western values, customs and beliefs.

Dutch Christian missionaries were the first Europeans to establish permanent posts in West Papua where they landed in 1854. The Christian mission became, since its first appearance, the symbol and embodiment of the West for the Papuans and the Christian and ‘white’ ambery or Pandita (foreigners or missionaries) came to be envisaged as the agents of Western civilisation. The terms of the relationship between the mission and the Papuans will be explored to determine how and to what extent Christian beliefs and values became part of Papuan identity. The ‘discovery’ of Papuan hermeneutics will show that more than being ‘acculturated’ by the Christian missionaries, the Papuans ‘inculturated’ Christian beliefs and values, that is re-interpreted and systemised the contents of Christianity into their historical-religious worldview and ethnic identity. This stance tends to present the Papuans as dynamic, active masters of their destiny, breaking
away from the colonial approach of the ‘lazy’ or ‘passive’ native. The cargo movements, recorded and narrated by European missionaries and administrators over more than a century, provide chronicles, ‘episodes’, devoid of the spatio-temporal ‘coordination’ and semantics typical of narratives. In my view, however, a Papuan history as well as historiography is possible. Consequently I believe that cargo hermeneutics, underlying Papuan epistemology, contains the traces of Papuan historicism.

On the basis of these premises this dissertation argues that Papuan national consciousness can be located in the intersection of pre-colonial Papuan narratives (myths) with colonial and Christian institutions. The mission, consequently, comes to play an important role in the ‘politics of space’, first with the Papuans and then between the Papuans and the Dutch government, which characterised colonial settings and became a common feature of the landscape.

In the six chapters of this thesis I will trace the itinerary of the idea and perception of Papuan ethnic identity from the protological myth of the Paradise Lost of Koreri to the eschatological narrative of the Promised Land of Merdeka.

In the first chapter I will discuss the theories of nationalism and their relevance to the study of West Papuan nationalism. It will be argued that since there is no universally accepted definition of nationalism, each study needs to be approached in a particularist perspective and must be examined in the wider context or configuration of the international system of the time. I will show how existing theories of nationalism have neglected the foundational role of religion in prompting perceptions of identity as well as processes of identification, because of their ‘compartmentalized’ approach to the study of religion, culture and society. A perusal of nationalist movements and ideologies reveals
that religious beliefs, values and norms, ‘ritualised’ in narratives, symbols and ceremonies, represent the semantic and structural basis for the feelings of ethnic and national identity.

In the second chapter I will set out the methodological approach with which I will study the development of West Papuan nationalism. Since methodology is intrinsically determined by the nature of the sources used and evidences available, I will briefly present the material examined. Furthermore, since anthropological studies on West Papua, as previously argued, have focused on the examination of single tribes in the synchronic perspective typical of the social sciences, I will attempt to overcome the notions of primitivism and evolutionism embedded in this type of approach – which generates the notion of ‘history-less-ness’ – as well as the post-colonial interpretations and epistemologies that inherently contribute to perpetuate the colonial. The logic and ontology of tenses, the crux and obsession of historians of all times, will be briefly addressed in order to identify a perspective or approach able to overcome the existing hermeneutical dire straits. Sahlins’ *structure of the conjuncture*, coupled with Anthony Smith’s perspective of ethno-nationalism, will be used to identify and interpret the developments of West Papuan history showing how a particular ethnic identity came to be both connected to particular spatio-temporal experiences and to inform the structuring of particular relations.

Since history can be regarded as the ‘narrative of time’, special attention will be devoted to the analysis of the concept of time among pre-literate populations. I do this in order to clear the ground of inveterate prejudices, which assume that pre-literate societies have a cyclical concept of time and that forms of linear time reckoning are alien to their
worldview. It will be shown that the apocalyptic-eschatological-messianic dimension informing Papuan cargo cults stems from Papuan autochthonous cultural processes and their patterning of ecological adaptation and societal integration. This has produced a linear dynamics in which the *Eschaton* coincided with an apocalyptic palingenesis. Therefore it can be argued that cyclical time does not exclude or preclude the existence of linear time.

In the third chapter I will challenge the view of Papuan ‘history-less-ness’ demonstrating the *colonial fallaciousness* of such an assumption. A perusal of published and archival documents will reveal how the West Papuans were an integral part of South-east Asia and were endowed with a particular ethnic and geographic identity. The arrival, first of Islam, and then of Christianity in the Papuan neighbourhood during the XV century finds the Papuans as active participants in the existing inter-island trade network, the epicentre of which was represented by the mythical four quarters of Giailolo (Halmahera), Bacan, Tidore and Ternate. The connection with Maluku, as will emerge from this thesis, will represent a recurring feature of Papuan history. In the course of this chapter it will also be shown, by referring to documentary evidence and the presence of common myths and ideas, that the Papuans inhabiting the interior were an integral part of this world of relations long before Archbold’s Catalina landed in the Baliem Valley in 1936.

In chapter IV I will examine the narratives by which the Papuans accounted for their role and function in the inter-island system of relations of the Maluku-Ceram-Papuan region. These narratives, coalescing around the XV century figure of the Papuan hero Gurabesi, reveal their Papuan origin because of the peculiar hermeneutics and
structural patterning also found in other previous myths onto which they came to be grafted. The same hermeneutics informed the dynamics and dialectics of a later episode, that of the revolt led by the Maluku prince Nuku, in the XVIII century, which saw the participation of the Papuans inhabiting littoral and insular areas of West Papua.

Following the end of the XVIII century revolts led by Nuku, the archives become silent regarding the Papuans. The reason for the sudden eclipse is difficult to explore because of the lack of Papuan evidences. West Papua appears again in the records in the 1820s in conjunction with the colonial enterprises of the time. In 1854 Christianity finally lands on West Papuan shores. In chapter V I will present the phases of the penetration of Christianity in the territory between 1854 and 1938. It will be shown that during this time Christianity, following its inculturation through the native cargo hermeneutics, became an important feature of an emerging ‘collective’ ethnic identity of the Papuans, the formation of which was fostered by the mission network.

The effects of the mission network appeared in the great cargo movement of Angganita in which Christianity enriched Papuan modes of representation sanctioning the transition from an exclusive tribal to an inclusive collective and ethno-national mode of identification. It will be shown that during World War II the christianisation of Papuan identity and the policies of Islamisation implemented by the Japanese during their occupation acted as the critical locus or structure of the conjuncture that brought about the politicisation of feelings of national identity and unity among the West Papuans.

The natural development of West Papuan nationalism, which gained momentum during the war period, was forestalled and went underground once the program of nation building implemented by the Dutch between 1945 and 1962 intensified. In chapter VI the
tension between Papuan nationalitarianism,\textsuperscript{11} rooted in the pre-war Koreri experience, and the Dutch program of nation-building, between an autochthonous form of nationalist sentiment and an intrusive nationalism, will be presented as the constant \textit{Leitmotiv} of those years. The Dutch inculcated an idea of nation that suited their own neo-colonial interests, at the time, by presenting them as Papuan ideals, and unintentionally contributed to facilitate the Indonesian \textit{Anschluss}.

\textsuperscript{11} The term has been coined by Fanon F. \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 176. Anouar Abdel-Malek provides the following definition of nationalitarianism: “[The] nationalitarian phenomenon...has its object, beyond the clearing of the national territory, the independence and sovereignty of the national state, uprooting in depth the positions of the ex-colonial power – the reconquest of the power of decision in all domains of national life...Historically, fundamentally, the struggle is for national liberation, the instrument of that reconquest of identity which...lies at the centre of everything”. Abdel Malek A., \textit{Nation and Revolution}, McMillan, London, 1981, p. 13. Cfr. Snyder L.L., \textit{Global Mini-Nationalisms: Autonomy or Independence}, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1982, p. 1.
Chapter 1

Nationalism: Exploring the Enigma of the Amoebic.

_Dulce et decus est pro patria mori_
Horace, _Odes_, III, 2:13

_Qu’est ce-qu’une nation?_ Renan’s question still echoes after more than a century. It is significant that the question began to be posed as an historical and social problem in the year 1882, at the height of capitalist colonial expansion, a phenomenon that found its ideological justification in the doctrines of positivist intellectuals. One would have expected such a question to rise at the beginning of the XX century when nationalism played an important role in shaping power relations.¹ The chronology of the study of nationalism suggests that the problematic character of the concept of ‘nation’ and its derivative ‘nationalism’ was identified only at the height of colonial expansionism when the increasing and systematic dilation of colonial boundaries to encompass alien peripheries, endowed with peculiar cultural traits, served to strengthen the boundaries of a core-identity, which felt itself threatened by the subjected colonial entity. It follows that the forging of the coloniser’s identity entailed the weakening of that of the colonised. Both colonisers and colonised engaged in preserving and protecting their identities, which paradoxically were both threatened and shaped by a persistent ‘alter-ity’ in colonial contexts. The French scholar Renan, whose enigmatic question still resonates in the current era of what could be defined as continuous neo-colonial de-colonisation in which boundaries are still being re-shaped and re-drawn, argued that

a nation is a great solidarity, created by the sentiment of the sacrifices which have been made and of those which one is disposed to make in the future. It supposes a past, it renews itself in the present by a tangible deed: the approval, the desire, clearly expressed, to continue the communal life. The existence of a

nation (pardon this metaphor!) is an everyday plebiscite; it is, like the very existence of the individual, a perpetual affirmation of life.\(^2\)

Renan clearly indicates that a nation is a community that shares the consciousness of a common past, a past that comes to be articulated and transmitted in a set of myths and narratives which a people believe and partake in and with which they tend to individually and collectively identify. The constant and continuous reiteration of these myths and narratives tend both to generate and to perpetuate the nation. Consequently it appears that the rise of national identity and nationalist claims is intrinsically tied to the emergence, constitution and solidifying of historical consciousness.

Every community appears to be endowed with a memory of past vicissitudes and experiences, but before these can coalesce into a selectively meaningful narrative underlying sentiments of and claims to nationhood, the intervention of a particular factor capable of prompting the rationalisation and conventionalisation of perceived common traits and experiences is necessary. States of oppression and cultural alienation, where the free expression of deeply rooted values and beliefs is suppressed, commonly represent the ideal milieu in which nationalist ideas and processes emerge and come to be articulated into movements and ideologies.

In recent decades, in the historical milieu referred to as the post-colonial era, a conspicuous amount of interest and attention has been devoted to the study of nationalism. Scholars of various disciplines have attempted to provide an explanation for its rise, meaning and development in human history and societies. The phenomenon of the constitution of nations and national identities, the emergence of national sentiments, the construction of nationhood and nationalist ideologies appear to be all interrelated constituents of a single phenomenon. While scholars of the time

\(^2\) Renan E., ‘Qu’est ce-qu’une nation?’ , in Hutchinson J. & Smith A.D. (eds.), Nationalism, Oxford
in which Renan was writing were articulating the question of nationalism to support colonial expansion, the interest of current scholarship derives from the attempt to explain either the failure of many de-colonised nation states and their political instability or the post-war nationalist breakthrough in the Third World and the subsequent one in the post-Soviet world. The weakness of some decolonised states induces us to question the universality of the concept of nation and speculate whether the concept is, as it has often been argued, a western *res* translated to and into colonial settings. Is the cause of the current post-colonial instability to be traced in the programs of nation-building and state-crafting enacted by the colonial powers during the phase of decolonisation? Being Western, such programs tended to foster the formation of dependent peripheries merely serving the neo-colonial interests of their former masters. These questions will constantly appear in the course of this thesis which explores the genesis of the West Papuan nation and how and to what extent the colonial experience has influenced such a genesis. It will also examine whether there was a pre-colonial historical-consciousness and identity born out of the longstanding relations the Papuan peoples had with the neighbouring Malay populations.

This chapter examines the theoretical bases necessary for a consideration of West Papuan nationalism. By reviewing critically the existing theories of nationalism I will demonstrate that current debates neglect pre-colonial experiences especially those of pre-literate and tribal populations. These theories have also failed to consider, the role of religion in the phenomenon of nationalism and how religion is intrinsically tied to the existence of historical consciousness embedded in origin myths, in stories and in ritual performances. They do so because they are entrenched in a functionalist treatment of cultural variables.

Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Overview

The difficulty of examining the complex and peculiar reality of nationalism is determined by the fragmentation of knowledge into a plethora of independent and often antithetical disciplines. Different approaches, departing from different theoretical assumptions, have failed to attain an acceptable and compendious explanation. This failure is mainly ascribable to the anisotropic and amoebic nature of nationalism, which eludes any mono-systemic analysis. By privileging one factor or dimension over others, mono-systemic analyses tend to yield a theory that is inherently a mere synecdoche of the ultimate solution. An eclectic approach should prove to be more effective since nationalism is a multifarious, heterogeneous, mutant reality, a continuous “moving target”\(^3\) that cannot be understood from a single point of observation.

In the light of these considerations the controversy between the schools which have been labelled modernists, who maintain that nationalism is tied to the development and spread of capitalism, and primordialists-perennialists, who argue that nationalism is the product of a natural human propensity to gregariousness, appears to be inconclusive and academically dysfunctional resting on partial and contradictory assumptions as I will show in this chapter.

Modernists, such as Gellner\(^4\), Anderson\(^5\), Nairn\(^6\) and Hobsbawm\(^7\), assume that the origin of nations and nationalism lies in the structural changes that affected

economic and social systems during the industrial revolution at the end of the XVIII century, implicitly denying the importance of cultural factors.

In the opinion of the modernists, the introduction of new means of production and the division of labour caused a restructuring of social relations and the polarisation of class interests. Nationalism emerged as a means to promote and direct change through the creation of an organic solidarity as well as a means to protect and promote class interests. The prevalence of one intention or aim over another brings about the constitution of different political organisations depending on the nature of the political system ranging from totalitarianism to socialism and democracy. Thus nationalism is identified by the modernists with the process of nation-building, a nation being a mere artificial construction fuelled by particularist class interests.

This notion of nationalism contrasts with that proposed by the primordialists. Scholars such as Smith\(^8\), Reynolds\(^9\) and Hastings\(^10\) believe that nations are “natural” givens. Consequently it is possible to find traces of nationalism and nationhood in ancient times. The feeling of belonging, the acknowledgment among a group of people of sharing common cultural, racial, linguistic traits, a common ancestry, history or religion is a documented fact in history. Groups did coalesce around or were bound together by these focal points or ties. This tendency or proclivity brought about the rise of politically and socially organised nations claiming sovereignty over a territory.

The epistemological cleavage in the study of nationalism represented by the primordialists and modernists arises because of diverging foundational assumptions.

regarding the original spatial and temporal collocation of the rise of nationalism and the selection of constants and variables that have contributed to the emergence and development of the phenomenon. Furthermore both theoretical approaches seem to implicitly agree that nationalism is a product of western civilisation and that the emergence of nationalism in colonial settings was fuelled by the introduction of either western gnoseology or western socio-economic and political systems.

Because of the large number of theories included in the two mainstream epistemological approaches, it is convenient to divide the existing analyses into six epistemic approaches defined by a particular set of assumptions regarding the forces that shape social, economic and political relations as follows: idealist-historical theories, ethno-national theories, modernisation theories, class-centred theories, statist theories and uneven development theories of Marxist derivation.11

The modernisation, class-centred, statist and unequal development theories clearly belong to those theories of the Marxist matrix that privilege economic and social factors and processes to explain the emergence of nationalism. Ethno-national and idealist-historical theories, by contrast, stem from the primordialist approach, stressing the importance of cultural factors in the rise and development of nationalism.

Beside the two existing mainstreams it is necessary to consider a third one, that of the postmodernists. Scholars such as Bhabha12, Chatterjee13, Yuval-Davis,14 Enloe15 and Schlesinger16, to only cite a few, concentrate on exploring the

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11 The taxonomy is that drawn by Goodman J., Nationalism and Transnationalism: the National Conflict in Ireland and European Union Integration, Aldershot, Sydney, 1996, p.11.
fragmentation of contemporary national identities in the current order of global politics and culture.

Since postmodernism focuses in particular on analysing the dynamics of identity in pluralist societies, at a synchronic and local level, they prove to be inappropriate in the study I am undertaking which aims at exploring the genesis of the idea of a ‘Papuan Nation’ beyond tribal pluralism and the role played by western-colonial institutions and ideas. Postmodernist approaches, dealing mainly with post-colonial configurations, tend to reverse the modes of or ‘deconstruct’ national formations that took place in colonial settings, treating these as quasi-static ‘bounded entities’ or ‘texts’ in which, inherently, the dynamics are those of the observer and not of the observed. The studies of Patricia Spyer on the Aru islanders, of Janet Hoskins on the Sumbanese and of Danilyn Rutherford on the Biakkers of West Papua, are exemplary in this regard and show how local cultures influence the vertical dynamics of interaction with colonial powers and modern nation-states, but are implicitly unable to explain the horizontal dynamics prompting discourses of nationalism capable of overcoming historically rooted and/or ethnic divisions.

**Idealist-Historical and Ethno-National Theories**

Historical theories have their origin in the idealist speculation and the spirituality and aesthetical sensibility of XIX century Romanticism. In 1872 Mill, discussing the positiveness of representative systems, argued that it was “a necessary
condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality”, emphasising that “where the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a prima facie case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government”.\textsuperscript{20} Mill’s positive understanding was echoed some year later by Ernest Renan in his famous \textit{Qu’est-ce qu’une Nation?} referred to at the beginning of this chapter.

Both Mill and Renan maintained that a nation was determined by the will and a people’s genius, the daily plebiscite of every single individual of a community. As Kedourie points out, this favourable tradition derives from Locke’s apologia for freedom and the criterion of political representativeness.\textsuperscript{21} Consequently nationalism, in the sense of self-determination, comes to be identified with the determination of the will. Fichte, in his \textit{Reden an die Deutsch Nation}, wrote that “it is neither the strong right arm nor the efficient weapon that wins victories, but only the power of the soul”.\textsuperscript{22}

By contrast, the conservative faction of XIX century academia and politics was keener in identifying and pointing out the inherent dangers to consolidated institutions and established order in the spread of nationalist ideologies. Lord Acton, the inaugurator of this tendency, prophetically proclaimed that nationalism did not aim at achieving liberty and prosperity but at “making the nation the mould and measure of the state”, a process that would lead to sacrifice of moral values and material stability in order to establish its new ‘invention’.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Fichte J.G., \textit{Addresses to the German Nation}, Harper, New York, 1968.  
As Kedourie points out, echoing Lord Acton’s belief, until the French Revolution, conflicts were caused by territorial claims or dynastic succession, conflicts of interests that were resolvable through negotiation and compromise. Nationalism by contrast “represented politics as a fight for principles, not the endless composition of claims in conflict” and “since principles do not abolish interests a pernicious confusion resulted”.\textsuperscript{24} Interests and claims are negotiable but they become unnegotiable items when they are transmogrified into or intertwined with principles that by virtue of their essential nature are unnegotiable.

Kedourie’s negative evaluation of nationalism stems also from the nationalist claim that political boundaries must be determined on the basis of linguistic considerations. This critique is directed against Fichte who maintained that “those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature itself, long before any human art begins”. In Kedourie’s opinion the ‘politicisation’ of language introduces a dangerous element of arbitrariness and ambiguity. As evidence of the unreliability of nationalist claims based exclusively on linguistic grounds is the difficulty to establish a clear-cut distinction between language and dialect, and cases of diglossia in some countries.\textsuperscript{25} Linguistic factors may fuel irredentism in territorially contiguous countries, although this is not a necessary corollary as the West Papuan case confirms,\textsuperscript{26} as it may also prompt, in some cases, the formulation of ideologies of racial exclusiveness. Such a possibility was noted by Fichte who argued that a nation “if it wishes to absorb and mingle with itself any other people of different descent and language, cannot do so without itself becoming confused and violent by disturbing the uneven process of its culture”.

\textsuperscript{24} Kedourie, \textit{op.cit.}, p.18.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ibid.}, pp.124-126.
The historical theories of nationalism are fundamentally diffusionist, holding that nationalism spread from the western core to colonial peripheries. According to historical idealists, the origins of nationalism, considered as a structured ideology, are to be traced to the historical context of medieval Europe\(^{27}\) where the term *nationes* was first applied in the organisational structure of the universities.\(^{28}\) The nation, emerged in its larval state in this milieu and is considered by the idealists as the outcome of an ‘act of will’. Human beings, because of a natural, innate propensity, tend by living together to constitute kinship sodalities or communities in which the functions and roles of the members are structurally determined and regulated and resources are distributed on the basis of privilege and rank.

From the idealists’ assumptions it can be inferred that they consider nationalism the bearer of quasi-religious concepts and not the outcome of a psychological attitude and necessity, as theorised by Hertz\(^{29}\) and more recently Greenfeld\(^{30}\), although admitting that nationalism entails a feeling or sentiment of belonging.


\(^{27}\) For the medieval origins of nationalism see: Seton-Watson H., *Nations and States. An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Methuen, London, 1977, p.17. According to Seton-Watson the first nation-states to emerge between the IX and XII centuries A.D. were England and France ruled by aristocracies that belonged to distinctive ethnic and linguistic groups juxtaposing themselves on a pre-existent ethnic stratum. Emerson in his study on the formation of nations in Asia and Africa seems to agree that a relative ethnic and linguistic homogeneity appears to lie at the basis of the formation of the first nations observing that “the first nations to make themselves evident in the modern world embraced peoples who had achieved a large measure of internal unity and were not significantly plagued by minority problems arising from the presence of distinctive ethnic groups”. Emerson R., *From Nation to Empire. The Rise to Self-assertion of Asian and African Peoples*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1967, p.91. Emerson’s observation seems to be in line with Smith’s ethno-nationalist theory.


\(^{30}\) See for the recent psycho-sociological theory: Greenfeld L., *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1992. Greenfeld roots the emergence of nationalism and nationhood in the psycho-sociological situation of *ressentiment* defined as “a psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred (existential envy) and the impossibility of satisfying these feelings.” *ibid.*, p.15-16.
The idealist analysis, by implicitly emphasising the priority of thought over action, tends to disregard the dynamics of socio-economic and cultural change, relegating socio-economic factors to the subsidiary role of contributory or intervening variables. In fact, although the breakdown of traditional and stable communities, the resentment of an intelligentsia excluded from participation in political affairs and the development of a Kantian philosophical dualism are adduced by idealists as causes of the rise of nationalist claims and unrest, they argue that these are the consequential result of the penetration of secular thought into traditional thinking which inevitably acts as a solvent of traditional institutions. They fail to explain how and when kinship groups or tribes become nations, to state it in sociological terms the transition from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft.

More recent historical-idealist analyses of nationalism, known as ethno-national theories, maintain that communal ties of ethnic identity determine the development of nationalism. Consequently nationalism comes to be identified with national sentiment, a subjective and affective force that binds people together. For the ethnicists, nationalism is an ideological movement that aims at “attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation”. The revival of the ‘ethnic dimension’ of community constitutes the essence of nationalism and the key to political legitimacy.

The prominent theorist of ethno-nationalism, Anthony Smith, identifies the essence of ethnicity in individual experiences, that is the complex of “myths, memories, values and symbols (...) the characteristic forms, or styles and genres of

31 Kedourie, op.cit., p.99.
certain historical configurations”.

Nationalist mobilisation, therefore, in this context appears to be brought about by the dichotomy between an objective socio-political change establishing horizontal social categories and subjective affiliation to vertically ethno-national communities. In response to the cultural disruption produced by this dualism a disaffected intelligentsia arises which attempts to reformulate in ethnic terms the original modes and templates of relation. According to Smith it is the intelligentsia that redisCOVERS an ethnic past and defines vernacular communal nationalism in antithesis to the state-sponsored Weltanschauung.

The ethno-national approach proves to be effective in explaining the modes of internal integration, but it needs to be coupled with a consideration of the influence of exogenous factors. Ethno-national theories clearly reject the role played by the global communication and transnational structures and agencies in both prompting and shaping nationalism. The theoretical propositions of ethno-nationalism appear to be affected by a sort of creeping psychologism, ethnicity being envisaged as an entity independent of both class interests and the international system.

It appears evident that the functionalism of ethno-nationalist and the historicism of historical-idealistic theories tend to be inherently abstract since they analyse nationalism in se et per se, disregarding its structural dialectics within the wider international system that inherently determines its rise and shapes its ideological content. Idealist and ethno-nationalist theories are effective, however, in explaining how the contents of nationalist ideologies are construed, although they are unable to account for the social processes that bring about the rise of nationalist movements.

35 ibid., p.133.
They provide the false impression that the phenomenon of nationalism is the outcome of some sort of static parthenogenesis and a merely cultural phenomenon.

**Modernisation Theories**

Many scholars acknowledge the unifying force of culture and the fact that cultural or ethnic nationalism contributes positively to the processes of nation building. Others, such as Kohn, argue that cultural nationalism is functional only in the formation of nations in backward cultures and cannot lead them to socio-political and economic modernisation. On the basis of this premise, it appears that modernisation theories tend to relegate cultural factors to an ancillary role in the emergence of nationalism, considering the latter as a dynamic process in which social, economic, political and cultural factors interact on both a synchronic and diachronic level.

Modernisation theories are sociological in character. Most of them consider nationalism as a ‘subspecies’ of ideologies originating from a radical and structural transformation of the social system; others tend to merely equate it with the processes of nation building. The sociological and Marxist foundation of modernisation theories determines the limits of this epistemological approach since it is unable to account for the existing differences in space and time of the phenomenon of nationalism.

There are two main sociological models proposed by modernisation theories: an ‘integration’ model which addresses the problem of the persistence of social forces

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and relationships, and the ‘conflict’ model that focuses on processes of change and mutation of social norms and structures. The former maintains that nationalism is a product generated by the breakdown of traditional communities under the influence of modernisation: the introduction of innovative technology and change in traditional modes of production cause a radical change in the original templates of social relationships. Vertical kinship relations are replaced by horizontal class ones, bringing about a polarisation of political and economic interests.

Eisenstadt maintains that the disintegration of traditional communities is caused by structural differentiation prompting a dislocation and relocation of structural elements. This process inevitably produces social tensions of which nationalist movements and ideologies are expression. Nationalism intervenes to systemise the newly introduced elements, re-engineering social, economic and political relations in order to adapt the community of individuals to the changed environment. Smelser believes that “nationalism is a sine qua non of industrialisation because it provides people with an overriding, easily acquired, secular motivation for making painful changes”. It is a phenomenon which reveals the characteristics of what Smelser refers to as a ‘value-oriented movement’, since it appears to be prompted by the necessity to renovate and modernise values and beliefs of a traditional community transformed by the introduction of a new division of labour, into a stratified society.

38 Smith, Theories of Nationalism…cit., p. 41.
39 An account of the conflict and integration models can be found in Cohen P., Modern Social Theory, Heinemann, London, 1968.
42 Smelser defines a value-oriented movement as “a collective attempt to restore, protect, modify or create values in the name of a generalised belief. Such a belief necessarily involves all the components of action; that is, it envisions a reconstitution of values, a redefinition of norms, a reorganisation of the motivation of individuals, and a redefinition of situational facilities”. See: Smelser N.J., Theory of Collective Behaviour, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1962, p.313. Both Smelser and Eisenstadt belong to the Neo-Evolutionary Functionalist School of Sociology.
The integrationists substantially maintain that the persistence and connivance of atavistic forms, such as language, customs, cultural symbols with modern goals and values can be explained in terms of the overlapping of Gesellschaft innovations with Gemeinschaft residues. Implicitly they suggest that nationalism can cement disparate elements and forge a new social identity by differentiating and reintegrating the individual components of a community. Since the processes of differentiation and reintegration exert extreme pressure on the structures of traditional societies, nationalist ideologies come to function as means of social adjustment. This approach finds its theoretical archetype in Durkheim’s definition of anomie, caused by the transition from a mechanical to an organic type of solidarity, one prompted by the introduction of new modes of production and division of labour. In order to overcome this state of structural entropy it is necessary to identify a cohesive force able to reconstruct group solidarity.

The weakness of integrationist theories is to be found in the synchronic perspective they adopt, which is typical of sociological analyses. The teleological explanation and the reification of ideal types, proposed by the integrationist approach, use tradition and modernity as heuristic devices. It follows that their analyses appear to be affected by a sort of mechanical determinism grounded in the predictable mechanics of human needs and strain effects.

The lack of pragmatism in the, inherently functionalist, integrationist approach is visible also in the tautological treatment of ideology. Integrationists consider ideology as a response to psychological strain, social penury and structural entropy caused by rapidly induced change, failing to consider the causal relationship between the situation of strain and its simultaneous production of or connection with symbols and belief systems. In other words they do not explain the processes by which
individual discontent assumes a collective form manifested in the tacit acknowledgment and acceptance of a specific and common social symbolism.

Another question that the integrationists fail to address concerns the ideological responses to both external influences and autochthonous internal pressures affecting transitional communities. The fundamental ‘sociologism’ characterising the methodology of the functionalist-integrationist approach, along with its ontology of the *hic et nunc*, disregarding diachronic developments, prevents it from providing adequate and comprehensive answers to the causes of nationalism. The priority that functionalist analysis ascribes to structural elements over ideological ones, considered as either mere effects or accidents, impedes a deep understanding of the phenomenon of nationalism and its relation to cultural and socio-economic change.

The overestimation of the effects that situational strain exerts on the social structure introduces an element of predictability and determinism in the development of social trends. It is undeniable that physical deprivation and psychological frustration, or religious and political persecution, can give rise to value-oriented movements. Relative deprivation does tend to generate expectations at a psychological level that often can be socially projected. These however are not a prerogative of backward or traditional societies, as Kohn assumes.43

Nationalism according to the integrationist theorists aims at integrating individual components, whose system of structural relations has been disrupted by processes of modernisation, into a new functional organic solidarity, a modern society. Nationalism is the product of a class or elite engineering and restructuring power relations to serve peculiar interests.

43 Kohn, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.
In contrast with this conclusion, Breuilly’s state-centred theory argues that nationalist ideology is not the expression of a particular social class or segment but a solution to overcome the antithesis between the state and society.\textsuperscript{44} As Akzin points out “not always meet as harmonising and complementary forces; quite often they constitute competing forces”.\textsuperscript{45} Nationalism in this case performs a mobilising and coordinating function in inter- and intra-state relations. Nationalist ideology legitimates the role of the state by transforming it into the institutional expression of national interests and establishing a structural link between the political sovereignty of the state and the national citizenry so that nation, society and state come to constitute an indissoluble identity. The coordinating and mobilising functions of nationalism coincide however with the growing secularisation brought about by socio-economic and political modernisation and the consequent constitution of a ‘public domain’ represented by the coalescence of societal interests.

The systemic limitations characteristic of state-centred theories are represented by the axiomatic assumption that processes of modernisation will bring about the secularisation of traditional societies, an assumption that tends to foster abstract generalisations disregarding historical and cultural peculiarities. The only generalisation that structuralism could offer was the identification of the \textit{locus} in which processes of innovation and change take place. Communication theories identify the stage of ‘transition’ from a traditional community to an industrial society as the \textit{causa causans} or \textit{locus originis} of nationalism.

\textsuperscript{44} Breuilly J., \textit{Nationalism and the State}, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1982, pp. 335-344; pp. 348-351.

Both Deutsch\textsuperscript{46} and Gellner\textsuperscript{47} maintain that it is in the limbo between tradition and modernity that nationalism has its origins, at the stage that Lerner calls the ‘point of engagement’, the painful threshold where the intimate psychological restlessness of the ‘transitional man’ and the past and present historical events are on the point of being linked.\textsuperscript{48} It is at this stage that traditional symbolism, obsolete and meaningless in the new socio-economic environment, comes to be replaced by a significant new set of symbolic representations. The diaphanous channel of communication introduced by technological development and institutionalised education, becomes the \textit{locus} in which new identities are brewed and beliefs and institutions are selected, adopted and imposed.

According to this epistemological approach, education, spreading a common means of communication and semiotics, fosters the rise of cultural homogeneity and becomes the driving force of change by replacing birth as the criterion for authority. It introduces abstract concepts that oust customary loyalties and obligations, as Wertheim argues in his study of the modernisation of Indonesian society.\textsuperscript{49} Vertical processes of enculturation are substituted by horizontal processes of socialisation.\textsuperscript{50} The processes of change, triggered by the spread of literacy and education, however, involve only a limited number of individuals, those politically, socially and economically aligned and endowed with complementary communication habits and

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\textsuperscript{50} Processes of enculturation consisted in the transmission of cultural values, norms and beliefs from the elders of a community to the new generation grouped in age classes through that complex of rituals known as initiation ceremonies. Colonialism, christianisation and modernisation brought about the}
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social and economic preferences, for, as Deutsch argues, “within any geographical setting and any population, economic, social and technological developments mobilise individuals for relatively more intensive communication”.

According to Gellner a unified system of education, spreading a common language and symbols, prompts the awareness of cultural affinity and generates the necessity of affective belonging by delimiting and defining the concept of nationality. It follows that the nation-state assumes the configuration of a ‘mass co-cultural society’, that is linguistically and culturally homogeneous.

Modernisation does not consist only in the introduction of new technologies and in the improvement and widening of communication strategies but also in the rise of new cultural forms. Cultural symbols and language became crucial in the processes of forging and fostering a new system of structural relationships suitable to the new industrial-urban environment. The unequal distribution of wealth, privileges and resources in urban contexts tends to prompt the rise of a fierce urban class competition in which the privileged classes, in order to increase their benefits and protect their interests against immigrants or new arrivals, erect an impenetrable cultural barrier against them under the banner of nationalism.

Gellner’s theory displays the advantages provided by an eclectic approach allowing for an analysis of the phenomenon of nationalism, which takes into account disparate interacting factors. The vulnerability of his approach lies however in the disruption of kinship systems of enculturation introducing new modes of cultural transmission that is socialisation through formal education by which new cultural contents were channelled.

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51 Deutsch, *op.cit.*, p.126.
53 *ibid.*, p.173.
54 *ibid.*, p.168.
56 *ibid.*, p.39.
prominence he ascribes to language, which tends to reduce nationalism to a linguistic movement, turning his analysis into a macro-socio-linguistic one.\footnote{It seems, in fact, that in Gellner’s analysis language plays a pivotal role in the organisation of national communities. Linguistic differences tend to enact and transmit in an organic society inequalities in power and in status. In other words, language becomes the symbol of social and political divisions. The particular social role played by language is well argued by Gellner in his \emph{Words and Things: A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and A Study of Ideology}, Gollancz, London, 1959.}

Notwithstanding the excessive importance conferred on linguistic factors in some analyses, communication theories do identify a series of important cultural and socio-economic factors and processes that arise in the transition from a traditional to a modern society. Their epistemological limits lie in the fact that they consider the nation as a constructed, artificial reality and nationalism the ideological means by which heterogeneous groups are gathered to form a single body, that of the nation.

The importance of communication is also stressed by Benedict Anderson who ties the origins of nationalism to the spread of, what he calls “print-as-commodity”. According to Anderson, a nation is nothing but ‘an imagined community’ the existence of which is founded on and living in the imagination of its members who perceive themselves as part of a distinctive community.\footnote{Thiss imagined community is obtained by a “systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations”.\footnote{For this reason he connects the rise of nationalism with the spread of ‘printing press capitalism’ that, by adopting vernacular and indigenous languages, replaced the written script monopolised until then by a narrow oligarchy. The destruction of this monopoly paved the way to mass communication and to the rise of linguistically defined communities. The spread of literacy and education brought about a new idea of history that had been in the traditional gnoseological system identified with cosmogonic myths. The rupture of this identity introduced a new anthropocentric}}
worldview and the constitution of new power relations. The link between the three new categories of fraternity, power and time was represented by the construction of the new rational imagined community.  

Modernisation theories tend to link the emergence of nationalism to the system of international relations and the processes of capitalism. It is from this very connection with the external political and economic processes that derives the ambiguous nature of nationalism: while, in fact, capitalist processes force nations to look forward to the attainment of national goals, they invite them also to look backwards in search of historical attachments and memories able to foster a sense of common identity.  

Anderson, focusing on the wider international and trans-national setting, argues that the uneven development of global culture represents the seedbed of nationalism. The discontinuities in territorial development produce a series of social and political antinomies expressed in nationalist struggles. According to Nairn the origins of nationalism are “located not in the folk, not in the individual’s repressed passion for some sort of wholeness or identity, but in the machinery of world political economy”. Global economy inevitably leads to domination and exploitation. In this context nationalism becomes for the oppressed a liberating force able to achieve autonomy within the global system.  

The theories of uneven development proposed by both Anderson and Nairn can be related to Worsley’s theory of capitalist imperialism, and are useful to explain the

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58 Anderson, op.cit., p.6.  
59 ibid., p.114.  
60 ibid., p.36.  
61 Nairn, op.cit., p.349.  
62 ibid., p.335.  
63 ibid., pp.337-339.  
rise of nationalist movements and the processes of nation building in colonial settings although they are unable to overcome the Marxist dialectics of periphery and core that casts uneven development analyses in a diffusionist mould. The merit of uneven development theories, however, stems from their internationalist perspective, avoiding the Parmenidean abstraction of historical and ethno-national theories. By contrast, the limit of their analyses lies in the fact that they focus mainly on structural relations within the socio-economic system, failing to consider the role played by political agencies within the system of socio-economic relations in forging nationalist discourses. Anderson does stress the importance of the spread of literacy, the emergence of vernacular literatures and the rise of a new intelligentsia, but these seem to be subordinated to the major role played by capitalism.

The failure to consider the role of agency in the emergence of nationalism is repeated in Kautsky’s interest theory and class-centred theories as a whole. Kautsky’s theoretical approach stresses the importance of capitalist industrialism in the emergence of nationalist movements and ideologies. Nationalism is considered the expression of a particular social class and consequently its origins are to be traced in the exploitative logic of industrial capitalism. In this case, it may act either as the ideological tool of the ruling classes in order to foster consensus and abate dissent, or as the expression of exploited colonial people demanding the right and power to shape their destinies. It is, however, the product of a specific social class and is constructed to satisfy class interests and needs acting either as a cohesive force emanating from the authority of a state elite or as a divisive one driven by the grievances of marginalised or exploited segments of a society.

66 Hobsbawm, op.cit., p.178.
State-driven nationalism usually yields authoritarianism or totalitarianism. Social classes during this process become masses and social movements become totalitarian movements, “mass organisations of atomised, isolated individuals” inspired by a belief in their collective superiority and of being invested with a messianic mission. Kornhauser maintains that mass movements, which he identifies tout court with nationalist movements, consist of those individuals who have broken with traditional groups and social functions and therefore are prone to join movements invoking the nihilistic destruction of the traditional system in order to restore a lost sense of belonging.

Hobsbawm agrees with other theorists that it is in times of systemic changes, characterised by uncertainty and cultural disorientation, that nationalism emerges to restore a sense of permanence and stability, becoming the expression of what Kornhauser calls an ‘organised insecurity’. Modernisation and globalisation are induced and governed by capitalism acting as a unifying, centripetal force at a global level and a divisive, centrifugal force at the local level, prompting the emergence of nationalist claims.

Class-centred and uneven development theories tend to envisage nationalism as arising from a situation of social conflict caused by the polarisation of class interests. These disregard the role played by cultural factors such as religion, language and customs in the rise of nationalism, focusing instead on the effects of urbanisation and industrialisation on traditional social structures. Such analysis stresses the economic and social aspects involved in the rise of nationalism, arguing that cultural elements

play a functional role in the construction of nationalist propaganda by transmogrifying class interests into collective ideals.

Both primordialist and modernist theories are inclined to focus either on the analysis of one particular nationalism, generalising from it for their conclusions, or they select a particular factor and analyse several nationalisms exclusively in the light of its function in the social, political, economic and cultural processes taking place. Both inductive and deductive methodologies yield results characterised by a high degree of particularism since nationalism in se et per se is a sui generis or particularist phenomenon, a symbiont destitute of specific contents. As Andrew Vincent has recently pointed out:

The most tried and tested manner of discussing nationalism (…) has been through sovereignty and state language. The discourse of both the latter concepts predates nationalism by centuries. Both concepts also embody implicitly the logic of particularity (…)\(^7\)

It can be argued that nationalism tends to plagiarise existing discourses about sovereignty and legitimacy tied to particular historical-geographical realities.

The theories analysed, although diverging on their fundamental assumptions, implicitly tend to agree that nationalism is a European creation or invention transferred to colonial contexts through colonial practices and decolonising programs. From Europe nationalism, envisaged as a sort of new universal and natural religion, spread to other parts of the world through the processes of acculturation enacted by colonisation. Consequently the nationalisms that emerged in colonial settings are a product of mere mimesis or methexis, imitation or participation. Alien slogans, ideas, effigies and symbols have been borrowed or adopted by groups who have often misunderstood, misapplied or distorted the meanings and functions of a particular

nationalism born out of distinctive historical and ecological experiences so that “the political thinking of the indigenous intelligentsia is purely derivative, and on the whole out of place in the local setting” since “theories are mistaken for political slogans and hypotheses are treated as strait-jacketing doctrines”.72

The impression of ‘derivative nationalism’ stems from the fact that both primordialist and modernist theories neglect the existence of a pre-colonial history and historical consciousness in which dynamics of ethnic identity may have already taken place. It is this very neglect that has generated the misconception or colonial myth of ‘history-less-ness’, which has been extremely useful to ethically and politically justify colonial oppression first and neo-colonial nation-building practices later.

My reluctance to adopt postmodernist theories or approaches stems from the fact that these do nothing but “perpetuate the colonial” since by deconstructing post-colonial entities they support and favour the implementation of neo-colonial practices. Postmodernism can be tout court envisaged as the ‘discourse of neo-colonialism’. The deconstruction of national entities to recover local narrative-discourses undermines ‘national histories’ reaffirming the myth of ‘history-less-ness’.

Furthermore, all theories examined tend to neglect the important role of both religious and historical consciousness in the emergence of nationalism considering them as mere means to construct ideologies and mobilise people and failing to acknowledge that the intimate connection between religious and historical consciousness may prompt the rise of an autochthonous ethno-nationalism prior to any attempt of post-colonial nation-building.

72 Smith, Theories of Nationalism...cit., p.29.
According to the theories analysed, the emergence of discourses of nation and nationhood in colonial settings appear to be connected to the spread of western civilisation. The diffusionist perspective of modernisation theories seems to acknowledge this as an undeniable and unquestionable fact. By contrast, primordialist approaches, maintaining that nationalism is the product of a natural human proclivity to gregariousness, which causes the sharing of common cultural elements, tends to equate nationalism to tribalism.73

Notwithstanding the antithetical premises on which primordialists and modernists found their analyses, both epistemologies seem to acknowledge that nationalism binds individuals into homogeneous groups, mobilising them for the attainment of a common goal. Socio-economic and political interests spur this necessity to coalesce, and in order to homogenise the maze of interests of a group, it is necessary to condense them under the shield of some sort of common ideal that may be rooted in religion, language or history.

Nationalism appears to be strongly connected to history, that is to the ‘particular’ vicissitudes or events experienced by people in a ‘particular’ place that come to represent the principium individuationis of their very ethnic genesis and existence. As the previous perusal of theories of nationalism has shown, history appears to be a common feature of all existing nationalisms. As Anthony Smith

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argues, “the myth of a common and unique origin in time and in place (...) is essential for the sense of ethnic community, since it marks the foundation point of a group’s history, and hence to its individuality”.74

Myths of origin appear to be rooted in the sphere of religious experience and thus the historical consciousness of a people is tied to its religious experience expressed through a peculiar language and semiotics embedded in temporal narratives. Religion appears to have been the seedbed of ethnic or cultural identities since it inherently represents the expression of an inner feeling, of a peculiar way of perceiving and interpreting reality and history, a mode of connecting and conceiving the dimensions of space and time. For its very nature it consequently becomes a formidable conservative force and, acting on both an individual and collective psychological level, is able to coagulate and synthesise disparate and conflicting elements and ideas.

The phenomenon of religion has been considered either as a psycho-intellectual creation75 or as a symbolic fact76 and both approaches to the study of religion seem to recognise the morally compelling and socially cohesive force of religious sentiments and systems. Under the influence of such force often nationalism has either allied itself with a traditional religion or has presented itself in effect as a religion. Bruce Kapferer has shown in his study of Australian and Sri-Lankan nationalism how nationalism in the former assumed the role of a religion articulating discourses and

unit in shaping civil politics. For a complete analysis regarding the concept see the series of essays collected by Helm, *ibid.*


75 Edward Burnet Tylor first formulated this theory in his *Primitive Culture* of 1871 in which he maintained that religion arose from the belief in the existence of spiritual beings.

76 The symbolic nature of religion was theorised by Emile Durkheim in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915). According to Durkheim, religion was not to be intended as the explanation of natural events, as suggested by Tylor, but as a social fact. The origin of religion consequently did not lie in the individual’s psyche but in the social group.
structures of national identity, while in the latter it merged with institutional Buddhism.\textsuperscript{77}

Studies regarding the genesis and function of religion have constantly swayed between the two hermeneutical approaches referred to above, disregarding the important ‘cultural’ foundation of religion. The resistance of religious systems to change has been imputed either to its function of instrumentally generating and maintaining structural power relations or its psychological effects. In reality religions do change under the influence of transformations affecting the external environment, incorporating and reinterpreting intrusive or new elements, even though the original deep structure remains unaltered. Max Weber observes:

\begin{quote}
However incisive the social influences, economically and politically determined, may have been upon a religious ethic in a particular case, it receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and, first of all, from the content of its annunciation and promise. Frequently the very next generation reinterprets these annunciations and promises in a fundamental fashion. Such re-interpretations adjust revelations to the needs of the religious community.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

An ‘ecological’ approach to the study of religion, one which considers religion as a system of survival generated by processes of adaptation to a particular physical environment, would be able to account for both its resistance to change and its own necessary tendency to change. The ecological peculiarities of the environment prompt the rise of unique forms of theophanic and hierophanic experiences. Taboos and legal codes informing the socio-economic and political conduct of the individual and the community protect the latter from the dangers of the physical environment.\textsuperscript{79} The transposing and the ritualising of life to the domain of the public provide norms of


adaptation and foster internal integration, through the conceptualisation of the perceptions of time and space, the elaboration of a common language and semiotics and the creation of myths and stories. Being a system of survival, religion consequently tends to prompt the formation of particular social political and economic systems managing and allocating scarce and vital resources as well as protecting the community’s interests from external threats.  

Consequently religion as a primordial contour of national identity deserves to occupy a more central place in the study or hermeneutics of nationalism. As George Mavrogordatos has recently pointed out in his study of Christian Orthodoxy and nationalism in Greece, “despite the prolific literature on nationalism and the growing literature on religion, currently there is no systematic framework focusing specifically on the linkage between the two”.  

A growing number of theorists are beginning to reconsider the relationship between nationalism and religion. Recently Anthony Marx, in his *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, argues that the birth of nationalism dates to a time when religious intolerance ravaged Europe. This statement reiterates the argument, already elaborated a few years earlier by Linda Colley, suggesting that religion has always been central to nationalism since the latter begins with an act of demonising a ‘religious other’, fostering the coalescence of a community. Kedourie had already pointed out that religion through the ‘transvaluation’ of its original values

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is able to seduce and mobilise the masses through millennial promises communicated in the language and rituals of their religious traditions.\textsuperscript{84} In line with this approach is Jurgensmeyer who has identified the important alliance between religion and nationalism in decolonised states and how this alliance has been constructed to oppose what he refers to as the secular version of nationalism imported by the former colonial powers.\textsuperscript{85}

Marx, Colley, Jurgensmeyer and Kedourie still place the analysis of the role of religion in the mould of modernist functionalism, in which ‘transvaluation’ implicitly stands for ‘secularisation’ and religion is identified with tradition in antithesis to modernity. In the approach to the study of the relation between religion and nationalism, the real question, as Mavrogordatos points out, is not about ‘affinity’ or ‘covariance’ as Smith argues\textsuperscript{86}, but about ‘filiation’ since religion provides “a primordial line of demarcation easy to identify exclusive and more impermeable than language or any other cultural trait being, by definition, value-laden and inherently breeding a sense of superiority”.\textsuperscript{87} The role of religion in the context of nationalism is more than instrumental. Religion represents the moment and locus (the spatio-temporal configuration) in which a community becomes aware of its existence and meaning as a ‘historical community’. It appears that it is in the domain of religion that historical consciousness emerges.

\textsuperscript{84} Kedourie, Nationalism in Asia and Africa... cit., pp. 73-77; 92-93; 106.
\textsuperscript{87} Mavrogordatos, op.cit., p. 117.
According to a tradition that has its *fons et origo* in Hume’s philosophical speculation,\(^8\) historical consciousness stems from the existence of social consciousness, namely when a community comes to share a series of beliefs and values. Consciousness of the past thus is envisaged as a social construction. I believe however that the Humean assumption reiterated by Hegelian-Marxist scholarship is fundamentally erroneous since it appears to be based on the confusion of historical consciousness with historical knowledge. Brown falls victim of this very confusion by linking patterns of social stratification to patterns of historiography in order to account for variation in the meaning and function of historical writing.\(^8\) He fails to explain what produces a correlation between the mode of social stratification and the quality of historiography since he disregards the foundational role played by religion. Religion, in fact, acts as the epistemological locus in which structural components are linked through the underlying assumptions of space, time and language shaping the overall cultural configuration. This appears to undermine Dumont’s axiom regarding the a-historicity of the Indian caste system,\(^9\) deeply rooted in Hindu practices.\(^9\)

Myth and history, in my opinion, are not antinomic domains but binomials of a single domain. The structuralist *per antonomasia*, Levi-Strauss, had to acknowledge that the distinction between the two is not as clear-cut as some scholars suggest.\(^9\) Both represent, in fact, to use Huizinga’s words, “an intellectual form in which a


\(^{9}\) Bhatt C., *Hindu Nationalism. Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, Berg, Oxford, 2001, p.10. Bhatt writes in this regard: “The development of primordialist thinking in colonial India after the mid-nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century was inextricably related to the processes of Indian elite cast formation (...) an overarching framework that served to provide ideological coherence for the idea of a primordial nationalism, primarily defined through an invention of archaic Vedic Hinduism”.

civilisation renders account to itself of its past”.\(^{93}\) As Pompa argues, facts of history cannot be distinguished from mere fantasy “other than by an appreciation of the way in which we have come to acquire belief in them and of the constitutive places they occupy in our thinking about the past”.\(^{94}\) Stories and mythical accounts in preliterate tribal societies disguise historical facts hence revealing the existence of an historical consciousness. The process that brings about the actualisation of such consciousness is prompted by the religious experience itself, in what Martin Buber refers to as the ‘I-Thou’, the relational experience in which

> the ‘I’ emerges as a single element out of the primal experiences, out of the vital primal words \(l –\text{affecting} – \text{Thou}\) and \(\text{Thou} – \text{affecting} - l\), only after they have been split asunder and the participle has been given eminence as an object.\(^{95}\)

It is in this relation that consciousness of the Self comes about, informing temporal and spatial experiences with a peculiar meaning. The contact with the world that falls outside that particular relation with the ‘Other’ determines its objectification: the memory of past vicissitudes, rooted in that very hierophanic or theophanic experience becomes essential to establishing tangible and unique criteria of identity demarcation. The intimate connection of the religious experience with a specific place and time explains why it inevitably comes to be connected with discourses of ethnicity, fostering the rise of what Anthony Smith refers to as ‘demotic ethnie’.\(^{96}\) It follows that preliterate people possessed temporal narratives, a history, prior to colonisation, stating the origins and meaning of their existence, demarcating the boundaries of their original identities.


Since nationalism is rooted in the domain of religion it is clear why it tends to propose a vision of the future in-the-image-of-the-past in such a way that protology and eschatology come to coincide. It is in this past-future vision or continuum that both history and nationalism reveal their religious foundations. Nationalism, through religion, comes to be connected both to the past, that is history, and to the future, generating messianic-soteriological expectations. Nationalist ideologies incorporate and rhyme archaeological relicts with a teleological-eschatological tension, turning the myth of a ‘paradise lost’ into a vision of a ‘promised land’.

In the idea of nationalism as a ‘religion of history’, the theoretical chasm between primordialist and modernist theories gradually blurs. Modernisation processes do not completely wipe away tradition rooted in religious beliefs and expressed in myths and rituals, but simply erode its surface structure so that persisting underlying structures of meaning, embedded in the deep structure, act as the ordering basis of the ideological system of latent anti-colonial nationalism. This system will generate movements of messianic and soteriological character when the state of anomie and relative deprivation triggered by cultural and social change reaches unbearable proportions, when the divide between the interests of the colonised masses and the ideal trajectories proposed by the elites, or colonial government, widens. In this milieu, nationalist ideologies become a sort of ‘political religion’ that, as Durkheim argued, is able to coalesce and mobilise the resentment of the culturally and socially dispossessed.

Religion and historical consciousness are the seedbed of nationalism, and in the contention for social recognition and justice they become the driving forces of social and political action. In an era when the centrifugal forces of globalisation threaten

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national identities, religion, by fostering the consciousness of a specific ‘ethnic past’, becomes the centripetal force of the nation. As Benedict Anderson argues, echoing Lord Acton’s aphorism that “exile is the nursery of nationality”, a new phenomenon, that of ‘long distance nationalism’, represents “a probably menacing portent for the future. First of all it is the product of capitalism’s remorseless accelerating transformation of all human societies. Second it creates a serious politics that is at the same time radically unaccountable”. Religion fosters the rise of a communal sense of belonging and demarcates the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in discourses of identity and participation in ‘national rituals’.

The belief that nationalism is a secular ideology is, in my opinion, obsolete. Religion is still a strong factor intervening in civil politics and social life. The division between the spheres of the secular and the religious, between the sacred and profane, is in se et per se dubious, the limen between the two blurred and hard to define. Secular states and ideologies appear all to stem from an original religious source. The preambles of the constitutions of many states echo fundamental values and beliefs that derive from an original religious substratum. Secularisation is a myth, although a controversial one. Religious beliefs and values as well as religious institutions and

101 While I am writing there is a discussion in progress in the Constituent Assembly of European Parliament in Strasbourg regarding the preamble of the European Constitution. Many of the European states are stressing the necessity to include a reference to Christian values in the preamble as one of the foundational features of the European Union. This request is opposed by those states, such as France, that envisage that type of wording as a destabilising factor for their multi-ethnic socio-economic realities. The reference would also exclude ipso facto Turkey, and other potential non-Christian bidders, from joining the Union.
102 In this regard see: Luckman T., Life-World and Social Realities, Heineman Educational, London, 1981.
leaders have played an important, integral role in shaping nationalist movements and ideologies in different spatio-temporal contexts.\textsuperscript{103}

As argued at the beginning of this section, religion is inherently a system of survival generated by processes of adaptation to the physical environment which influenced the dynamics and structure of group integration. Theophanic and hierophanic experiences have been influenced by the peculiarity of ecological adaptation. It follows that the hermeneutics underlying particular epistemologies are influenced by these very processes, expressed in religious beliefs, rituals and values. Religion and culture may be regarded as an indissoluble monad articulating particular social, political and economic patterns.

This assumption may explain why the introduction of western social, economic and political systems into decolonising settings failed to achieve the desired results, notwithstanding, in some cases, these were introduced along with what is still regarded in some quarters as the ideology of the West, namely Christianity. Those, however, who believed that christianisation would have brought about the acceptance of western forms of socio-political and economic organization failed to consider the important fact that Christianity in colonial settings underwent a process of vernacularisation, a process involving the re-interpretation of Christian values, beliefs and norms by the hermeneutical categories of the colonised. The culmination of this process is marked by the transformation of the mission, a foreign import, into a native Church. Churches in colonial settings display those indicators of social control identified by Migdal, compliance, participation and legitimation.\textsuperscript{104} These factors


account for their prominent role in provoking or assisting nationalist struggles and the role of religion in the formulation of nationalist ideologies.

**The Dialectics between the ‘National’ and the ‘International’**

The hypothesis of the religious foundation of nationalism is able to account for the international dimension that nationalist struggles come to assume. Besides being generated by the relations developed with similar national entities that have gained the right to statehood by mutual *de jure* and *de facto* recognition, the international system comes to play an important role in shaping and conferring legitimacy on nationalist claims. The domains of the national and the international appear to share ontologically porous boundaries. Both appear to have originated from the fragmentation of universal Christendom in Europe in the early modern era when the translation of the Bible from Latin into vernacular languages, along with the spread of printing or what Anderson calls ‘print-capitalism’, destroyed the monopoly of doctrine, of knowledge and, above all, of hermeneutics held by the clergy, opening up new avenues and modes of communication.

The translation of the Bible, in some cases, brought about its reinterpretation in the light of non-canonical exegeses rooted in peculiar cultural-ecological experiences. Hermeneutics and language prompted the rise of ‘national churches’ especially in socially and economically advanced areas such as England and The Netherlands. The marked degree of hermeneutical-linguistic differentiation, which came to be tied to or reflect specific socio-economic and political interests, within the borders of Christendom, resulted in the inevitable outbreak of conflicts. The international system, which emerged from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, can be regarded as the
corollary of years of religious wars. The ‘secular arm’,\textsuperscript{105} which appears to have emerged victorious, relied heavily on the Westphalian principle \textit{cuius regio eius religio} to promote a new system of ‘inter-sovereign’ relations, the fundamental structural unit of which came to be represented by the nation-state.

It follows that the presumed secular system,\textsuperscript{106} or institutions of the state, came to be rooted and found their legitimation in the religious substratum of the nation. The transition from the medieval to the modern system of ‘inter-sovereign’ relations is founded on an inherent ontological tautology. It appears that nationalism, while generating the ‘inter-national’ system, derives its \textit{raison d’être} from its very existence by contributing to define the jurisdictional boundaries of political, social and economic action and the sovereign rights and legitimacy of the single nation-states.

The decolonisation program, which in the aftermath of World War II transformed the former colonial territories into independent nation-states, is paradigmatic in indicating the role of the international system in promoting and generating claims to nation-statehood. The principle of \textit{uti possidetis}, applied by the international agency to determine the right to independence and statehood, served the neo-colonial interests of the former colonial powers which either directly or indirectly continued to interfere with the political, economic and social life of the new states. The irrationality of the equation colony = nation-state helped to nurture the original inter-dependency. The cultural heterogeneity, which characterised the societies of former colonial possessions, compressed within the narrow boundaries of the nation-state system, brought about the rise of ethnic conflicts, which still persist today.


\textsuperscript{106} The followers of the secularist-modernist thesis of the origins of nationalism often neglect that the state institutions, derived from Greek and Roman antiquity, had \textit{ab origine} a religious origin, sanction and function, the original meaning of which was wiped away by the emergence of new forms of religiousness and religious organization.
The configurational dynamics of the ‘post-colonial’ international system constantly fosters the rise of new nationalisms. The capitalist system prompts the coalescence of group interests, either superseding or in alliance with ‘national interests’, which find their ‘justification’, in the sense of *facere iustum* (to make just), in the hermeneutical particularism derived from the fragmentation of Christendom: the Cold War was generated by opposing ideologies affirming or denying the validity of the religious component; the post-Cold War is articulated along religious lines where the Christian, capitalist and nationalist West is set against a Pan-Islamic sodality or the *Dar-al-Islam*. But the epoch is far from being either a ‘Clash of Civilisations’\textsuperscript{107} or an ‘End of History’\textsuperscript{108} heralded by some illustrious scholars in the early nineties: here we are assisting in the re-structuring of a World System based on the nation-state, the meaning and functioning of which depends on the existence of a configurational-structural dialectics.

Since the international system determines and is determined by the existence of the nation formalised in the state entity, any nationalist claim that threatens directly or indirectly the system of relations becomes *ipso facto* an international issue. An example of the international dimension of nationalist struggle, in which religion plays an important role in determining support for the parties involved, is provided by the Arab-Israeli conflict.\textsuperscript{109} As Premdas points out:

> The pervasive incidence of cultural pluralism and multi-ethnicity found among the world’s 160 states provides potentially inflammable raw


materials for conflict; the permeable borders facilitate widening involvement with dire and destructive consequences.\textsuperscript{110}

It follows that the survival and perpetuation of the international system, being an interconnected whole, depends on its economic and political stability. The carving up of member states into smaller national units or the polarisation of state entities into opposing blocs supporting one of the parties involved in a civil strife, on the basis of either religious or ethnic affinities, may endanger the internal dialectics and dynamics of the system of relations and alliances. The omnipresent and latent trend by interest groups to ‘translate’ the international system into a global one in which the nation-state may be replaced by Multinational (MNC) and Trans-national (TNC) Companies and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGO) and other similar ‘matrix’ agencies reveals how destabilising nationalist struggles are perceived to be by these groups and really are to the World System. But the ‘hermeneutics’ that tends to ‘sublimate’ the national-international dialectics into a homogenising global entity conceals the risk of more devastating effects. It engenders a variety of essentialist and fundamentalist reactions produced by different combinations of global and local phenomena. The resurgence of religious fundamentalism, an obvious return to the origins of the nation, is the natural outcome, an explicit “return to the local” as a “response to globalisation”.\textsuperscript{111}

In a homogenising system, which is characterised by the existence of a socioeconomic inequality enabling its functioning and encompassed in the formula ‘North-South’ which cuts across religious and ethnic allegiances, religion returns to fulfil its original function of guaranteeing survival becoming the source of security for a

threatened identity. Lapidus shows for instance how Islamic movements involve a combination of the universalistic notion of the *Umma* with more local particularistic identities.\textsuperscript{112} The trend is visible also in those nation-states such as Iran and Afghanistan where a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam has supported political regimes and national identities.\textsuperscript{113} Religious fundamentalism may be viewed *tout court* as the expression of the local or the national against the homogenising forces of global capitalism. It re-essentialises, re-historicises and re-totalises those communities resisting the ‘global assault’ either by defining, re-formulating and strengthening their original identities or by bringing about the formation of new forms of identification. The wars in Kosovo,\textsuperscript{114} Bosnia\textsuperscript{115} and Chechnya,\textsuperscript{116} stemming from the break up of the federal states of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are examples of modern religious wars carving out nation-states in the name of the Westphalian principle *cuius regio eius religio*.

The study of West Papuan nationalism, presented in the following chapters, reveals how the international system or World Order has influenced its development over time. The international forces of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism prompted the ‘discovery’ of West Papua’s economic and strategic potential in the XIX century, which brought about the drawing of local realities into the wider network of capitalist relations while simultaneously demarcating their particular

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114 Mertus J.A., *Kosovo. How Myths and Truths Started a War*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999. Mertus believes however that the Kosovo-Albanians did not define themselves in religious terms that is as Muslims but in ethnic terms as Albanians failing to define the ‘Albanian’.


ethnic identities. In this process of integration Christianity acted as a means to globalise and localise at the same time. As Bayly points out in his analysis of archaic and modern globalisation in Eurasia and Africa between 1750 and 1850:

the Asian and African people began to take up and adapt a concept of religion and nation which was in some essential sense derivative of Western discourses. In this sense, the nation-state and doctrinally differentiated religions were globalised even though their tendency was to fragment and enhance difference among societies. (...) modern nationalism and modern religious beliefs did not erase (...) earlier formations. Instead ancient religion and old patriotisms were subsumed into the new forms of nationalist and religious ideology.\textsuperscript{117}

The rise of Papuan nationalism developed in the context of a World System and, as May’s article regarding the sources of external support for the West Papua movement implicitly suggests,\textsuperscript{118} it appears to have been influenced by systemic forces operating beyond the control of single agencies.

By different modes and means religious beliefs and institutions have contributed to foster the genesis of discourses of identity and nationalist aspirations at the local level prompting the creation of an ‘inter-national’ system of relations. It is in the domain of religion that primordial sentiments of unity encompassed in the idea of nation have been conjugated with the civil politics of the state.

**Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics**

Geertz argues that it is possible to identify a latent tension between those primordial sentiments rooted in pre-modern differences of language, religion and cultural heritage, which divided people in pre-colonial settings, often giving rise to

nationalist movements, and civil sentiments inculcated into the citizenry by colonial governments or the intelligentsia of the new independent states which promote an ‘engineered’ form of nationalism. Consequently the citizenry appears to be more divided than united by culture in the colonial-drawn territories so that the new independent post-colonial states are far from being an ‘appropriate’ realisation of consciously rooted national aspirations.

The aim of the present discussion is not to compare synoptically patterns of conflicts and arrangements between primordial sentiments and civil politics but to detect the cultural ‘webs of significance’ that the encounter or clash of these two sets of distinct ideas and beliefs produce in the populace. These symbolic webs are important since they inherently legitimate power structures and channel human aspirations by providing the believers with an intimate sense of purpose and agency within an ordered and meaningful world. Consequently the aim of the present investigation is to detect and identify the mechanisms by which these two systems coalesce to create new symbolic significances.

Social discontent and nationalist claims, as already pointed out, tend to crystallise around specific *foci*, represented by Geertz’s primordial ties or assumed natural givens. Primordial sentiments, in societies where the tradition of civil politics is weak, tend to be assumed as bases for the demarcation of autonomous political units. While, in fact, economic and social disaffection threatens revolution, the loss of loyalty based on religious, linguistic, racial or cultural peculiarities threatens partition, irredentism or merger, namely a re-definition of a community or state’s domain.

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120 *ibid.*, p.121.
Geertz, in this regard, identifies six foci around which discontent tends to aggregate, that is kinship, race, language, region, religion and custom.\textsuperscript{121} The politicisation of these primordial attachments is fuelled either by political oppression, as in the cases of secessionism and colonialism, or by partition which brings about the rise of irredentist or pan movements.

The transition from a colonial government to an independent state organisation cannot be merely envisaged as a process of hand-over between two distinct power agencies. It entails a process of constructing a political consciousness in an unmodernised population hitherto excluded from political and administrative affairs. Moreover political consciousness and collective interest in public affairs are not facts achieved once and forever, but have to be continuously nurtured. As Geertz states:

(…) as a primordially based ‘corporate feeling of oneness’, remains for many the \textit{fons et origo} of legitimate authority (…) much of this interest takes the form of an obsessive concern with the relation of one’s tribe, region, sect, or whatever to a centre of power that, while growing rapidly more active, is not easily either insulated from the web of primordial attachments, as was the remote colonial regime, or assimilated to them as are the workaday authority systems of the ‘little community’. Thus, it is the very process of the formation of a sovereign civil state that, among other things, stimulates sentiments of parochialism, communalism, racialism, and so on, because it introduces into society a valuable new prize over which to fight and a frightening new force to contend with.\textsuperscript{122}

Numerous are the examples of how primordial sentiments have been used to divide a state rather than fomenting unity in the post-colonial era. In Sri Lanka, for instance, economic changes, induced by modernisation policies, aroused fears that the position of the industrious and aggressive Tamils would be strengthened at the expense of the less methodical Sinhalese. Governmental economic planning, risking radical change in demographic distribution and the criteria of parliamentary representation, fuelled discontent, which was automatically ‘psycho-somatised’ in the

\textsuperscript{121} ibid., p. 121.
form of racism, positioning Dravidian and Hindu Tamils against Aryan and Buddhist Sinhalese.\(^{123}\)

Primordialism, as the Sri Lankan experience suggests, can be envisaged therefore, not only as a legacy hindering development and modernisation but also as an effect of change itself. This type of dialectics seems to be identifiable in almost all new states emerging from the *uti possidetis* policy of the decolonisation process. In the case of Indonesia, for instance, the antithesis primordiality-modernity assumes a variety of forms in which regionalism, racism, religion and language are connected to economic and political inequality.\(^{124}\)

The use of primordial tendencies, stirred by centralised developmental policies, implies the creation of a new *ad hoc* type of authority. Since the doctrine that legitimates authority stems from the moral coerciveness that primordial-rooted sentiments impose, recognition of authority comes to lie within the structural boundaries of affinity, acknowledged as the sole ‘signifier’ of intelligible and acceptable ‘signifieds’. This particular condition explains the strenuous violence against and resistance to perceived alien and oppressive entities. Primordial ties, in order to become active political forces, must be ignited by a perceived structural inequality and inferiority of status translated into paradigmatic economic and social realities. These perceived systemic inequalities are hence ‘ethnicised’.

Although race, kinship, language and custom can play a decisive role in the rise of nationalism, nothing seems to be more powerful and effective than religion since it tends to transcend reality and provide the individual with an intimate strength and

\(^{122}\) *ibid.*, p.122.


consciousness of his place in the cosmos. The action of religion in shaping nationalist claims, however is various because of its ‘ecological’ origins, as pointed out in an earlier section.

In Africa, Asia and Oceania, religion has represented, and continues to represent, an important distinctive feature in the realm of politics and to be intrinsically connected to nationalism. Pakistan and Israel stand out as paradigms of the osmosis existing between religion and nationalism. Pakistan, in particular, represents an example of how a religious community can establish itself as a political entity by overcoming the inhibiting dialectics between nationalism and Islam. In other cases, especially in relatively homogeneous contexts, religion has been employed as a welding and mobilising force in the processes of nation building. In Japan, for instance, Shinto, rooted in the prehistoric mythical experience of the Japanese people, moved to a conspicuous position as the great energiser in the national effort to modernise, focusing on the Sacred Emperor as the living object of the people’s loyalty.


126 The prehistoric formulation of Shinto was saisei itchi or the unity of rites and government, which implied ipso facto that the government had always used religious rites in order to support political issues. Before World War II Shinto, highly influenced by the religious Japanese tradition embodied in the Zen, represented the basis of Japanese religious/spiritual state as Kokkateki Shinto (National Shinto). Only after the war did the Japanese refer to a State Shinto (Kokka Shinto). See: Fridell W.M., ‘Modern Japanese Nationalism: State Shinto, the religion that was “not a religion’”, in Merkl P.H. & Smart N., (eds.), Religion and Politics in the Modern World, New York University Press, New York, 1983, pp.155-168.
As Hans Kohn has pointed out, the rise of nationalism is usually preceded by a revival and reformulation of religious principles and attitudes. In India, for instance, under the pressure of British reformism which impinged upon some of the fundamental religious beliefs and values of the local populace, religious authorities promoted a series of revivals and reforms of Hinduism. Buddhism, Judaism and Islamism, also, in order to become bearers of nationalism, had at times to undergo processes of either revival or reform. In the Islamic context Wahabbism is, for instance, a clear example of Islamic revivalism, which at the beginning of the XIX century resulted in the creation of a political realm, although delimited by hazy boundaries, and still represents the core of Saudi Arabia’s nationalism. In Turkey, often regarded as an example of ‘secularised’ Islamic state, in reality nationalism was born out of the latent, structural tension or dialectics between the religious faction of Islam and the secularist establishment engaged in an attempt to accommodate western thought and technology with Islamic tradition. As Yavuz points out “because secularism did not separate religion and politics but rather subordinated religion to the political realm, it promoted the politicisation of Islam and of the struggle between secularists and Muslims for the control of the state”. Analogously Judaism, in which the common origins of religious and historical consciousness are evident, experienced a series of reforms and internal tensions at the turn of the XX century.

which brought about the emergence of Zionism, an ideology which, centred on the historical and religious meaning of Zion, aimed at restoring *Erez Israel* (the Land of Israel) to the Jewish people.\(^{132}\) The debate prompted by Zionism on whether Israel was to be a ‘Jewish State’ or a ‘State of Jews’ still continues.\(^{133}\) Furthermore, Hinduism\(^{134}\) and Theravada Buddhism,\(^{135}\) due to their particular legalistic, philosophical and presumed a-historical nature, in order to become driving forces in nationalist movements underwent reforms which either ‘historicised’ or ‘pragmatised’ their contents which often led them, as in the Sri-Lankan case, to link with the exclusive and restrictive notion of race.\(^{136}\)

Further evidence of the intimate connection between religion and nationalism is the appearance of religious sects and politico-religious movements in contexts where political activity is forbidden by the colonial authorities or where the development of


a widespread national consciousness is still embryonic. The *Maji-Maji* uprising of 1905-1907 in German East Africa (modern Tanzania)\(^{137}\) and the *Mau-Mau* rebellion in British Kenya are typical examples of this kind of phenomenon. In these politico-religious movements, often of an eschatological, messianic and apocalyptic nature, a new prophetic leadership emerges against both the colonial and traditional power structure, since the former aims at introducing reforms and policies subverting the native socio-economic system founded on traditional religious beliefs, and the latter appears unable to oppose or protect against foreign intrusions. The *Mau-Mau* and the *Maji-Maji* rebellions as well as the Melanesian cargo cults are expression of this type nationalism, erroneously considered immature or larval, in which the desire for independence and nationhood still float in an indistinct aura of mystic religiousness because of the lack of ‘systemic institutions’ through which to ‘structure’ their claims.

In studying the intricate relation between religion and nationalism in the new states, one must distinguish at the outset the two complementary levels on which religion manifests itself: the institutional and the emotional, that is the public and the private. The former refers to the institutionalisation and ritualising of religious beliefs and organisations as a systemic adjustment to the material world; the latter to the original relationship between the individual and the divine enucleated in religious ideology which influences both the ethical and psychological dimensions of a human being. From an epistemological point of view it is necessary to distinguish between

\(^{137}\) The *Maji-Maji* uprising takes is name from the supposed magic water that protected against German bullets. It began as a peasant protest against a communal cotton-growing scheme and against the conversion by the German colonial authority of a hut tax from in-kind into cash. Springing out from legitimate peasant grievances the movement grew into a dynamic new religious cult bringing together 127 tribes that inhabited the colonial territory. What characterised the movement however was the opposition not only to colonial rule but also to the traditional chieftain that opposed the movement. This probably can be explained on the basis of the latent conflict or dialectics existing between the witch doctors and the tribal chiefs that has characterised African tribal societies. See: Wallerstein I. & Rich E.J., *Africa. Tradition and Change*, Random House, New York, 1972, pp.293-297. Cfr. Listowell J., *The Making of Tanganyika*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1965, pp. 34-44.
the effects that religion, as a corpus of moral doctrines, has on the development of nationalist ideologies and the pragmatic activity of religious institutions such as the Church, the Mosque and the Synagogue.

The dichotomy between the private and the public dimension of religion can be exemplified by the Filipino struggle for independence. Here in the religious rite of the Pasyon, the theological significance of the image of the ‘suffering servant’ combined with the activity of the lower indigenous clergy influenced the modes of action and thought of the peasant nationalist movements. As Ileto has pointed out, the dramatisation of the story of Jesus Christ and the rituals of the Holy Week had two different functions in Filipino society. Apart from being employed by the Spanish colonisers, through the activity of the missionaries, to instil respect and loyalty both to the Spanish Crown and to the Church, these stories introduced moral and eschatological preoccupations into a peasant and illiterate population. It was this function, over which the missionaries and colonial power lost control that provided the Philippine society “with a language for articulating its own values, ideals and even hopes of liberation”. 138

The contribution of religion in the creation of nationalist ideologies and movements can be explained by considering the essence and character of religious beliefs. Religion appears, in fact, to be always associated with soteriological needs and expectations and a theodicy that can provide the quester with a suitable and pacifying response to the world in the guise of a set of behaviours, norms and values. Consequently the transposition of this function from the private sphere to the realm of public affairs flows naturally since religion informs the moral codes of conduct of individuals and communities. In the locus where this transition occurs lies the origin
of the phenomenon of nationalism that bridges moral norms with the political institutions of the state.

The role the Church played in the struggle for independence in East Timor is paradigmatic in illustrating the function of religion and religious institutions in shaping nationalist ideologies and struggles. The Catholic Church became the institution that catalysed and structured nationalist claims and resistance of the East Timorese against colonial rule.139 Similarly in Greece the Orthodox Church became, under Ottoman domination, the repository of the Byzantine tradition to which the nationalists turned for inspiration.140 In Russia it acted as a unifying and driving force and “alone realised the identity of liberty and unity”.141 In Poland142 and in Ireland143 Roman Catholicism played an important role in preserving both the Polish and Irish nation, preventing their assimilation into their neighbouring invaders.

The ecclesiastical involvement in nationalist struggles, however, does not ipso facto or syllogistically imply that the Church and its theology are the initiators of independence claims, or the demiurge of nationalist sentiments, but that these simply act as stable gravitational points in moments of collective and individual uncertainty and distress. In Southern and Central Africa, for instance, the independent churches,

139 Nicol B., Timor. A Nation Reborn, Equinox Publishing, Jakarta, 2002, pp. 106-120. The high echelons of the Marxist inspired nationalist party Fretlin was dominated by Catholics and Catholic clergymen such as Xavier do Amaral. The program of Fretlin was to create a Catholic nation. The religious element in the case of East Timor appears to have functioned as a means to design categories of exclusion and inclusion, Catholicism ipso facto excluding Islamic Indonesians.
140 There were, however, among the nationalists those who considered the Orthodox Church as an enemy of the nationalist cause. Adamantos Koraes, in fact, accused the Church of being the cause of the slavery to which the Greek nation was reduced and found in the Greece of the age of Pericles the fountainhead of Greek values and ideals. See: Koraes A., 'Report on the Present State of Civilisation in Greece', in Kedourie, Nationalism in Asia and Africa...cit., pp.153-188.
141 Kohn H., Panslavism. Its History and Ideology, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame-Indiana, 1953 p.121.
143 Carey M.J., ‘Catholicism and Irish National Identity’, in Merkl & Smart (eds.), ibid., pp. 104-120.
that traced their origins to schismatic church movements (Ethiopian and Zionist) in neighbouring South Africa and Rhodesia, became the systemic centres to which the oppressed workers and peasants turned to in their quest for self-rule and racial and cultural dignity. Although, in some cases, as in the Ethiopian Church, they became effective nationalist institutions with a budget, a constitution, a flag and a paramilitary force, the churches never initiated nationalist movements but simply gathered and rationally condensed the feelings of resentment and the aspirations to social and economic equality of their followers.\footnote{Isaacman A. & B., Mozambique. From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982, Westview Press, Boulder, 1983, pp.72-73.}

In colonial settings a factor that may have caused religion to become often the focus or seedbed of nationalist movements and ideologies is the work carried out by the missionaries whose activity greatly encroached upon the indigenous systems of belief. Their presence introduced, in non-western colonial contexts, notions of strangeness, diversity and pluralism, disrupting existing categories and worldviews. The emergence of messianic movements stemmed from the ‘transitional religious milieu’, often assuming nationalist accents and connotations. The mixture of Christian and indigenous religious elements in the ideologies of these movements indicates how deeply rooted religion is in the collective unconsciousness.

Christianity also introduced a new way of organising a community’s life by establishing new institutions such as schools, hospitals and churches, which replaced traditional kinship structures, and new technologies, which altered traditional labour patterns. New categories of thought and cognitive systems associated with western socio-economic systems eroded traditional organisations.
Hastings argues that the nation as a cultural construction and category is of Christian origin and where it has appeared it has done so “within a process of Westernisation or imitation of the Christian world, even if it was imitated as Western rather than as Christian”.\textsuperscript{145} Christianity, in fact, appears to stimulate the rise of nationalism because of a combination of, sometimes unique, elements. These are the tendency to sanctify and canonise the origins of a particular community by rooting it in particular historical occurrences or events that come to be mythologised or commemorated, especially when celebrated as threats to national identity. Thus Christianity’s providential perspective represents the locus in which nationalism and history are ‘visibly’ conjugated. Furthermore the social and structural role played by the clergy, the production of vernacular literatures, the provision of a biblical model of the nation, the existence of an autonomous national church and the discovery of a unique national destiny may have also acted as structural and doctrinal factors in the formulation of the idea of nation, nationhood and nationalism within the Christian religious milieu.\textsuperscript{146}

Ecclesiastical hierarchy and congregational organization, the existence of canonical Scriptures and of institutional ritualism, supported by an apodeictic legalism and a proselytic missionary activity, are some of the elements that have favoured the involvement of Christianity in political and nationalist struggles. Important and determinant was also its ideology based on the ideals of freedom and equality and a promise of palingenetic renewal and soteriological achievement. Christianity, having already undergone a transformation disengaging it from a peculiar homeland and ecosystem in the first centuries of the Christian era, assumed an ecumenical and universal character in a way that its ‘sublimated’ contents and forms became

\textsuperscript{145} Hastings, \textit{op.cit.}, p.186.
transferable to and translatable into any cultural context: the odyssey of the ‘People of Israel’ became the symbol and paradigm of all human nations.

The diffusion of the Christian message and of biblical ‘theologomena’\(^{147}\) and images has been possible through the appropriation of the language of the people addressed. The first translations of the Scriptures into indigenous idioms began to circulate in colonial settings along with the spread and multiplication of missionary posts during the XIX century. Against the colonisation of language by political and administrative authorities, the missionaries opposed the ‘translation’. This became a metonym of a process of conversion, which brought about the transformation of differences into similarities and western logical categories into indigenous ones.\(^{148}\) Although it has been used in nationalist movements to emphasise distinctiveness and individuality, language has never been the fons et origo or causa prima of nationalist movements.\(^{149}\)

\(^{146}\) ibid., pp.187-198.

\(^{147}\) For instance the theologomena of the ‘Warrior God’ according to which God reveals Himself through the processes of human history and the natural phenomena visible in history proving that God was lost to His people when they were at war. Such an idea could be well understood by followers of animistic doctrines. For the biblical concept of the ‘Warrior God’ see: Greenspoon L., ‘The Warrior God, or God, the Divine Warrior’, in Merkl & Smart (eds.), op. cit., pp.205-227. For the encounter between Christianity and Animism see: Neill S., Christian Faith and Other Faiths. The Christian Dialogue with Other Religions, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1970, pp.125-152.


\(^{149}\) Many support the theory of linguistic nationalism referring to the case of the Balkan states in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. It is true that the ‘millet system’ created by the Ottoman administration favoured the maintenance of a persistent cultural and linguistic particularism, nevertheless the various nationalisms that emerged in the Balkan states were far from being exclusively linguistic. The failure of Pan-Slavic ideals represents an unquestionable evidence of the veridicality of such assumption. Linguistic affinity did not foster unity. On the contrary, political and historical realities, differences of religion and civilisation conjured against unification on exclusively linguistic grounds. Herder himself, greatly misunderstood and misinterpreted by linguistic theorists, stated that national language, although being a factor that determines a man’s loyalty, cannot be assumed as the sole element for the foundation of a civilisation or nation. A high morality and a glorious destiny seem to be far more important. Writing about the Greek language, Herder argues that language itself is the outcome of “the genius of nature, their country, their way of life and the character of their progenitors”. Herder J. G. von, Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, (Book VI, 2) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, p.172.
Religion itself can be envisaged as a language of symbolic significances, a means of semiotic communication intelligible only to the members of the congregation, a means that fosters a system of relationships by constructing diaphanous webs of structural correspondences. For foundational character religion is able to create homogeneous communities from heterogeneous groups.

Conclusions

In the discussion above, I have tried to provide a critical and comprehensive overview of theories of nationalism in order to identify an appropriate approach to the study of West Papuan nationalism. It has emerged that each theory considered, deriving from the analysis of a single nationalism, remains tied to a specific spatio-temporal context and is not transferable and applicable to another. The ‘particularity’ and ‘particularism’ that characterises the phenomenon of nationalism, consequently, accounts for its ontic elusiveness.

My critical overview of theories has also revealed that religion has constantly played an important role in almost all the nationalisms studied inducing one to conclude that an appropriate approach to the study of nationalism is likely to involve the domain of the religious experiences that inform the culture and historical consciousness of both the individual and the community. Religion, as a system of psychological and social adaptation to physical contingencies and occurrences as well as a system of meaning embodied in intelligible symbols and ritual performances, generates specific underlying and communally shared assumptions about time, space and language that foster intra- and inter-group communication inherently tending to define and demarcate boundaries within which discourses about identity, nationhood and ethnicity are able to develop.
This type of approach reveals that communities, irrespective of their socio-economic and political organization, have a peculiar historicity. The denial by both modernist and primordialist theories of a pre-colonial history to pre-literate and/or non-western populations appears to be without empirical foundation since it has been constructed on the assumption that nationalism is exclusively a European category or invention transferred to colonial settings. It is possible to argue that what is eminently European is the form of state system imposed in decolonising settings that called forth the construction of an ad hoc nation to ‘match’ and eventually overcome those structures.

The foundational (not functional) role of religion in eliciting historical and ethnic consciousness will represent the theoretical underpinning of the study of West Papuan nationalism. The surviving mythical accounts, recorded over a long period of time by missionaries, casual explorers, anthropologists and colonial administrators, reveal the existence of an historical consciousness rooted in the particular religiousness of the Papuan people which acted as the mould of their ethnic identity in pre-colonial and colonial times. Although these accounts have been muddled up by the recorders, creating what Levi-Strauss calls, “a hodge-podge made up of tradition and beliefs belonging to great many different social groups”, it is nevertheless possible to identify functional categories of Papuan hermeneutics by which to organise and interpret systematically autochthonous perceptions of experiential data provided by identifiable Papuan chronicles.

The lack of native written documents and the ‘forced’ reliance on ‘observers’ accounts’ call for the identification of a methodology able to overcome the risk of ethnocentrism on the part of the observer. This will be dealt with in the next chapter.

150 Levi-Strauss C., *op.cit.*, p. 35.
Chapter II

The Architecture and Archaeology of Memory and Oblivion
Or the Conundrums of Methodology and Hermeneutics

L’oubli, et je dirai même l’erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d’une nation, et c’est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger.¹

Ernest Renan’s statement regarding the meaning of the idea of nation once again alludes to the amoebic, elusive and ambiguous ontology of the concept. The French scholar argues that the nation is the product of a collective amnesia implying that the origin of the idea resides in the demiurgic power of a volitional act. Consequently, since the nation appears to be an artificial product of the will, which manipulates and interpolates the past to sustain its creation, historical inquiry may also represent a threat because of its potential to awake or actualise the quiescent reminiscent faculty of an ‘amnesic nation’.¹

Because of the central role historical consciousness plays in the problematic identified in chapter I, I wish to show that this appears to be rooted in the religious domain of a people. It has emerged from the previous discussion that religious consciousness and historical consciousness appear to constitute a monad, an indissoluble identity encompassing the fundamental notions of time and space.

The veridicality of such a postulate or axiom can be proven by observing the different modes and means by which people account for the occurrence of events and represent the world they live in. If, as Heraclitus once stated, “war is the father of

¹ Renan E., ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?’, in Oeuvres Complètes de Ernest Renan, Tome I, Édition définitive établie par Henriette Psichari, Calmann-Lévy Éditeurs, Paris, p. 891. Translation: “Forgetfulness, and I would also add historical error, are an essential factor for the creation of a nation, and that the development of historical studies is often a danger for nationality”.

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all”; 2 ‘meaning’ can be considered as the discriminating factor of all. Consequently interpretation or hermeneutics become an important factor in drawing peculiar epistemologies and historical narratives. The recovery of such an hermeneutics and its modes of structuring are essential to the understanding of the creation or emergence of nationalist discourses, ideologies and narratives.

Eugene Weber, in tune with Renan’s statement, argues, in his Peasants into Frenchmen, that the notion of oblivion is a necessary prerequisite to the construction of a nation. 3 The process of forgetting the past paves, in fact, the way to forget and overcome the idiosyncrasies of an inherent tribalism. Remembrance cannot be assumed as the effective basis on which to found a national history able to coalesce the disparate temporal and geographic experiences of individual ‘demotic clusters’ into a comprehensive ethnic group. Oblivion, by contrast, constitutes the basis to create and imagine a past of shared experiences. This explains why more than being founded on concrete historical mémoires, nationalism appears to be rooted in a particular historiography, in a sort of abstract rêverie d’un temps perdu.

Analogously the emergence of West Papuan nationalism appears to be the outcome of a collective reminiscence of mythical unity and amnesia of historical idiosyncrasies embedded in their distinctive tribal cultures. This is embodied in the Papuan myths referring to an ancestral Golden Age, variously known as the Koreri among the inhabitants of the Biak-Numfor area, Hai or Nabelan-Kapelan among the Dani people of the interior. These myths stemmed from the common belief of an original a-temporal spatial and ontological reality of unity and harmony, a ‘Paradise’ lost because of a man’s act of foolishness. The loss, that inaugurated time, entropy, multiplicity and death, was however compensated by the hope or promise of the

return, the νοστος, of the original, primeval unity, a promise that accounts for the presence of eschatological and messianic expectations, of ‘nost-algia’ (Lat. ‘longing to return’), in Papuan religiousness. Even among the Marind-anim of the south coast, where no analogue of the ‘Golden Age’ has been found, the theme of the return is present in particular in the Sosom cult as will be shown later in this chapter. Here, because of the precariousness and insalubrity of the environment, a complex religious system of ritual performances covering all aspects of human life during the astronomical year, appears to have replaced or compensated the evolution of such a belief.

As will emerge from the discussion in the following chapters, this expectation represents a recurrent feature in the religious systems of many Papuan tribes and that manifested itself in times of crisis and change. When Christianity landed on Papuan shores, it found this fertile spiritual humus on which to implant the Christian soteriological message of moral redemption and social palingenesis. Christianity, following its inculturation into the indigenous templates, appears to have harnessed and synthesised the apparent heterogeneity of expressions of Papuan religiousness and provided a common unifying language and symbolism in which to articulate Papuan aspirations.

In my opinion, the rise of Papuan nationalism can be explained only with reference to its pre-colonial religious worldview, condensed in a series of traditional narratives, and its intersection with colonial and Christian institutions. As will be argued in chapter III, a variety of external factors and contingencies triggered the rise of internal perceptions of identity and diversity that came to be rationally elaborated

and expressed in the political discourses of nationalism and independence. Since the *locus* of Papuan identity seems to reside in the unfolding of and participation to historical processes and events, the exploration of past developments and the experiences of the Papuan people come to represent the empirical field of inquiry. In the Papuan case, this empirical basis presents itself as a minefield beset with problems not only of methodology, regarding the use and historicity of the existing sources of information, but also, and above all, of hermeneutics.

The processes involved in the emergence and construction of West Papuan nationhood and nationalist discourses have never constituted an object of systematic analysis. West Papua has been considered, since its ‘discovery’ by the Western world, a field of anthropological and ethnographic inquiry. Scholars have limited their research to the mapping of socio-economic and political structures and cultural templates of a myriad of tribal communities believed to be still living at the dawn of civilisation. Consequently the evolutionist or diffusionist approaches, based on the synchronic empiricism typical of social sciences, have implicitly denied historicity to Papuan societies, freezing them in the remoteness of a static primitivism. By fragmenting Papuan society in a number of individual tribal units, anthropologists and ethnographers have concentrated their attention on the study of one Papuan people or tribe at a time. The category of ‘tribe’, a product of occidental logic, by denying implicitly the notion of *civitas* or civilisation, has contributed to enhance the perception of the ‘nationlessness’ of the Papuan people.

The anthropological and ethnographical approach to the study of West Papuan societies and worldview explains why West Papuan historiography is of relatively recent vintage or still in its embryonic phase. Its official beginnings date to the

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5 For the problem of the tribe see: Helm J. (ed.), *Essays on the Problem of the Tribe*…cit.
aftermath of World War II during the intensive scheme of nation building developed and undertaken by the Dutch colonial administration.

The type of historiography developed during this period lacks distinctive authenticity and appears to be enmeshed with Dutch propaganda aiming at forestalling Indonesia’s request for incorporation of the territory. The historical reconstruction, commissioned in the middle of the XIX century by the Dutch colonial government and carried out by Haga, is an attempt to prove the ethnic distinctiveness of the Papuans vis-à-vis their Indo-Malay neighbours and their territorial independence. ⁶ Although there is no institutional link between the two projects being currently undertaken, analogous bias appears to affect the project regarding the ‘Rectification of Papuan History’ announced in the year 2000 by the *Presidium Dewan Papua* ⁷ in conjunction with the study, currently under way at the Institute for Dutch History in the Netherlands and financed by the Dutch government, regarding the developments surrounding the 1969 Act of Free Choice. ⁸ While colonial interests prompted Haga’s research, the more recent project appears to be in line with the persisting neo-colonial interests and ambitions of the Dutch government that reluctantly was forced to surrender West Papua to Indonesia in 1962.

The revision of the developments and events leading to the 1969 Act of Free Choice appears to be based on the implicit assumption that West Papuan history began with Dutch colonial rule that reached its apex in the years between 1945 and 1962. As stated in the previous chapter, this stance appears to be clearly supported by

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⁷ The project was undertaken in the wider context of the process for special autonomy of West Papua and included in the special autonomy bill, chapter XII, art. 46 in which it is stated that the Commission for the rectification of Papua’s history has the task “to provide clarification of Papua’s history in order to strengthen the people’s unity in the State of the Republic of Indonesia and to formulate and decide steps towards reconciliation.” Theo van den Broek OFM- Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian – Keuskupan Jayapura, Private Communication, December 2001.
post-colonial (postmodern) historiography that, while providing romantic and attractive analyses of the aims and processes of colonial representations and discourses, inherently and simultaneously provides the grounds, means and modes for neo-colonial constructions, policies and justifications so that the category of the ‘colonial’ is constantly being reiterated and articulated in new representations. This is done by resorting to the denial of colonial notions of primitivism in the name of what can be regarded as neo-colonial representations or categories of ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘ethnicity’. The category of the ‘colonial’ continues to survive in the current research of anthropologists who, as already pointed out, tend to approach the study of Papuan society on a ‘tribal basis’ just as their eminent predecessors of colonial times did.

This thesis represents an attempt to break away from this type of scholarship and produce an integrative study of West Papuan nationalism by overcoming the apparent cultural differences of Papuan society generated by anthropological studies and step beyond the recent developments and processes of induced nationalism and nation-building. Consequently the study calls for the identification of a methodology capable of overcoming the limitations of the sources available.

In the present chapter I will try to identify the epistemological bases for understanding the notion of ‘Papua’, that is the categories that define and differentiate the concept in relation to the West by examining the nature of the sources available in a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. This will bring the discussion to question whether it is possible to write a history of Papua that reflects the Papuan cognition of events and processes as expression of a Papuan identity.

Since it has been impossible to carry out field work in West Papua because of the existing political tensions in the territory, which have intensified following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the killing in November of the same year of
one of the nationalist leaders, Theys Eluay,\(^9\) episodes which have contributed to create unsafe conditions for foreign travellers and in particular researchers, I had to rely on archival resources outside West Papua.\(^{10}\) This unfavourable circumstance has represented a partial set back for my research. Firstly, I have missed out on the possibility of experiencing Papuan landscapes and the records that they incorporate since I agree with Barbara Bender’s assumption that “there is an historicity and spatiality to people’s engagement with the world around them” recorded in the landscape created by that very engagement.\(^{11}\) Secondly, I had to face the problems entailed with the use of archives stemming from the criteria adopted in selecting and preserving documents and how these can be identified and retrieved, each archive being inherently a political construction of memory generating discourses to protect the interests of hegemonic groups. An analysis of the archives of Papuan history will be provided in this chapter and this discussion will lead to consider the important issue regarding the historicity of the Papuan people and the possibility of writing a Papuan history, issues implicitly bound to the problem of Papuan nationhood and nationalism.

Since the writing of history is tied to the conception that a society has of time, the temporal categories of pre-literate societies will be considered so to identify an \textit{ad hoc} hermeneutics to understand Papuan conception of history and related gnoseological templates and to clear the grounds of the colonial categories of primitivism and history-less people.

\(^{10}\) Mission archives exist in the Franciscan monasteries of Jayapura and Wamena and in the Diocese of Jayapura. The material contained in these archives have been catalogued in 1992 by Dr. P.J. Margry of the Meertens-Instituut in Amsterdam. I have found a copy of the catalogue in the General State Archives in The Hague.
The Western Archives of West Papua

At the outset of a study that aims at reconstructing the historical developments involved in the emergence of processes and discourses of ethnic and national identity in a preliterate context, a brief critical evaluation of the sources available and the hermeneutical problems entailed with their use, represents a methodological imperative.

There is an extensive anthropological and sociological literature regarding the analysis of what has been termed by some distinguished academics as ‘primitive societies’. Although acknowledging the inestimable value of such literature both for its ethnographic accuracy and ethnological analysis, one cannot fail to notice that its approach to the study of non-Western societies appears to be biased or affected either by a intrinsic diachronic evolutionism or synchronic diffusionism. Both approaches tend to consider societies, not invested by the processes of modernisation, as ‘primitive’, ‘primordial’ or ‘savage’.

Primitivism, stemming from the philosophical speculations of XVIII century Enlightenment and idealised by XIX century Romanticism in the myth of the Bon Sauvage, was first devised as a ‘scientific’ category by the antiquarian and intellectualist stream of anthropological studies, inaugurated by Edward Burnet Tylor and Sir James Frazer during the second half of the XIX century. For the intellectualists, contemporary primitive societies represented the initial stage of human social and cultural development. The Marxist tradition, notwithstanding its attempt to break away from the abstraction of the intellectualist approach, also fell victim of the same ethnocentric debacle by considering the non-western societies as either the antithesis or a derivative of the Occident. Both the intellectualist and the Marxist
speculations postulate the static nature of pre-literate societies,\textsuperscript{12} hermeneutical stances that served the political and economic interests of the colonial powers and justified the policies of acculturation, assimilation and development implemented in the colonised territories.

The scientific literature regarding West Papua appears to be influenced by these ethnocentric/Eurocentric attitudes. The information is consequently biased and deformed to suit the systemic postulates of the examiner and, in some cases, the political interests of the commissioning agency. However, the ‘before’ can only be reconstructed by the ‘after’, that is by means of an historical investigation based on documenta that impart a particular, distorted interpretation as the etymology of the word ‘document’ implies.

The literary sources contained in Portuguese and Dutch colonial archives appear also to be politicised since they inherently attempt to justify the colonial enterprise. Before the year 1855, when the first missionaries landed on Papuan shores, archival references to West Papua are random or exceptional. Only when the race for colonies and resources gained momentum among the European countries did West Papua gain attention and consideration. In other words, in our reconstruction of Papuan historical narratives we must rely on documents and evidences compiled and handed down by European missionaries, traders, explorers and colonial administrators with all the hermeneutical and epistemological problems connected to the use of such sources. The

\textsuperscript{12} The common prejudice in the study of pre-literate societies is that regarding the lack of internal development of cultural, socio-economic and political systems. Pre-literate societies are envisaged as static and monadic entities. This belief stems from the assumption that the pre-literate word was destitute of volitional inventiveness and that the main concern of pre-literate communities was survival. Consequently they emphasised the economic aspects of life. Pospisil, a missionary-anthropologist who worked and lived among the Kapauku of West Papua, objects to such assumption reporting a case in which political factors rather than those of economy or residence brought about a change in incest regulations among the Kapauku. See: Pospisil L., ‘Social Change and Primitive Law: Consequences of a Papuan Legal Case’, \textit{American Anthropologist}, 60, 1958, pp. 832-837. For the prejudice regarding the lack of volitional inventiveness among pre-literate societies see: Hoebel E.A., \textit{Man in the Primitive World}, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1949.
subjective perceptions, interests and aims of the reporter-observer inevitably distort or bias the objectivity of the facts reported.

The XVI century Portuguese and Spanish sources that I have been able to gain access to in the Vatican Archives and Library contain a few random references to the Papuans. These references are at times anecdotal in character and appear to be in tune with the spirit of the time and that travelogue literature more interested in the recording of curiosities and mirabilia than in the gaining of some sort of scientific knowledge.

The nature of this exotic and picturesque literature contributed to support the colonial enterprise by implicitly pointing out the diversity and backwardness of distant peoples and places, the ‘antipodal inversion’ characterising their world,13 and the superiority of the Western Christian world endowed with the duty to provide for the development of these peoples. In chapter III I will refer to this literature in order to identify the nature of South-east Asian Christianity and its relation with the Papuans.

The archives and the literature reveal that the Papuans appear to be in the XVI century a particular group, suddenly disappearing a century later from the records. No reference is made to the Papuans in the XVII century. This silence of the archives may be explained by the unrest characterising the region at that time caused by the confrontations and battles between the Dutch, the Portuguese and the British over the control of the lucrative spice trade.14 The role that the Papuans played in these struggles, and whether they did participate, is difficult to determine although it is possible to speculate that, because of their ties with the Sultanate of Tidore and the relations with the Papuan settlements in north Halmahera (Jailolo), the Papuans

14 Furber H., Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1976, pp. 31-78.
somehow either participated in or were affected by the struggles as will be shown in chapter III.

The Papuans reappear again in the XVIII and XIX century Dutch sources in relation to disturbances and troubles they were causing to mercantile navigation in the Maluku-Ceram area as will be discussed in chapter III. It is possible to argue that these disturbances may have been a direct consequence or the continuation of Papuan activity during the XVII century struggles and supports my previous hypothesis regarding their possible direct involvement. In contrast with the anecdotical nature of the Iberian sources, the Dutch records appear to be more precise and attentive in reporting the Papuans. These sources, in fact, contain important ethnographic information of the Papuan people and their territory. Anthropology, at the time, was considered by the Dutch government as a discipline with the purpose of providing practical and useful knowledge of Indonesian peoples to prospective colonial administrators. It was therefore a discipline subordinated to politics and political economy, without theoretical autonomy. The pragmatic rather than scholarly approach was emphasised by the institutional link between ethnology and geography in academic studies.\(^{15}\) For this reason most of the research in and on West Papua was conducted by administrative and missionary institutions that, although sharing the same general aims of pacification and acculturation, developed differing cognitive dispositions influenced by their respective preoccupations.\(^{16}\)

The administrators, concerned with the maintenance of law and order and the planning of a viable political and economic development in the colonial territory,

\(^{15}\) Josselin de Jong P.E. de, ‘The Netherlands: Structuralism before Levi-Strauss’, in Diamond S. (ed.), *Anthropology: Ancestors and Heirs*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1980, pp.243-246. Furthermore customary law or *Adatrecht* was split off from anthropology since it was considered the subject not for prospective colonial administrators but for the trainees of the colonial legal service.

tended to channel the ethnological and anthropological research in order to meet these goals. Acculturation and pacification, by contrast, acquired a different meaning for the missionaries who aimed at creating the conditions for evangelisation and conversion.\textsuperscript{17} The action of the latter proved to be more incisive and penetrating than that of the colonial administrators, with education and literacy becoming the means to ‘intrude’ into and change the native cognitive and belief systems. Furthermore, at times, the accounts of the missionaries, in particular those prior to World War II, were written for either edifying or proselytic purposes and directed to a Christian audience and consequently can be regarded as the product of a particular discourse stemming from and supporting the ecclesiastical establishment and power structure.

The diversity of intents produced a collection of ethnographic works that differed considerably as to content and perspective. Other contrasting approaches emerge when comparing more recent anthropological material collected by mainly Dutch professional anthropologists. Although some of this research was commissioned by the colonial government,\textsuperscript{18} it has a more autonomous stance in the processes of data collection and analysis. However even the scientific ethnographies of professional anthropologists are rather heterogeneous in their interpretation and understanding of West Papuan culture. Each anthropologist, in fact, embraced a peculiar approach reflecting the different anthropological schools of thought of the time.\textsuperscript{19} Hermeneutics appear to have been ‘ politicised’ by the academic competition.

\textsuperscript{17} Wolf & Jaarsma, \textit{ibid.}, p.111.
\textsuperscript{18} J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong held the Chair of General Anthropology at Leiden University between 1922 and 1956. During this period he was able to overcome the pragmatic use of anthropology conferring it the prestige of an autonomous discipline. However this did not prevent the government from using the Chair of Anthropology for more pragmatic purposes. See: Diamond, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.144-145.
\textsuperscript{19} The anthropologists of Leiden University, for instance, adopted a structuralist approach to the study of culture, while the scholars of Utrecht and Amsterdam universities, strongly influenced by American Comparative Functionalism, propended for a political-sociological approach. See: Wolf & Jaarsma, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.113-115.
The ethnographies by Frederick Christian Kamma, who worked as a missionary in West Papua during the 1930s in the Biak-Numfor area, are paradigmatic in this regard. In fact, while attempting to explain Papuan reactions to European penetration and presence with reference to Papuan beliefs and values, Kamma’s analysis inevitably comes to be influenced and channelled by the tenets and modes of structural anthropology in vogue at the time. Written in a period of intensive Dutch rule in West Papua during the early 1950s, it aims at serving Dutch neo-colonial ambitions. However the detailed collection of myths, events and rituals is invaluable for any researcher that approaches the study of pre-war West Papua. Kamma’s findings and assessments have provided a departure point for this thesis, which, however, moves away from both the spatio-temporal limits characterising his work, in order to provide a comprehensive study of West Papuan nationalism, as well as his methodology.

The only means available to overcome the epistemological impasse presented by the West Papuan anthropological and ethnographical literature is to collate similar pieces of information derived from contemporary sources, as a devised criterion of plausibility, and then proceed to inductively infer veridical facts contrasting them, when possible, with the evidence contained in native mythological accounts.

On a first reading of the available primary and secondary sources examined in the course of my research, it emerges that Dutch propagandist historiography created ‘the Papuan nation’ inducing the people to forget their original tribal divisions and come together under a single, common banner. If this was the case, it might be suggested that the cultural templates of the Papuan tribes presented common traits that could function as catalysts prompting the rise of feelings of commonness. On the basis of this assumption any analysis exploring the genesis of nationalism needs to determine to which extent an ‘original’ Papuan history has been preserved in the
colonial-induced nationalist historiography and/or how Papuan historical/mythical narratives have been used to create it. Departing from the existing archival records and the existing anthropological and historical literature, I will follow a journey à rebours in time in order to identify the locus or substratum of Papuan identity on which it was possible to found a common nationalist discourse.

In my opinion such a locus can be identified only by recovering original Papuan hermeneutics, visible in Papuan narratives, that is the structural-semantic relations underlying Papuan modes of narration and representation. As I argue in chapter I, in regard to the nexus of religion-culture, these structural semantic relations appear to have been determined and defined by processes of adjustment to a particular ecosystem prompting simultaneous processes of internal integration among the members of the group sharing common ecological boundaries. Consequently notions of time and space appear to be the product of these very processes and function as the basic organising principles of religious and cultural templates. The intrinsic semantics and functional modes of these notions need to be defined and explored in order to identify Papuan historical consciousness as well as historicism.

Historical documents contained in European archives, dating back to the period between the XIV and XIX centuries, contain references to the existence of ‘a’ Papuan people and their activity in the South-east Asian region. While many Asian and South-east Asian kingdoms had a long tradition of historical recording, the Pupuans were still relying on mnemonic devices and ritual repetitiveness to transmit historical events.

The arrival of the missionaries in the territory, followed some years later by that of the Dutch colonial administrators, represented a turning point in Papuan history as well as historiography. Historical events, witnessed by the Europeans inhabiting the
territory, began to be recorded in letters, reports and official documents. The archive of Papuan events that was thus being slowly constructed consisted, however, of a fragmentary record of events similar to the Roman annalistic tradition, but from which I believe it is possible to elicit ‘chronicles’, destitute of momentousness, of Papuan history. What characterises this type of historical archive regarding Papuan nationalist and historical discourses is the emerging latent antithesis between the assumed or presumed Western creationism, manifesting itself in processes of acculturation and assimilation, and a non-Western parthenogenesis embedded in the phenomenon, often referred to as revivalism or nativism and expressed in the so-called cargo cults.

**The ‘Vexata Quaestio’ of Hermeneutics**

“In the beginning there was the West. 
And the West was with God. 
And the West was God”.

My parody of the first lines of John’s Gospel aims at stressing the nature of colonial, historical and anthropological epistemologies. The Christian West has constantly acted as the frame of reference against which non-Western societies have been analysed and ‘judged’. The deriving prejudices, in fact, are nothing but the outcome of this despicable act of misjudgment. The West has for centuries embodied the evangelical Logos, the absolute hypostasis of God’s order, perfection, truth and intelligence. The ‘Rest’, in this biased perspective, came to be envisaged as the result of an ‘act of creation’ of Western wisdom.

The notion of primitivism associated with pre-literate societies, has caused the rise of prejudices and preconceptions that have conditioned the study of cultural systems. It has been argued in Marxist circles that processes of modernisation-Westernisation would have inevitably prompted processes of secularisation of
indigenous systems of socio-political and economic organization. The argument postulated that the worldview of pre-literate societies was inherently religious, magic and mythical lacking of any notion based on scientific empiricism or rationalism. Modernisation would have transformed the *homo religious* into a *homo theoreticus*. A sort of Copernican revolution would have taken place in which anthropocentrism would have replaced the original theocentrism and western rationalism would have swept away the assumed irrationalism of native epistemology and hermeneutics. The emergence of nationalist ideologies and movements in non-western societies, while on one hand seemingly to be the outcome of either adjustment or resistance to processes of induced modernisation and acculturation, is also characterised by the revival of autochthonous cultural beliefs, values and expressions. This leads one to hypothesise that, more than being acculturated, non-western societies tended to translate the intrusive structures and ideas through their own epistemological categories before systemising them into their autochthonous gnoseology and cultural templates. In the following chapters this tendency will clearly emerge.

Current hermeneutics, notwithstanding the attempt made by some authors to break away from the tenets tenaciously sustained and divulged by a traditional and sclerotic academia, have continued to maintain and foster the ethnocentrism of the beginnings. On the other hand, independent non-western epistemologies have failed to be developed by that same intelligentsia that fought against colonial rule and its attempt to destroy non-western identities in the name of a ‘constructed’ ethnic and cultural distinctiveness. Thus epistemological colonialism has replaced territorial colonialism. The ‘Asian values’ debate can be regarded as a clear attempt to move
away from Western imposed notions and views of the world and of history towards the recovery of autochthonous, pre-colonial hermeneutics and epistemologies.²⁰

The existence of the phenomenon of revivalism, which casts a shadow of doubt over the validity of the tenets of Marxist and intellectualist epistemologies, induces to critically question some of the inveterate notions and concepts of the primitivist-evolutionist approach and acknowledge the inherent originality and rationality of pre-literate cultural systems. Fabian, in his *Time and the Other*, has pointed out that the misconception and misrepresentation of non-western societies has been generated by the methodology of anthropological studies which were, at times, serving colonial interests, and which translated spatial and cultural differences into temporal distances.²¹

The challenge is at this stage and under these circumstances to identify a new mode of analysis and interpretation capable of reinstating cultural entities in their autochthonous and ‘original’ perspective, although I acknowledge that “the origin is possible and conceivable only in disguise”.²² Consequently the silence of the archives, the ‘momentary’ disappearance of the Papuans from the records, becomes a ‘momentous’ and significant fact, although it is merely a ‘disguise’. The problem with archival material is that, as Derrida points out, “the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event”.²³ In other words, ‘factuality’ is the *condicio

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sine qua non of ‘historicity’. The ‘decision’ to include the document or record the event in the “sequential and iussive” archive determines its historicity and therefore the possibility of history.24

It appears evident that any attempt to reconstruct and chronicle the historical developments of cultural realities that lack written documents proves to be a sort of Sisyphus fatigue. In fact the historian, struggling to attain a tantalising scientific objectivity, tends inevitably to adopt epistemological and hermeneutical parameters and criteria derived from his personal cultural perceptions and experiences and to apply them to the analysis of events and activities of a perceived ‘unknown and foreign world’. The antithesis between the emic and the etic, the crux of anthropological analyses, besides appearing in all its crude reality, stands here as an insurmountable hurdle. The cause for the existence of such a hermeneutical chasm is to be imputed to an epistemology, that acknowledges a large number of followers in modern historiography, claiming that only the histoire événementielle, namely occurred and documented facts, can constitute the object of historical analyses. Consequently what falls outside the ‘realm of factuality’ is mere subjective speculation.25

‘Factual history’, fundamentally concerned with reconstructing occurrences in chronological and causational succession, betrays its bias by extracting and isolating events from a supposed and fictitiously constructed historical ‘progression’ and

24Foucault argues that “The necessity of Madness, throughout the history of the West, is linked to the deciding gesture which detaches from the background noise, and from its continuous monotony, a meaningful language that is transmitted and consummated in time; briefly it is linked to the possibility of history”. Quoted from Derrida J., Writing and Difference…cit., p. 42. Cfr. Foucault M., Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, Pantheon, New York, 1965.

25This is the stream of historiography founded at the beginning of the XIX century by Leopold von Ranke and known as the Geschichtswissenschaft or ‘science of history’. A brief summary of Ranke’s historical methodology can be found in the preface to his The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, first published in 1843 (republished: AMS Press, New York, 1975, pp. 1-4) in which he stated the importance of archival documents for historical reconstruction.
charging them with pretentious universal significations. This type of methodology consequently hinders the understanding of the motivations of historical agencies, yielding to artificiality, misconception and void rhetoric. It derives that an historical analysis that aims at reconstructing a history wie es eigentlich gewesen (as it happened) must consider other underlying factors in the genesis of events and phenomena.

The necessity to consider and examine psychological factors, individual and collective, involved in the genesis and spatio-temporal occurrence of historical events emerges a fortiori when confronted with the unreliability of historicist assumptions and patterns which tend to indulge in universalistic generalisations. This appears evident in the new historicist trend, inaugurated in the 1980s, and known as New Historicism, which postulates the shaping intentions in literary and political behaviour and their linkage with cultural phenomena, the Foucaultian relation between power and discourse, the historicity of the text and the textuality of history.

New Historicism seems to have abandoned its universalising philosophical and teleological habitus to embrace a methodological approach, influenced by a positive evaluation of the so-called micro-history, and what Ricoeur refers to as a

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26 Two remarks must be made in regard to this type of historiography: 1) in its hermeneutics chronology and causation come to constitute an indissoluble identity; 2) the historical ‘progression’ thus construed betrays the intentional ordering and interest of the historian disregarding the ‘real’ causes of examined events.


“hermeneutics of suspicion”.

In this new epistemological milieu historicism is conceived as the spatio-temporal ‘contextualisation’ of events, a process which entails a “formal comparative placing of an event, form of behaviour, or concept in a series of others which are similar though they may be separated in time and in space”.

If this new historicist approach has the merit to bring about a deeper and less prejudiced and stereotypical understanding of historical processes, it fails in the long run to solve the vexata quaestio regarding the definition of ‘historical fact’. This limit may be overcome by coupling the theoretical parameters and tenets of historical ‘contextualisation’ with Sahlins’ theory of the ‘structure of the conjuncture’ and ‘structuration’.

Sahlins argues that the ‘structure of the conjuncture’ is “the way cultural categories are actualised in a specific context through the interested action of the historical agents and the pragmatics of interaction”.

Historical events, or more precisely, the events of historical significance, are produced by the structure-transforming process that Sahlins calls ‘structuration’, that is the structural change that action triggers through its own products. The event or fact, consequently, comes...

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33 Levi G., ‘On Microhistory’, in *Burke*, op. cit., p.108. As Levi points out, the process of contextualising “involves not only the identification of a set of things sharing certain characteristics but can work also on the level of analogy- that is, in an area where the perfect similarity is between the relationships linking things rather than between the things themselves (…). The similarity is between systems of relations involving different elements”. *Ibid.*, p.108.


35 For a complete discussion of the processes of structuration see: Sahlins M., *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities; Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Island Kingdom*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1981. Sahlins develops the theory of ‘structure of the conjuncture’ in relation to his analysis of the sandalwood trade between Hawaii and foreign enclaves during the XIX century. He noticed that the Hawaiian chiefs, endowed since time immemorial with taboo privileges regarding the land’s products and valuables, were able to monopolise the sandalwood trade when foreign traders started to arrive in the archipelago for supplies. Therefore, concludes Sahlins, the ‘structure’, that is the system of chief taboo privileges, ‘in conjuncture’ with the occurrence of particular historical circumstances (the arrival of foreign traders and the demand for sandalwood) caused the emergence of a significative event which changed Hawaiian society.
to be envisaged as the empirical form of the system, an immediate effect of the process of ‘structuration’\textsuperscript{36}: the structural discontinuities present in this dialectic process concur to produce the event, otherwise it would be simply the manifested unfolding of the cultural order.\textsuperscript{37} In other words the event is what alters the existing relations within the system.

Sahlins’ hermeneutical approach is therefore particularly effective in the analysis of pre-literate societies as the West Papuan. The task of reconstructing an objective account of historical development in cultures that have no written records requires an holistic approach that considers cultural and psycho-sociological factors in complementary association with ethnographical-ethnological and archaeological evidence. In the context of ‘pre-literate history’,\textsuperscript{38} in fact, the historian has to ‘read’ history not in the objectivity of the written document but in that of the material culture and beliefs of a human group. Besides creating a conceptual template that takes into account differences in language, cognitive systems and symbols and the meaning of time and space, the historian has to become the active observer of a new challenging reality.\textsuperscript{39} It emerges that history has to be intended as not only a ‘narrative’, but also as a ‘structuring’ process.

\textsuperscript{37} Sahlins, ‘The Return of the Event’…\textit{cit.}, p.82. Sahlins identifies three moments in the dialectics that produce the event: 1) instantiation, that is the presence of a particular cultural category; 2) denouement, the occurrence of the incidence that triggers change; 3) totalisation, the return of the consequences to the system by the attribution of meanings. According to Sahlins an event is nothing but he outcome of a synthesis: “the synthesis requires complementary processes of mediation: the evolution of the global forces to the terms of the local action and conversely the expansion of local actions to global significances”. Sahlins, \textit{ibid.}, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{38} I intentionally avoid here the traditional term ‘pre-history’ that, besides alluding to notions of primitivism, implicitly denies the existence of historical narratives for people without written documents or who have failed to develop a system of writing.
\textsuperscript{39} In this regard see: Marcus G.E. & Fischer M.M.J., \textit{Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences}, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986. This procedure to reconstruct and analyse historical developments is that proposed by \textit{L’École des Annales} in France in the middle of the XX century. \textit{L’École des Annales} privileged a history of structures to the traditional history of narratives. Robinson, one of the members of the new stream stated that “the New History will avail itself of all those discoveries that are being made about mankind by anthropologists,
In the light of this new perspective cultures, believed to be a shared web of symbolic meanings or significations, are treated as readable and/or decipherable texts. The intelligibility of the text is obtained by engaging in cross-cultural communication, juxtaposition becoming an important component of interpretative anthropology. This juxtaposition, envisaged as the metaphor of an inter-cultural dialogue, is based on a paratactic relation between the examiner and the examined, each maintaining unaltered their constitutive and connotative characteristics, and never develops into syntax. It is evident that this approach tends inherently to break away from and overcome the limitations of both the Parsonian interpretative tradition, that assumes dealing with each society in its own terms, and the structuralism of Levi-Strauss that, by constructing taxonomies, strove to identify a universal syntax for all existing cultural systems. As Marcus and Fischer point out

The authority of grand theory styles seems suspended for the moment in favour of a close consideration of issues as contextuality, the meaning of social life to those who enact it, and the explanations of exceptions and indeterminants rather than the regularities in phenomena observed – all issues that make problematic what were taken for granted as facts or certainties on which the validity of paradigms had rested.

Consequently in this new epistemological atmosphere relativism, until now regarded as the doctrine inclining towards an apathetic or hyper-critical scepticism, comes to be re-evaluated as a hermeneutical methodology, a medium of economists, psychologists and sociologists”. See: Robinson J.H., The New History, n.p., New York, 1912.

Geertz C., op.cit., p.5.

Marcus & Fischer, op.cit., pp.30-31. It is evident that critical anthropology moves away from post-modernist ‘deconstructionism’ that tended to fragment cultural discourses into a series of aporetic texts each endowed with an independent meaning which undermined the meaning of the discourse itself as an intelligible and meaningful whole. In this regard see: Derrida J., Aporias, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

Marcus & Fischer, op.cit., p.28.

ibid., p.8.
interpretation\textsuperscript{44} in which scientific objectivity is guaranteed by the ‘ironic’ treatment of selected symbols and images of a given culture.\textsuperscript{45}

The structure of the conjuncture approach combined with that of interpretative anthropology provide the appropriate lens through which to read Western narratives of pre-literate societies and identify ‘chronicles’, in the sense of Derridean ‘traces’.\textsuperscript{46} Such ‘traces’ could constitute the basis of possible Papuan historiographies as well as the re-writing of both mnemonic experiences and textual legacies.

Furthermore, the ‘microscopic-telescopic’ or structural-narrative approach of interpretative anthropology, apparently bridging the gap between teleological historicism, concerned with meaning, and historiography, concerned with chronology and factuality, seems to bring about a re-evaluation of those ‘fluid’ traditions not fixed in the written text and in which historical processes and developments have been ‘stratigraphically’ re-arranged and condensed.\textsuperscript{47} Although I have not directly accessed oral accounts of Papuan history but only some of the written texts of the oral tradition, I believe that the latter represents a valuable source of information since it reflects Papuan constructions and interpretations of spatio-temporal events. The fact that oral history is more about meaning than about facts\textsuperscript{48} explains why, in the reconstruction

\textsuperscript{44} ibid., p.32.  
\textsuperscript{45} For the use of irony as a hermeneutical tool see: Marcus & Fischer, ibid., pp.12-14. Cfr. White H. V., \textit{Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe}, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973. As Marcus & Fischer argue irony as a means of representing social reality comes to be enhanced when there is a heightening of “perceptions throughout society of living through historic moments of profound change. The content of social theory becomes politicised and historicised, the limiting conditions of theory becoming clearer”. ibid., p. 15.  
\textsuperscript{47} For the importance and the re-evaluation of oral history see: Prins G., ‘Oral History’, in Burke, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.114-137.  
\textsuperscript{48} Portelli A., ‘What makes oral history different’, in Perks R. & Thomson A. (eds.), \textit{The Oral History Reader}, Routledge, London, 1998, p.67. Portelli argues that what makes oral history different is that “it tells us less about events than about their meaning. This does not imply that oral history has no factual validity. Interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events; they always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the non-hegemonic classes. From this point of view, the only problem posed by oral sources is that of verification”. ibid. Furthermore Vansina shows how it is possible to identify and decode in the last oral text of the chain of transmission the several
of the history of pre-literate societies, it becomes important as evidence and a source of information.

Mythological accounts collected by anthropologists, missionaries and colonial administrators are able to provide the historian with the hermeneutical and epistemological context in which to systemise Papuan chronicles. As Levi-Strauss has argued, myths are communications transmitted in a language unknown to the ‘outsider’ or the ‘other’, but susceptible to being deciphered. Kamma states that

What is curious about myths is not that they have been composed but that they are believed. Belief though depends on the existence of a specific tradition. Every myth must contain a point of contact for identification. Not everything is believed or suitable for being handed over to later generations. A mythology without a system would be chaotic, it would not provide a susceptible basis for society.

It follows that mythology cannot be based on an unconscious structure as the primitivist tradition argues. Myths are not the product of what has been labelled ‘pre-logical thinking’.

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51 Levi-Strauss, discussing the logic of totemic classifications, pointed out that the existence of similarities between different cultures can be explained by using Jung’s concepts of ‘archetypes’ or ‘collective unconsciousness’ arguing that “it is only forms and not contents which can be common. If there are common contents the reason must be sought either in the objective properties of particular nature or artificial entities or in diffusion and borrowing, in either case, that is, outside the mind”. Although Levy-Strauss rejected Levy-Bruhl’s theory regarding primitive pre-logical thinking, he ended up falling victim of a tautological speculation. See: Levi-Strauss C., *The Savage Mind*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1962, pp.65-66.
An attentive analysis of myths contradicts primitivist assumptions, both of the evolutionist and diffusionist schools, revealing that there is a conscious participation in mythopoeic activities. Culture can be considered, in fact, as the inherent and autonomous capacity of the individual to use symbols to structure and elaborate in intelligible terms both his world-view and his way of life. If it is true that symbolic structures ‘make’ man, at the same time man creates *ex nihilo* or *ex novo* symbolic structures. Being contemporaneously the *agens* and *patiens* of symbolic systems, the individual can change structures by operating on the symbols and their semantic value.

It appears evident that there is no need to suppose a hermeneutical or logic asymmetry in order to explain cultural differences. Radical pan-relativistic views appear to be unable to understand the underlying external and internal factors that shape cultural beliefs and values. By different means and methods, rationality, with its inherent tendency toward the search for universal truths and rational references, reaches the same failing conclusions.\(^53\) This becomes obvious when considering the relativist basis of rationalism.\(^54\)

Confronted with the particular reality of oral societies, a current of modern studies has deemed it necessary to develop a new epistemological approach, known as ‘perspectivism’. Perspectivism is believed to be the appropriate hermeneutical domain for providing proper moral and political judgements, concerning the nature of the *summum bonum*, and the teleology and methodology of political and social actions of

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\(^{54}\) In my opinion, relativism is not antithetical to rationalism. On the contrary it represents its foundation. Since the conscious awareness of diversity and pluralism triggers a process of commensuration and reflection by which the individual comes to picture reality and elaborate the category/perception of the ‘self’, a complementary or parallel process of abstraction, moving from empirical relativism to metaphysical rationalism, takes place. Consequently ontology and epistemology
a group. The basic assumption of this new trend of studies is that there may exist ‘different worlds’, shaped by different external factors and internal processes.

The assumption that myths are the product of a conscious epistemological activity finds support in Kamma’s analysis of West Papuan mythology. Kamma argues that, since the meaning of the symbolic representations is hidden or unintelligible to the non-initiated, and that one must be initiated or educated to their understanding, mythopoeic processes must entail a conscious participation. The role of consciousness in the creation of myths also accounts for the oral nature of native religious texts and represents the reason why these have never been fixed in canonical and definite texts. If, in fact, unconsciousness was the source of symbolic meanings, these could have changed little over time. Kamma, once again, effectively illustrates the point stating that oral traditions that are shaped into myths are always on the move along with the culture of a group in a given time and place.

Sahlins identified the same process in his analysis of the ‘structure’ of Hawaiian myths. The peculiar structure of the myth allows for the explanation of the consonances and dissonances created by historical changes. Induced changes do not affect the mythical structure that continues to operate: the Hawaiians, according to Sahlins, continued to treat Cook as their God Lono in an expectable structural way notwithstanding the disruptive elements introduced by the British that affected sensitive areas of Hawaiian society:

The irruption of Captain Cook from beyond the horizon was truly an unprecedented event, never seen before. But by thus encompassing the

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55 The epistemological approach of ‘perspectivism’ has been devised by Steven Lukes who elaborated on Geertz’s distinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ description as delineated in his The Interpretation of Cultures. See: Lukes, op.cit., pp.298-305.


57 In this regard see: Sahlins, op. cit.; cfr. Islands of History…cit.
existentially unique in the conceptually familiar, the people embed their present in the past.58

As to the stratigraphical structure of mythological systems Levi-Strauss, although reluctantly, since it tended to implicitly contradict his belief that the unconscious played a major role in mythopoeia, had to acknowledge that myths often exhibited a ‘slated structure’ which comes to the surface through a process of repetition. However the slates are not identical. And since the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (an impossible achievement if, as it happens, the contradiction is real), a theoretically infinite number of states will be generated, each one slightly different from the others. Thus, myth grows spiral-wise until the intellectual impulse which has produced it is exhausted.59

Levi-Strauss’s reflection appears to undermine the assumption of the homeostatic nature of myth and oral traditions as well as that of their metaphysical or imaginative origin. Changes within the mythological system are not exclusively produced by external influences or contingencies but also by an internal, autochthonous development. As Goody has pointed out, in the oral tradition of mythological accounts innovations are accepted as if they are believed to be sensible and useful and reflect the needs of the community, a process however that he believes does not foster reflexive thought.60 An attentive analysis of the process of mythopoeia reveals the inappropriateness of Goody’s conclusions.

The reiterative aspect of myth in ritual, its objectification into standard practices testifies to the existence of reflexive thought among pre-literate people. Consequently the fixation of a mythical account into a written text, subtracting it from the flux and influence of daily contingencies depriving it of its functional vitality, decrees its death. It is not rationalisation but the authoritative standardisation by the act of writing that is

58 Sahlins, *Islands of History...cit.*, p. 146.
the tombstone of myth. Thus the inconsistencies that come to be identified in the
written text are not derived from the incapacity of the natives to perceive rational
relations but from the limits of an inappropriate medium. The inconsistencies
crystallised in the written text belong to different temporal strata and can be used to
reconstruct diachronic developments revealing exogenous and endogenous
innovations, foreign influences and autochthonous developments. While on the other
hand, their synchronic reading supports the notion of primitivism and timelessness.

Christianity may be assumed as the common ground in which Western
rationalism and non-Western revivalism confronted each other on their own terms.
The presence of Western Christianity in the Papuan world introduced new
gnoseological and hermeneutical categories. In order to assess the extent and depth of
Christian influence, that is to determine the epistemological boundaries of Christian
influence in the Papuan worldview, it is necessary to examine the original,
autochthonous conceptions of time and space of the Pauans.

Space and time are, in fact, the organising principles of human cognition. The
representation and meaning of reality rests on and is shaped by these two categories.
By establishing the socio-cultural meaning and function of these categories, it will be
possible to determine the meaning of history of the Papuan people as well as to
identify the ontological locus of identity and ethnicity.

The new understanding of oral history, until now relegated to the status of a
mere document for the synchronic analyses of anthropologists, brings the so-called
‘history-less’ peoples into the spatio-temporal boundaries of history. It is through the
re-evaluation of oral traditions and their relation with the existing historical narratives
that, as Eric Wolf argued, “both the people who claim history as their own and the

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people to whom history has been denied emerge as the participants in the same historical trajectory.”\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{Papuan Time-Reckoning Systems.}

In the collective imaginary of modern societies history has unconsciously assumed the meaning of ‘time’. Originally the former was believed to be the autoptic account of events and vicissitudes of peoples along a continuous diachronic line. Temporality was simply the background on which those events were classified and interpreted according to the rationale of the law of causality.\textsuperscript{62} In the course of the centuries, history has assumed a different meaning, gradually identifying itself with the notion of time so that historical narratives come to be envisaged as “narratives of time”.

Because of the cumulative effect of temporality and the inherent authoritativeness that derives from perceptions and conditions of priority and eldership, history has become the foundation of legitimacy of power agencies and structures when elaborated in the light of a peculiar and \textit{ad hoc} historiography. Historiography is, consequently, nothing but a politicised version of history.

The process of the ‘politicisation’ of time\textsuperscript{63} explains why many nations are regarded by XIX and XX century historians as ‘history-less’ or ‘nations without history’. The concept of Marxist derivation, based on Durkheim’s assumption that

\textsuperscript{62} The word ‘history’ (Lat. \textit{Historia}; Gr. ‘\textit{ιρτο}ια’) derives from the Greek radical ‘\textit{ιδ}-’ (transliteration: ‘\textit{vid}’-) that means literally ‘I know because I have seen’.
\textsuperscript{63} By ‘politicisation’ of time I mean the same process known as the creation or invention of ‘Public Time’. See: Northrop F. S.C., \textit{Philosophical Anthropology and Practical Politics}, Macmillan, New York, 1960.
time is fundamentally a ‘social given’

64 Durkheim E., *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1915, pp.9-11. Durkheim writes in this regard: “We cannot conceive of time except by distinguishing its different moments. Now what is the origin of differentiation? (…) in reality, observation proves that these indispensable guidelines [which provide]…an abstract and impersonal frame (…) like an endless chart, where all duration is spread out before the mind, and upon which all possible vents can be located in relation to fixed and determined guidelines (…) are taken from social life. The divisions into days, weeks, months, years, etc. correspond to the periodical recurrence of feasts and public ceremonies. A calendar expresses the rhythm of collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity (…) what the category of time expresses is the time common to the group, a social time, so to speak”.


is dead, it has lost its original meaning and vitality becoming ideology “with a purpose, designed to control individuals or motivate societies, or inspire classes”\(^{67}\).

The distinction between heritage, as memory of the past typical of pre-literate societies, and history of modern or modernised societies is able to give reason for the apparently different function and meaning of time between pre-literate and modern societies. As Hoskins points out, ‘Western history’ presents itself as “an ideology of cumulative, irreversible change” in which the past is envisaged as being part of a linear time line, marked by distinct, non-repeating events in which individuals emerge as actors and their deeds as unique occurrences. Thus the past refers to a definite series of actions discontinuous with the present.\(^{68}\) On the other hand, if the past is conceived as heritage it is susceptible to being repeated, although transformed, since it does not refer to specific events but to potentialities. As Hoskins effectively specifies in this regard:

Instead of a line of unique occurrences, the past is an array of established sequences, like the stages of a ritual which can be instantiated in various forms. Thus a headhunting raid may be carried out by many different actors, but they must follow the proper procedures. Its characteristic ritual forms (songs, dances, offerings) can even be adapted to other contexts without a total loss of meaning. The ‘heritage’ of the past allows for a more flexible synthesis of new senses that are attached to a shared sequence.\(^{69}\)

The conceptualisation of the past in terms of heritage explains why processes of assimilation, acculturation and adaptation, at the time of the contact era, became possible: new concepts came to be systemised and contextualised within the existing traditional cultural frameworks. Only when heritage was transmogrified into history, creating an ontological discontinuity between the past and the present, did conflicts

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\(^{68}\) Hoskins, *op.cit.*, p.308.

\(^{69}\) *ibid.*, p.308.
arise between the colonised and coloniser. On the basis of these considerations one may understand why the category and notion of time in pre-literate societies appears to be cyclic or repetitive. This perception of repetitive time stems from an ‘optical’ distortion produced by the application of Western categories.

An attentive examination, in fact, reveals that a cyclic concept of time reckoning is not antithetical to linear temporality, instead both represent an integrated complementary system. Cyclical flow merges into a linear temporal continuum so that synchrony, the intelligible structure that survives all changes, merges with diachrony, the processes which submit organisms to irreversible change. Gell, in his study regarding the *ida* initiation ritual celebrated by the Umeda of West Papua, argues that the idea of cyclic or repetitive time that characterises life cycle and fertility rites, is not a *drama religiosum* designed to make the prospect of death less terrifying. Instead it is an attempt to resolve the ambiguity of time that is both an Heraclitean continuous process, in which nothing remains the same, and a synchronic, Parmenidean opposition between young and old. In his opinion the solution to the antithesis is attained

by mutual accommodation between the two: diachrony submits to synchrony by becoming an oscillation which never departs too far from the axis of the synchronous ‘now’: synchrony submits to diachrony in admitting the regular induction of fresh cohorts into the categories it provides; inductions which are generally marked by *rites de passage*.  

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70 Hoskins in this regard writes: “My distinction between Kodi construction of the past which I call heritage and the externally introduced ideology of sejarah has many dimensions. The one preserves evidence of the past and procedures for evaluating it that valorised a vanished order; the other encourages an alienation from much of the past but preserves records of certain persons and events who are seen as meaningful to the course of nationalist struggle. The one looks to objects and their locations as the starting points for narrative accounts, while the other prefers biographies of heroic protagonists. The one emphasises continuities and the legitimating power of the ancestors, while the other seeks out discontinuities and the ruptures that gave birth to a new society”. Hoskins, *ibid.*, p.332.


72 Gell, *op.cit.*, pp.343-344.
The structural compatibility between linear and cyclic time and the qualitative heterogeneity of time among some societies has also been pointed out by Clifford Geertz in his essay ‘Person, Time and Conduct in Bali’.\textsuperscript{73} Geertz asserts that in Bali permutational and Gregorian calendars coexist and are not incommensurable or conflicting since permutational calendars express qualitative time measurements, while the Gregorian calendar expresses quantitative measurements. Thus the former tends to ‘de-temporalise’ the notion of time itself so that Balinese time comes to be perceived as a “motionless present, a vector-less now” in which all conceivable people are present simultaneously.\textsuperscript{74} At the same time this process has the effect of depersonalising the individual that is not seen as living a historically unique life in a non-repeating durational time, but to be a repetitive token fossilised in a timeless space.\textsuperscript{75} Under these circumstances the recording of events appears to be of secondary importance since it is the synchronic dimension that prevails over any diachronic development. Permutational calendars are not organic systems of time measurement but a component of a system of action aiming at guaranteeing the ‘synchronic perpetuation’ of Balinese society.

Geertz’s theory has been criticised by Maurice Bloch who argues that Geertz has interpreted ritual messages, aiming at legitimising authority, as the Balinese cognitive mode of time reckoning. Consequently Geertz’s speculation is inherently flawed since it confuses ideology with cognition. While the latter is a human universal, a mode by

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{ibid.}, p.404.
\textsuperscript{75} According to Geertz this explains why Balinese society has adopted a naming-system based on ‘social placement’ (function/performance), kinship and teknonymy.
which humans structure experiences and relations, ideologies, on the other hand, are
‘functional’ ideas aiming at legitimising authority in ritual contexts.\textsuperscript{76}

According to Bloch, the Balinese temporal system does not exclude change: a
universal linear time exists in Bali and it is adopted for practical purposes.\textsuperscript{77} This
however means simply juxtaposing a dual system of time reckoning that does not
consider the semantics of different temporal systems. Meaning is always inherently
associated with a specific function that is culturally or socially determined.

Gell shows that among the Umeda, time is modalised rather than metricised so
that a temporal field is represented as a spread of equi-probable contingencies not
calculated by any regularised schedule. Since the Umeda lack an external public
schedule, they need to make ‘situationally’ specific judgements regarding their
location in relation to their temporal neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{78} It appears that the situational
reference tends to ‘spatialise’ time. An analogous process has been identified in Bali
by Howe, who asserts that the temporal flow is not perceived and conceived in terms
of ‘duration’ but as a process involving the creation of intervals, transitional points or
“nodes” of time. It is in these points of caesura where change occurs.\textsuperscript{79}

Although space and time are fundamentally different, as Hobart states,\textsuperscript{80} I
believe that the categories of time and space are interdependent and constitute the

Bloch cites Hobart who claims that only priests in their official capacity used permutational calendars
while agriculturalists used luni-solar calendars. Hobart M., \textit{Orators and Patrons: two types of political
leaders in Balinese village society}, in Bloch M. (ed.), \textit{Political Oratory in Traditional Society},
Academic Press, London, 1975. Hobart’s statements were not corroborated however by Howe’s
findings which reveal the use of permutational calendars in pragmatic contexts and not only in ritual
16, 1981, pp.220-234. The use of a dual system of time reckoning is a common practice in many
societies.


\textsuperscript{78} Gell A., \textit{The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images}, Berg,

\textsuperscript{79} Howe, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.220-234.

\textsuperscript{80} Hobart M., ‘Anthropos through the Looking-Glass: or How to teach the Balinese to Bark’, in
abstract forms by which humans perceive the world and construct, order and store the knowledge of their perceptions and reasoning. An analysis of the modes and processes by which Balinese construct ‘historical’ texts may cast a light on the relationship between spatial and temporal patterns of time reckoning.

Vickers, in his article ‘Balinese Text and Historiography’, points out that the Balinese perceive time in qualitative terms, as a series “of past events patterning present events, meaning that something which happened in the past is not over forever and never recoverable”. Events tend to ‘coincide’, in the language of the Balinese *sedeng luunga*, a “process of being made good”. Vickers’ philological analysis of Balinese texts provides insight into the modes of Balinese temporal cognition. It clearly appears that time, and consequently history (knowledge of the past) has to be understood not in terms of the relation cause-effect, but in terms of effect-meaning. It follows that time is a qualitative res, not a quantitative one. The process of ‘qualitative coincidence’, identified by Vickers, does not seem to exclude a spatial dimension. A confirmation of this hypothesis can be traced in Papuan mythology.

In Papuan myths temporal discourses appear to be connected to spatial ones. Among the Marind-anim on the south coast, as among the Biak people in the north for instance, time and space are not separated entities. The *Dema* Sosom of the Marind-anim tribes travels from the east every year at the time when the east monsoon has caused the swamps to dry up. He travels westwards from the village of Kondo to that of Anasi on the coast and then from there turning inland to visit the villages of Saror and Kuprik. It takes almost six months to visit all the villages from east to west, the


duration of the dry season when the gardens produce yams and taro in abundance. The dry season is therefore the ‘time’ in which the ‘sacred space’ of the Sosom-mirav, or Sosom-place, is built by the men of each village and in which initiation rites take place. The progression of the Sosom cult from east to west is translated into a temporal cluster, the ritual lasting for the period of the dry season, contrasted to the wet season associated with the west. As Molenaar argues: a category with a temporal implication such as life/death, can function with a spatial reference to the place of the living and the space of the dead. And thanks to the non-chronological, non-geometric nature of space and time, they can present shifting boundaries in the present. Past and future are not necessarily divorced from the present.

During both ritual occurrences initiation rites are celebrated synchronising and coordinating the social system, structured by age groups, with the spatial-temporal flow. Gell, in his analysis of the Ida ritual among the Umeda of West Papua, shows that these rituals seek to create order and pattern in Umeda society in coordination with the natural cyclical flow. At the same time, however, it functions as a means to pre-empt nature by cultural means: the cassowaries, that play an important role in the ritual, are considered by the natives the Lords of Misrule, representing man in ‘natural’ guise, fertile but disorderly, free but anti-social. The scenario of the ritual is the subjugation of this natural spontaneity, which alone can ensure the perpetuation of Umeda society but which at the same time threatens its very essence.

82 ibid.
84 Van Baal, ibid., pp.498-499. Van Baal points out that regarding the duration of the Mayo cult celebrations there is disaccord among the scholars: Heldering maintains that the Mayo cult was repeated at a interval of four years while Vigen advances an interval of eight years.
86 Gell, The Anthropology of Time...cit., p. 46.
When the Umeda grow old they come to resemble cassowaries, living an independent and autonomous life with their wives and children in the bush. The ritual acts as a stratagem to counteract this tendency for Umeda society to dissolve into its constituent parts since it is only by asserting its cultural and social hegemony over the wilderness and nature that it will be able to perpetuate itself.\(^{87}\) Time appears, during the ritual, to be reversed in order to forestall the tendency to dissolve. The senior takes precedence over the junior, so that the representation of lifecycle phases occurs in a reversed, symbolic time. This however is only apparent, and stems from the existence of the synchronic, immutable temporal oppositions between senior and junior members of society. These are temporal statuses that do not change although the individual who occupies them does.\(^{88}\)

Barnes, in his study of the collective thought in Kedang, further corroborates the theory regarding the need in pre-literate societies to overcome the dichotomy between linear and cyclic time by pointing out that, although in Kedang telling time is based on the eternally recurrent, time is conceived as oriented, irreversible although repetitive. Time reversal, in fact, is believed to bring disaster, a return to primeval chaos or entropy:

When the souls of the ancestors are called back, it is in controlled ceremonies and at special portals or points of origin, which allow their orderly and temporary presence. All of these ideas have in common the conviction that the orderly way to return to the starting point is by proceeding through a sequence to its completion without ever reversing the direction.\(^{89}\)

\(^{87}\) ibid., pp. 42-43.

\(^{88}\) ibid., pp. 48-49.

\(^{89}\) Barnes R.H., *Kedang. A Study of the Collective Thought of an Eastern Indonesian People*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974, pp. 128-129. The same belief is found among many peoples and still survives in some of our traditional western celebrations. For instance, Halloween when the doors to the netherworld are open, or in the practice of spiritualist seances. The fact that in many myths, from Orpheus to the Papuan myth of Manseren Manggundi itself, the heroes visiting the world of the dead have to walk backwards to reach again the world of the living, is significative since it underlies the necessity to follow the normal processes of natural laws.
The fact that the pre-literate populations of West Papua were able to coordinate ritual celebrations over a relatively long span of time indicates that they had the means to record the intervals between the beginning and the end of the celebrations. This consisted not only in the qualitative recording of temporal intervals but also in referring to the spatial interval between the village that hosted the first celebration and the one that hosted the last. Space, consequently, is not thought of as a geometric entity, as time is not believed to be an abstract quantitative sequence. Space becomes temporal and time spatial thus constituting an indissoluble correlation. As space, time is also tridimensional, with successiveness, irreversibility and transitivity constituting its dimensions.90 The progression of the ritual is in fact determined by this tridimensional pattern.

The same temporal-spatial template is present in Biak mythology in which west-east journeys have a temporal connotation, being associated with the beginning of the new era of Koreri.91 Analogously spatio-temporal correlations are found among the Muyuw of Woodlark Island. According to Damon, among the Muyuw, the New Year ceremonies are not tied to specific phases of the moon but reflect a spatial progression from east to west in which different regions differentiate themselves in respect to the equinoxes and an intervening solstice events. Damon asserts that “the system’s rigor concerns space (and kinds of time), not the amount or sequence of time”.92

The existence of a spatio-temporal correlation in time computation induces us to consider a fundamental question: that regarding why, of all possible representations of

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91 Kamma, *Koreri...cit.*, p.36.
92 Damon F.H., *From Muyuw to the Tobriands: Transformations along the Northern Side of the Kula Ring*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1990, p.9. According to Damon the spatial vocabulary is more important than the temporal one since there is a tendency to create a centre of power emanating from one of the villages. The situation brings about a pattern of cultural differentiation, with one area designated as the timekeeper (the power centre) and others focusing on other criteria of spatial ordering.
time does a society tend to adopt a particular system of time reckoning. In other words, in order to understand the functional role of time reckoning in a society it is necessary to investigate why different societies adopt different systems of time computation and whether the creation and adoption of a dual system of time reckoning is simultaneous.

A close analysis of the relations between time structures and religious rituals in pre-literate societies reveals that historical contingencies and external influences have introduced new elements into existing cultural systems. Time, in pre-literate societies, appears to be determined by a continuous dialogue between culture and nature. This is exemplified in the association of solar time, determined by fertility rites, with life cycle ceremonies. Among the Marind-anim of West Papua, for instance, the Sosom cult is both a fertility rite, in which Sosom represents the phallus, and a male initiation rite.93

From the various accounts examined regarding West Papuan fertility and initiation rites, it appears that the fertility rites, once incorporated into the initiation ones, tend to be eclipsed by the latter and in areas open to external trade, fertility rites tend gradually to disappear. The change in religious attitude is probably caused by the change in economic patterns of survival and political allegiances. The fertility of the tribe’s land does not represent any more the exclusive source of wealth and subsistence. Goods and commodities can be provided from the extra-tribal world through trade and/or ceremonial exchange or tribute. As Robin Horton pointed out in his analysis of African tribal societies, in those societies moving away from subsistence farming towards a broader intercommunicating zone, socio-economic change affects the structure and meaning of traditional cultural and religious templates.94

The association of cyclic fertility rites and linear initiation rites, of ecological cycle and structural-social time, is an extremely important factor since it signifies the integration of the macro-cosmos (the world) with the micro-cosmos (the group or tribe). Such a condition paves the way for the rise of the belief in a great cyclic period (Universal Conflagration) from which a new and better world will emerge. This correlation, however, does not exclude the conception of linear time. The apocalyptic eschatology that emerges from such correlation has its main source in the temporal linearity of life cycle ceremonies tied to a lunar calendar.\(^{95}\) The latter appear often to be associated with the dead culture-heroes and/or ancestors, a fact that sanctions their disengagement from both initiation and fertility rituals. Gradually they come to constitute a ceremonial group of their own connected to the religious system of belief in spirits and ghosts. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed and corroborated by Held’s findings among the Waropen of Geelvink Bay. Held, in fact, observes that there is a clear-cut distinction between saira or initiation rites and munaba rituals connected to the cult of the dead, a distinction related to the universal opposition of masculine and feminine.\(^{96}\) Held writes in this regard:

> Among many peoples the idea of the ultimate unity of life and death is well-known, although it may not be so strongly alive and although it may at least not have been clearly elaborated in a cosmological system, but they are nevertheless conscious of the mythical oppositional connection between the two sexes and the labour of both. And in any case, the relation between the sexes seen from the mythical point of view is not isolated from the connection between life and death, nor it is detached in a general cosmological sense from the connection between day and night (…).\(^{97}\)

\(^{95}\) Fertility rites follow a solar calendar since these are tied to the movement of the sun that determines the alternation of the seasons on which agrarian activities depend. Consequently this type of time reckoning is cyclic and repetitive. Initiation rites instead are more mystical and are tied to a lunar calendar the cycle of which is relatively short. Alternation and change, in fact, appear to be imperceptible and not tied to the visible cycle of birth, growth and death. Initiation rites, on the basis of which age groups are socially determined, are linear since they embrace the span of life of an individual. At his death the individual transits into the world of the dead becoming a spirit or ghost never to return again.

From the quoted passage one can infer that Held, who carried out field work among the Waropen during the late 1930s, perceived that the opposition between saira and munaba rituals was implicitly a temporal antithesis generating a unity by overcoming the incommensurability of linear and cyclic temporal processes.

Anthropological analyses have revealed that in oral societies time is not represented as an abstract dimension of reality, a cognitive quid or a Kantian aprioristic pure form, but as an element inseparable from the concrete events taking place in a well defined space. To use Molenaar’s words:

The duration, synchronicity, succession and alternation of socio-cultural phenomena are conceived and measured in terms of other phenomena which form a frame of reference. This frame of reference makes the synchronisation and coordination of different actions possible.98

In pre-literate societies time is conceived as a spatial and functional representation. It is a qualitative entity, or to be more precise, a physical quantum, the qualities of which remain unaltered by movement. Consequently the difference between oral-traditional and literate-modern societies does not consist in a different mode of perception and cognition of time but in the use and function of time reckoning. As Fraser has pointed out “what is usually regarded as a uniform flow which embraced equally all structures and processes is revealed as a nested hierarchy of qualitatively different temporalities”.99 Fraser distinguishes three ‘nested levels’ each corresponding to a precise function in human life and activity: an eco-temporal level related to the seasonal successions of the calendar; a bio-temporal level which is related to the cumulative time of living bodies; and finally a noo-temporal level that encompasses a teleological awareness and establishes the ontological locus of the past

97 ibid., p.128.
98 Molenaar, op.cit., p.253.
as an entity distinct from the present and the future. Nested levels of temporality related to specific functions still persist in modern societies.

The acknowledgment of the existence of a functionally multi-stranded temporality in oral societies as well as in modern civilisations promotes a holistic and rational understanding of the interactions among the representations, uses and meanings of different notions of time. Meaning consequently represents the *discrimen* between modern and traditional systems of time reckoning, deriving from the particularity of their religious experiences, rooted in a peculiar ecosystem, as well as from the social and political functions ascribed to the concept of time. Hence, in the light of the semantics of the system, linear and circular temporality are complementary categories each fulfilling a specific function. Linear temporality, that tends to generate teleological ideas and eschatological conceptions, does appear to be present in oral or preliterate societies. What must be investigated is its function and meaning.

**Identifying an Indigenous Apocalyptic Eschatology.**

The existence of an underlying notion of oriented and irreversible time in the system of thought of pre-literate societies is extremely important and casts a new light on the effects that Christian evangelisation had on animist populations.

Haddon, at the height of British imperialism wrote:

An awakening of religious activity is a frequent characteristic of periods of social unrest. The weakening or disruption of the old social order may stimulate new and often bizarre ideals, and these may give rise to religious movements that strive to sanction social and political aspirations. Communities that feel themselves oppressed anticipate the emergence of a hero who will restore their prosperity and prestige. And when the people are imbued with religious fervour the expected hero will be regarded as a

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100 *ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.
101 It suffice to consider the existence of multiple calendars related to specific social and economic sectors: education, finance, administration, etc.
Messiah. Phenomena of this kind are well known in history, and are not unknown at the present day among peoples in all stages of civilisation.102

The idea that psychological unrest and social discontent generate eschatological tensions and desires of palingenetic renewal appears to be espoused also by scholars such as Lanternari103 and Cohn.104

It appears that the concept of linear time tending towards an *Eschaton* comes to be emphasised when oppression and frustration force people to seek or dream of a better world usually projected in a foreseeable future. Thus the past and the present come to be connected with a new temporal dimension and to represent the structural and dynamic stages of an interrupted linear continuum.

Apocalyptic eschatology is, however, an ontological hybrid since it can be conceived as the outcome of a confluence of linear and cyclic time-reckonings. Apocalypticism can be envisaged as a relic of cyclic time, of the idea of a universal conflagration that many societies, in particular the agrarian cultures, believe will occur at a certain point in time, inaugurating a new cycle. The Umeda of West Papua, for instance, believe that a cataclysm will happen that will destroy the world:

The waters in the rivers will rise up and simultaneously the sky will fall, crushing all living beings out of existence. Then the water will fall again, and the sky resume its normal position, and the corpses of the Umeda will lie rotting. When the corpses have rotted away altogether, and only the fleshless bones are left, then the plants and animals and human beings will revive, and the world will be created again from the beginning, only to go through exactly the same process again.105

By contrast eschatology, in which Messianic and prophetic figures usually play a prominent role, is by antonomasia the quintessence of linear time. The belief in the Eschaton, that is the coming of the end, has its origins in the seedbed of apocalyptic traditions. The myth of a primeval deluge, present in the mythology of many spatially and temporally distant societies, represent the nucleus of the set of ideas regarding the end of the world. The deluge, in fact, represents the origin of a linear development and evolution of a people. The progenitors of tribal groups, the mythical ancestors, are those who survived the devastating event and sanctioned the beginning of the ‘historical’ time of a group. The phenomenon of progression and development can be traced in the social systems of pre-literate tribes or societies, the structures and relations of which reflect ideas, beliefs and values informing the code of behaviour and culture of the group itself.

In support of this view Biersack, examining the social formations of the Paiela people, inhabiting the valleys of the Enga province of Papua New Guinea, observes that the formation of family units, stemming from an original ancestor, appears to be a culturally defined process. This appears to be, in fact, governed not by a rule, as the structuralists would suggest, but by the ‘father’s mana’. Consequently the generation of socially exogamous units (yame) “over time produces a longitudinal trajectory in which serial filiation is portrayed as serial transformation”. The ideology that governs yame formation among the Paiela is that what is “unrelated must become

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108 ibid., pp.238-239.
related”. This process stretches both in space and in time. The continuous creation of new units generates a millenarian motion that will come to an end when the time of serial filiation qua serial transformation will end or, to use the expression of the Paiela people, “when all men are brothers and we will marry our sisters”. In this context the Big Man, chosen to lead the community for his charismatic qualities, becomes the mediator that guarantees the stability necessary to the unfolding of the process of yame formation and the realisation of the millennium. The millenarian processes involved in the formation of Papuan social structures account for the presence of latent chiliastic tendencies in the belief system that supports that very structure and that come to be activated under certain structural conjunctures.

Apocalypticism and eschatology during the colonial era came to be fused into a single concept or ideology and represented the supernaturalistic response to a state of anxiety, alienation, helplessness and deprivation experienced in the political, economic, social and religious spheres by oppressed communities. It is a revolutionary response to oppression in view of its basic conviction that God would overthrow the present order and set free the oppressed. For this reason only in the presence of an alien oppressive entity can the idea of eschatology substantiate and take a precise ideological formulation and pragmatic form. Linear time becomes the basis of this new ideology. Soteriological aspirations to freedom and redress from the wrong suffered at the hands of an alien nation are projected in a near future and announced by a Messiah. The natural elements used to calculate the cyclic flow of time are functionally maintained and systemised into the linear flow as means of “understanding the

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109 ibid., p.237.
110 ibid., p. 242.
111 ibid., pp. 242-245.
112 For the rise and developments of messianic movements in colonial contexts see: Lanternari, op. cit.
times”\textsuperscript{113} and thus determining the ultimate coincidence of protology and eschatology to produce the primeval unity.

Gradually from the belief in God’s intervention emerges the contextual idea of the ‘Chosen People’. The recording of events becomes crucial since past and present events contain prefigurations of the future and legitimate a people’s aspiration to identity and freedom. It is in this \textit{locus}, the ‘structure’, as will be discussed in the last two chapters, that the myth of the ‘stolen cargo’, ‘the biblical secret withheld by the missionaries’, will emerge. This will occur when European presence and socio-economic change, that is the contingent ‘conjuncture’, in West Papua intensified. The past is envisaged as a ‘repository of meanings’ for understanding the present and forecasting the future. The meaning of the past accounts for the effects of the present. It is at this crucial stage that historiography comes into being since history, that is the ‘linear’ recording or memory of veridical facts, was already there as mythology.

An analogous process seems to have taken place among the Sumbanese. Janet Hoskins argues that the history of the Sumbanese starts with the colonial encounter although they do not deny earlier transformations of their society. However they do assess the meaning of the latter differently as the author points out:

\begin{quote}
History in their usage is not ‘about’ the society it depicts; it is the process of that society’s emergent self-consciousness. Before the resistance against the Dutch, there were trade relations with European powers, local feuds and headhunting raids, narratives and ancestors whose chronologies were uncertain. History began when regional autonomy was challenged and the Kodinese became part of a larger world of interacting forces. It was not the presence of written documents that made these events historical but their consequences – the awareness of cultural identity through loss of autonomy.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

Eschatological time, \textit{in nuce} in the apocalyptic tradition of many societies, emerges and takes a conscious form, disengaged from visions of cyclic destruction and

\textsuperscript{113} In the synoptic Gospels the connection between cyclic and linear time, between apocalypticism and eschatology is clearly established. Cfr. Matthew 16: 2,3; Luke 12: 54, 56.
palingenesis, in the context of colonial oppression and/or in situations of relative deprivation when an ‘Other’ challenges their existence and identity. Historiography is its ‘political’ form by which a people engage in a dialogue with the outside world.

On the basis of these considerations it is possible to argue that in pre-literate or oral societies the category or concept of eschatological time existed long before christianisation took place. The identification of such a peculiar notion of time in pre-literate mythology and its autochthonous meaning casts the entire phenomenon of christianisation as well as modernisation in a different perspective.

As stated at the beginning of this section the Papuan people have been presented as a ‘history-less’ people, a concept that implicitly denies their existence in world history. But this is a ‘Eurocentric’ view or perception. The historical written and material documents available on the Papuan people, in fact, have been ‘read’ by combining interpretations of evidence into a narrative consistent with the European perception of the past. The notion of revivalism, used to explain non-Western cultural or socio-political phenomena, consequently, is nothing but a product of Western rationalism.

For centuries most of the Papuan tribes inhabiting the territory and islands of West New Guinea lived unknown to the European world. This however does not mean that they lived, as it has often been erroneously stated, in total isolation from the outside world. The Papuans were part of a regional world of relations in the form of ceremonial exchanges, trade and politico-economic allegiances. They were part of the Indo-Malay world and region and it was in this relational context that Papuan perceptions of ethnic identity first emerged.

Chapter III

Parsing the Papuan in South-east Asia before Dutch Colonisation

The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor and in what order or context (…) It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Caesar’s crossing of the petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossings of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all.1

In this chapter I will explore or try to determine whether an ethnic ‘Papuan identity’ existed as a ‘historical reality’ or ‘entity’ in South-east Asia before 1945, by examining the available information and references contained not only in Portuguese and Dutch colonial sources, but also in Indo-Malaysian and Chinese documents. The aim of such an examination is that of reconstructing Papuan historical identity as well as ‘historical trajectories’ prior to the establishment of official colonial rule and the beginning of Christianisation. The word ‘development’ will be avoided for the evolutionism implied in the term. As a matter of fact I do not believe in a history conceived as a ‘vertical progress’ but in a history as an iter, an ‘horizontal itinerary’ through time, shaped and regulated by people’s needs, wants, aspirations, dreams influenced by a particular ecological setting, and the conjunctures that these contribute to create.

It is possible to detect glimpses of Papuan history in their beliefs and customs, which are based on and accounted for in their myths or oral tradition transmitted from generation to generation. The oral tradition, still alive today among the Papuans, represents their historical archive. The primitivist-evolutionist approach as well as the scientific approach of social sciences in general, adopted in the study of West Papuan culture, has contributed to deny the existence of a Papuan history.
The perception of ‘history-less-ness’ derives from the fact that scholars have tried to understand Papuan culture and history through western categories and parameters according to which the presence of monumental edifices and of complex systems of material culture indicated the presence of a highly developed ‘historical’ civilisation, neglecting the fact that often civilisations, peoples, nations disappear or decline without leaving traces of their past grandeur. When dwelling on this thought, I can hear the echo of the wise words of the Herodotean Muse, which any historian who is about to write a history should remember:

I will proceed with my history telling the story as I go along of small cities of men no less than the great. For most of those which were great once are small today, and those which used to be small were great in my own time. Knowing therefore, that human prosperity never abides long in the same place, I shall pay attention to both alike.2

In this chapter it will be shown that the Papuans were part of a wide web of commercial and political relations characterising the South-east Asian milieu since time immemorial in which they were acknowledged as a people, the Papuans, inhabiting a defined territory that corresponds to today’s West Papua including the adjacent Papuan islands. This world has been recently analogically compared to Braudel’s Mediterranean in which people of diverse cultures and heritages engaged in a series of economic and political relations creating structures and conjunctures, the ‘webs of significances’,3 that shaped their histories, identities and destinies.4

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Furthermore, from the historical dynamics or developments reconstructed and described in this chapter, it will emerge that the western part of the island of New Guinea, known over time as Netherlands New Guinea, Irian Barat, Irian Jaya and now West Papua, appears to constitute a geographical reality separated from the eastern part of the island which represents today the independent nation-state of Papua New Guinea. Past and current anthropological and ethnological literature dealing with the peoples inhabiting the island of New Guinea has contributed to generate this image and perception, so that while Papua New Guinea is considered part and parcel of a wider Melanesian complex, West Papua comes to be envisaged as a ‘Melanesian appendix’ of South-east Asia. The relations between these two parts or ‘halves’ will not be examined, although I need to point out that traces of relations between the two sectors can be found in the languages/dialects\(^5\) and stories\(^6\) of the Papuan peoples on both sides of the ‘artificial’ colonial divide or border. The persisting porousness of the border\(^7\) shows how the ‘drawing of a line’ is not sufficient to demarcate nation-states:


the border disputes, which followed the official colonial partition of the island,⁸ are a tangible evidence of the incongruity informing such an act. West Papua, consequently, has been drawn into the history of the Malay world and cut off and excluded from Melanesian history by ‘colonial’ partitions and dynamics. I believe that from a scholarly point of view, it is important to consider the Malay dimension as a historical development, even though some activists emphasise the Melanesian aspect of Papuan identity.⁹

Edward Carr’s statement, quoted to introduce the chapter, explicitly indicates the limits of historiography and the difficulty historians face in trying to reconstruct the past on the information transmitted by their predecessors. Historians, in fact, select, interpret and introduce facts according to their interests and their experiences by engaging in a continuous dialogue with the past. However this dialogue takes place in or against an episteme. That is, to use Foucault’s definition, “a set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences and possibly formalised systems”.¹⁰ It is an a priori “whose jurisdiction extends without contingencies”.¹¹ Since a peculiar epistème becomes the organising principle endowed with an inherent logic, the archives of the past can be considered as a series of collected memories and documents, “systems of statements”, historically determined and politically constructed, whose meaning shifts over time in the light of different and new hermeneutical approaches and political interests.

It follows from this that historical memories are mere constructions of an agency that orders and organises selected experiences in significant and persuasive

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⁸ For a complete and close investigation of the phases of and the problems involved with the partition of the island see: Veur P. W. van der, Documents and Correspondence on New Guinea’s Boundaries, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1966.

structures. Factual experiences and events are transmogrified into abstract symbols to signify and legitimise relations of political, economic and social inequality. By this process of structuring and systemising, history comes to be identified with historiography, that is a specific epistemology based on a particular hermeneutics. As Croce observed, a book of history has itself a historicity.\textsuperscript{12}

Croce argues that political historiography is simply the ‘propaganda’ of the ‘hegemon’, may this be a social class, a person or a regime. Consequently a historiography operating under these conditions and constraints is far from producing a ‘universal history’ in which a society, as a stratified whole, may be able to recognise itself. In a certain way, the writing of history comes to share with the social sciences the same dilemma stemming from the epistemological and hermeneutical dialectics between rationalism and relativism,\textsuperscript{13} between what Sahlins labels as “the practical and the meaningful”.\textsuperscript{14} Referring to the eulogistic and militant nature of official historiography, which celebrates and heralds to posterity the positive events, and neglects and silences the negative ones, Croce states that it tends to commemorate merely “what man does and not what he suffers”.\textsuperscript{15} In this context history becomes a right bestowed to the powerful \textit{agens}, denied to the powerless and oppressed \textit{pátiens}. The denial of history has become a means to deny the right of a people to freedom and self-determination, in other words to exist as ‘a people’.

The myth of the ‘history-less people’ or ‘people without history’, as described by Wolf,\textsuperscript{16} represented the keystone of colonialism, structuring a rigid system of

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\textsuperscript{11} Foucault, \textit{ibid.}, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{12} Croce B., \textit{La Storia come Pensiero e come Azione}, Editori Laterza, Bari, 1966, p.7
\textsuperscript{15} Croce, \textit{op.cit...}, pp. 147-170.
\textsuperscript{16} Wolf, \textit{Europe and the People without History...cit.}
relations between the coloniser and colonised in which power and resources were allocated to meet the needs and wants of the rulers. This was done by promoting acculturative processes that aimed at wiping out any vestige of the past of the subjected populations. Thus, as the German historian Michael Stürmer once stated, “in a land without memory anything can happen”.17

Nationalism, as pointed out in chapter I, is inherently a symbiont of history rooted in religious beliefs. Being an amoebic, shapeless reality it owes its intrinsic meaning to the ideology and symbols provided by a particular historiography. There is no nationalist ideology or movement that has not resorted to history to further and legitimise the right of a people to nationhood and self-determination or has not used history as a means to cement, aggregate and foster a sense of unity and sodality among its members. History, although providing a religious foundation to nationalism, has contributed (paradoxically) to its ‘rationalisation’ and ‘secularisation’ by providing it with tangible elements on which to found the legitimacy of its existence and claims, overshadowing messianic – mystical traces and idyllic rêveries.

In 1969 the Papuan-Indonesian Anschluss finally eventuated. Following a stalemate, which had lasted for almost 20 years, the Dutch Government ceded the territory of West Papua to the Republic of Indonesia in 1962. The Indonesians had used historical arguments to support and justify their ownership rights over the Papuan territory claiming that it had been part of Indonesia since the times of the Kingdom of Majapahit.18 For a strange irony that sometimes seems to characterise the destiny of individuals and things, a people that, until then had been considered a ‘people without history’, had become suddenly a part of the official history of

18 In this regard see: Bone R.C., The Dynamics of the Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya) Problem, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1962, p.120. Cfr. Chauvel R., ‘The Emergence of the West New
Indonesia. While an autonomous history was still being denied, this circumstance implicitly opened the doors to the debate of Papuan historicity and, consequently, identity.

With the exception of the monograph by Haga, *Nederlansch-Nieuw Guinea en de Papoesche Eilenden: Historische Bijdrage 1500-1883*, commissioned by the Dutch colonial government in 1884 in order to prove that the country had been part of the Sultanate of Tidore and consequently, under indirect Dutch influence, there is no ‘history’ regarding the Papuan people prior to the year 1945. Officially Papuan history begins in the aftermath of World War II and coincides with the struggle to avoid incorporation into Indonesia. Such a history matured in the mould of the intensive program of nation-building implemented by the Dutch government. More recently the ‘historical beginnings’ of the Papuan people or ‘nation’ have been further postponed and brought to the year in which the New York Agreement was signed, that is 1962. An evident charade of historical truth and reality!

The historical literature and documents available on West Papua prior to the year 1945 are extremely scarce and inadequate to provide a continuous narrative. Before the establishment of permanent Dutch administrative posts and mission stations in West Papua, the references to the Papuans are rare and random. Only when the Dutch established a permanent presence in, and direct rule over, the territory that the mission and administrative reports, regularly sent to the headquarters in the Netherlands or Batavia after 1855, become a rich source of information useful in reconstructing phases of Papuan local history.

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As to earlier documents, Chinese sources make no reference to New Guinea, although archaeological and ethnological evidences reveal the presence of the Chinese in the area already during the Han dynasty.\textsuperscript{20} Arab sources are silent as well. Islam, in fact, appears to have reached the island around the XV-XVI century. Its contact was mediated by Malay traders of Ceram that were part of the commercial network of the Gujerati traders. The only reference to the territory of New Guinea in Indonesian sources is a possible mention in the XIV century poem by Prapanca Negarakartagama in which the gloss Wwanin may well refer to modern ‘Onin’ peninsula.\textsuperscript{21} The Papuans begin to be randomly mentioned in the Portuguese sources of the XV-XVI centuries and in the Dutch sources of the XVII-XVIII centuries.

To identify earlier phases of Papuan history one must also consider and explore the mythological tradition of the Papuans themselves since it appears to contain ‘sedimented traces’ of a remote past continuously reinterpreted and reformulated to incorporate intrusive elements and face the new challenges brought about by the arrival of the Europeans in the area. The dynamics of cargoist hermeneutics, which will be briefly discussed in chapter IV, will represent the medium enabling the identification of the meaning the Papuans attributed to the events and processes taking place in and affecting their world of relations and the mean by which to extrapolate from the ‘European narrative’ the possible ‘Papuan chronicles’.

\textit{The Papuans in South-East Asia.}

The identification and definition of the Papuan world is extremely important since it was this world that acted as the catalysing filter of a new system of thought

and action. If the arrival of Christianity, in fact, fuelled complex mechanisms of change in indigenous discourses, it is also true that it itself was in turn affected by the ‘recipient matter’ that gradually was being cast into its mould. But can a Papuan cultural and historical identity still be reconstructed from the debris of a homogenising colonial system and the propaganda and diffusion of western modernity? Is ‘Papuan-ism’ an ethnic and ontological reality *in se et per se*, and as such historically identifiable? The answer to this question will provide the context in which to determine the nature and origins of Papuan nationalism.

It is difficult to reconstruct the position of the Papuans in South-east Asia prior to the arrival of the first European fleets because of the lack of documents. Most of the information of earlier periods of Papuan history is derived from XVI century European sources and this is also based, as stated in the previous chapter, on either the personal inferences of the writer or on local tradition collected *en passant* and recorded as a mere anecdotic curiosity. Very few documents regarding the Papuans have survived the shipwrecks of time and those that have are of recent vintage. Much of this material is based at times on mere speculation or hearsay.

The earliest sources, dating back to the XVI century A.D., belong to a literary genre devoted to the recording of anecdotes and exotic curiosities gathered by casual explorers, travellers, navigators, traders and missionaries. Often these accounts record events and facts that have not been directly experienced by the writer but that probably have been drawn from other accounts. A classic example of this literary genre is the XIV century travelogue by Sir John Mandeville who abundantly drew information from the accounts of Odoric of Pordenone, John of Plano Carpini and Marco Polo. Among the curiosities Mandeville reports that, during his peregrinations,

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he came across a race of midgets that could be conjecturally identified with the warrior pygmies who inhabit the highlands of New Guinea.\textsuperscript{22} Whether Sir John really undertook these journeys or were they simply fruit of his fantasies and imagination, is difficult to establish. It is however certain that no European at the time has been recorded as landing on the Papuan shores, although such a possibility cannot be excluded.

Attempts to reconstruct an earlier Papuan reality, that is prior to the XVI century, and to establish its place within the South-east Asian region, is consequently based more on the analysis of the geographic distribution of linguistic evidences crystallised in surviving anomalous lexemes, onomastics and toponyms which may provide information regarding human migrations, contacts among distant communities through trade, centres of power and influence.

Anthropological and archaeological research conducted in South-east Asia during the XX century has contributed to uncovering some of the mysteries surrounding the earlier history of New Guinea and its connections with South-east Asia. These studies reveal that the Papuan populations inhabiting mainland New Guinea and the adjacent islands off its western shores were actively involved in the trade cycles that developed and thrived in the region since the III millennium B.C.\textsuperscript{23}

Commodities, such as spices coming from the South-east Asian region, have been

\textsuperscript{22} Mandeville J., \textit{Mandeville’s Travels}, Translated and edited by Seymour M.C., Oxford University Press, London, 1968, p. 161. Describing the pygmies, Mandeville writes: “They have often time war with the birds of the country that they take and eat. This little folk neither labour in lands nor in vines, but they have great men amongst them of our stature, that till the land and labour amongst the vines for them. And of those men of our stature they have as great scorn as we would have among us of giants if they were amongst us”, a description that seems to recall the ‘Big Man’ system. Cfr. Milton G., \textit{The Riddle and the Knight. In Search of Sir John Mandeville}, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1998, p.250.

\textsuperscript{23} Swadling, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 51-53.
found in the archaeological sites of the Middle East in stratigraphic sections of the II millennium B.C.  

Initially this trade was limited to the inter-island commercial networks through which goods and artefacts were presumably bartered. Archaeological diggings conducted in the north-western part of the island of New Guinea reveal that during the III millennium B.C., pottery from the west was being exchanged probably for Bird of Paradise skins and other local products. The pottery, elaborately decorated and known as Lapita, also represented an innovation in the South-east Asian earthenware production. The Lapita pottery seems, in fact, to have been introduced into the area by migrants who colonised the eastern Pacific islands.

The Lapita tradition is associated by both linguists and archaeologists with the arrival of Austronesian speakers in the region that, along with a new bronze technology, introduced new religious beliefs and political systems that triggered a gradual change in the culture of the non-Austronesian substratum. De Hoog suggests

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that probably the Lesser Sunda and the Southern Moluccas were the meeting place of the two cultural complexes.\textsuperscript{28}

Between the V century B.C. and the beginning of the Christian era, a new ‘cultural revolution’ took place in South-east Asia, the effects of which also reached the shores of New Guinea. This period coincides with the establishment of centralised kingdoms, bringing to completion a process already initialised a couple of centuries before, with the development of permanent agricultural patterns and the rise of important ceremonial building complexes. The accumulation of exotic valuables became the expression and symbol of wealth and power, while ancestral kinship yields to divine kingship. The Dong Son warrior aristocrats of North Vietnam are the most illustrious example of the new culture emerged in his period.

In this new political and social milieu trade became an important means by which to obtain these valuables, the symbols of divine power and prestige. The innovations introduced by the Dong Son civilisation gradually spread to other regions of South-east Asia. Kettle-drums of the Heger type I have been found in an area extending from Sumatra to New Guinea along the ancient trade route that, from Sumatra reaches New Guinea through Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands.

This trade route, using the islands as stepping-stones along the way, was that covered by the lightly equipped Kora-Koras, Prahus or other small traditional skiffs used by the island populations. The route was, in fact, favourable to the navigation of small vessels that, in case of adverse atmospheric conditions, could have easily found shelter in the island bays and coves.

Archaeological findings reveal that West Papua was part of the intricate web of commercial enterprises that developed between the V century B.C. and the III century

A.D.: bronze tops of the Heger type 1 drums of North Vietnamese provenance and dated 250 A.D. have been found in the interior of the Vogelkop peninsula near Lake Aimura and in the Lake Sentani area.29

Swadling suggests that the Dong Son manufactures may probably have made their way to New Guinea in exchange for Bird of Paradise plumes. The hypothesis seems to be confirmed by Wallace’s earlier observations indicating that both the Lake Sentani area and the Vogelkop peninsula are home to many bird of Paradise species.30

Asian iconography, in particular from India and China, dated between the III century B.C. and the III century A.D., indicates that Bird of Paradise’s plumes were appreciated and avidly sought by the Asian rulers.31

Bronze kettle drums found in the outer islands of Indonesia reveal peculiar Indian and Chinese (Han dynasty) motifs such as tigers, elephants and peacocks. Archaeological diggings, chronologically related to the period in question conducted in the Lake Sentani area, indicate the association of bronze artefacts and glass beads. The latter have been found both in Biak, used as traditional valuables, and in an archaeological site in Bali of the early Metal Age.32 The archaeological evidences allow us to hypothesise a close interaction between eastern Indonesia and the Southeast and East Asian continent probably activated by commercial enterprises.

By the end of the III century A.D., the trade relations between New Guinea and insular and continental Asia suddenly began to decline. The quantity of bronze artefacts of continental provenance gradually decreases, presumably along with the demand of Birds of Paradise. The cause of the decline is probably to be imputed to the


demise of the Dong Son dynasty and the spread of Hindu-Buddhism.\textsuperscript{33} It is possible also to hypothesise that the decline in the volume and quality of South-east Asian trade may have resulted from the ongoing wars of the Romans in Asia, in particular with the Parthians first, and then with the Sassanian empire of Persia. The gradual penetration of Indian elements into the region brought about a shift in the demand for certain goods, with the demand for spices and sandalwood replacing that for feathers.

As documented by archaeological\textsuperscript{34} and literary\textsuperscript{35} sources for the nearby Moluccas, Indian traders or indianised Malay traders may have engaged in commercial relations with the inhabitants of the coasts of north-west New Guinea. Elements in the local mythology can well be relics of ancient Indian or Hindu contacts. Horst believes, in fact, that the baptism by fire present in the Biak myth of Manseren Manggundi is of Hindu origin.\textsuperscript{36} He also attributed a Hindu origin to the Papuan \textit{Rum Sram}, or Men’s House, maintaining that its ceremonial meaning and function is not related to ancestor worship but rather to Lingam worship.\textsuperscript{37}

Horst’s hypothesis, although contested even at the time of its publication,\textsuperscript{38} seems to be confirmed by Fabritius who visited the Biak and Geelvink Bay area a few years before the arrival of the first Christian missionaries from Utrecht, namely before 1855. In his comment on a version of the myth of Manseren Manggundi, he states that a Hindu missionary once visited the Numfor-Biak area. In this version it is believed

\begin{footnotesize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Swadling, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 54-57.
  \item \textit{ibid.}, pp. 205-206.
  \item For the spread of Hindu-Buddhism in South-east Asia see: Coedes G. \textit{The Indianised States of South-East Asia}, East-West Centre Press, Honolulu, 1968.
  \item ‘Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsche-Indië’, \textit{Oudheidkundig Verslag}, 1914, p. 165. The article reports that in the village of Amaliai a small golden four-armed figure of Shiva has been found.
  \item For the myth of Manseren Manggundi see the \textit{Beyuser (=Song) of Manarmarkdi} in appendix. Strophe 34 of the \textit{Beyuser} refers to the baptism by fire.
  \item A reader’s letter in reaction to Horst’s theory was published on the Dutch newspaper \textit{Vaderland}, 12 December 1893 in \textit{Nederlandse Couranten Indische Onderwerpen}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
that Manseren left the island of Numfor and travelled to Kalinga, which probably must be identified with modern day Orissa on the Coromandel Coast, an important and ancient seat of Brahmanism from which “missionaries went out to preach the doctrine of their religion in the most distant regions”.39

At this stage there is neither archaeological nor anthropological evidence to support the hypothesis. It must be noted that ‘Kalinga’ was a recurring name in Indianised South-east Asia: it is known that Java was often referred to as Ka-ling. A Chinese inscription reads:

Ka-ling is also called Djava [Java], it is situated in the Southern Ocean at the east of Sumatra and at the west of Bali. At its south it has the sea and towards the north lies Cambodia…In 674 the people of this country took as their ruler a woman of the name Sima.40

The tradition associates Queen Sima with the arrival of Islam in archipelagic South-east Asia when the so-called Ta-shih people came into contact with her kingdom.41 At the beginning of the VII century A.D. a number of Ta-shih settlements were established along the coasts of West Sumatra. These settlements have been associated with Arab tribes.42

It is possible that the demand for spices and wood increased with the arrival of the Arab traders in the region around the VII-IX centuries A.D. Gradually the Muslim merchants established important commercial entrepots such as those in Gujerat in north-west India and Malacca in South-east Asia, only to name the most important and strategically significant. Through the Arab traders, commodities from the mysterious ‘Far East’ made their way to the European markets. At the same time local

39 Kamma, op. cit., p. 40.
41 In this regard see: Slametmuljono, A Story of Majapahit, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 1976.
rulers were embracing Islam: the first fully-fledged Islamic states in Indonesia date back to the XIII century A.D on Sumatra. Marco Polo, visiting Sumatra in 1292 observed that the urban people of the island who once were ‘idolators’, had converted to the “law of Muhammad” for their continuous contact with Arab merchants.43

By the XV century the western part of the Indonesian archipelago, Java and the Spice Islands appear to be governed by local Muslim rulers who adopted the Arab title of Sultan.44 The old Hindu title of Raja seems to have been confined to the non-Muslim vassals as well as to the surviving Hindu enclaves. It is documented that the Papuan leaders, vassals of the Sultan of Tidore, were granted the title of raja along with the indigenous Malukan titles of kolano and sangaji.45 Although it appears, as recent anthropological studies have revealed, that the raja continued to be characterised by the qualities and functions typical of the traditional Melanesian ‘Big Man’.46 The influence of the Muslim sovereigns over the Papuan islands was probably established after the demise of the first kingdom of Majapahit in 1478 following

44 Ricklefs, op.cit., p. 8.
longstanding dynastic conflicts and its incorporation first into the Islamic state of Demak in 1527 and finally into the kingdom of Mataram in 1584.47

During the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Majapahit in the XIV century, the south-western part of the island of New Guinea appears to have been part and parcel of the dialectics between Jawabhumi (Java) and Nusantara (the other islands) which characterised the Indo-Malay world at the time.48 The ancient XIV century Javanese poem, *Negarakartagama,*49 already mentioned, lists the Onin peninsula among the territories visited by the Majapahit ruler. Swadling suggests that, at that time, it is possible that the *massoi*50 producing area of Onin was under one of the Moluccan Sultans, probably the Sultan of Bacan.51 This hypothesis is based on the *Myth of Bikusagara,* recorded by Antonio Galvão in 1536-1539, which suggests a direct kinship relation between Bacan and the Papuans inhabiting the Raja Ampat Islands.52

The myth describes the discovery of four naga eggs by the elders of Bacan from which four individuals were born who founded the royal houses of Bacan, Banggai, Loloda and the Papuas.

The myth of the *naga* eggs clearly betrays its Hindu origins and must consequently pre-date the spread of Islam in the area. Similarities, in fact, with the Indian epic poem of *Mahabharata* concur to suggest an early Hindu chronology, although some are inclined to hypothesise a later date, after the composition of the

47 Ricklefs, op.cit., pp. 36-37.
50 The bark of the *massoi* tree (Crytocarya massoy) which grew on the coastal hills of the Mimika region has medicinal properties and was in great demand in particular in Java. Kooijman argues that the *massoi* was introduced to West Indonesia by Ceramese traders since ancient times along with Papuan slaves. See: Kooijman S., *Art, Art Objects and Ritual in the Mimika Culture,* E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1984, pp. 157-158.
51 Swadling, op.cit., p. 62.
Negarakartagama. Historical records indicate that at the time of the Tidorese expansion between the XV and XVI centuries A.D., Onin was under the influence of the island of Misoöl that in turn had close relations with Bacan.

As already pointed out in the previous pages, early Chinese and Arab sources provide little information on the inhabitants of New Guinea. It is known that Chinese and Arab trade routes intersected in the monsoonal region of South-east Asia. Archaeological findings, however, reveal that the Papuans developed direct or indirect trade relations with Chinese merchants as early as the I century A.D.. The finding of bronze pieces with a chemical composition similar to the Dong Son alloys of the Han period among the Mejprat of West Papua, suggest that the Chinese developed some form of trade connection with mainland New Guinea.

The archaeological information seems to be corroborated by that contained in XIII century Chinese sources revealing that among the products traded on the Bandanese market figured a series of commodities that may have originated from New Guinea: the “little black slaves” and the “small clove bark”, probably massoi wood from the Onin peninsula, may be of Papuan provenance.

It is known that Banda had developed trade connections with Ceram and, through the Ceramese traders, with the coastal areas of New Guinea. It was through these traders that Papuan products, such as slaves, sago and massoi wood, reached the Bandanese market. The commercial transactions were based on barter: local products were exchanged for textiles, in particular patula cotton cloth from Gujerat.

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54 ibid., pp. 106-109.
57 Hirth & Rockhill, op.cit., p. 257.
Barbosa reports that *patula* cloth was traded in Banda already in 1512 when the first Portuguese expedition, led by D’Abreu, reached the island. Patolas or Cambaya cloths were traded along with “great bells of metal”, probably gongs, ivory and “fine porcelain”. The gongs and the porcelain probably originated from China and were presumably used by Chinese merchants for barter in their commercial transactions. As Kamma reports, foreign goods, such as cloth, porcelain, beads and bronze gongs, articles whose manufacture was shrouded with mystery for the Papuans of Biak, were highly valued and, consequently, for their ‘extra-ordinary’ nature incorporated into ceremonies.

Among the items the Papuans were collecting on their raids were also slaves to exchange on the Malukan markets for valuables sought for their ceremonial value. They themselves had been, as the Chinese sources suggest, the object of this trade. It is recorded, in fact, that in the year 724 A.D. a “black girl” was listed among the items of the tribute Sumatran envoys of the trading empire of Srivijaya brought to the Chinese court which, speculatively, could have been of Papuan origin. Furthermore from the record of the foundation of a Buddhist sanctuary, it appears that Papuan slaves had been on Java since the X century A.D. Van Vollenhoven reports that Papuan traders, presumably those who inhabited coastal areas were providing Java with Papuan slaves probably from the interior of the Papuan islands or New Guinea at

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59 Barbosa D., *An Account of the Countries bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants*, written by Duarte Barbosa and completed about the year 1518 A.D. Translated from the Portuguese Text, first published in 1812 A.D. by the Royal Academy of Sciences at Lisbon, in vol. II of its Collection of Documents regarding the History and Geography of the Nations beyond the Seas, and edited and annotated by Mansel Longworth Dames, vol.I, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1989, p. 198.
60 Kamma, *Koreri...cit.*, p. 66.
the time. A form of socio-political or economic dialectics between the Papuans of
the coast and those of the interior, translated at times into a form of dependency of the
inland tribes, was to be identified by later explorers such as Forrest and Wallace, as
already mentioned. Papuan slaves were still present on Java at the end of the XVI
century.

The XIV century poem Negarakartagama mentions the Onin peninsula and the
island of Seran, presumably modern Ceram. The fact that the two areas are mentioned
together indicates that probably the association is not ‘casual’ but ‘causal’. Tome
Pires clearly indicates that, in the XVI century, Ceramese traders were
commercialising Papuan products on the Bandanese market. It is possible that the
Sesolot or Sosolot of the south-western coast of New Guinea, from MacCluer’s Gulf
to Triton Bay, were established by the Ceramese traders.

The Sosolot were areas with exclusive trade rights. The etymology of the term is
obscure. It possibly derives from Malay and, as the XVII century explorer Johannes
Keyts suggests, it denotes a hill or harbour, marked by a flag, whose owner had
exclusive trading rights over the area.

The Sosolot appear to have been communities of traders or trading agents.
Goodman hypothesises that there is probably a relation between the importation of
bronze and iron artefacts from Maluku and the establishment of the first Sosolot

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64 Rouffer G.P. & Ijzerman J.W., De Eerste Schipvaart de Nederlanders naar Oost-Indie onder
Cornelis de Houtman, 1595-1597: Journalen, Documenten en Ander Bescheiden, vol. I, Works of the
65 Pires T., Suma Oriental, V, Fol. 156v. Translated from the Portuguese MS in the Bibliothèque de la
Chambre des Députés, Paris and edited by Armando Cortesão, vol. I. In the works issued by the
Hakluyt Society, The Suma Oriental and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues, Second Series, Kraus
66 Hille J.W. van, ‘Reizen in West-Nieuw- Guinea’, Tijdschrift Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig
communities in West Papua. This suggestion seems to be supported by Kamma and Kooijman’s findings regarding the identification of a considerable number of iron-working sites stretching from the MacCluer Gulf to Triton Bay. The location of these smith-shops does not seem to have been casual but to follow a precise pattern suggesting the existence of some sort of ‘manufacturing network’ connected to a ‘specialised trade’.

According to Kamma and Kooijman, iron working in West Papua began around the middle of the XVI century, a time that coincides with the apogee of the expansion of Islam in Maluku, Banda and Ceram. This ‘circumstantial evidence’ leads them to hypothesise that the Malukan and Ceramese smiths, who introduced iron working to New Guinea, were probably Muslims. What seems to support the hypothesis is the presence of a food taboo, the prohibition of eating pork, associated with the smith in West Papua, a prescription that is clearly a foreign or intrusive element in Papuan culture. The presence of Muslim communities on the south-western coast of New Guinea, probably original Sosolot communities, is confirmed also by XVI century Portuguese mission reports, as will be shown later in this chapter.

Existing documents reveal that at the beginning of the XVI century Tidore began to extend its influence over New Guinea. In 1534, it conquered Misoöl in the Raja Ampat archipelago and the eastern part of Ceram. It is not clear, however, whether the Ceram Laut islands and their Sosolot network became part of the

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69 The Ceramese had learned iron working from the Tidorese as well as from inhabitants of the village of Tobelo on northern Halmahera who had migrated to Ceram. Kamma & Kooijman, ibid., p. 28.
70 Kamma & Kooijman, ibid., pp. 27-28.
‘Tidorese Mandala’. The *Adatrechtbundels* inform that, on that occasion, a number of chiefs were appointed among the Papuans of the Onin peninsula and that these appointments followed the previous *Sosolot* divisions.

It appears also that the *Sosolot* continued to foster and maintain their original interdependence, although foreign traders were allowed access to the area. In these centres a type of ‘Chinese System’ of trade seem to have been adopted. That is, because of the seasonal nature of the trade, based on the monsoons, foreign merchants advanced goods to the local population and consequently they had to appoint an agent to stay on the spot when they left in order to ascertain that the return goods were available and ready for them when they returned. In 1670 the island of Namatote near Triton Bay on the south coast of West New Guinea was the centre of trade and the headquarters of an agent who bore the title of raja. Papuan functionaries were appointed by Ceramese traders in remote villages of the interior.

The goods, in the form of *massoi* bark, slaves and nutmegs, came from the interior. Forrest, who visited New Guinea in 1775, refers to this system of trade in his passage regarding the *Haraforas* of the interior of Doreh Bay and clearly indicates that it is a Chinese system. The system of advanced payments was still in use when the Dutch traders entered the New Guinea area in the XIX century.

The presence of a Chinese system of trade in New Guinea suggests the possible existence of an earlier Chinese commercial influence in the area. Forrest, in fact, observes that, notwithstanding the apparently fierce and hostile nature of the Papuans of the south-western coast, “they are said to deal honestly with the Chinese, who trade

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73 *Adatrechtbundels*, *ibid*.
with them”, 76 a fact that suggests that the Chinese were well known and integrated in the area.

The Chinese trade, however, must have experienced alternating periods of ‘boom and bust’ over the centuries, but their presence must have been constant. At the beginning of the XVIII century the Chinese appear, in fact, to have dominated the trade to Numfor and other coastal areas of New Guinea. Here they bought slaves, *massoi* bark and tortoiseshells in exchange for cloth, coral, knives and swords. 77 The Dutch tried several times, around the beginning of the XVIII century, to bar the Chinese from trading on the coasts of New Guinea 78 but encountered the opposition of the Sultan of Tidore who believed that the Chinese were the only ones able to guarantee the profitability of the trade with the Papuans. 79

As Forrest observes, the Papuan people of the coast seemed to have the monopoly of the goods produced by the Papuans inhabiting the interior:

The Papua people also did not seem willing that we should have any intercourse with the Haraforas, who, I believe, are some how kept in ignorance by the Papuas. When I asked any of the men of Dory, why they had no gardens of *plantains* and *kalavansas*, which articles they were continually bringing from the Haraforas, I learnt, after many interrogatories, that the Haraforas supply them with these articles and that the Papua people do not give goods for these necessaries every time they fetch them; but that an ox or a chopping knife given once to a Harafora man, makes his lands or his labour subject to an eternal tax, of something or other for its use. 80

This system of dependency is confirmed by later XIX century sources, the report of the traveller Dumont d’Urville 81 and the observations of the naturalist

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77 Forrest, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
78 VOC 2465, *Openbaar Verbaal*, 30 April, 1738, fol. 489.
Russell Wallace who refers to the men of the interior as *Arfaks* also observing that the *Papuas* and the *Arfaks* differed much in physical features.\(^{82}\)

Interestingly the name *Papuas*, referred to in earlier sources, appears to be reserved for indicating the coastal inhabitants of New Guinea as well as those inhabiting the off-shore islands. From the sources it emerges also that the Papuan world was characterised by a dialectics between the coast and the interior expressed in economic, and, probably, political terms providing us with some insight into Papuan modes of self-identity. This appears to be based on residential or territorial relations, a fact that seems to be confirmed by modern anthropological research. The Dani of the Baliem Valley, for instance, used to identify themselves on the basis of prestige and ecology contained in the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ valley labels.\(^{83}\) The same antithesis appears to occur in XVI century Maluku in the political and economic dialectics generated by the political figures of the ‘intrusive’ *Kapita Laut* or Lord of the Sea and the ‘indigenous’ *Jojau* or Lord of the Land.\(^{84}\)

It appears that when the Europeans arrived in the region they found a world characterised by an intricate web of economic and political relations. As Van Leur points out, the first Portuguese vessels entered a region “where there was a complex of shipping, trade, and authority as highly developed as the European”.\(^{85}\) The Papuans were part of this bustling world of peddlers, agents, wholesalers and privateers. The Europeans did not ‘discover’ South-east Asia. They simply had ‘ignored’ its existence until the changing economic, political and religious systemic configurations of post-Reformation Europe prompted the necessity to find new sources of wealth and gain.

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\(^{82}\) Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 381.


\(^{84}\) Andaya, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

In their journeys, regulated by the monsoons, the Europeans landed on the shores and anchored in ports they never had before. They gradually penetrated the areas of traditional trade disrupting with their presence the ancient practices and relations. Their driving forces were profit and power and these acted also as criteria in selecting partnerships and in drawing commercial routes and maps. What was regarded as ‘unprofitable’ was neglected. Traditional trade was never completely discarded but absorbed into the new mercantilist network as a sort of ‘sub-system of indirect local trade’. It was as members of this sub-system that the Papuans came to be encompassed into the structures of colonial capitalism.

*The arrival of the Europeans.*

The island of New Guinea received its name from the Spanish Captain Yñigo Ortíz de Retes who, in search of a south-east route to Mexico and forced to land because of unfavourable weather in the area of present day Sarmi, in 1545 claimed possession of the territory for the Spanish Crown.\(^{86}\) This was presumably under the Treaty of the Tordesillas since the anti-meridian crossed Maluku.\(^{87}\)

The first account specifically referring to the territories inhabited by the Papuans is the *Relación que Miguel Rojo de Brito da de la Nueva Guinea*, written shortly before the year 1600 by Hernando de los Rios. Brito sojourned in the Raja Ampat islands, the MacCluer Gulf and North Ceram between 1581 and 1582. Sailing under the Spanish flag, it is not known whether he was on an official trip or on his own account. In his *Relación* he often compares the features and customs of the

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Papuans to those of the inhabitants of Guinea in West Africa.\textsuperscript{88} From several references in the account it is possible to infer that Brito was interested in gold and probably the scope of his voyage was that, as Sollewijn Gelpke suggests in his preface to the translation, of identifying the source of the fine quality gold circulating at the time in the area between New Guinea and Bacan.\textsuperscript{89}

Besides visiting the Papuan islands of Misoöl and Waigeo, Brito, accompanied by the \textit{raja} of Waigeo and travelling south-west, seems to have reached the shores of mainland New Guinea landing at MacCluer Gulf on the Onin Peninsula. Brito reports his observations of the island:

The people of this region are black, like those of Guinea, and they are traders; they \textit{[go to]} trade in a kingdom on the equator called Sekar, where there is a village with an important market where black slaves are traded; here the people of Onin buy \textit{[slaves]}, which they sell in Serdanh (Ceram). The Serdanhos, since they are very wealthy, buy them and take them to the island of Kidang as labour for their gardens. It is \textit{[a certain fact]} that there are Serdanha \textit{Yndios} who own a thousand black slaves, who produce much sago bread, which they accumulate in order to sell to the Javanese; and \textit{[these]} trade it for nutmeg and mace in Banda, because of \textit{[the Bandanese]} lack of staple food.\textsuperscript{90}

Brito adds later that the gold found in the Raja Ampat islands originated from this area, from the village of Ugar. Here traders from Ceram came to buy \textit{massoi} wood, in high demand in Java, in exchange for iron.\textsuperscript{91}

From the MacCluer Gulf Brito continued his trip northwards along the coast reaching, after a few days of navigation, the then densely populated area of Apaa, to be probably identified with the modern town of Waba, between modern day


\textsuperscript{89} Rios, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 126.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 134-135.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{ibid.}, p. 135.
Wandamen and Manokwari. Here he noticed that the people of Apaa did not wear gold but were extremely fond of iron gongs that they obtained in exchange for the prisoners captured during their raids on the island of Gebe situated half way between Halmahera and Waigeo.

After returning to one of the islands of the Raja Ampat group, Notan, Brito set off from there to Ceram. At the time he reports that, on the Hoamal peninsula of West Ceram, was stationed the base of the so-called Rubihongi or ‘smasher of fleets’, who was the admiral instructed by the Sultan of Ternate to fight the Portuguese in Amboina and who, at the time of Brito’s sojourn, was engaged in an attack.

From Brito’s account important information can be inferred. Setting aside what he reports directly and the obscure reason of his journey among the Papuans, his account presents the Papuans inhabiting the islands and coastal areas of New Guinea as a distinct ethnic group ‘within’ the Malayan world.

Papua and the Papuans appear to be in the XVI century a well-defined reality in ethnic terms. This means that they are distinguished by peculiar ‘markers’ such as language, race, religion and colour. Since ethnicity is not an ontological res but a ‘relational category’ it is possible to argue, on the basis of the information provided by Brito, that the Papuans were perceived to be ‘different’ from the Malayans with whom they constantly interacted. Brito, in fact, referred to their colour calling them negros as distinct from yndios, a term that he adopts to designate the straight-haired people, the Malay stock, inhabiting the non-Papuan islands.

Linguistic differences may also have reinforced the perception of differences between the Malayans and the Papuans: Brito informs us that he used a Malay interpreter in his dealings with the Papuans, a circumstance suggesting that the racial

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92 The identification is suggested by Sollewijn Gelpke in a note to the text.
93 Rios, op.cit., p. 137.
taxonomy came to be translated into linguistic terms. That Brito did not fail to notice the differences existing between the Malay and the Pauans appears in his reporting of ethnographic curiosities and details related to the Pauans. The fact that he dwells on recording them suggests that they drew his attention for being unusual and unique, not having encountered them anywhere else in East Indies.

Another interesting fact that emerges from Brito’s account is that the Pauan people seem to be defined in both geographical and territorial terms, their territories being located to the east of the Spice Islands. References to the Pauan territories prior to Brito’s *Relaçion* date back to the year 1513.

Tomé Pires in his *Suma Oriental* refers to Papua as a defined territorial entity. While reporting on the booming of XV century Bandanese market of cloth, imported from Gujerat and Bengal, and of ivory tusks and gold, the provenance of which is not specified, Pires informs:

(…) people from Banda from a great many outside islands to buy cloth from Gillolo (Bato Ymbo) to Papua, from Papua to Moluccas, and many other islands. (…) Banda has ivory tusks and gold which are brought from other islands to be sold.94

Probably the gold Pires mentions, the same that will draw, some year later, Brito’s attention on Banda, came from New Guinea. Since at the beginning of the XVI century when the first Portuguese vessels arrived in the Spice Islands, the Pauan territory of the Onin peninsula appears under the influence of the Sultan of Bacan,95 it is possible that it was through the latter that Pauan products were commercialised in the Indonesian archipelago. Among the surrounding islands Pires mentions the *Jilha de Papua*, the island of Papua, from which the *nore* parrots came.96

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94 Pires, *op. cit.*, p. 208. The island of Gillolo is referred to by Pires as Halmahera.  
Although the drawing of maps always reflect the ideology of the commissioner and his ‘vision’ of the world, nonetheless they still represent a useful historical document of an epoch and the way the world was structured and ‘represented’. Besides the inevitable ‘sins of commission’, maps may also present significative ‘sins of omission’. During the XVI century the mapping of territories equated to the ‘colonisation of space’. Territorial representations were politically meaningful pointing, as Mignolo argues, to spatial differences and translating them into values.

A rapid glance at XVI century cartography may produce interesting insights regarding the geographical and political ‘position’ of the Papuans in XVI century Portuguese South-east Asia.

A map drawn by the cartographer Francisco Rodrigues in 1540 indicates the islands of Papua, as *jlhas papuas*, situated to the east of Gillolo (Halmahera). On the same map the island of Gillolo, located to the north of Ceram, bears the inscription *Jlha de Papaia e a Jente dell sam Cafres*. He probably refers to the large Papuan enclave on the island.

In a map of 1563 drawn by Luís, the north coast of a large island to the east of the Spice Islands is denominated *Nova Guinea*. The same coast is referred to as *Costas dos Papuas* in Dourado’s map of 1573. The oldest Portuguese map showing

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97 A classic example of how maps reflect the worldview of the commissioning body is that provided by the T- and –O maps developed between the VIII and XV centuries A.D. The name derives from the tripartite continent-sea configuration of Asia, Europe and Africa in which the east, where it was believed the Garden of Eden was located, was placed at the top. This geographic configuration reflected both the secular and theological requirements of the time. Moreover, following the symbolism cultivated by the medieval scholars, the letters T- and –O stood for *Orbis Terrarum*. See: Nowell C.E., *The Great Discoveries and the First Colonial Empires*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1954, pp. 7-8.


99 Pires, *op.cit.*, p. 208, n. 3: “Island of Papua and its people are *Cafres*. *Cafres* is often translated as meaning ‘heathen’. It is an Arabic word, from *Kafir*, initially used to denominate the Black Africans. Both Pires and Rodrigues probably refer to the fact that the Papuans are animists while the rest of the population in Halmahera are Muslims.
the *Ilhas dos Paukas* is that dated 1537 and attributed to Gaspar Viegas which depicts also the island of Biak.\(^{100}\)

Pires refers to the *Ilha de Papua* in the context of the inter-island trade relations developed in the Maluku area locating the island at eighty leagues from Banda but without specifying the direction. This could be either one of the Kei islands or the island of New Guinea. The reference to an island inhabited by Papuans is made in relation to an exotic curiosity: he had been told by the inhabitants of Maluku that in this island “there were men with big ears (*orelhas grandãs*) who cover themselves with them”.\(^{101}\) To what in reality the ‘myth’ referred, it is difficult to establish. Probably a misunderstanding due to an inappropriate translation caused the rise of such curious story. Although the following remains a highly speculative hypothesis, it is likely that the original informers were referring to the *koteka* or phalocrypt in use among the Papuans of the interior of New Guinea or the bark-cloth, which the coastal inhabitants used to cover themselves.\(^{102}\)

References to the Papuans appear also in the account by Antonio Pigafetta of Magellán’s voyage in 1519. The Papuans mentioned by Pigafetta are those heathen populations inhabiting the island of Giailolo (Halmahera). He reports that these Papuans, ruled by a king, *Raia Papua*, are rich in gold and live in the interior, while the Moor kings live along the coast.\(^{103}\) Where these Papuans originated from, it is

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\(^{101}\) Pires, *op.cit.*, Fol. 159r., p. 222.

\(^{102}\) Misunderstandings may have often occurred at that time. An example appears in Brito’s account and has been detected by Sollewijn Gelpke: Brito reports that when he arrived in the island of Garau (Arar) they found that the villages were deserted. Having asked the reason of this to the king of Waigeo, the latter seems to have replied that it was because a snake had devoured them. This was not the reply intended by the king but the interpreter’s translation of it. In reality the king of Waigeo might have told Brito that the villagers had gone to their gardens in the interior since the appearance of the constellation of Scorpio on the horizon together with the *Corona Australia* in its tail, called ‘the snake of heaven’, signals the beginning of the planting season. Rios, *op.cit.*, pp. 133-134 and n. 38 for Sollewijn Gelpke’s comment.

\(^{103}\) Pigafetta A., *Magellán’s Voyage. A Narrative Account of the First Navigation*. Translated and edited by R.A. Skelton from the MS in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale
difficult to ascertain. It is likely that the island is one of those off the coast of New Guinea. Wichmann reports that according to an old map, this was an island considered part of the lands known as *Terra Australis* since the Latin inscription of the map reads: *Nova Guinea a nautis sic dicta, quod eius Citora, cocoriemque facies Guineae Africanae multum sunt similia…partem autem esse continentis Australis.*

Local legends among the Papuans of the north-west coast of New Guinea report that people from Biak and Geelvink Bay migrated to Halmahera and intermingled with the local inhabitants as the adoption of the local Malay title suggests. Kamma reports that people of Biak originally migrated from the area between Sarmi and Jayapura to Northern Halmahera in a time prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the area, a fact that has been corroborated by linguistic surveys conducted in the two areas which tend suggest a very early date for the migration. Visser’s ethnological study on the Sahu/Sawai of north Halmahera has confirmed the existence of the relation between Sahu/Sawai and the Papuans inhabiting coastal and insular territories.

A more ancient reference to the Papuans is contained in the *Treatise on the Moluccas* dated 1544. Philological analyses have revealed that the author relied on older reports the chronology of which is not certain. The *Treatise* in chapter XIII

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104 Wichmann, op.cit., p. 29. Translation: “New Guinea is called in this way by the navigators, since it is more recent and also because for some aspects considerably similar to African Guinea…instead it is part of the Australian continent.”


106 Kamma, *Koreri…cit.*, p. 8; p. 79.


records a myth of foundation related to the institution of the Raja-doms of Banggai, Bacan and Papua.\footnote{Visser L. E., My Rice Field is My Child. Social and Territorial Aspects of Swidden Cultivation in Sahu, Eastern Indonesia, Foris Publications, Dordrecht/Providence, 1989, p. 175; pp. 179-181.} The Treatise, however, fails to geographically specify the land referred to as ‘Papua’, although I am personally inclined to hypothesise, on the basis of the information provided by Brito, that the Treatise refers to the island of Misoöl.

De los Rios, narrating Brito’s journey to the Papuan islands, reports that Brito visited Misoöl in 1581 and spent some time with the king of the island. He addresses the king as the Rey Papua,\footnote{A Treatise on the Moluccas. Ch. XIII.} a title that appears he does not use when referring to the king of Waigeo\footnote{Rios, op.cit., p. 131.}. In the account it is also stated that the king of Misoöl had been elected by the people, a fact that suggests that autochthonous elective forms of leadership were still in use among the Papuans of the islands notwithstanding their close relation with Malay populations.

In 1527 Martin Uriarte, a pilot of the remaining vessel of Garcia Jofre de Loaysa’s fleet, explored the coast of Halmahera and recorded in his log that in the south-east were las islas de las Papuas, numbering more that eight large and small ones.\footnote{Sollewijn Gelpke, op.cit., p. 329.} Among these were probably the islands of Gebe and Waigeo. In 1528 Alvaro de Saavedra, while sailing east towards the Americas, was forced to stop on an island situated to the east of Halmahera “en unas de negros, que llaman Papuas”.\footnote{Sollewijn Gelpke, ibid., p. 323.} In a letter dated 1544 addressed to King João III, Jorge de Castro, Governor of Ternate, used the expression Arçepeligo das Papuas referring to the territories east of the Spice

\footnote{Urdaneta Andres de, ‘Relaciones del viaje hecho á las islas Molucas ó de la especieria por la armada á las ordenes del Comendador Garcia Jofre de Loaysa’ (1537), in Navarrete M.F., Colección de los viages y discubrimientos, Imprenta Nacional Madrid, 1837, V, doc. XXVI, p.32.}
Islands. The same expression occurs in the account of Gabriel Rebelo of the same year.

Following the Portuguese capture of Melaka in 1511, the original trade centre gradually shifted further east to Makassar in the Celebes. The Portuguese Crown tried to obstruct private trade in the area under its dominion but without results. The trade laws prohibiting Christians from carrying out commercial transactions with Muslim merchants and communities were not able to hinder its practice and development. The increased demand by both Portuguese and Asian communities for spices triggered an increase in the cultivation of cloves and the introduction of clove cultivation to other islands in the region.

The change in the trade map also affected the Papuan populations. The proximity of rising entrepots in the Celebes and Maluku caused commercial transactions to intensify in the area. The Sultanates of Tidore and Ternate reached the zenith of power and state development during this period. The Portuguese, in fact, exploited the bitter rivalry existing between the two Sultanates in the Spice Islands in order to further their interests, with the Sultan of Ternate becoming the most important Portuguese ally. By favouring the monopoly of the spice trade by the

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118 Meilink-Roeslofsz, *ibid.*, p. 156. Cfr. Boyajian J.C., *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Hapsburgs, 1580- 1640*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1993, pp. 53-85. Private trade developed within the system of the Portuguese *casado* trade conducted by *casados* and *soldados* living in Portuguese controlled areas and by *lançados* residing in native-controlled communities. This trade ran parallel to the *Carreira* trade of the *Estado da India*. As Boyajian points out, private trade in Asia was an afterthought. In the first moment the king erected barriers to its growth, but then realised that some gain could have been realised out of it. In fact the Portuguese Crown established a licensing system: only those who were licensed by the Crown could trade in the *Estado da India*. Boyajian, *ibid.*, p. 29. As to the native trade, the Portuguese immediately realised that this could be used to protect their own interests and so they made no attempt to suppress it. In this regard see: Simkin C.G.F., *The Traditional Trade of Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 184; p. 229.
Portuguese, the Sultanate of Ternate was able to extend its influence over Maluku and forestall the rise of Tidore’s dominance in the region.

Before the arrival of the Portuguese, the most important island in the Maluku area was Halmahera and the neighbouring island of Giailolo. Ternate and Tidore, helped respectively by the Portuguese and the Spanish, increased their authority on Halmahera at the expense of the Sultan of Giailolo.\(^{121}\) Plausibly it was during the power struggle between Tidore and Ternate and the demise of the political supremacy of Giailolo, that the Papuan populations became tributaries of the Sultan of Tidore as the ‘saga of Gurabesi’, developed in this period, symbolically and aetiologically suggests. Slaves and products from New Guinea and the Papuan islands made their way to Tidore as tribute.\(^{122}\) A VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) document, dated 1705, reports that since the XVI century the islands bordering the northern coast of West Papua, inhabited by people who spoke a Papuan language, were tributaries of the Sultan of Tidore.\(^{123}\)

The arrival of the Dutch in South-east Asia at the beginning of the XVII century caused a further disruption in the commercial transactions and arrangements of the region. The increase in the production of spices, already initiated during the Portuguese mercantile domination, caused their price to plunge on the world markets. The East India Company tried to solve the crisis by implementing the policy of *extirpatie*, that is the destruction of cultivated trees in order to reduce production, and by introducing trade restrictions aiming at impeding private trade. Subsidies, known as *Recognitie Penningen*, were paid to the rulers of those islands forced to reduce cultivations.\(^{124}\)

\(^{121}\) Meilink-Roeslofsz, *op.cit.*, p. 154.
\(^{122}\) Kamma F. Ch., ‘De Verhouding tussen Tidore en de Papoese Eilenden’ …*cit.*, pp. 536-541.
\(^{123}\) VOC 1727, *Openbaar Verbaal*, 17 June 1705, fols. 486-487; 493-495.
\(^{124}\) Meilink-Roeslofsz, *op.cit.*, p. 207.
Once again the trade centre shifted, this time to the west, from Macassar to Batavia on Java, and to the south on the Ceram Laut islands. In the latter case the Bandanese who fled when their island fell into the hands of the Dutch are probably to be held responsible for the rise of a florid market in the second half of the XVII century. Schouten, quoted by Galis, reports that in 1602 the trade area covered by Ceram Laut merchants extended as far as the Raja Ampat islands, New Guinea and Timor to the east and Bali, south-east Kalimantan and east Java to the west. Among the commodities commercialised by the swift kora-koras were birds of paradise, massoi bark and Papuan slaves from the Onin and Mimika coasts.

It seems that when the Dutch realised that the Ceram Laut merchants were carrying out a profitable trade along the south-west coast of New Guinea, they became interested in the area. The Ceram Laut merchants were trading in textiles and beads on the Onin peninsula in exchange for slaves and massoi bark. By the beginning of the XIX century they had established a monopoly over these products continuing with the traditional Sosolot practice and trade friend agreements. It was the existence of these longstanding traditional arrangements between traders and locals that neutralised any attempt made by the Dutch to gain the monopoly over the area covered by the Ceram Laut commercial venture, that is, from the Onin peninsula to Kowiai. Here Ceramese traders had established several trading stations or Sosolots, at Triton Bay, Namatote and Lakahia in which they appointed local agents. The Ceramese expansion on the south coast of New Guinea came to a halt when the Sultan

125 Meilink-Roeslofsz, ibid., pp. 219-220.
126 Galis, op. cit., p. 16.
of Tidore, attempting to enforce his influence over New Guinea, initiated hongi expeditions in 1850.\textsuperscript{129}

The Dutch did not exert, in the first place, direct control over New Guinea. Since they did not see any profit and benefit deriving from directly controlling the Papuan territories, these were allowed to remain under the sovereignty of the Sultan of Tidore as the treaty signed in 1660 shows.\textsuperscript{130} Any attempt to find precious metals and resources in west New Guinea had failed. In 1667 the treaty was renewed but the boundaries of the territories placed under the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Tidore remained vague. The treaties were subsequently renewed on the same terms in 1689 and 1700.

According to one of the clauses contained in the treaty, the Sultan of Tidore was held responsible by the Dutch for the activities and disturbances caused by Papuan raids and piratical practices. This probably explains why the boundaries of Tidore’s sovereignty were never clearly defined: in this way the Dutch could have, in fact, at any time, called up Tidore’s intervention invoking responsibilities stemming from jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{131}

Valentijn, writing at the beginning of the XVIII century, reports that in 1670 the inhabitants of Weda and other Papuans raided Ceram and Ambon. Furthermore in 1700 groups of Papuans, migrated from Misoöl and established in North Ceram, were causing disturbances in the area forcing the colonial Government “to attack the


\textsuperscript{131} Galis, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 17.
Papuans not only on our shores, but even in their own eyries on the coast of Maba, Weda and Salatta”.132

Probably the Papuan raids reported by Valentijn were part of Papuan rak ceremonies, headhunting expeditions, or a means to obtain slaves to sell on the lucrative regional markets.133 These disturbances may also have been related to the insurgency against the Dutch and Tidore led by the Sangaji of Patani that will be discussed later. However, that the Papuans practiced piracy seems to be confirmed by the fact that for the Timorese of Kisar the word papua meant ‘pirate’.134

From the archival documents and contemporary accounts it appears that the Dutch and their Tidorese vassal were experiencing difficulties in asserting and maintaining their control over the Papuan populace of New Guinea. In 1703 representatives of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie travelled to New Guinea with representatives from Tidore in an attempt to assert Tidorese sovereignty over the Papuans. This practice became customary and lasted until the XIX century when Dutch direct rule came to be established. In 1706 Governor Roselaar listed the islands of Pisang, Popa, Bolo, Misoöl, Salawanta, Batanta and Waigeo as being under Tidorese rule. No mention is made of the Onin peninsula and Gebe, although it seems that the Sultan claimed sovereignty over these territories as well.135

The repercussions of the Napoleonic wars and the contemporaneous industrial revolution in Europe affected also the South-east Asian region. The Congress of Vienna, which restored the balance of power of the Ancien Regime, prompted a new wave of colonial enterprises in Africa, Asia and Oceania. The shift from colonial mercantilism to capitalist imperialism brought about a change in the existing

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133 Haga, op.cit., I, pp. 80-81.
134 Kamma, Koreri...cit., p. 9.
longstanding economic and political relations, as well as traditional allegiances. The necessity to secure unrestricted access to resources forced the Dutch to establish direct control over the territories until then indirectly administered.

In order to forestall the ongoing British expansion in the east and the south, in 1824 the Netherlands signed an agreement with Great Britain over the partition of New Guinea, presumably part of the treaty of London, which had worldwide application. A few years later in 1828 at Fort Du Bus in Triton Bay on the south-west coast of New Guinea, the Dutch government claimed sovereignty over the territories from the Vogelkop peninsula to 141 degrees east longitude.\(^\text{136}\) In 1897, because of the necessity to control the raids of Tugeri or Marind-anim head-hunters of the south coast into the British sector of the island, the Dutch government was reluctantly forced to include in its budget for 1898 an item for the establishment of an administrative post in Netherlands New Guinea.\(^\text{137}\) But this, more than an administrative post, was a sort of military garrison. It was only in 1907 that an effective administrative post was established in Merauke sanctioning the beginning of official Dutch rule in the territory and the incorporation of West Papua into the Dutch colony of Indonesia.

The survey of the existing archaeological and literary sources reveals that the Papuans were a people occupying a territory geographically situated to the east of the Spice Islands and Halmahera. The same sources, however, provide little or no information regarding the characteristics and traits constituting Papuan identity, that is, how this identity was structured in relation to the wider regional Malayan context by external observers as well as Papuan self-perception.

\(^\text{135}\) This transpires from the texts of the treaties of the above quoted ‘Corpus Diplomaticum’.

Regional Perceptions of Papuan Identity.

The scarcity of documents renders difficult any attempt to determine the characteristics and constituents of Papuan identity in pre-colonial South-east Asia. The sources surveyed portray the status quo the European powers found when they first entered the region. They list the Papuans as part of the traditional commercial network and they appear to constitute a ‘people’ or ethnic group in their own right distinct from the Malay people on the basis of racial, linguistic and cultural traits. But they say nothing regarding how Papuan identity was structured.

Identity is the outcome of a relational process continuously shifting over time. Not having an ontic dimension, but being a relational entity generated by the dynamics of a continuously changing dialectics, it escapes any attempt of conceptualisation and definition. It represents, in fact, the knowledge of one’s essence and existence in relation to another mutating entity so that perceived differences become structural elements of identification. The relation creates a system in fieri, continuously changing and shifting towards new dimensions, configurations and meanings.

Ethnographical accounts show that the Papuans identified themselves with reference to their tribe, clan, confederacy, territory or ecosystem and never to the common intertribal elements they shared. They never referred to themselves as ‘Papuans’. Probably the dialectical idiosyncrasies of Papuan languages and the totemic ancestries contributed to foster this type of ‘localised’ or ‘residential’ identification. Only in their relations with the Malays and, subsequently, with European traders did they refer to themselves as Papuans, that is the name that had been attributed to them by the outsiders, the perceived ‘strangers’ or ‘other’.

137 Bone, op.cit., p. 19. See also in this regard note no. 6 of this chapter.
138 In this regard see: Bromley, op.cit.
Consequently, in order to reconstruct the identity of the Papuans in South-east Asia, an historical analysis of the name may represent an optimum point of departure. Names, in fact, tend to resiliently survive the test of time and can be considered bearers or custodians of historical significances and experiences. As toponyms are used by archaeologists as relics to reconstruct the history of a settlement, so eponyms and ethnonyms may be indicative of historical vicissitudes and cultural peculiarities.

In support of the hypothesis that, at the dawn of the XVI century, the Papuans were already regarded as a people ethnically distinct from the Malay populace inhabiting Maluku is the name ‘Papua’ itself. Apart from an isolated inference that can be drawn from a document dated 1554 by Vicente Pereira reporting that the name derived from the Papuan language, evidences seem to suggest that the name derived from a Malay word or etymon and was used by Malay speakers to denominate their non-Austronesian neighbours.

Antonio Galvão, who had served as Governor General in the Moluccas between 1536 and 1538, stated that the “Moluccas call those people Os Papuas (Mal. Orang Papua) because they are black, and have frizzy hair, and the Portuguese also call them so, because they copied it from the [Moluccas]”. The word ‘Papua’ therefore appears to refer to the physical characteristics of the Papuan people, that is their negritude and frizziness. Galvão informs us that etymologically the name derives from a Malay word, probably puah-puah, meaning ‘wollen’ or ‘frizzly haired’.

The etymology puah-puah was first listed in the 1852 English-Malay lexicon compiled by Crawfurd who worked on previous dictionaries and word lists, in

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139 In a letter Pereira wrote that in the Maluku neighbourhood there was a people “que se chama os Apapus”. The reflexive form of the verb suggests, in fact, that this was the name by which the Papuans denominated themselves. Sá, op.cit., vol. II, p. 137. In my opinion, instead of being a reflexive form, it could be a colloquialism (i.e. dativus ethicus or dativus possessionis) typical of Latin-based languages.
particular those compiled by missionaries. Since the term *puwah-puwah* does not appear in Marsden’s dictionary of 1821, Sollewijn Gelpke hypothesises that probably Crawfurd derived the information from other sources and in particular from the notes of the missionaries Hutchins and Robinson who worked respectively in Penang and Batavia at the end of the XVIII century.

Sollewijn Gelpke observes, however, that in Crawfurd’s reporting of the etymology there are some inconsistencies. In his lexicon, Crawfurd provides three definitions of the word ‘Papua’ determined on the basis of perceived phonetic differences. In the first, *papuwah*, of Javanese and Malay derivation, is listed as meaning ‘frizzled’, “a negrito of the Indian islands, an African Negro”. This is followed by the entry *pâpuwah*, “frizzled; the island of New Guinea; an inhabitant of that island being of negrito race”. Finally he lists the Javanese-Malay word *puwah-puwah* as meaning “frizzled or woolly; a Negro. It is applied to anything with a frizzled or woolly coat”. Crawfurd, writing some year later, added that the Malayans and the Javanese used to refer to New Guinea as *tanah puwah-puwah*, the land of the Papuans, that subsequently the Europeans corrupted into ‘Papua’.\(^{141}\)

According to Crawfurd the homonyms or homophones of *papuwah* and *pâpuwah* would indicate the existence of two different referents. The necessity to duplicate referents derived probably from the need to overcome the semantic confusion of the word *papua* meaning both ‘black’ and ‘frizzled’. Antonio Galvão, in fact, as mentioned above, reports that the inhabitants of the islands east of the Spice Islands were called *os papuas* because they are black and have frizzly hair. Sollewijn Gelpke suggests that Galvão intended the term as meaning primarily ‘black’. The


\(^{141}\) For the discussion on Crawfurd’s lexical entries of the term ‘papua’ see: Sollewijn Gelpke, *op.cit.*, pp. 320-321.
same meaning, in fact, appears to occur in Wilkinson’s dictionary the compilation of
which was based on lexemes contained in old texts and manuscripts and not on pre-
existing dictionaries.  

A completely different etymology is that proposed by one of Galvão’s
contemporaries, Gabriel Rebelo, who argued that “Papua, em todas as linguas de
Maluco diz Cafre”, that is ‘heathen’. The same association between negritude,
frizzly hair, and ‘kafir’ is reported in Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola’s *Conquista
de las Islas Malucas*. But for Argensola ‘cafír’ or ‘kafir’ means ‘dark-skinned’ and
not ‘heathen’. Argensola’s text reads:

(…) los Papuas al Este del Maluco, islas poco frecuentadas (…); cuyos
naturales son negros como los cafres: usan el cabello revuelto en grandes y
crespas greñas; (…) Llamaronse Papuas que en su lengua significa prietos
(…).  

A completely different etymological identification is that proposed by Kamma
who hypothesises a native origin for the term based on historical considerations, that
is the historical use of the term, rather than abstract lexical and semantic speculations.
Kamma’s argument is constructed by contextualising the Papuan reality in the Maluku
world, in its economic and political configuration reconstructed on the basis of the
information provided by XVI –XVII century Spanish and Portuguese sources. These,
in fact, tend to relate the term ‘papua’ to the seafarer tribes of Biak and the Vogelkop
peninsula who were part, as shown in the previous pages, of the intricate web of

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143 Sá, *op.cit.*, III, p.393. The Arabic word ‘kafir’, however, means ‘black’ and not ‘heathen’. Probably
Rebelo derived this pseudo-etymology by association, observing that the Muslims of Africa called the
native heathen populations ‘kafirs’.
Translation of the Spanish text: “(…) the Papuans to the east of Maluku, islands not often visited (…),
the natives are black as the ‘cafres’ [= kafir?]; they have their hair styled in big tight curls; (…) they call
them[se]selves? Papuas that in their language means dark-skinned”. It should be noted that in modern
Spanish ‘cafre’ means ‘savage’.

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commercial and economic relations developed in eastern Indonesia since time immemorial.

The earliest South-east Asian maps and reports seem to confirm the assumption that the name ‘Papua’ was used to refer to a region east to Halmahera and with which Halmahera had a close and longstanding relationship. Several traditions seem to support the hypothesis that groups of Biak people migrated to Patani and Sawai long before the arrival of the Europeans. Visser points out that the Sahu of north-west Halmahera speak a language that belongs to the West Papuan Phylum of non-Austronesian languages. According to the linguistic analyses conducted by Würm, the West Papuan Phylum comprises of 24 languages located in the central and northern parts of the Vogelkop Peninsula in West Papua and on northern Halmahera. Miguel Roxo de Brito reports that the people of the Geelvink Bay area told him that some of their kinsmen (keret) lived in a region beyond Gebe. It is likely therefore that they were referring to East Halmahera, Patani and Weda.

Portuguese and Spanish reports, dating back to the XV-XVI centuries, indicate that the Papuan islands paid allegiance to the Sultan of Tidore. In the Tidorese system of vassalage, the Biak, Numfor and Raja Ampat islands were denominated collectively as sup i papwa or ‘the land below’. This is a designation that may be read as either a geographical reference, as ‘land below the sunset’, which is a rather difficult etymology to accept since Papua is east of Tidore, or as indicating a political status alluding to the subjection to the Sultan of Tidore.

147 Rios, op.cit., p. 138 and n. 58.
It is evident that the acceptance of either the geographical or political meaning of the term will weigh on Papuan chronology, with the geographical semantics vouching for an earlier chronology. The two meanings of the term however can well be referred to two different moments of Papuan history, as *ab origine* the term may have had a geographical connotation and subsequently it underwent a semantic ‘drift’ or ‘shift’ assuming a political meaning coinciding with the submission to Tidore around the XV century A.D.. Presumably before any Papuans became vassals of the Tidorese Sultanate, they were known as the people inhabiting the ‘lands below the sunset’, more precisely the territories south to Halmahera traditionally connected to the populace inhabiting the north-western shores of New Guinea.

The Papuan shore-dwellers of New Guinea and off-shore islands were well known in the Maluku-Ceram Laut trade circuit. The Papuans were also known not only as traders and suppliers of particular commodities, but also for their piratical activity. Piracy is the concept applied by the Europeans of the XVI-XVII centuries to define Papuan raiding activity. The term is, however, inappropriate since a great part of presumed Papuan ‘piratical’ activity had a ceremonial or ritual meaning. These raids were usually head-hunting expeditions or *rak*, that had in the Papuan worldview a profound social meaning. Among the Marind-anim, for instance, they served the purpose of obtaining new names for the individuals of the tribe. As Van Baal points out, head-hunting expeditions were usually carried out in areas distant from their home territory in order to prevent their victims from retaliating with counter-attacks on the raiders’ village.\textsuperscript{149} For the people of the Biak-Numfor area it was a means by which to acquire those valuables necessary for the performance of ceremonies and the definition of social ranking.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{149} In this regard see: Van Baal, *Dema...cit.*, pp. 676-764.
\textsuperscript{150} Kamma, *Koreri...cit.*, pp. 66-67.
European sources, dating back to the XVII-XVIII centuries, report that the Papuan incursions were greatly feared by the coastal populations. Argensola writes that the Pupans were considered “hombres rígidos, sufridores del trabajo, hábiles para cualquiera traición”, that is men morally inflexible, hard workers and capable of any sort of treachery.\(^{151}\) Valentijn, writing at the beginning of the XVIII century, states that “al deze papoasche ingezenten zijn en zeer befaamde roovers, voor welke de bewoners van Ceram (waar zij ook meest aankomen) uitemend bang zijn”.\(^{152}\) He also reports that, because Papuan piracy was increasing in brutality and frequency, the Bandanese trade was experiencing severe losses in terms of profits and volume of trade.\(^{153}\)

The arrival of Islam in Eastern Indonesia, with its prohibition against enslaving coreligionists, may have greatly affected the modalities and characteristics of traditional slave trade patterns and practices. New parameters were established and new traders emerged. Reid argues that in the XV century slave trade followed a precise pattern:

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\text{slave trade} \quad \text{(to take people from east to west, from small divided states (especially those prey of internal warfare) to larger wealthier ones, and from non-Muslim to Muslim societies. A number of states rose and flourished primarily on the traffic of slaves, many of them seized by raiding expeditions against coastal peoples in the Central Philippines, Eastern Indonesia, New Guinea, Arakan or the Mekong Delta. Aru (Sumatra) and Onin (New Guinea) had the reputation in the XVI century (…).}^{154}
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The historical process that brought about the commodification of the Papuans as slaves and the development of a master-slave relationship between the Indo-Malays

\(^{151}\) Argensola, op.cit., p. 74.
\(^{152}\) Valentijn, op.cit., I, p. 248. Translation of the Dutch text: “All these inhabitants of the Papuan areas are big and famous pirates and the people of the island of Ceram (where they mostly come to) are extraordinarily afraid and scared of them”. Emphasis in the Dutch text is added.
\(^{153}\) Valentijn, ibid., I, pp. 252-253.
and the Papuans, probably represented the *locus originis* of the persisting Indonesian attitudes of contempt for the Papuans.\textsuperscript{155} Twentieth century Dutch reports, although written in the milieu of an anti-Indonesian propaganda, confirm that the sense of superiority that characterised Indonesian attitudes in their relations with the Papuans date back to the beginning of their contacts and it was during this time that the expression *Papua Bodoh*, stupid Papuan, was coined.\textsuperscript{156}

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, South-east Asian slave trade was mainly local, motivated by religious and social factors. Once again, as has been argued in regard to piracy, the concept of slavery is inappropriate to understand the meaning of the institution in the South-east Asian context. This was part, in fact, of the wider web of the traditional South-east Asian patron-client hierarchies and bondage relationships,\textsuperscript{157} and, as the Malay Law Texts indicate, a taxonomy of dependencies existed in the regional system of bondage and slavery.\textsuperscript{158}

With the expansion of Islam in the region, non–Muslim communities became the agents and centres of the profitable slave trade. In the XVI century, the most important trade route was that operating between Onin and the island of Goram. Coastal non-Muslim tribes, known and feared for their bellicosity and fierceness, were left to monopolise the florid trade of human cargoes. The Papuans from the Onin

\textsuperscript{154} Reid A. (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in South-east Asia*, Queensland University Press, St. Lucia, 1983, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{155} Kroef van der, 'Ethnic Self-Perception and Political Action’...cit., pp. 106-107.


\textsuperscript{158} In this regard see: Matheson V. & Hooker M.B., ‘Slavery in the Malay Texts: Categories of Dependency and Compensation’, in Reid, *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency...cit.,* pp. 183-191. The Bugis Law Code *Latoa* provides the following definition of slavery: “A person is called a slave (*ata*) when the four following circumstances rise: first, a person is peddled for sale and bought; second, the person sold says ‘buy me’ and you buy him; third, a person seized in war and sold; fourth, a person has transgressed the customary law (*ade*) or the state (*kerajaan*), he is sold and you buy him”. Text quoted by Reid A., ‘ ‘Closed” and ‘Open” Slave Systems in Pre-Colonial South-east Asia’, in Reid, *op.cit.,* p. 158.
peninsula sold slaves to Muslim traders from Ceram and Tidore with whom they had *Sosolot* agreements.\(^{159}\) It is possible that the conversion to Islam of Papuan communities was hindered by the necessity to maintain control over this trade sector. Islam in fact appears to have been confined to a relatively exiguous number of people living in the *Sosolot* areas where Muslim trade agents from Ceram or Tidore lived whilst maintaining contacts with the local ‘heathen’ population. This situation seems to be confirmed by the fact that when the Dutch traders entered the Papuan-Ceramese trade network they found trade agents of mixed-blood referred to as ‘Papuans’.\(^{160}\)

The Dutch *Generale Missiven* indicate that the Dutch tried to enter and take over the slave market controlled by the ‘Ceramese-Papuan connection’ but that their attempts failed,\(^{161}\) probably because of the support of the Muslim traders for a Papuan-Ceramese monopoly. In support of this hypothesis, VOC documents indicate that in the XVII and XVIII centuries the Papuans continued to control undisputedly the slave trade in a wide area stretching from the so-called Gamrange region north to the Raja Ampat.\(^{162}\)

From the scarce information available regarding the Papuans in South-east Asia in both the pre-colonial and colonial eras, it emerges that they were perceived by Malayans and Europeans as a ‘people’. More than a peculiar identity it is possible to determine certain modes of ‘identification’ based on particular activities that the Papuans exclusively engaged in. Piracy and slave trade, justified by Papuan beliefs, values and norms, became the structural elements in which a Papuan mode of

\(^{159}\) Haga, *op.cit.*, I, pp. 80-81; pp. 120-121.


identification was moulded religiously, as being non-Muslim, and racially, by referring to their negritude and physical features.

The term ‘Papuan’ was used to designate the “frizzly haired” inhabitants of the islands and coastal areas of what is today West Papua. The inhabitants of the interior, in their relations with the coastal dwellers, appear to have been perceived and represented as a different ethnic group as some European accounts seem to suggest. The implications of the dialectics will be shown in the later parts of this thesis.

**Christianity and Colonialism: Exporting the West, Importing the Rest.**

Max Weber, in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, postulated a proportional relation between religious affiliation and social stratification and that “religious affiliation is not a cause of economic conditions, but to a certain extent it appears to be a result of them”.[163] Although Weber was elaborating a theory ‘within the boundaries’ of Christianity characterised by denominational divisions,[164] one might argue whether there is a direct correlation between Christian ethics, values and beliefs and the capitalist world system which emerged and took shape during the XV – XVI centuries A.D.. In this period Europe came to represent the epicentre or focal point of homogenising centripetal and centrifugal forces.

Christianity, inculcated by the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman mind and systematically developed by medieval scholars,[165] had become the ideological foundation and the source of identity of the West. The merchants, adventurers, conquistadors, missionaries and settlers set out to explore the newly discovered territories with their family Bibles and breviaries in their satchels and trunks. Often, as

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the log books and diaries of many navigators of the time record, prayers were recited and psalms were sung to foster a sense of safety and security during the hazardous and turbulent journeys and to provide a meaning for their actions and their enterprise. It was Christianity which, informing a particular way of life, made the Europeans socially and culturally visible in alien settings, becoming the matrix of their identity in an ‘unknown’ and ‘uncivilised’ world. The consequences of this process were that, in the long run, Christianity came to represent what was ‘known’ and ‘civilised’.

The missions, the institutionalised emblem of Christianity in colonial settings, became the outposts of Western civilisation and through their activity of christianisation were able to ‘convert’ some non-western populations ‘towards’ the acceptance of western ways of life, values and norms. Christianity appeared to be able to support the colonial system since it acted as a means for mobilising the peripheries to meet the needs and demands of the core. To a certain extent Christianity did provide capitalism, and its offspring colonialism, with the fundamental (and foundational) ethics and ethos, that is a code of behaviours and beliefs, justifying and informing the actions and practices of those living in the colonies.

The arrival of the Europeans in South-east Asia between the XV and XVI centuries saw the establishment in the region of Christian missions and the gradual penetration of ‘institutionalised’ Christian ideas, beliefs and values into non-Western systems. Its appearance was not, however, ex abrupto but had been preceded by earlier forms of Christianity. Studies carried out by Sutjipto Wirjosuparto and

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166 Etymologically from the Latin verb *convertere* which means ‘to turn around or towards’, chiefly implying ‘direction’.
Bakker\textsuperscript{168} on ancient Arab sources suggest that in the second half of the VII century A.D. a community of Nestorian Christians\textsuperscript{169} flourished near the Sumatran town of Pancur. This location was probably the commercial entrepot of Barus to which Arab sources, dating back to the X century, refer.\textsuperscript{170} According to the tradition of the \textit{Acts of Thomas}, Christian communities were established by the apostle Thomas in south-east India along the Coromandel coast.\textsuperscript{171} It is possible that from here Christian ideas and customs made their way to the islands of the Indo-Malay archipelago as far as New Guinea along traditional local trade routes, as for centuries did Hindu practices and tenets. In his report regarding the Papuan myth of Manseren Manggundi, for instance, the XIX century captain and explorer Fabritius tells us that in earlier times the Biak-Numfor region of West Papua was visited by a Hindu priest whose fate and the doctrine he preached might have influenced the Biak legend. In the Manggundi myth the doomed hero is said to have left for Kalingga or the coast of Coromandel, the seat of Brahmanism, whence from earliest times many Hindu missionaries set out to preach their doctrines in the most distant regions.\textsuperscript{172} The phoenix motif and the baptism by fire, present in the mythological accounts of the Biak populations, are


\textsuperscript{169} The Nestorian Church is the ancient Christian Church of the Persian Empire that in the V century A.D. embraced an anti-Monophysite Christology in order to distance itself from Rome and avoid the persecutions of the Zoroastrian clergy. From here the Nestorians undertook extensive missionary activity in East and South-east Asia. It is known that a Persian Nestorian monk, A-lo-pen, worked in China under the emperor Tai-Tsung (627-650 A.D.) according to a stele found by the Jesuit Fathers in 1625 in China. The Christian mission of Pancur was probably established in the period of intensive Nestorian mission activity.

\textsuperscript{170} Arab sources often refer to Barus as Fansur, a nomenclature derived probably from that of a small settlement in the region of Barus known as Pancur or Fansur. The Arab name Fansur refers to the finest quality camphor (\textit{fansuri}) found in the region. Literary and archaeological evidences suggest that Pancur/Fansur/Barus was an important trading centre of resins already in the IX – X centuries A.D. prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the region. See: Drakkard J., \textit{A Malay Frontier. Unity and Duality in a Sumatran Kingdom}, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1990, pp. 3-4. In the XVI century Barus was an important commercial centre. See:Pires, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 161-162.

\textsuperscript{171} The first document that provides this information is a Syriac manuscript dated 1770. The text can be found in Richards W.J., \textit{The Indian Christians of St. Thomas}, London, 1908, pp. 72-77.

\textsuperscript{172} Fabritius’ report can be found in Goudswaard A., \textit{De Papoeua’s van de Geelvinksbuai}, Schiedam, 1863, p. 88.
symbolic representations probably derived from Hindu beliefs. The hypothesis is tinged, however, with probabilism and appears to depend on semiotic interpretations (the pitfall of comparative studies!) which tend to debase symbols to mere signs. The fact that similar symbols recur in different religions does not entail ipso facto that they may be the outcome of influences or contacts.

As discussed previously in this chapter, the casual explorers who visited from time to time the scattered islands dotting the Indian Ocean in search of new sources and opportunities of wealth and gain before the opening of the sea-way by Vasco de Gama in 1498, probably represented an optimum display of Christian civilisation to the local populations. In the Franciscan archives it is documented that in 1291 Fr. John de Monte Corvino was the first European cleric to undertake a sea-journey to the East although from his letters we are not sure whether he visited any of the Indo-Malay ports. He was followed in 1323-1324 by Blessed Odoric of Pordenone who visited Sumatra, Java and Borneo and in 1347 by Bishop John de Marignolli who on his visit to Sumatra reported that, at that time, “sunt enim ibi pauci Christiani”.

What must be considered at this stage before undertaking the narration and analysis of the spread of Christianity to West Papua, is that monotheistic views had already penetrated into the religious sphere of coastal populations in pre-missionary times because of the spread of Islam by Arab and Persian traders. Archaeological

173 In this regard see: Horst, op. cit., p. 155. Horst argues also that the Rum – Serams or worship houses of the Papuans are of Hindu origin. According to the XIX century Dutch scholar they are related to Lingam worship or Shivaism and not to ancestor worship as it is commonly and widely believed.
177 “There were in fact there a small number of Christians”. Golubovich, op.cit., vol. IV, p. 274; p. 302.
evidences shows that an Arab settlement existed on Sumatra from the IX century A.D. and that Arab merchants played an important role in the affairs of the Sumatran Buddhist trading state of Srivijaya founded in the VII century A.D.  

The preceding nominal acceptance of, or conversion to Islam, experienced by some of these populations, cannot be ignored in any discussion concerning Christian evangelisation in the East. Henotheism and polytheism, which characterise animistic religions or religiousness, were not the only elements the Christian missionaries had to contend with in their evangelical enterprises. The confrontation and competition between the Cross and the Crescent was an element that greatly influenced missionary activity with regards both to its organisational strategy as well as to its educational and catechetical programs.

As Valentijn reports, Islam reached the eastern region of the Indonesian archipelago in the last quarter of the XV century with the conversion of the Sultan of Ternate and, as the author of the Treatise informs, this remained confined only to the ruler and his immediate entourage. This information is confirmed by Tome Pires who observed that Islam began to be accepted by local rulers in Maluku fifty years before the arrival of the Europeans in the region and that “the kings of the islands are Mohammedans, but not very deeply involved in the sect”. He also pointed out that many of the natives who had converted to Islam were not circumcised. These converts, however, represented a very small number of the population that still paid allegiance to their traditional deities and beliefs. In fact Pires observes that “the heathens are three parts and more out of four.” Haga reports that Islam reached the Papuan islands around the middle of the XVII century when all the

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178 Ricklefs, op. cit., p. 3.
180 Treatise, p. 85.
181 Pires, op. cit., p. 213.
Papuan islands were subjected to Tidore, although he admits that nothing is known about the supremacy of Tidore on the coast of New Guinea.\textsuperscript{183} It is possible to assume, however, because of the frequency of contacts, that Islam was introduced to New Guinea by merchants from Halmahera and Ceram during the XVII century and would explain the similarity in the denomination of the ‘Muslim’ sects in XVI century Portuguese and XIX century Dutch sources: the Portuguese \textit{ceita de Mafoma} in Halmahera\textsuperscript{184} and the Dutch \textit{caste Mafore} in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{185} The Etna Report of 1858 also refers to \textit{Mjfore} as a clan or \textit{keret} on the north-western coast of New Guinea.\textsuperscript{186}

Andaya’s study of the Maluku region supports the hypothesis that Islam spread to New Guinea two centuries after the introduction of Islam to north Maluku.\textsuperscript{187} Also Andaya argues that the clash or encounter between different worldviews came to be perceived differently by Europeans, Arabs and South-east Asian populations. For the Europeans and the Arabs it was a continuation of earlier religious conflicts initiated in the XI century with all their economic and political implications.\textsuperscript{188} Trade wars were the most visible sign of these clashes and did not pass unnoticed by the local populations for whom the acceptance of either Islam or Christianity represented the “commitment to either Christian or Muslim socio-political institutions and economic networks,”\textsuperscript{189} an act lacking religious resonances.

The latent battle between Muslim \textit{ulama} and Christian missionaries came to be translated on the ground as a struggle between opposing symbols. These came to be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{182} \textit{ibid}.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} Haga, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 94; pp. 121-122.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} \textit{Documenta Maluenses}, doc. 10, par. 10, p. 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} \textit{Geheim Verbaal}, 20 August 1851, doc. No. 215.
  \item \textsuperscript{186} \textit{Nieuw Guinea, Ethnographisch en Natuurkundig Onderzocht en Beschreven in 1858 door een Nederlandsch Indische Commissie (Etna Rapport)}, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indië, Amsterdam, 1862, fols. 155-156.
  \item \textsuperscript{187} Andaya, \textit{The World of Maluku...cit.}, p. 108.
  \item \textsuperscript{188} For the origins and nature of the struggle between Christians and Muslims see: Riley-Smith J., \textit{The First Crusaders, 1095-1131}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997; Fulcher of Chartres, \textit{A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem 1095-1127}, Harold Fink, New York, 1969.
\end{itemize}
loaded not only with a spiritual significance and content, but also with historical and political meanings. The locals, in the beginning, interpreted this ‘war of signifiers’ according to their hermeneutics, as a clash between forces or powers. It was a natural process that caused the rift between signifiers and their signifieds to widen and shift towards new meanings bringing about the rise of new or apparently hybrid ideologies.

For the Papuans the acceptance of either Christianity or Islam was conceived as a political and economic statement of allegiance entailing the adoption of existing political institutions and economic networks. It did not have an impact on a spiritual level since they simply systemised the new symbols into their native epistemology.

Local Muslim or Christian converts tended to indifferently use Christian objects as tutelary or apotropaic talismans. This attitude implicitly reveals that their conversion was propelled by the pragmatic opportunity to get access to new sources of spirits and power in order to ameliorate their lives. Consequently the appearance of either Christian or Muslim symbols and practices in the aboriginal system does not ipso facto mean that one is in the presence of converted populations or communities.

Notwithstanding the acceptance of Islam, it appears that the local populations of the Maluku-Papuan region continued to maintain their traditional animistic beliefs and rituals which supported and underpinned their atavistic system and network of social and economic relations. Foreign elements, such as Islamic beliefs, rituals and practices, were merely incorporated into their traditional systems.

As will be discussed in chapter IV, the Papuans tended to incorporate intrusive elements into their native systems of beliefs by interpreting them in the light of their native hermeneutics. Among the Papuans ‘conversion’ had a different meaning not entailing the abjuration of the past in order to make ‘space’ for the exclusive

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189 Andaya, op. cit., p. 146.
190 ibid., p. 146.
acceptance of the ‘direction’ indicated by the new faith. Conversion was a politico-economic ‘act of allegiance’ not different from that by which relationships were established within the native exchange system regulated by the Big Man. It was the ‘cargo’ transacted within the system of values and beliefs of the Papuans.

From the discussion above it appears clear that when the Portuguese first arrived in the region in the XVI century, a mild inkling of Christianity was already present, long before the establishment of the first missionary posts and the enactment of a program of systemic evangelisation of the area. Christianity and related ideas had already been directly or virtually experienced. In India, for instance, the Portuguese found the Thomas tradition well rooted and widely established.\footnote{Goa 31, 18-15v (text A), 1517, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome.}

In the beginning the Portuguese were not concerned with spreading the Christian faith. Their enterprises were not crusades and the initial attitude and mentality was more that of a conquistador than of a coloniser. Unfavourable contemporary criticisms tend to emphasise the thirst for booty of the first Portuguese merchants and soldiers. Hugo Grotius reports in this regard that “the Portuguese in most places do not further the extension of the Faith or, indeed, pay any attention to it at all, since they are interested only in the acquisition of wealth”.\footnote{Grotius H., \textit{Mare Liberum}, quoted by Boxer, \textit{The Portuguese Seaborne}…\textit{cit.}, p. 78.} Similar denunciations are found in Spanish sources such as that of the Dominican Friar Diego Aduarte who in 1598 polemically argued that the Portuguese were far more interested in holding the ports they had than gaining souls to the Christian cause.\footnote{Goa 31, 18-15v (text A), 1517, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome.}

The tendency to create a \textit{Pax Lusitana} in the south-eastern seas facilitated the spread of missionary activity. Permanent stations were established alongside commercial entrepots and administrative posts. This detour in attitude was in great part determined by political considerations. In order to strengthen their position on the...
European chessboard against the rival Spanish Crown, it was vital to the Portuguese to gain the support of the powerful Catholic clergy at that time struggling against criticisms and apostasies fuelled by Lutheran reformism. Another factor which may have contributed to the creation of permanent urban ‘Portuguese’ settlements was the increasing power that the Black Portuguese, or Topasses, were gaining in the territories under Portuguese influence. These mestizos, for instance, in Timor controlled the sandalwood, wax and gold dust trade with Macao and Makassar in which the Dominican missionaries of Solor also had a profitable share. The involvement of the clergy in mercantile activities was not casual but was prompted by practical needs.

According to the Padroado (Spanish Patronato) agreements, which regulated the relations between the Church and the Crown in both Portuguese and Spanish territories and can be regarded as a direct corollary of the treaty of the Tordesillas of 1494 dividing the world between the Iberian empires, the Portuguese and Spanish crowns were able to impose restrictions on church activities in the region by applying to the missionaries the same mercantile policy they had enacted for foreign ships trading in their seaports. Missionaries had to be in possession of a regium placet, a sort of cartaz, in order to carry out their work and acknowledge the jurisdiction of

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193 Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne...cit., p. 78.
196 For the origins and nature of the Padroado-Patronato institution see: Silva da Rego A., O Padroado Português do Oriente: Esboço Histórico, Agencia Geral das Colonias, Lisbon, 1940.
198 Shipping in Asian seas by non-Portuguese merchants and vessels was allowed provided that the merchant or ship-owner concerned had taken out on payment a Portuguese licence or cartaz and that
the Portuguese Crown and of the Padroado prelates. Since the Bulls instituting the Padroado had granted the king of Portugal the right to collect tithes and other ecclesiastical revenues, the overseas dioceses and missions were financially dependent on the crown and came to represent a constant item in the Portuguese balance of payments. However revenues were often insufficient to support the ecclesiastical organization overseas and had to be often integrated with subsidies from the Royal Exchequer. The fact that this was most of the times empty, forced the clergy to look for alternative sources of income and maintenance. For this reason the missionaries, religious orders and high ecclesiastical personalities were forced to engage or become involved in mercantile activities. It is documented for instance that the Jesuits took part actively in the Maluku spice trade. A document dated 1575 expressly refers to Jesuit commercial enterprise: the fathers of the Maluku mission in Ambon had a licence to trade four bahars of cloves. Father Valignano who visited the missions in the South-east Asian seas deplored the fact that the missions resembled commercial entrepots rather than institutions for the advancement and promotion of Christianity in the region. Furthermore, the peculiar ‘hybrid’ reality of the South-east Asian context brought Christianity to engage in relations with the non-Christian world, in particular with the old enemy Islam. Papal bulls tried to systemise the relationship in order to curtail negative doctrinal effects. In the Bull Aeterni Regis Clementia of 1481, Pope Sixtus IV spelled out the ‘rules of engagement’ of Christianity in the South-east Asian region to be observed by both Christian laics and

custom duties on the merchandise bought or sold were paid at the Portuguese ports docked by foreign ships. See: Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire...cit., p. 48.

ibid., p. 81.

ibid., p. 230.

clerics: trade with non-Christians was permitted provided they did not supply weaponry and believers continued to promote the propagation of the Christian Faith.\textsuperscript{203}

Missionary involvement in worldly mercantile affairs projected a peculiar image of the mission to the native populations: Christian beliefs and practices, as it will be shown, came to be envisaged as ‘means’ to enter the politico-economic network centred around the mission. It was presumably in this way that the missions were perceived by the Papuans who were part of a longstanding inter-island trade network between New Guinea, Ceram and Maluku and it prompted their interest in Christianity.

\textit{The Maluku Mission and the Papuans}

The christianisation of the Papuan region appears to have been closely connected to that of Maluku. Once the mission station was established in Maluku, missionaries set out from there to reach the western shores of the territories of New Guinea and its adjacent islands. This connection between Papua and Maluku constitutes a recurrent \textit{leitmotiv} in Papuan history since primeval times and continues up to its incorporation into Indonesia and beyond. The Catholic Church itself enhanced this already existing connection when drawing its ecclesiastical districts. In 1902 Maluku and West Papua would become the first Apostolic Prefecture to be instituted as a separate entity from


Java, a binomial that will last until 1949 when Jayapura will be established as an independent Apostolic Prefecture.\textsuperscript{204}

The Portuguese, stationed in the Maluku seaports, did not make any concerted attempt to convert the native inhabitants to Christianity. When the fortress on the island of Ternate was built in 1522, the Padroado Real provided the settlement, limited to its Portuguese population, with a vicar and, in some cases, with one or two beneficiaries belonging to the secular clergy. Their duty was to take care of the spiritual needs of the Portuguese residents and their native wives and children. The conversion of the autochthonous inhabitants did not represent their main duty according to the contemporary sources available on the area.\textsuperscript{205} This was undertaken only when believed to be politically necessary.

Under Captain Tristão de Ataide who governed the Maluku fortress in the years 1533-1536, conversions were made among the native inhabitants, the light brown ‘Alfuros’,\textsuperscript{206} of the so-called Moro, identified with the region to the north of Halmahera.\textsuperscript{207} Among the converts were the village chiefs of Tolo and Mamuya on the Morotia (Morotai) coast and more than five thousand locals. During the revolt against Ataide in 1535-1536, known as the Molucensian Vespers,\textsuperscript{208} some ‘Moro’ villages

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\textsuperscript{204} Muskens M.P.M., Partner in Nation Building. The Catholic Church in Indonesia, Missio Aktuell Verlag, Aachen, 1979, p.93.
\textsuperscript{205} See: A Treatise on the Moluccas (c.1544), p.301. According to Jesuit scholars the Treatise, one of the oldest sources for the reconstruction of Jesuit missionary activity in Maluku was probably a preliminary version of the lost Historia das Molucas by Antonio Galvão. cfr. Documenta Malucensia, I, (1542-1577), edited and annotated by Hubert Jacobs SJ, Institutum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 1974, Doc.82, par.1.
\textsuperscript{207} ‘Moro’ corresponds to the island of Morotai in the Maluku archipelago. However some sources refer to Moro as the north-west arm of Halmahera, also referred to as Jilolo (or Giailolo) or Batechina (Batakinas del Moro). In the beginning of the XVI century Jilolo or Moro was a Sultanate. See: Meersman, op.cit., pp.56-58.
apostatised and killed one of the vicars, Fr. Simão Vaz, who had been sent there to evangelise the ‘pagan’ populations. His companion, the merchant Francisco Alvares, had a narrow escape from his would be murderers and managed somehow to return safe and sound to Ternate. 209 It can be speculated that at this time there was a proto-mission field operating on the island of Halmahera, which, as previously shown, had strong relations with the Papuans inhabiting the off-shore islands of New Guinea, since the two heroic pioneers had been joined, in 1534, by Fernão Vinagre. 210 The contemporary Jesuit cleric Marta reports that the south of the Moro region was inhabited by Papuans who occasionally were found in the north as slaves of the more wealthy Alfuros. 211

Between 1536-1539, under the regency of Antonio Galvão, the Maluku-Papuan region had been pacified when Tidore, which had been occupied by the dissident Maluku kings and their Papuan allies, 212 was captured. During this period Francisco Alvares Pinheiro, a priest, went twice to the island of Moro and baptised many Christians but did not reside there. 213 At the time of St. Francis Xavier’s arrival in the area, however, there still were few Christians. In this regard he writes to his fellow Jesuits in Rome:

whom was the lord of Mamojo, received baptism in Ternate. A great movement towards Christianity had then set in, and two clerics with a number of Portuguese went to Moro in order to baptise the people. But two years later the great conspiracy of the Moluccan kings against the Portuguese had erupted and the raja of Jailolo had sent a fleet of Korakoras to Moro. These had conquered the land by force of arms and had compelled the Christians to apostatise. The churches had been destroyed. One of the two clerics had been slain. The other sorely wounded had succeeded in fleeing to Ternate with his companion but he had died there”. Cfr. also: Treatise, pp.26-36 and ‘Letter of Tristão de Ataide’, 11 November 1537 in Sá, op.cit., I, pp. 342-350.
210 ibid., p.90.
212 Castanheda F.L. de, Historia do Descobrimento e Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses, vol. I, Coimbra, 1924-1933, Book 8, chapters 156-160; Book 9, chapter 23. The four Papuan allied kings were probably those from the Raja Ampat islands.
213 Treatise, pp.300-301.
De la otra costa de Maluco está una tierra, la qual se llama o Moro, a sesenta leguas de Maluco. En esta isla de o Moro avrá muchos años que se hizieron grande número de christianos, los quales, por muerte de los clérigos que los baptizaron, quedaron desamparados y sin doctrina (...)  

Very few of the converts remained loyal to the Christian faith. On Ambon conversions had been made under Captain Antonio Galvão in 1538. In the same year Galvão was informed of the arrival of ships from Java, Makassar and Banda in Ambon sent to buy cloves in exchange for arms. Galvão held that this was against Portuguese interests and in contravention of the papal bulls regarding the rights and duties of the Padroado.  

Probably the words of the papal Bull Aeterni Regis Clementia were echoing in his mind and served as a pretext to send out a fleet under the orders of Diogo Lopes de Azavedo to expel the intruders. On this occasion the whole of Ambon came under Portuguese-Ternatan control and three villages requested to be baptised.  

These must have increased by the time St. Francis Xavier arrived on the island in 1546 since he records “siete lugares de christianos”, seven Christian villages. As to Ternate, the Portuguese town inhabited by “casados”, their native wives and slaves...
were Christian. No other Christian community is reported to have existed on the island before the arrival of the Jesuits.

The arrival of the followers of the Society of Jesus represents the point of departure for the systematic evangelisation of the native populations and the development of Christian missions in South-east Asia. The Jesuits became politically and economically involved in East and South-east Asian affairs: under their sponsorship the Catholic Church appeared to be but a militant and mercantile organization. They were, for this very reason, the most strenuous defenders and prominent exponents of the claims of the Padroado for the following two centuries.

Since the Maluku region represented until the arrival of the Jesuits the easternmost frontier of Christianity, in West Papua, there had been no systematic evangelisation. Christianity may have been, for the populations situated on the coasts, mere hearsay. Nor there are any documents referring to the religious status of West Papua prior to the Maluku mission. Only when the mission was established in Ambon in 1547 do we find some references to the island of New Guinea and the Papuan inhabitants.

The earliest Jesuit information regarding the Papuan populations dates back to the year 1553. Fr. Juan De Beira, writing to his fellow Jesuits in Coimbra reports:

Hay nestas partes huma terra chamada Nova Guiné e por outro nome Papuas. É terra muy grande; tem perto de si muitas ilhas. A terra firme tem mais de 700 legoas em comprido. Nella ai 4 reinos e todos se entendem com huma mesma lingua. Regem-se polas estrelas e contão seus meses por ellas.
The information provided by Fr. Beira is extremely significant for the inferences that can be made. First of all Fr. Beira’s missionary activity was in the so-called Moro region (Morotai – Halmahera). It is possible that during his stay in the Maluku mission he had a chance, not expressly reported, to visit the Papuan country or had information of the area from the local inhabitants who had contacts with the Papians of New Guinea and nearby islands. It is also possible that he had a chance to meet either the residual Papuan communities who lived in Halmahera and Morotai or the Papuan embassies to the Sultan of Tidore. He mentions, in fact, 4 reinos, Four Kings or Raja Ampat, a name used to designate the islands west of New Guinea and some parts of its western coastlands, including the Geelvink bay region, all of which fell under Tidorese sovereignty. Beira’s account seems to be confirmed by a contemporary source, that of Antonio Pigafetta, who, in his account of Magellan’s voyage around the world, refers briefly to these Papuan populations inhabiting the interior of the island of Halmahera that he calls ‘Giaiolo’:

Before this island is another very large one named Giaiolo, inhabited by Moors and heathen. And there were (as the King told us) two kings among the Moors, one of whom had six hundred children, and the other five hundred and twenty five. The heathen do not keep so many wives, and do not live so superstitiously as the Moors; but in the morning, as they leave

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222 *Documenta Malucensia*, Doc. 44, pp. 129-131. Translation of Portuguese text: “There is in this region a land called New Guinea and by another name ‘Papuas’. It is a huge territory; it has nearby also many islands. The mainland is more than seven hundred leagues in length. It is governed by four kings and all speak the same language. They orient themselves by the stars and they name the months of the year according to them. One of these is ‘hand’, since many stars joined together represent a hand, and this is called in their language ‘fale’; others resemble a bow, others a boat and other figures that the stars form. The land is fertile and rich in resources, similar to the islands of Moro and very solitary; its inhabitants are naive, and there are no Muslims among them, and we could make a great service to Our Lord if we try to save these souls”.

their house, they worship the first thing they see for the whole day. The king of those heathens, called Raia Papua, is very rich in gold and lives in the interior of the island.²²⁴

Beira’s predecessor, St. Francis Xavier, had reported of the village of Alilio on the north coast of Morotai that was inhabited presumably by Papuans who appear to have been Christian: in 1555, in fact, there was a cross standing in the village but no church.²²⁵

Beira describes the Papuans as “gente simple”, naive people, probably referring to their rudimentary, “primitive” way of living. However the most important piece of information he provides is that the Papuans had not been converted to Islam, “mem ay entre ellos mouros”. This information may be used to infer that Arab merchants who had arrived and established themselves in the Maluku area never landed on the Papuan islands and mainland. It is possible, since Papuan products appear to have represented a consistent part of the early trade cycles monopolised by the Arabs in South-east Asia, that the relationship between the Muslim traders and the Papuan territories were mediated either by a third party, probably the Tidorese sultan, or else the exchange took place in an intermediate market (Maluku). In fact, Beira’s testimony seems to corroborate this supposition, since it seems that the Papuans whom he refers to are seafarers, living therefore in coastal areas, who use the stars for orientation and time reckoning, naming the months of the year after stars and constellations.

The very few documents contained in the Jesuit archives referring to the Papuan populations reveal that the missionaries of the Maluku station intended to evangelise the Papuans too and carry out missionary work in their lands. But there was a lack of personnel able to carry out the necessary work. It is documented that in 1545 there was a cleric working in the territory of New Guinea, a not well-specified Fr. Jeronimo who,

²²⁴ Pigafetta, op. cit., p.121.
at the outbreak of the war between Spain and Portugal in that year was forced to leave
the island. How long he sojourned among the Papuans is not reported. \footnote{Schurhammer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.129. Probably this was the same Father Jeronimo who was among those on
board of the ship captained by Ortiz de Retes in search for north-eastern route to Spain. Schurhammer, \textit{ibid.}, p.127.}

The lack of missionaries probably was one of the main reasons why Papua was
neglected and missionary work began late. In a letter dated 1563, Fernão De Osorio,
wrote to the Jesuits in Lisbon about the need for more missionaries in the region as the
inhabitants were many and the territory to cover vast:

\begin{quote}
E tãobem causa grande dor tão grande messe e tão poucos obreiros porque
Ihes sei dizer que esta terra de Maluco hé huma das grandes empresas que a
Companhia tem, por ter muitas terras propinquas que dizem folgarião de ver
os Padres e fazerem-se christãos, como hé hum reino que se chama
Seyrão\footnote{Seyrão refers to East Ceram.}, terra muito grande; outro que se chama o Papua, tãobem muito
grande (…)que hé imfinidade de gente, todos com desejos de christanidade,
e por falta de obreiros se não começa quaise nenhuma. \footnote{Documenta Malucensia, Doc.115, “Br. Fernão De Osorio SJ, by order of Fr. Prancudo SJ, to the
Jesuits of the College of Santo Antão in Lisbon”, p.374. Translation of Portuguese text: “It is cause of
great pain that there is a big harvest and so few workers because they say that this land of Maluku
represents one of the great challenges for the Company [of Jesus], for it has many neighbouring lands
that they say would like to see the Fathers and become Christians, such as the kingdom called Ceram, a
big land; another that is called ‘Papua’, also very big (…) that is inhabited by a great number of people,
all longing to become Christian, and for lack of workers [=missionaries] nobody starts”.}
\end{quote}

The same shortage of clerics is recorded by other two documents respectively
dated 1564 and 1569 both referring to Papuan populations:

\begin{quote}
Ad haec Papuarum populi impense baptizari efflagitant, quorum tamen
saluti ob nostram paucitatem hucusque consultum non fuit. \footnote{Documenta Indica, III. Edited by J. Wicki, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, Rome, 1948-1972,
pp. 552-553.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
E por aqui verão as terras que quá pedem christanidade; nomear-ihas-ei pera
que roguem a Nosso Senho que manda muito obreiros a ella[s], pois tantas
almas se perdem à mingoa de quem as bautize, scilicet; a terra dos papues,
que hé gente como cafres, omde há muitos reis e estaraa daqui algumas 60
ou 70 legoas. Há terra de infinita grandeza e dizem que são jaa discubertas
della 70 legoas, e hé terra incognita eindiscuberta: dizem que chega ao Cabo
\end{quote}
It is not easy on the basis of these documents to geographically localise the Papuan people to whom they refer. Probably since the former document deals with the evangelisation of the island of Bacan it is possible that it is alluding to the Papians of the Kei islands who wanted to be christened, as is reported in a previous document. Otherwise it may be conjectured that it points more indistinctly to the inhabitants of east Ceram, inhabited by ‘Alfuros’, and of some adjacent islands whose allegiance was claimed by the king of Bacan. Among the adjacent islands, Nusa Laut appears to be the one, which could fit the description. Situated between Ceram and Amboina Nusa Laut was in fact a nodal commercial point, where boats usually laid over, and was inhabited by the Alfuros whose piratical activities caused problems to the Maluku-Ceram-New Guinea trade network.

The reason for the willingness of the Papians to become Christians is not clear. Probably the local populations thought that the conversion to the new faith would materially benefit them somehow. The struggles for the commercial monopoly of
certain products between the Ulilimas who had become allies of the Muslim traders and the Ulisiwas, allies of the Portuguese, as reported by the *Feitos Eroicos*,\(^{233}\) may offer the key to identify the causes which sparked the Papuan request. In fact, if one reads the *Feitos Eroicos* with another document reported by de Souza showing local kings ‘shopping around’ to choose the more profitable faith, the cause for the request becomes clear and appears in tune with Papuan attitudes: De Souza reports that the king of Banggai\(^{234}\) sent his son to examine both the Christian and Muslim creed and to choose the best one. He decided in favour of Christianity following the advice of the king of Bacan against that of the king of Ternate.\(^{235}\) In some other cases conversion was used as ‘merchandise’ to barter in exchange for power or wealth. It is reported in this regard by St. Francis Xavier that the king of Ternate promised that one of his sons would convert to Christianity on condition that the latter was created king of Moro.\(^{236}\)

The last document found in the Jesuit records regarding the Papuans is a survey of Maluku commissioned to Fr. Nicolau Nunes by Fr. Martim Da Silva SJ of Goa dated 1576. Besides the general information regarding the “terra dos Papuas” already provided in previous accounts, for the first time there is a clear reference to the indigenous religious practices of the Papuans that suggests that at that time there was a general ethnological knowledge of Papuan practices and beliefs.\(^{237}\) They are described as being devoted to the practice of magic, as fetishists and as displaying a great reverence towards their idols.\(^{238}\) The interest that the missionaries showed


\(^{235}\) *Documenta Malucensia*, I, doc.128, par.3, pp.433-434.

\(^{236}\) *Documenta Malucensia*, doc., 10, par. 11.

\(^{237}\) See in this regard: *Documenta Malucensia*, doc. 63, p.194.

\(^{238}\) *Documenta Malucensia*, I, doc.213, par.17, “Fr. Nicolau Nunes’ General Survey of Maluku by Request of Fr. Martim Da Silva SJ, Goa”, Goa, January 4, 1576, pp.681-682: “Todas estas gentes papuas são grandes feiticeiros e dão grande credito às sortes e ten-nas por seus deuzes, o quaoi tãobem fazem todas as naçois dos Maluquos ainda que sejão mouros, e não se movem pera quaolquer parte
towards the Pauans was probably due to their demographic density and to the prominent role they played in inter-island trade. Nicolau Nunes’ report, in fact, contains a reference to the abundance of gold and of birds of paradise, the latter item one of the most traded commodities from New Guinea in East and South-east Asia. Father De Beira repeatedly shows in his letters his keen interest in the Pauan people and, at the same time, we learn that the Pauans are repeatedly calling to be christened by the Jesuit fathers. A letter by the Scholastic Luís Frois SJ informs the Jesuits in Portugal of the Pauan request and their favourable disposition towards Christianity:

Hé gente viva d' engenho, segundo os escravos que quá há nesta terra muito ouro, e facilmente tomarião a fee se ouvesse obreiros della. Esta hé a gente que contnoaente está clamando: Senhor, não há homens que nos metão na pesina do sancto baptismo.

It seems that the slave that provided Fr. Luís Frois with this information was from Papua. Supposedly, as information regarding the Pauans and their territory was passed on to the missionaries through intermediaries and random contacts in an intermediate location, probably in the same way information regarding Christianity might have reached the Pauans but also through the Pauan enclaves of Maluku. In 1588 the Jesuit Marta reports that on the island of Morotai, the village of Alilio,
known also as ‘Papua Maleleo’, is listed among the 29 Christian villages of the Moro Mission.\textsuperscript{242}

The interest of the Papuans for Christianity appears to have been prompted by the peculiar physiognomy Christianity came to assume in South-east Asia.

\textit{Promoting Christianity in the Maluku-Papuan Region}

Missionary ethnographic accounts are fundamentally theocentric, that is they are based on the concept of the deity. From an epistemological point of view this means that their description of tribal societies is connected to and influenced by their own synchronic social position within these societies. The accounts available show that the Jesuit Portuguese missionaries aimed at providing a moral justification for the presence of the mission. From this attitude derive two mutually antithetical images of the people studied. On one hand there is the latent theoretical assumption that there is a general inclination on the part of the people towards Christianity. On the other, one can observe that the missionaries perceive the people they intend to evangelise as a ‘primitive other’, an attitude that reinforces the disinclination of the natives to convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{243} Both positions are unequivocally present in the XVI century writings of the Jesuit missionaries.

Portuguese missions in Asia between 1550 and 1750 were mainly manned by Jesuits in Portuguese Asia, although a contemporary Spanish source documents that in the area other religious orders were actively carrying out missionary work.\textsuperscript{244} However

\textsuperscript{244} Argensola, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 38. Argensola, who was writing in the second half of the XVI century, writes: “En este tiempo sonaba ja la voz del Evangelio en los oídos bárbaros de las gentes del Archipielago por la predicación delos religiosos Agustinos, Dominicos y anciscos, y por la del Padre Francisco Javier, Jesuita y de sus compañeros; edificabanse Iglesias (…)”. \textit{ibid.} (Translation of Spanish text: “At this time the voice of the Gospel was already heard by the barbarian ears of the people of the archipelago
the missionaries of the Company of Jesus were those who made the struggle for souls as intensive and extensive as was the spice trade competition in the area.

St. Francis Xavier, the founder of the Maluku mission, sojourned in the region from 1546 to 1548. It is possible, in general terms, to trace his itinerary through the islands even though there are some doubts regarding the exact names of places he travelled to and consequently their location. In the letters that he addressed to the Company he speaks of ‘Molucco’ as a single place, at the same time he refers to it as a region or as the ‘Molucca’ islands.245 His own language leads us to suppose that he used the name in a large sense to designate a tract of ocean sprinkled with islands, but that he considered it one country.246 His letters are an important testimony of the time and provide us with useful information regarding the methods of evangelisation experimented with by the first missionaries, along with the common difficulties they encountered. What these accounts lack, however, is information concerning the reactions or perceptions of the native populations to the fathers’ activities, their understanding of what was being taught and references to the social, political and economic changes their presence and action ignited. The only facts reported, as seen, are either willingness manifested by the natives to convert to Christianity or their violent reaction to the fathers’ presence in a given territory: we are not provided with the motives that triggered these attitudes, as happened in the Moro region. Missionary accounts can be regarded exclusively as the narratives of the mission and not of the native converts.

245 See: Documenta Malucensia, Ambon May 10, 1546, doc.3, par.7, p.11: “Eastas partes de Moluco todas son islas, sin ser descubierta hasta hora terra firma. Son tantas estas islas que no tienen numero (…)”. (Translation of Spanish text: “In this part of Maluku, all are islands not having been discovered until now any continent. These islands are so many that it is impossible to count them”).

246 Coleridge, op.cit., p.363. The Moluccas or Maluku are, in reality, the five islands of Ternate, Tidore, Motir, Macian and Bacan.
As already stated no mission was established in the Papuan territories of New Guinea and the Raja Ampat islands for lack of missionary personnel, even though the Papuans repeatedly asked to become Christians. That the Papuans were in the minds of the missionaries is proven by a proposal dated 1577 from Fr. Antonio de San Gregorio who proposed to evangelise New Guinea by establishing a permanent mission station. Preparations were made but at the last moment his destination was changed and a royal decree ordered him to sail for the Philippines.²⁴⁷

Following the systematic evangelisation carried out by the missionaries in Maluku, presumably the Papuan enclaves on the island of Halmahera experienced conversion to Christianity and were able to transmit Christian beliefs and practices to the Papuans of other territories with whom they were in contact. Of course here, for the lack of textual evidences, we are navigating in the realm of supposition and inference. However what the missionary accounts report on the methods of christianisation applied in a given territory can be taken as a general practice and extended to other areas.

It is widely accepted belief that Jesuit evangelisation was a mixture of carrot and stick, that the conversions were made either by force or by emotionally and materially blackmailing the local populations; in other words that the Jesuits enacted some sort of ‘food for souls program’. Boxer, quoting the Jesuit Fr. Valignano, refers to St. Francis’s “judicious mixture of threats and blandishments”.²⁴⁸ Others reject this

²⁴⁷ Meersman, op.cit., pp. 188-189.
²⁴⁸ Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne..., cit., p.76-77. The letters of St. Francis are only partially reliable. Many parts have been, in fact, expurgated by the Jesuits before their publication. St. Francis himself wrote to his companions: “(...) and let it be of edifying matters; and take care not to write about matters which are not edifying (...) Remember that many people will read these letters, so let them be written in such a way that nobody may be disedified”. Quoted from: “St. Francis Xavier to João de eira, SJ, and the other Jesuits in the Moluccas”, Malacca, June 20, 1549, in Schurhammer G., SJ, & Wicki J., SJ, (eds.), Epistolae S.Francisci Xaverii aliaque eius scripta, vol.II, Jesuit Hist. Inst., Rome, 1944-1945, pp.108-115.
opinion, maintaining that the missionary respected the free will of the people.249 Valignano’s testimony may be true as to the overall picture, in particular where the Jesuit activity came to be instrumental to Crown politics. This, in fact, transpires in the letters of St. Francis. That the Jesuits were involved in secular politics emerges clearly when the great missionary saint acknowledges the necessity to convert the headmen of communities and villages. The European practice of *cujus regio illius religio* was applied in the overseas missions:

> Se el-rey há se fizer christão, espero em Deus Nosso Sennhor, que nestas partes de Maluquo se am-de fazer muitos christãos.250

The conversion of a king would have brought about the conversion of the whole community. State politics and missionary policies went hand in hand. On one side the temporal power of the Crown sought loyal and exploitable subjects. This was easily achieved since many of the Asian princes became suspicious of those subjects who accepted Christianity because they came to be identified with the European intruders.251 Christianity was for the Asian kings and headmen synonymous with Western ideas and customs. On the other hand the missionaries wanted to gain as many souls as possible for the cause of Christianity and in particular that of Catholicism which at that time was struggling against Protestantism. In other words the urge to spread the Gospel was dictated more by political concerns, both *in loco* and in the mother country, often expressed or formulated through the categories of heresy and apostasy, than spiritual and moral ones. At times conversions of some

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249 *Monumenta Xaveriana*, II, Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, pp. 312-314.

250 *Documenta Malucensia*, doc.4, par.3, p.18. (Translation of Spanish text: “If the king becomes Christian I am sure, that with the help of Our Lord we will be able to convert many to Christianity”). The allusion is to Hairun the Sultan of Ternate who was taken prisoner and brought to Goa in India from where he returned and became a Christian under the governorship of the fortress of Ternate de Sousa.

251 Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne...cit.*, p.80.
territories were fuelled by the allegiance or vassal status that these had towards a neighbouring sovereign.252

The Crown, as previously stated, helped the missionaries in their endeavour by enacting and enforcing a favourable legislation in the territories. Among the laws enacted by the Crown in order to facilitate the christianisation of the heathen population in the Indies were the prohibition of polygamy and the partition of villages in Christian and non-Christian sectors.253 Fines were levied for those who tried to circumvent the obligations. In other words the decrees implicitly concentrated on a certain exclusiveness of Christians against the heathen populations. Non-Christians were discriminated against. Only Christian converts, for instance, were allowed and favoured to occupy public offices and remunerative posts.254 Consequently, if the native populations did not convert at the point of sword, it was difficult for them not to adhere for practical reasons to the Christian faith.

Great attention was devoted by St. Francis and the other Jesuit missionaries to the children since they were seen as the most effective means of spreading the faith to the elders and of assuring its preservation in the community for future generations. This is why the first missionaries insisted on administering baptism to the children and their catechisation. In 1559 the Crown promulgated the infamous Crown Decree on Orphanage by which children could be arbitrarily taken from their living parent or surviving next of kin and entrusted to a Pai dos Cristão, usually a prelate, who took care of them educating them to the Christian faith. The practice was arbitrary since the original decree defined an orphan child as one who had lost both parents and both grandparents. The application of a wider definition was justified on the basis that in the Portuguese Code of Law an orphan child was considered one who had lost only

252 See: Documenta Malucensia, doc. 128, 4 already referred to previously.
253 Respectively title no.12 and title no. 25 of the 1567 Ecclesiastical Council.
one of his parents. This paradigmatically shows how and to what extent the decrees established by the Council were often reinforced by enacting coercive measures. In other cases, however, they were relaxed for reasons of political opportunism that called for a partial tolerance towards some autochthonous customs of religious worship, as in the case of the Malabar and Chinese rites, sparking serious controversies with the Vatican.

According to St. Francis the first step in evangelising the heathen populations was to establish a common means of communication. He writes in this regard that all the islands of the Maluku area differ among themselves in language and in some of them the inhabitants of neighbouring villages use different dialects. However, he noticed that all understand the Malay language, the *lingua franca* in inter-island trade relations. For this reason, while he was residing in Malacca, he commissioned the translation into Malay of the fundamental Catholic prayers, that is the Creed, the form

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254 Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne...cit.*, p.68.
255 *ibid.*, p.75.
256 The Malabar rites were a compromise between Hindu customs and Christian values and beliefs promoted by the Jesuit Fr. Roberto de’ Nobili in the Indian Mission of Maduré, as the Chinese rites heralded by the Jesuit Fr. Matteo Ricci were a compromise between Confucian epistemology and Christian tenets. Both were allowed by the Portuguese Crown, since they guaranteed the political stability in the colonies which the Portuguese strenuously pursued, but were opposed by the Vatican. The Jesuit methods of indigenisation of Christianity caused a rift in the ecclesiastical body to a point that the Franciscan Order brought it to the attention of the Pope. In 1623 Pope Gregory XV made concessions to the Jesuits. But the Franciscans and other religious orders continued in their battle for the respect of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In 1704 the Cardinal of Touron issued the Decree of Pondicherry that forbade the Jesuit practice that was ratified by the papal constitution *Ex illa die*. See: Cappuccino N., *Memorie Storiche intorno alle Missioni delle Indie Orientali presentate al Sommo Pontefice Benedetto XIV*, vols. II, Lucca, 1744. On the Chinese rites see: Minamiki G., *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1985. For the diatribe between the Portuguese Crown and the Vatican on the matter see: Brazão E., *D. João V e a Santa Sé. As relações diplomáticas de Portugal com o governo pontificio de 1706 a 1750*, Coimbra, 1937.

257 See: Schurhammer, op.cit., p.135, cfr. also: Rebelo G., *História das Ilhas de Maluco, escrita no anno de 1561*, p.362, in Sá A.B. de, *Documentação para a Historia das Missões do Padroado Portugês do Oriente. Insulindia*, vol. III, Lisbon, 1954-1958, pp.193-344. Probably St. Francis is referring to Halmahera. According to Rebelo description of Maluku specifies that on Halmahera “(...) la mayoría de las poblaciones de Batachina [Halmahera] tiene cada una su idioma propio, tan distinto de los otros que no se entienden mutuamente sino con la ayuda del ternatés o tidores”.(Translation: “Each of the peoples inhabiting Batachina have their own dialects which are so different from each other that they are unable to communicate with each other without the help of either the Ternaten or Tidorese languages”).
of general confession, the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Ten Commandments.\textsuperscript{258}

The translation of Christian prayers marked the beginning of a long process of translation into native languages of the books of the Old and New Testament and the ‘colonisation of language’, a fact that was to have remarkable influence on the literature of the local populations. It was the Church that became the promoter of literacy and of an indigenous written culture. It is, in fact, reported that one of the Spanish Augustinian fathers, who in 1545 had unsuccessfully asked permission to enter the Moro region for missionary purposes, had drawn up a Tidorese dictionary.\textsuperscript{259}

The processes of Westernisation and modernisation began with the translation of the local languages and the vernacularisation of the Christian message.\textsuperscript{260} Of course the possibility of the missionary giving direct instruction to the natives in their own language was more likely to be effective, since the missionary would have been able to achieve what he had in mind.

Schurhammer, in his monumental work on the life and epoch of St. Francis Xavier, provides us with a detailed account of the method the father adopted in order to bring people to Christianity. He usually went door to door asking if there were any sick people or children to baptise. In the case he had a positive response, he went inside and began to recite the Creed and the Commandments in Malay. Then he read a passage from the Gospel and baptised the children. With the interpreter’s help he gathered the young and the elderly to teach them the prayers and the articles of the

\textsuperscript{258} Documenta Malucensia, doc. 10, par.3, p.35. Cfr. Schurhammer, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.153-154. Schurhammer, who derives most of the information from St. Francis Xavier’s letters, reports that St. Francis wrote a rhymed catechism in Malay.

\textsuperscript{259} ‘Letter from Gaspar Nilyo’, Malacca, 10 August 1545, in Sà, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 456.

\textsuperscript{260} The effects of the politics of language and the vernacularisation of Christian beliefs have been dealt with by Rafael. Although his study focuses on Tagalog culture (Philippines) I believe that its findings may be applied also to other pre-literate and/or non-Western contexts. See Rafael V. L., \textit{Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule}, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988.
Christian faith in Malay.\textsuperscript{261} These methods were applied first in Ternate and then in Moro, North Halmahera and Bacan.

However the battle of the Jesuits was not only against pagan beliefs and practices, but also against Islam. In two distinct passages St. Francis refers to Muslim cacizes, Muslim teachers:

\begin{quote}
Dos o tres cacizes que venieron de Meca (…), convertieron grande numero de gentiles a la cecta”. Estos Moros lo mejor que tienen es que no saben cosa ninguna de su secta perversa.\textsuperscript{262}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Los moros de aquellas partes no tienen doctrina de la ceita de Mafoma; carecen de alfaquis, y los que son, saben muy poco, y quasi todos estrangeros.\textsuperscript{263}
\end{quote}

Both documents point out the doctrinal ignorance of the Muslim teachers, but what is interesting is the fact that these teachers are said to be ‘estrangeros’, strangers. This induces us to suppose that beside the Christian mission there was a more or less organised Muslim mission that drew preachers from Arabia, Turkey and Egypt.

At some point in the last quarter of the XV century, in fact, Ternate had adhered to Islam. According to tradition a Javanese trader, a certain Hussein, introduced the new faith to the region; he was later followed by a Javanese priest who initiated the process of proselytising the locals.\textsuperscript{264} Portuguese sources however point out that, at the beginning, Islam was confined to the ruler’s family and his court entourage\textsuperscript{265} while the rest of the population was left to worship its native gods and goddesses.\textsuperscript{266} Islam introduced into the Maluku- Papuan region new power relationships expressed in the

\textsuperscript{262} Documenta Malucensia, doc. 3, par. 8, p. 11. (Translation of Spanish text: “Two or three teachers that came from Mecca (…), converted a great number of gentiles to their sect. What is good is the fact that these Moors do not know anything about the doctrine of their dreadful faith”).
\textsuperscript{263} Documenta Malucensia, doc. 10, par. 10, p. 40. (Translation of Spanish text: “The Moors of those parts do not know anything of the doctrine of their faith; they do not have a teacher, and those who are teachers, know very little and are almost all strangers”).
\textsuperscript{264} Valentijn, \textit{op. cit.}, p.288-291.
\textsuperscript{265} Treatise, p.85.
adoption of new titles, in particular that of hukum. These, however, were never structured within the autochthonous socio-political system and were regarded as external accessories of allegiance to the ruler, a fact that will account for the pseudo-religious fluidity that seems to characterise the region during the XVI century. The conversion of Ternate to Islam encouraged Maluku Muslim traders and scholars to travel to the area, as they felt more comfortable and safe when dealing with Islamic or Islamised rulers. It is recorded however that the Islamisation of the Papuan islanders took place two centuries after that of Northern Maluku, presumably at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. It was between the end of the XV century and the beginning of the XVI century that the ‘saga of Gurabesi’ explaining the vassalage of the Papuans to the Sultan of Tidore was developed.

By being vassals to the Muslim Sultan of Tidore and in order to maintain “a beneficial relationship with an overlord, which required total commitment to his world,” the Papuans also accepted the forms and contents of the faith of their ruler. Islam, however, came to be contextualised by the Papuans into their world-view according to which life primarily consisted of interlocking worlds of relationships. Conversion to a religion always took place on the basis of existing political or power

266 Pires, op. cit., p.213.
267 The hukum was an administrator and magistrate, which was a new post created by the Islamic states in Maluku. The hukum in fact was important in the relations between the centre and the periphery of the Maluku sultanates since it remained outside the indigenous socio-political structure. See: Andaya, op.cit., p.58. The definition that Andaya provides in his glossary is the following: “Properly ‘law or judgment’, but in Maluku the term was applied in different ways in the early modern period. Initially it referred to an Islamic judicial official and later became a prestigious position in the north Maluku courts. The term was also used for certain officials who served as representatives of the sultans in outlying territories”. Andaya, op. cit., p.281.
268 See in this regard: Andaya, ibid., pp.146-147. Andaya however does not attribute to the particular position of the hukum the political and religious flexibility of the Maluku rulers.
269 Andaya, ibid., p.58.
270 ibid., p.108.
272 ibid., p.108.
273 ibid., p.108.
relations generated and supported both by the original religious beliefs of *mana* and *taboo* and spatial locations.\textsuperscript{274}

It appears from the letters of the first missionaries, previously examined, that there was a general awareness of the fact that, in order to eradicate native religious superstitions and idolatry, it was necessary to change the way of life of these peoples. It is obvious that the pioneer missionaries realised that there was a directly proportional relation between a given socio-political and economic organisation and the systems of knowledge and belief. Changing one would have brought about the transformation of the other. For this reason the fathers sought to ‘de-link’ or disengage the individual from the community. They taught the people to be economically self-sufficient and to possess a single family home.\textsuperscript{275} This kind of teaching in a society in which an individual’s life is organised in the terms of the clan or tribe did not fail to produce, in the long run, devastating consequences for the traditional cultural and social patterns. Therefore the critique that maintains that pioneer missionaries had no knowledge at all of the religious beliefs of the populations whom they were trying to convert, that there was cultural myopia on their behalf,\textsuperscript{276} is unfair since it generalises from the outcomes of very few exceptional cases. In reality many missionaries acted as cultural catalysts between Asia and Europe. One might only think of the attempts that Roberto de Nobili in India and Matteo Ricci in China made to ‘indigenise’ Christianity by using philosophical and ideological categories of those cultures in which it was being implanted.\textsuperscript{277} It must also be considered that the disciplines of

\textsuperscript{274} The fact that Tidore was located in the west, considered the source of power in Papuan belief system and the resting place of the ancestors, may have contributed to the acceptance of Tidore’s supremacy. See: Kamma, *Koreri...cit.*, pp.94-96. Van Baal notes that in Marind-anim mythology there is a structural opposition between east and west. Celebrations such as the *mayo* cults are structured within this opposition. See: Van Baal, *Dema...cit.*, pp.494-501.

\textsuperscript{275} Bartoli, *op.cit.*, pp.113-114.

\textsuperscript{276} Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne...cit.*, p.81.

\textsuperscript{277} Luzbetak L.J., *The Church and Cultures. New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*, Orbis Books, Mayknoll, 1988, p.117-118. For Ricci’s use of Confucian categories to divulge Christianity see:
anthropology and missiology at that time were far from being systematically developed. The missionaries were left on their own to face the challenges of an unknown world.

Conclusions

When the Europeans appeared on the horizon of what can be regarded as the ‘Maluku-Papuan zone’, they found a regional system characterised by highly permeable and fluid boundaries between different ethnic groups, whose identity was nothing but the product of a series of structural processes and relations. Archaeological evidences and the scarce literary sources seem to suggest that the people known as the ‘Papuans’ were part and parcel of this world of structural-semantic relations.

During the first phase of christianisation of South-east Asia, missionary activity was limited to areas surrounding Portuguese garrisons and fortresses. In exceptional cases it was directed towards those areas of economic and strategic interest. In the period between 1546, which marked the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in the region, and the end of the century there were an estimated 16,000 Christians in the Maluku area. These had been ministered to, over half a century, by only fifty Jesuits.


280 Treatise, p.301.

The lack of personnel was one of the major problems of pioneering missionary endeavour. There might have been only five or six missionaries available to serve an enormous region at any given time.\textsuperscript{282} The scarcity of missionaries appears to be the main reason why West New Guinea was not included in the first missionary itineraries and programs. Contemporary sources, in fact, show that both the missionaries and the Papuans were well aware of the existence of each other.

In the missionary accounts, the Papuans display a great interest in becoming Christian. This may not be regarded as mere Jesuit propaganda and the cause of the declared willingness may be located in questions concerning allegiance and vassalage to some of the Maluku sovereigns. The political and economic power that the Portuguese missionaries concentrated in their hands may have also contributed to the Papuan insistent request of christianisation. Consequently the desire to embrace Christianity may be historically authentic since it appears to be ascribed to motivations well in tune with the peculiar pragmatic and materialistic character of Papuan religiousness.

It is possible to infer from the documents previously examined that a few Papuan communities in Halmahera and Morotai adhered to the Christian faith. \textit{Ex hypothesi}, these may have communicated Christian ideas, values and beliefs to the Papuans of the coastal areas of New Guinea and nearby islands with whom they had well established commercial and/or ceremonial contacts.

Sixteenth century Portuguese sources reveal that Papuan interest in Christianity was prompted and regulated by ‘autochthonous perceptions’: what they ‘saw’ was not Christianity as a doctrine or set of beliefs, but the Christian mission, a reality or establishment capable of harnessing and distributing resources. It is possible that for

\textsuperscript{282} Boxer, \textit{The Portuguese Seaborne...cit.}, p.80.
the Papuans the parallel with the Muslim *sosolot* was inevitable and consequential, and it could account for the practice of mass conversion to the European faith. The apparently materialistic attitude of the Papuans was, however, prompted by a peculiar hermeneutics, referred to as cargoism, operating to systemise intrusive elements into the native socio-cultural templates. The modes and means of this ‘processual systemisation’ will constitute the object of the subsequent chapter.
Chapter IV

In Search of the Papuan Clio

History is a child building a sandcastle by the sea,
and that child is the whole majesty
of man’s power in the world.¹

But what happens when a tidal wave suddenly and fortuitously washes away the sandcastle leaving behind just a fistful of sand, meaningless, amorphous? When tangible signs or ‘vestiges of memory’ do not survive to testify existence, is it moral, if morality is still of some concern to an historian, to deny *sic et simpliciter* the existence of a past existent? Does the fact that it is empirically impossible to trace origins and developments, in other words the ‘archaeology’, of a people that appear to share common cultural traits, imply that they ‘really’ did never exist as a people or a nation?

In this chapter I will continue my journey, initiated in the previous chapter, to find traces of the existence of a Papuan Clio, as expression of pre-colonial Papuan ethnic identity, by referring to precise ‘texts’, different in origin and nature: the Papuan-Tidorese tradition of Sekfamneri, known also as Guru Besi or Gurabesi, developed in the insular and littoral areas of north-west New Guinea, and the Dutch documented or reported revolt of Nuku. The journey will continue in the subsequent chapters in which I will detail the modes and means of penetration of Christianity and its effects on the local populations. It will be argued that it was through the hermeneutics, referred to as ‘cargoism’, and evident in mythopoeic processes and developments of the narratives of Papuan oral tradition that the acceptance of the message of Christianity and modernity was possible and prompted the emergence of notions of nationhood and nationalism. The outcome of the journey will not be a

‘history’ in the sense we commonly intend the word today, but the Derridean acquisition of tangible, material ‘traces’ of the existence of a Civitas Papuana.

Before perusing the documents available that will represent the milestones of this temporal journey, which is inherently based on the assumption that ab esse ad posse valet consequentia, I need to consider the nature of these documents and sources and whether it is possible to use them to reconstruct ‘one’ of the many possible archives of the Papuan people.

**Trekking the Papuan Archives**

More than any other people, the Papuans are affected by what Derrida defines as the mal d’archive, the need for archives. The current political debate regarding Papuan nationalist claims cannot be disjoined from the search for the historical genesis of Papuan nationhood and the historicity of the Papuan nation.

As Derrida has effectively pointed out, authority as well as authoritativeness rests on the existence of memory preserved in the archive. From this it follows that the archive can be envisaged as the custos or custodian of a people’s past, the locus where memory is preserved and defended. Consequently the archive more than an ‘archaeology of knowledge’ is an ‘architecture of memory’.

It has already been stated in chapter II that the archive endows people with the power to assert themselves as a people, a group, a nation, a ‘self’ whose existence and identity are substantiated and acknowledged by the existence or survival of memory. The semiotic tautology embedded in the relation archive-people explains why

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2 Translation: ‘The inference from the actual to the possible is valid’, an expression taken from modal logic (axiom of possibility).
4 The Latin word custos means both ‘defender’ and ‘guardian’. Cicero in his work De Oratione, 2: 7, used the term in its dual meaning in the expression custodiare litteris, ‘to be guarded/defended by the written text’.
nationalist doctrines or ideologies are rooted in and sustained by myths of origins, a
mythical or mythologised account of how, from a state of original chaos or entropy, a
nation was able to establish itself as an ‘orderly’ unity ruled by a ‘monarch’ or
‘oligarchy’ chosen from the aristoi, the best and wealthiest of a community. It was
this exclusive elite that, by a quasi-religious creationist act, prompted the genesis of
the archive which became the foundation of its legitimacy to rule.

The power of the ruling class, consequently, is embedded in the normative
ordering of events in the archives, an order supported by an ad hoc epistemology and
hermeneutics of which the archive becomes the symbol, paradigm and beacon.
Foucault’s theory that the archive represents “the general system of the formation and
transformation of statements”5 corroborates the normative and ‘assertive’ function and
nature of the archive. When Renan, as mentioned in chapter II, argued that more than
memory, a nation is based on a shared amnesia, he was probably alluding to the
processes of selection and ordering operating in the construction of what I would
denote as ‘archival’ and not archetypal memories. The concept of the nation as an
‘imagined community’, formulated by Benedict Anderson,6 finds its raison d’etre
only in the existence of an archive. Since these are the ‘genetic’ and ‘teleological’,
more than functional, characteristics of the archive I agree with Derrida when he
argues that the ‘eco-nomy’ of the archive consists inherently in keeping in order the
oikos (οικος)7, the house, or to use Croce’s expression, il Palazzo del Potere.8

When I first put hand to the study of Papuan nationalism and, a fortiori, Papuan
history, I found myself lost in the mists of amnesia. Here was, in front of me, a people

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5 Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language, Pantheon Books, New
York, 1972, p. 130.
7 Derrida, op.cit., p. 7.
possessing an evident ancient culture derived from the processes of external adaptation to a peculiar environment and of internal cultural-societal integration, but that did not possess an ‘archaeological memory’ that could have represented the foundation stone of an archive recording their past existence. Neither did an oral tradition of past events, elaborated in pre-literate times, exist that could have replaced the lack of written documents. That such a tradition did not exist or was neglected because of its mythologised character, as Kamma’s collection of religious texts of the Papuan oral tradition reveals, was confirmed by the project regarding the rectification of Papuan history, as referred to in chapter II.

According to the project, it appears that Papuan history began only in the aftermath of World War II and is to be identified with the history of integration of West Papua into the Republic of Indonesia “and aims at clarifying Papuan history in order to strengthen the people’s unity in the State of the Republic of Indonesia”. In other words what is being written or ‘rectified’ is not an independent history of Papua, based on traditional accounts and memories, but one of the many Papuan historiographies, in this case the one serving the purposes of a specific power agency (Indonesia) implicitly denying Papuan nationhood and Papuan historicity.

This state of affairs induced me to undertake a quest for historical documents which could have constituted the basis of a possible archive. This was deemed necessary for the purpose of my research aiming at assessing whether and to what extent Christianity contributed to the formation and development of West Papuan nationalism.

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8 In this regard see Croce’s statement regarding the formation of what he calls the *storiografia di partito o di tendenza*, the ‘historiography of the political party or tendency’. Croce, op. cit., pp. 162-163.


10 Theo van der Broek, Private Correspondence, Jayapura, December 2001.
In a visit to the Vatican archives and library in Rome in February 2001, I came across copies of XVI century Spanish and Portuguese documents, which variously referred to the Papuans. The contents of these documents have been used in the previous chapter. These documents reveal that the Papuans were at that time a well-identified *ethnos*. It is not clear who the Papuans mentioned by the Iberian sources were, but presumably they must be identified with those inhabiting the offshore islands and coastal areas of West New Guinea. The Hispano-Portuguese documents, however, as already observed in the previous chapter, provide information useless to any reconstruction of Papuan identity and history, being only brief references, mainly anecdotal in character.

In the Dutch colonial archives in The Hague, the information becomes less novelistic and imaginative and more precise and factual. In contrast with the Hispano-Portuguese sources which consisted in brief and marginal observations contained in travelogues and log-books, the Dutch documents consist of government decrees, official private and public reports, newspaper articles, mission reports and letters, from which emerges a clear picture of the relations between the colonial government and the local agency.

The Papuans in the Dutch archive are recorded in a series of XVIII century VOC documents and in XIX century government and missionary reports. Their presence however is not continuous. There are extensive time lags between one reference and the other, the most extensive being those between 1658, the last date on which the Papuans are recorded by the Hispano-Portuguese sources, and 1716, and 1784 and 1828.

The discontinuities of the archives cannot be regarded, as Foucault once argued, as “something that the historian secretly supposes to be present”, as the positive
element that determines the object of the historical reading and validates his analysis, but rather the presence of the authority that has determined the existence of the discontinuity by applying criteria of selection, admission and omission which have contributed to engender the ‘infamous’ categories of primitivism, orientalism, occidentalism, as well as various criteria of historicity by which to support and justify governance and dominance.

The missionary archives, by contrast, are less selective because they are already ordered by an existing pre-formatted ‘missiological discourse’ generated by the ecclesiastical establishment and ‘canonical’ activity. The archive here is implicitly dominated by an Augustinian historicism that assumes Divine Providence as the Prime Mover of events and processes and the mission as the civitas Dei (city of God) located within the civitas diaboli (city of the devil) of the heathen populations. Although spiritually edifying, the missionary accounts often appear to be distorted by this vision so that the information they provide appears, at times, ‘unrealistic’ and affected by some sort of ‘romantic idealism’.

Since the documents are divided by missions, that is geographically, the spatial element provides that sense of continuity in the missionary narrative that is missing in the colonial archives. The ‘discontinuity’ in this context comes to be marked by the absence of the Papuans as the subject/agent of a narrative parallel to the missionary one, and consequently they appear as passive objects of missionary enterprise. Although the missionaries do refer to the reactions of the Papuans to their activity, this is always ‘described’ and ‘interpreted’ according to missiological hermeneutical parameters or western gnoseological categories.

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11 Foucault, op.cit., p. 9.
Missionary narratives merely ‘objectify’ the Papuans, implicitly denying them the autonomy typical of an historical agency or subject. Since narrative, as Peel argued, is “the most spontaneous form of historical representation”, I believe that the existence of missionary narratives, not counterweighed by any parallel Papuan narrative, tends to implicitly and systematically deny Papuan historicity. Paradoxically, however, the missionary narrative does act as a sort of ‘apophatic epistemology’, since the implicit ‘negation’, while admitting the factual existence of the object, stresses the inadequacy of the language and concepts adopted to ‘speak’ of the ‘other’ on their own terms. What emerges from an historical reconstruction based merely on these narratives is a ‘missionary monologue’ that is essentially meta-historical.

One way to overcome the structural impasse, generated by a lack of countervailing documents, is to explore whether it is possible to use the missionary narratives to reconstruct ‘possible’ Papuan chronicles. As Roland Barthes stated, “for history not to signify, discourse must be confined to a pure, unstructured series of notations. This is the case of chronologies and annals”.

A deconstruction of missionary discourses contained in the narratives, as will be shown later, will not yield supposedly existing Papuan ones. The missionary narratives are the texts of the narrator, of his culture, his space, his time, his situational and gnoseological contexts. The spatio-temporal continuity of this narrative is that of the mission and not that of the Papuans who are ‘outside’ or

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13 The expression is coined on that of apophatic theology.
14 I use the attribute ‘possible’ in the sense formulated by Spinoza in Ethics, 4: D4 and do not wish to imply relativist interpretations: “I call these individual things possible, in so far as we are ignorant, whilst we attend to the causes from which they must be produced, whether these causes are determined to the production of these things”. Spinoza B., Ethics, Wordsworth Classics, Ware, 2001, p. 164.
represent the ‘antithesis’ of the mission’s spatio-temporal dimension. What can be retrieved from the missionary narrative is isolated episodes, ‘epi-eis-odos’ (ἐπι-εἰς-οδος), in the sense of facts which ‘stand out’, focalised around an issue, without interrupting the normal spatio-temporal sequence. The Papuan chronicles will be therefore destitute of epistemic connotations. These may not be regarded as milestone or significative events for the narrated, as the narrator’s version may induce one to suppose. They may simply be regarded as the ‘sub-liminal’ message contained in external or *liminal* narratives by which it is possible to subjectify the object being narrated. As Hayden White pointed out:

A historical narrative is not only a ‘reproduction’ of the events reported in it but also a complex of *symbols* which gives us directions for finding an *icon* of the structure of those events in…tradition.\(^\text{16}\)

This chronicle of the ‘subjectified object’, recovered by this process of ‘sublimation of missionary narratives’, will remain, however, destitute of the autochthonous spatio-temporal dimensions typical of a narrative, the recovery of which is practically impossible. Even the use of mythological material transmitted through an oral tradition, for its fluid and flexible nature, will not help in the reconstruction of the spatio-temporal milieu. The chronicle will lack, therefore, in historicity and will resemble more a phenomenological paradigm, which can be used as the seedbed of ‘possible histories and historiographies’.

In the chronicles, identified in the missionary narrative of cargo cults, it is possible to identify a Papuan hermeneutics, the ‘processual activity’ by which the Papuans interpreted and systemised intrusive data within autochthonous socio-cultural templates. This hermeneutical activity performs, in fact, the function of guaranteeing

the survival and perpetuation of Papuan cultural-social identity\textsuperscript{17} in a constantly changing environment.\textsuperscript{18} The gradual intensification of transformational processes fuelled by European colonialism and channelled by Papuan hermeneutics accounts for the eschatological-teleological tension, which appears to be one of the constant features of later Papuan narratives.

The cargo cult, as reported by the missionaries, being a phenomenon able to coalesce myth, tradition, history and modernity, represents the ideal ‘structural conjuncture’ from which to identify Papuan chronicles. The process consists in a transition from mythical tradition to annalistic sequence, from facts that have been mythologised by the collective imaginary to historical episodes recorded in written documents. The dynamics of this transition and the different discourses they generate appears evident when analysing two episodes, one rooted in the Papuan-Tidorese tradition and the other recorded in the archives of the VOC. It will appear evident that the two visions, the mythical vision of the past and the historical one, when societies become ‘historical’, do not exclude each other but tend to coexist in what Susman refers to as “a dialectical tension generating a variety of historical visions”.\textsuperscript{19} Of course in this epistemological-hermeneutical milieu, the historian must still face the dilemmas generated by a method based on the analysis of effects, to reconstruct the

\textsuperscript{17} I reject the academic distinction between social and cultural; phenomena as outlined by Kroeber A.L. & Parsons T., ‘The Concept of Culture and the Social System’, American Sociological Review, 23, 1958, pp. 582-583.

\textsuperscript{18} I assume that cultural-social templates are produced by processes of external adaptation to a peculiar ecosystem prompting parallel processes of internal vertical and horizontal integration. R. Rappaport had already discussed in his \textit{Ecology, Meaning and Religion} (1979) the relation between ecology and religious beliefs and norms. In my model I assume that structure and meaning come to represent a fundamental-foundational unit or component. This semantic-structural component is not a monadic immobile given but subject to change under the effect of transformational rules or hermeneutics generated by the system itself in order to guarantee its survival and perpetuation. I have presented this theory, which draws on the Chomskian linguistic generative-transformational model, in a paper entitled ‘Western Cargoes, Papuan Cults: In Search of a Native Hermeneutics’ presented at the Postgraduate ISCCI/CAPSTRANS Seminar series of the University of Wollongong on 27-28 November 2003.

possible causes. In other words the historian must make a ‘Great Trek’ through the shifting ontology and logic of tenses and perceptions.

**Gurabesi and Nuku: Prolegomena to a Papuan History.**

In the ‘virtual archive’ of the Pauans two events appear to have been considered as *eventa digna memoria*: the saga of the hero Gurabesi recorded in the Papuan-Tidorese tradition and the revolt of Nuku documented in the Dutch archives. These two episodes represent two important stages in the development of Papuan ethnic and political identity although different in character and spatio-temporal contexts: the saga/text of Gurabesi occurs in the pre-colonial period and that of Nuku in colonial times.

These two episodes share common modal dynamics, which points to the existence of a Papuan hermeneutics previously referred to as cargoism. The fact that it is possible to identify ‘cargo practices’ and ‘discourses’ in pre-colonial times prompts us to review the longstanding ‘Western’ postulates regarding cargo cults, which considered them as messianic movements fuelled by processes of acculturation and modernisation, and to discard the axiomatic notions of primitivism and evolutionism embedded in them. Both the traditions of Gurabesi and Nuku reveal the presence of a hermeneutics generating Papuan understandings and knowledge and informing Papuan behavioural patterns.

Historians have always presented and analysed these two traditions or episodes, in particular that regarding Nuku, in the broad context of Indonesian history. The influence of political opportunism on official historiography may be responsible for interpolating and drawing this particular perspective in an attempt to play down the importance of the event for a possible ‘Papuan history’. In fact, once the events in
question are isolated or uprooted from the development of Indonesian history, they become relevant events for a Papuan history within and often in contrast with the world of Maluku.

The story of Gurabesi, because of its oral tradition, appears to be shrouded by the diaphanous veil of myth. The problem in dealing with mythical accounts is whether these can be used as sources for historical reconstructions. The answer to this question depends on the definitions assumed for myth and history.

The heroic accounts of both Gurabesi and Nuku appear to be constantly and continuously rooted in past stories of a mythical Golden Age to which the present comes to be anchored, understood and projected, through prophetic visions, into a future dimension, a teleological projection which allows the community to survive and perpetuate its own tradition. The continuous editing of the narratives by the Papuans reveals the existence of latent processes of social and cultural adjustment to changes affecting the environment and the system of structural-semantic relations. As Nancy Florida has demonstrated with her study on Javanese historiography in *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future*, texts can be considered as historical events and as potential contexts in that the past becomes a prefiguration of the future. An analogous approach may be adapted to the study of the oral tradition of mythology. The event, underlying the myth, comes in fact to represent a sort of ‘contextualised’ caesura subsuming myth and history in which paradoxically the *aporia* between the two is overcome. In my opinion historiography is nothing but mythology rooted in an

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‘archaeological knowledge’ and justified by an ‘architectonic memory’ and endowed with a teleology or eschatology: that is, meanings generated by structural changes.

The ‘contextualised’ nature and origin of myth, having the attributes of temporality and public memory guaranteed through oral transmission, endows it with a sort of historicity and can be used to reconstruct historical experiences in the form of chronicles. Myths, although fluid in nature for the medium by which they are handed down through time and spatially diffused, retain traces or fossils of their previous arrangements. The structural and logical inconsistencies that the survival of these relics tends to generate represent the key to the Papuan archive.

**The Story of Gurabesi**

The episode of Gurabesi, whose Papuan name was Sekfamneri, represents the beginning of Papuan submission to the Sultanate of Tidore and coincides with the arrival of the first Portuguese vessels in the eastern seas. Until the second half of the XV century, the relations between the Papuans and Maluku had been characterised by a series of trade transactions in the context of either kinship or ceremonial obligations shrouded in a mystical aura of aetiological or foundation myths.

The appearance of Gurabesi on the scene represents the turning point in the Papuan world since it can be envisaged as the attempt to ‘historicise’ or rationalise customary relationships and spatio-temporal occurrences. Although Gurabesi later transmogrified into a legendary culture hero and come to be related to the cycle of narratives connected to the introduction of iron to the Papuan territories, there is sufficient evidence to prove the historicity of his existence. Legends are nothing but the product of a process that I would refer to as the ‘metamictisation of history’, what

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22 The name *Guru Boesi* (or *Guru Besi*) in Malay means ‘master of iron’ pointing to the hero’s activity as a ‘blacksmith’, an activity highly valued among the Papuans.
Hobsbawm and Ranger call the invention of ‘tradition’.\(^{23}\) The construction of legends and traditions represents a conscious attempt to structure and systemise, culturally and socially, an ‘event’ to which symbolic meanings have been attached.\(^{24}\)

The story narrates how the Biak hero Gura besi, the founding father of the Raja Ampat Kingdoms, married the daughter of the Sultan Jamaluddin of Tidore who reigned between 1495 and 1572 A.D.\(^{25}\) The Dutch civil servant de Clercq placed the event under the predecessor of Jamaluddin, Mansur.\(^{26}\) However historical evidence, incorporated into the story, indicates that the story of Gurabesi has to be placed in a period prior to the Islamisation of Tidore, that is prior to the reign of Jamaluddin, the first Tidorese *raja* to convert to Islam. This circumstance suggests a date *ante quem* for the episode of Gurabesi under the *raja* Mansur of Tidore in the second half of the XV century. It is possible that its ‘traditionalisation’, that is its transformation from historical episode into saga, occurred later during Jamaluddin’s reign, a fact that could account for eventual inconsistencies. The existence of conflicting chronologies indicates that there was at the time a process of systemisation *in fieri* aiming at adjusting socio-cultural templates to a changed environment, which apparently affected the meaning and function of previous narratives.

The episode of Gurabesi has to be analysed within the endemic structural rivalries between the sultanates of Tidore and Ternate.\(^{27}\) During the second half of the

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24 Shils writes in this regard: “constellations of symbols, clusters of images are received and modified. They change in the process of transmission as interpretations are made of the tradition presented; they change also while they are in possession of the recipients (…). As a temporal chain, a tradition is a sequence of variations on received and transmitted themes”. Shils E., *Tradition*, Faber & Faber, London, 1981, p. 13.


27 The story followed here is that reported by Leonard Andaya in his monograph *The World of Maluku* of 1993, already quoted. Andaya derives it from the version recorded in typed manuscripts in the
XV century, the Sultan of Tidore, on the renewal of the conflict between the two regional potentates, summoned the Sangaji of Patani, Sahmardan, to explore whether among the neighbouring areas there was a brave and strong man able to assist him in his struggle against Ternate. The Sangaji set out to find such man and travelled through the eastern islands to Waigeo. Here he met the Kapita of Waigeo, Gurabesi. When Gurabesi learnt of the reason of the Sangaji’s journey and of the prospects of reward granted by the Tidorese ruler, such as clothes marking his official position, he agreed to provide the Sultan with the help required.

Before setting out to undertake what he had promised, he asked permission to hold the clothes for a few moments. After having kissed them and raised them ceremoniously above his head in sign of respect, he travelled with his men to the court of Tidore. Once he reached the court, Gurabesi offered his services and was rewarded with the suit of clothes. Having distinguished himself in the battle against Ternate, he was given a wife in exchange for his loyal services and heroic exploits, the Sultan’s daughter, Boki Taebah, with whom he returned to live in Waigeo.

After ten years, the ruler of Tidore decided to engage in a new expedition to conquer new territories and enlarge his kingdom and wealth. He went to Patani, Gebe and the Raja Ampat islands, that were at the time tied to Tidore by vassal obligations. In Waigeo he met with his son-in-law Gurabesi and together with the Sangaji of Patani and the newly appointed rulers of other vassal territories, they went to New Guinea. On his return from the successful expedition, the Tidorese ruler stopped in Waigeo again and appointed his four grandsons as rulers of Waigeo, Salawatti, Waigama and Misoöl, better known as the Rajahs of the Four Islands.28

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28 Raja Ampat means ‘Four Kings’.
Andaya reports other two variants of the tradition regarding the appointment of the *Rajahs Ampat*. One version narrates that the rulers of the so-called Gamrange, that is the south-eastern settlements on the Island of Halmahera, Buli, Maba, Bricoli and Patani, were raised by Tidore to become the rulers of the Raja Ampat kingdoms. The other version tells of the conflict among the four brothers, Gurabesi’s sons, which led to the migration of the youngest brother, who originally had settled in Waigama, to Ceram.\(^{29}\)

It is possible to hypothesise that these later versions were formulated to justify a series of economic and ceremonial relations between the Papuans of the New Guinea islands and coasts with both Patani (and the Gamrange) in the north and the island of Ceram in the south which, as shown in the previous chapter, were part of a longstanding inter-island commercial network. The three versions appear to share a common element or tradition focusing on the primacy of the *Sangaji* of Patani. It is possible to conjecture that local legends about the migration of the Papuans inhabiting the islands and the coastal areas in the north and south of New Guinea may have converged, at the time when relations became more intensive, into the creation of a common *epos*. Presumably this occurred with the activity of Muslim merchants in Eastern Indonesia around the early XV century and brought about an increase in the demand for local products on traditional markets.

The authoritative supremacy of the Gamrange and Patani settlements derived from an acknowledged antiquity. Kinship ties were an important functional component of both Malukan and Papuan social and cultural templates, being often institutionalised in ceremonial rituals. It is documented that migrations between the two areas occurred over the centuries. Enclaves of Papuan speaking communities are

\(^{29}\) Andaya, *op.cit.*, pp. 105-106.
documented in Halmahera and Morotai in the XV-XVI centuries, the Sawai of Halmahera being acknowledged among the oldest Papuan settlements. When, in fact, the people from Biak arrived in Halmahera they found this earlier group that consequently came to be regarded as possessing greater prestige.\(^{30}\) The myth of Fakok and Pasrefi refers to the relationship between the Papuans migrated from the Schouten islands to Halmahera and their original settings.

Fakok and Pasrefi, who are said to be originally from the neighbourhood of Jayapura,\(^{31}\) introduced iron to New Guinea, the use of which they had learnt during their raids in Halmahera. The strongholds from where they launched their marauding expeditions were located on the island of Waigeo known also as Wardo.\(^{32}\) Significantly the village of Kabu Bay on Waigeo was the centre of the Kawe tribe that claimed to have had rajas long before the Tidorese Sultans began to exert their influence.\(^{33}\)

The introduction of iron to New Guinea presumably took place after 1500, the time in which the Sultan of Tidore converted to Islam. This chronology can be inferred from the taboos, as for instance the prohibition to eat pork, associated with the blacksmith which reveal a Muslim origin.\(^{34}\) The fact that the two mythical heroes are said to be raiding the island of Halmahera, and in particular the areas inhabited by the Sawai, suggests that this area was, at that time, widely inhabited by Austronesian speakers interspersed by pockets of Papuan settlements.

According to Kamma, the Sawai were Biak migrants who established themselves in Halmahera, Patani, Maba and Weda as well as north-east Ceram where


\(^{31}\) According to Kamma the Biak people originally came from the region between Sarmi and Jayapura. Kamma, Koreri...cit., p.79.

\(^{32}\) Kamma, op. cit., p. 59; cfr. Haga, op.cit., I, p. 94.
they came to be known as ‘Tidorese Papuans’. In 1653 Patani was mentioned as being a centre of Tidorese Papuans too.\textsuperscript{35} The geographical distribution of the Sawai settlements comes consequently to account for the trade patterns of the Papuans as outlined in the previous chapter.

The protracted contacts with Halmahera prompted a series of technical innovations resulting in the invention and the introduction into the Papuan world of new elements of material culture, in particular those related to maritime navigation and warfare, such as bellows for forging and the bulwarking of canoes and shields.\textsuperscript{36} It was because of the presence of Papuan kinsmen and for being the source of new valuables that the area came to be regarded as the mythical centre of power located, according to a longstanding tradition, in the west. The widening of the Papuan world of relations however caused a spatial shift in the original cultural-social templates.

The idea of the ‘west’ as the mythical source of wealth and the centre of power is a topos, common to many civilisations, deriving from the analogy of the life cycle with the \textit{cursus solis} and explains why it has been associated with ancestor worship. At a certain point this topos came to be historicized, presumably following a time of migrations directed towards the western territories. Among the Biakkers this process presumably occurred when the migrations of Papuans from the Sentani area towards Biak took place. The myth of the West, in fact, appears to have already been present in Biak mythology: the myth of Fakok and Pasrefi indicates that the Biakkers were originally from the area east of Sarmi. At that time the mythical west was located along the Mamberamo River. Reminiscences of this location, as a centre of power, apparently continued to persist in Biak myths as the participation of Biakkers to a

\textsuperscript{33} Kamma, ‘Incorporation of Foreign Culture Elements…\textit{cit.}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{34} Kamma & Kooijman, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 27-28.
\textsuperscript{35} Kamma, ‘Incorporation of Foreign Culture Elements…\textit{cit.}, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{36} Kamma, \textit{Koreri…\textit{cit.}}, p. 9.
cargo movement in the area in 1910 seems to suggest. The West, as the source of power, is also recorded among the Kamoro of the Mimika region, and among the Marind-anim on the south coast.

According to the myth of Fakok and Pasrefi reported by Kamma, it appears that the Sawai of Patani, Gebe and the Gamrange were already under the influence of Tidore. When the Sawai defeated the marauding brothers from Biak, they became on their return home ‘representatives of the Sultan of Tidore’, a fact that they accepted reluctantly and against which they attempted to rebel. When Gurabesi, who is said to have distinguished himself in the struggle against the Sawai, appears on the scene, Tidorese rule was well established in the area, and over the Sawai-Papuans who were used by the Sultan as intermediaries with the Papuans of New Guinea.

In the episode of Gurabesi, the Sultan of Tidore is portrayed as being a distributor of titles and clothes to the Papuans. The meaning of this practice is rooted in the ideological context of the Papuan exchange system regulated by the figure of the ‘Big Man’, central to Papuan socio-economic and political organizations, and the associated concept of nanek. In this ideological milieu the Sultan of Tidore is perceived by the Papuans as the Big Man to whom they felt obliged to pay allegiance until he was able to assert his power through ceremonial gift-giving. The payment of the annual tribute, or Samsom, to the sup Manseren or ‘Lord of the Land’, and the titles and valuables obtained in return, sanctioned the relationship between the

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38 Harple T., Controlling the Dragon: An Ethno-Historical Analysis of Social Engagement among the Kamoro of South-West New Guinea. PhD Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Australian National University, Canberra, 2000, p. 177.
39 Van Baal, Dema…cit., p.
41 Kamma, ‘De Verhouding…cit.’, p. 536.
42 ibid., pp. 536-541.
Papuans and Tidore. XVIII and XIX centuries Dutch sources record episodic refusals of the Papuans to send the Samsom to the Sultan and to which Tidore reacted by setting up expeditions to collect the tribute and enforce vassal obligations. It is possible that Papuan refusal to pay the tribute indicates that Tidore, by that time, had lost in the collective imaginary of the Papuan people its original ‘religious’ significance.

Yet in the XVI century the Papuans believed that the objects coming from the Tidorese court were imbued with the sacredness of the Sultan’s nanek. They believed that by touching these objects they were able to absorb the particles containing the Sultan’s power. This belief prompted the creation of a particular ritual that in many ways resembled that performed on the return from headhunting expeditions.

In the XIX century the missionary Geissler, in his De Reis naar Tidore, described in detail the tribute mission to Tidore which, at the time, was still being ceremonially enacted, notwithstanding that the Dutch had officially abolished any form of tribute payment to Tidore by 1861, as well as the complex ritual surrounding the reception of the Sultan’s letter. Both the letter and the Tidorese envoy, believed to be ‘carriers’ of the Sultan’s nanek, became objects of a peculiar ritual in which the village headman solemnly touched both the envoy and the letter in order to enhance the prosperity and welfare of the community. The same belief

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43 For the concept of samsom see: Kamma, ‘Incorporation of Foreign Culture Elements…cit.’, pp. 61-62.
46 Galis, op. cit., p. 22.
inspired the practice of the Papuans bringing tribute to Tidore who used to crawl on
the floor of the Sultan’s palace in order to absorb the spiritual traces of the ruler’s
magic powers. On their return, the village people gathered around the tribute mission
to share in the Sultan’s nanek.\textsuperscript{47} The distribution of clothing and titles by Tidore was
seen as having the same function, namely that of distributing the ruler’s divine
powers.

Although very few Papuans converted to Islam, probably because of the
prohibition of eating pork which represented the main source of animal proteins in the
Papuan diet and which was so important that pigs were part of numerous ceremonial
complexes,\textsuperscript{48} the acceptance of the Sultan’s faith was a way to express allegiance and
share in the privileges of the Sultan’s world. Papuan conversions were therefore more
a nominal, formal acceptance of material elements and behaviours peculiar to Islam
and did not impinge on or transform the structural meanings of the Papuan worldview.

The absence of spiritual conversion to Islam seems to be confirmed by that fact
that the acceptance of the new faith did not bring about any transformation of Papuan
political and social templates. The elements introduced by Islam were simply
juxtaposed to the existing structures and beliefs. The Muslim titles were mere ‘names’
endowing the recipient, usually the local headman, with material privileges and were
not indicators of a new form of political institution. On Salawati, for instance, the
raja, a title introduced at the time of the Indian expansion in South-east Asia, and the
jojau, the Muslim-Moluccan ‘Lord of the Land’, lived in the same community and
were considered equal in status.\textsuperscript{49} The Papuans seem to have persevered in
maintaining their original identity characterised by a peculiar worldview that

\textsuperscript{47} Kamma, ‘Incorporation of Foreign Culture Elements…cit.’, pp. 61-75.
\textsuperscript{48} See for instance that among the Dani studied by Heider K.G., ‘The Grand Valley Dani Pig Feast: A
\textsuperscript{49} Andaya, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 107.
consisted in, as Andaya effectively points out, “interlocking worlds of relationships, all of which had to be carefully nurtured”.\textsuperscript{50} It is in this particular spiritual and cultural milieu that the \textit{epopée} of Gurabesi must be understood.

The information regarding Gurabesi and the submission of the Papuan islands to Tidore seems to a western observer to be clouded by symbolism and mysticism, whereas a Papuan interpretation reveals the inherent linkages and patterning dynamics. The relevant historical facts and their structural progression or sequence can be isolated and extrapolated from western narratives and reinterpreted in the light of Papuan hermeneutics in conjunction with archaeological, anthropological and linguistic evidences that have survived the test of time.

The saga of Gurabesi corroborates the hypothesis, put forward in the previous chapter, that, before the arrival of the European fleets, the Papuans appeared to have represented an \textit{ethnie} identified on the basis of racial and cultural indicators and occupying a well defined territory represented by the coastal areas of West New Guinea and off-shore islands. That the Papuans were aware of their peculiar ethnic identity, defined in relation to the neighbouring Malay and, later, European populations, appears clear from the dynamics of the revolt led by Nuku in the XVIII century and in which the spirituality of the Papuans, their beliefs and values, played an important role in determining their participation and in shaping symbols and meanings as well as the semantics and structure of their relations with the Europeans.

\textit{Nuku and the Maluku-Papuan Connection.}

The struggle documented by the VOC reports takes place in the Maluku-Papuan area and can be considered a form of proto-anti-colonial or nativist struggle in which

\textsuperscript{50} ibid., p. 108.
the colonised take arms against the colonial power and its local vassals to restore pristine systems of relations and beliefs. Although the Papuans fought alongside the Malukans, they still appear to have retained their ethnic and cultural identity. The Dutch sources refer, in fact, to them as the ‘Papuans’ and constantly emphasise the central role they played in the struggle.

The Papuans who took part in the revolt appear to have been those inhabiting the islands, although it cannot be completely excluded that the Papuans from other areas may have participated in the events. This can be inferred given the intricate web of local commercial relations between the Papuans of the off-shore islands and those of the New Guinea coasts and between the coastal dwellers and the Papuans of the interior. Visser has identified strong similarities, for instance, between the political model of the Sahu and that of the Asmat of New Guinea,\(^51\) a fact that corroborates the idea of possible direct or mediated influences and contacts. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that those areas, which experienced the turmoils of Nuku’s attempt at restoration, became the setting of the XX century proto-nationalist feelings and movements and the place where nationalist aspirations received their political articulation, as will be shown in the following two chapters. Significantly at a more mature stage of the nationalist struggle in the aftermath of World War II, some Papuans, as Chauvel’s study reveals, attempted to forward their cause in connection with the nationalist claims of the southern Moluccas.\(^52\)

Beliefs and customary practices shared by the Malukans and Papuans appear to have been the prime movers in the clash between the colonisers and colonised. The cause of the conflict can be traced in the feeling of disaffection and alienation experienced by the people of the area under Dutch domination. The arrival of the

Dutch and the implementation of their commercial policies disrupted the original harmony of relations developed over centuries in the Malukan-Papuan area and maintained under Portuguese domination. The unity of the area of north Maluku, considered the centre of power or heartland of the area, was structured by referring to the four cardinal points, or ‘four quarters’ of the world: Giailolo as the north, Bacan the south, Ternate the west and Tidore the east. Each cardinal point indicated the boundaries of their sphere of influence irradiating as a mandala, a legacy of the early expansion of Hindu-Buddhism in South-east Asia.53

In 1551 Ternate had conquered Giailolo, initiating the gradual destruction of the original balance in the region. The intrusion into the Maluku-Papuan area of the Dutch VOC had accelerated the domino effect caused by the fall of the ‘northern quarter’ with the submission of Ternate in 1683, reduced to a Dutch vassal state, while Tidore continued to remain relatively autonomous for much of the XVIII century.

The submission of Ternate to the Dutch brought about the obliteration of the structural and ideological dualism generated by the tension between Ternate and Tidore that, as Andaya’s study reveals, represented a sort of gravitational focus of the Malukan world. The Ternaten and Tidorese rulers more and more came to rely on Dutch assistance to secure their sovereignty, power and influence in the region. They were, consequently, more concerned with pleasing the VOC in order to secure its support than with the functioning of either their administrations or the welfare of their

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52 In this regard see: Chauvel R., Nationalist, Soldiers and Separatists: The Ambonese Islands from Colonialism to Revolt, 1880-1950, KITVL Press, Leiden, 1990, pp. 239-240.
53 The distribution explains why the Papuan islands and New Guinea fell under Tidorese influence as well as the modes and means by which this influence was articulated. The mandala structure/nature of Tidorese power and influence explains why Tidore needed intermediaries, Patani and the Gamrange, in the dealings with the Papuans inhabiting territories located farther from the power centre. In a mandala system authority was greatest in the centre, while in the periphery it was dispersed often through local rulers of increasing independence and decreasing loyalty until total extinction. In this regard see:
subjects. This situation of neglect caused the emergence of a rift between the local rulers and the ruled.54

The economic policies introduced by the VOC, in particular the so-called extirpatie or spice eradication, contributed to augment the negative effects of the political change occurring in the region. South-east Halmahera and the Papuan islands fiercely opposed the implementation of the policy. The extirpatie, in fact, went against the fundamental tenets and practices of the traditional exchange system in the region. It entailed not only the destruction of the traditional commercial network but the disruption of the underlying system of rituals and beliefs as well. It meant the systemic ‘eradication’ of a longstanding world of living and thinking. As a consequence, disaffection of the subjects towards their rulers intensified and became widespread.

This sense of alienation and disenchantment was further enhanced by the simultaneous occurrence of natural disasters, such as the drought and consequential famine that ravaged the area in 1723, and the outbreak of smallpox in the 1720s. These events were interpreted by the natives as signs of the structural disharmony affecting the Maluku-Papuan world as a whole and of the depletion of the spiritual power of the sovereign of Tidore.55 It was in this period, in fact, as has been previously pointed out, that the Papuans began to question their obligation of tribute to Tidore. Political and social upheavals, caused by the spiritual malaise and the material precariousness of life, were frequent. Messianic and soteriological expectations emerged to provide people with some sort of hope in the future and a


54 Andaya, op. cit., p. 211.
55 ibid., p. 214.
justification for the temporary misery of the present. Eschatological and apocalyptic beliefs penetrated and were systemised in the religious worldview of animism.

The feelings of anxiety, alienation and moral uncertainty found their ideological and cathartic expression in, and were catalyst for, the rise of a revivalist or nativist movement. Historia docet that, when people are afraid of the future and dissatisfied with the present, there is a natural tendency to turn back and look at the past in search of certainties, in search of a secure and safe spiritual harbour. In the second half of the XVIII century, there was a widespread and well-rooted belief that the cause of the troubles ravaging the people of Maluku and Papua lay in the disruption of the former unity following the fall of Giailolo. This event came to be mythologised or mystified in the collective imaginary as the apocalyptic ‘beginning of the end’. Consequently the restoration of the ‘four quarters’ was deemed as a logical necessity, a categorical imperative that could no longer be procrastinated. The myth of the ‘Golden Era’, elaborated by apocalyptic-eschatological exegeses into systemic ideologies centred on the restoration of Giailolo, incited the Malukans and the Papuans to action.

The Dutch colonial archives contain several reports regarding the disturbances that occurred in the region. Andaya has used these documents to reconstruct the structuralism, rooted in religious and mythical beliefs, characterising the Malukan world. During my visit to the archives in The Hague I was able to view and study the same documents in order to verify whether they contained information useful to the reconstruction of the role the Papuans played in the struggle.

In two VOC documents dated 1765 and 1766 respectively, it is reported that a group from the Tidorese settlement in Tomelau, led by an imam and two scribes, arrived in Giailolo with the intent to crown a believed direct descendant of the

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56 ibid., p. 215.
legitimate royal family of Giailolo, Abu Laif, and restore the kingdom. The attempt failed since the local pagan headman did not want to swear allegiance to the supposed heir. When fighting broke out between the two parties, the Dutch were forced to intervene and, by 1766, peace was restored.\textsuperscript{57} Turmoil and disturbances, however, persisted throughout the Malukan-Papuan region.

The areas in which the movement for restoration grew strongest appear to have been those inhabited by the Papuans, namely Halmahera and the Papuan islands. From 1716 to 1728, the \textit{Sangaji} of Patani led a rebellion of Papuans against the Sultan of Tidore. Once again the \textit{Sangaji} of Patani, as in the saga of Gurabesi, appears to act as the leader of the Papuans of the islands with the difference that, at the time of Gurabesi in the XV century, the \textit{Sangaji} of Patani was a loyal vassal of Tidore.

The factors that caused the Papuans to move away from and against Tidore at the beginning of the XVIII century can only be conjectured and inferred from the VOC documents regarding the evolution of the relations and situation in the region in the two centuries between the XV and XVIII. It is possible that the intensification and expansion of trade relations that took place in this stretch of time might have caused a spatial or geographical shift of the original centres of power and wealth in the region. This shift also acted in and affected the metaphysical sphere of religion so that Tidore was no longer envisaged as the sole and exclusive source of \textit{nanek} and valuables by the Papuans. The submission to Tidore lost its pragmatic and symbolic significance. The revolt led by Patani, however, was quelled by the Dutch and a precarious state of peace ensued.

In 1761 the conflict was renewed. The \textit{raja} of Salawati led a contingent of fifteen hundred Papuans against the kingdoms of Sula Besi and Buru. Among these

\textsuperscript{57} VOC 3186, \textit{Geheim Verbaal}, 7 June 1766, fol. 218; VOC 3181, \textit{Besluit Nederlands Raad op Ternate}, 23 October 1765, fol 5.
were many people from Patani.\textsuperscript{58} Tidore was once again unable to suppress the rebellion since various *bobatos*, the traditional leaders of the *soas* or village-wards, opposed the use of force against the Papuans, adducing existing ancestral kinship ties between some Tidorese and the Papuans. The sultan was, therefore, compelled by the adverse circumstances to turn for help to the *Sangajis* of Weda and Patani.\textsuperscript{59} Archival documents report that the Dutch ascribed responsibility for the opposition to the Tidorese sultan to a politically influential family in Java whose members held, in Tidore, the important offices of *jojau*, *kapita laut*, *jurutulis* respectively ‘lord of the land’, ‘lord of the sea’ and scribe, and collector of the tribute from the Papuan territories.\textsuperscript{60} This reveals how traditional trade networks and allegiances persisted in the region notwithstanding European penetration and policies.

Political instability characterised the Maluku-Papuan area for almost the entire XVIII century. The situation worsened when the Dutch engaged in a series of actions aimed at forestalling British expansion in the area. Treaties were renewed with the Malukan vassals in order to prevent them from lending support to English vessels cruising the region. Political instability became an important issue on the Dutch agenda. Turmoil, insurrections, dynastic disputes, power vacuums would have, in fact, provided the English with an opportunity to intervene and eventually establish a foothold in the region. The situation forced the Dutch to assume a different approach to the 1761 Papuan rebellion.

Besides introducing constitutional reforms, such as the institution of the *raja muda* or heir apparent,\textsuperscript{61} in order to prevent succession disputes from arising, the VOC decided to resort to the use of force in order to restore peace and security in the

\textsuperscript{58} VOC 3022, *Besluit Nederlands Raad op Ternate*, 11 September 1760, fol. 3.
\textsuperscript{59} VOC 3022, *Geheim Verbaal*, 30 June 1761, fol. 86.
\textsuperscript{60} VOC 3186, *Geheim Verbaal*, 31 July 1766, fols. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{61} Andaya, *op. cit.*, p. 217.
region. Any insurrection aiming at subverting the status quo was considered an attack against Dutch interests. The rebellion was quelled, however, not by the military superiority of the Tidorese-Dutch coalition but because of the outbreak of an epidemic, which killed eight hundred Papuan rebels.62

The suppression of the revolt did not inaugurate the establishment of that Pax Nederlandica greatly pursued by the Dutch. Iranun fleets from Magindanao in the Philippines were raiding the archipelago, disseminating panic and terror among the Malukans and Papuans inhabiting coastal and littoral areas.63 It was in this area that British ships were first intercepted, inducing the Dutch to suppose a Tidorese involvement. Because of this conviction, probably supported by information gathered by his intelligence network, in 1779 the Dutch Governor of Ternate ordered the arrest of the Sultan Jamaluddin of Tidore and his raja muda, who were both exiled to Batavia.64 A new government of five regents was appointed and new treaties were signed between the VOC and Tidore, and the VOC and Ternate.65

The aristocratic families of Tidore opposed the constitutional change. Among the dissidents was Kaicili Nuku who left Tidore in 1780 and went to Patani. Having established a base between Weda and Patani he tried to build a coalition of Malukans, Papuans and Ceramese to fight the VOC and its puppet government in order to reconquer Tidore. He also tried to exploit the presence of the Spanish and British fleets cruising the local waters at the time, as well as the piratical incursions of the Iranun of the Philippines.66 Nuku, acclaimed ‘King of the Islands’ by the Papuans,67

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62 VOC 3357, Dagblad Register, 24 August 1771.
64 VOC 3556, Geheim Verbaal, 29 May 1779, fols. 4-12.
65 VOC 3551, Geheim Verbaal, 12 June 1779, fols. 30-31.
66 VOC 3603, Geheim Verbaal, 22 May 1781, fols. 5-6.
67 Kamma, ‘De Verhouding’...cit., p. 262.
initialised a restoration movement aiming at both overthrowing the current Tidorese government and expelling the Dutch from the region.

The Papuans identified Nuku with the mythical culture hero Manseren Manggundi, the ‘Powerful Lord’, who had promised to return and inaugurate the Koreri, the promised and longed for era of peace, prosperity and wealth.68 This identification was probably prompted by the translation into the Papuan language of one of the Malay epithets by which Nuku was addressed, Jou Barakti or ‘Lord of Fortune’.69

Messianic expectations were widely spread at the time in South-east Asia and represented a recurrent motif in many of the local mythologies. The presence of Messianic beliefs and ideas in South-east Asia are documented in the VIII- IX centuries A.D. and their presence coincides with the penetration of elements of Hindu spirituality in the region. The ideal or motif of the Ratu Adil, the Righteous Ruler, was developed in this period and although betraying a strong Hindu influence, I believe its genesis and emergence was prompted by the intensification of change in the region affecting traditional social-cultural templates through a process of adjustment, earlier referred to, which generated a teleological tension. The messianic investiture of Nuku is justified and assumes significance when considered in this particular spiritual and historical context.

Nuku’s piratical activities in the area were severely damaging Dutch commercial interests. In 1780-1781, the Dutch launched two attacks against Patani in

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69 Van Hasselt and Kijne suggest that the name ‘Manggundi’ derives from the Papuan manggan meaning ‘strong’, ‘powerful’. For the hypotheses of the etymology of the name ‘Manggundi’ see: Kamma, Koreri…cit., pp. 17-18.
order to wipe out the movement. Nuku and his followers had, however, moved their headquarters to the Papuan islands further east.

Following the Dutch capture of Patani in 1781, the headmen of the islands of Patani, Maba and Weda were forced to sign a treaty of submission to the Dutch. Article 7 of the 1781 treaty is extremely important because of its reference to the Papuan people as a ‘nation’. Yet it is obvious that this statement must be considered with due caution since the Dutch were applying their own categories to define the perception they had of the Papuans. The definition may not be significative for Papuan self-perception.

The article in question stated that the headman of Patani, Maba and Weda must accept not to “exploit the support and friendship of the Papuans in order to perform evil deeds, but to use all possible means to motivate this nation towards peaceful thoughts and submission to the company and to their lawful ruler”. The Dutch in order to prevent the Papuans of Halmahera from joining or providing assistance to Nuku, forced them to transmigrate to the south-west coast of the island.

Hunted in the area by the Dutch, Nuku moved his headquarters further south to Ceram. Here he was able to gather a number of exiled Tidorese and move against the Dutch, inflicting a series of losses. In his move to Ceram, Nuku was able to rally the support of the Papuans of the south-west coast of New Guinea. The Papuans of Onin figure prominently among the petitioners, urging him to expel the Dutch, in a letter dated 28 September 1783, addressed to the Dutch-appointed Sultan Badaruddin of Tidore, and sent by 12 Sangajis, Gimalahs and heads of Ceram.

In the letter the resentment of the rebels towards the VOC appears evident. The struggle was not a dynastic one to overthrow an illegitimate sovereign. In fact the

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70 VOC 3622, Geheim Verbaal, 28 September 1782, fol. 273. Emphasis added in the citation.
71 VOC 3622, Besluit Nederlands Raad op Ternate, 8 November 1781, fol. 138.
rebels were petitioning the ‘illegitimate’ Sultan Badaruddin to expel the Dutch and not to abdicate so as to restore the legitimate ruler to the throne. What was being fought was an anti-colonial war aiming at expelling a ruler that had undermined the interests and privileges of the traditional ruling classes as well as subverting the ideological and religious systems that sustained their privileges. The anti-colonial character of the struggle explains why Nuku was able to attract a number of different followers cutting across political ambitions and dynastic preferences. Aware of Nuku’s extensive support among the Malukans and the Papuans, the Sultan Badaruddin was forced to implement the requests of the Sangajis and declare war on the Dutch.

Flying the Tidorese flag upside down, in a symbolic gesture marking the subversion and end of the existing world, a gesture that will be reiterated by the Papuans, as will be seen, almost two hundred years later during the Manseren revolt, Nuku went to Tidore to assume the command of the war. In the meantime a joint Ternaten and Dutch expedition was established against the Tidorese and Papuan rebels. Within a month the coalition was able to defeat some of Nuku’s followers, compelling others to surrender.

The treaty that followed, signed in December 1783, confirmed Tidore as a vassal of the VOC. Following a series of explorative talks with the bobatos of Tidore, in 1784 the regency was given to Kamaluddin, who had been living in exile in Ceylon and was considered the legitimate heir. A Dutch report reveals that the Papuans did not attend the ceremony of enthronement and this caused them to be excluded from the amnesty granted by the colonial authorities.
Notwithstanding the defeat, Nuku’s charismatic appeal did not wane. Confined to his base in Ceram, he still enjoyed considerable and widespread support among the Malukans and Papuans. The threat posed by Nuku to the Dutch, however, was not represented by his ability to foment and lead mass insurrections, but by the fact that he could have provided the English with an opportunity to gain a foothold in the Spice Islands.

English shipping in the area had increased during the second half of the XVIII century. The lucrative Chinese market had forced the English to search for an ‘Eastern Passage’ that could be used all year round, in particular during the countervailing winds of the north-east monsoon. This favourable route was identified as that passing between the islands of Obi and Ceram leading into the Pacific through Pitt’s Strait between the Papuan islands of Batanta and Salawati.\(^75\) The area was, at the time, under the influence of Nuku.

Police interviews and intelligence operations and reports confirming that Nuku was in the Raja Ampat islands, also revealed the intensity of the support that Nuku still had among the Tidorese aristocracy. The Dutch attacked and occupied Salawati forcing the local *raja* to swear allegiance to the VOC.\(^76\) Nuku, however, was moving constantly through the islands, and was able to avoid capture.

A series of deliberations of the *Oost-Indische Comite*, which come to replace the VOC in 1795, reveals that the fears of the Dutch materialised when the English finally decided to join Nuku, taking advantage of the Iranun raids in the archipelago that were depleting the Dutch military and economic resources and capabilities.\(^77\)

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\(^{76}\) VOC 3943, *Geheim Verbaal*, 12 October 1790, fols. 31-33.

English, in fact, had been able to establish a trading post in Doreh Bay on New Guinea in 1793. The English traders who had discovered the profitability of this local entrepot, probably because it could have been used to enhance and strengthen their position in the Chinese market, lobbied the English colonial government in Bengal to intervene in Nuku’s favour against the Dutch.\textsuperscript{78} Bengal, however, declined the suggestion, deciding to persist in a policy of non-interference in Dutch-Malukan affairs.

The outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe brought about a change in the attitude of the English government. The \textit{Stadhouder} of the Netherlands, William V, in exile in London after Napoleon’s invasion of Holland, issued in 1795 the so-called ‘Circular Note of Kew’ by which he authorised the English allies to occupy all Dutch overseas territories in order to prevent them from falling into French hands. The English, therefore, occupied Banda and Ambon in 1796.\textsuperscript{79}

Nuku seized the opportunity and joined the English fleet with his contingent of \textit{kora-koras}. In the same year he took control of Giailolo where the Tidorese \textit{jojau} was installed as Sultan. Although he was not the legitimate heir to the throne, the restoration of the Sultanate of Giailolo had a profound symbolic significance indicating the restoration of the Malukan-Papuan world and the beginning of a new era.

The English, however, did not want to strengthen Nuku’s position further, since they feared it would have inevitably clashed with their own interests in the long run. They also feared that, if they moved against him, he might play the French card using the same tactics already tested with the Dutch. The English government, therefore, decided to return to a policy of non-interference. By contrast, the English traders

\textsuperscript{78} OIC91, \textit{Geheim Verbaal}, 16 September 1795.
\textsuperscript{79} OIC 91, \textit{Geheim Verbaal}, 29 April 1796.
continued to support and supply Nuku with weapons for the planned capture of Tidore. This was preceded by a siege of Ternate, where the Sultan Kamaluddin had fled, which aimed at taking the island by famine.

The English, deeming that Ternate was important to their commercial interests in the area, decided to cooperate with Nuku. In the light of the English resolve toward establishing a permanent presence in Maluku, the alliance with Nuku was considered crucial since it provided a degree of legitimacy to the establishment of an English influence that the Dutch never had.

The capitulation of Ternate in 1801, accelerated by the demise of the VOC in 1799, decreed the success of both English ambitions and Nuku’s aspirations. Nuku was proclaimed officially the Sultan of Tidore by the English. The proclamation was followed by a treaty between the Dutch and Nuku inspired by the important principle, identified by Andaya, of ‘mutuality of relationship’, a principle reflecting the nature of the relationships between the Malukans and Papuans. It appears that following Nuku’s revolt and his installation as the Sultan of Tidore, the original world of relationships and values in the Malukan-Papuan region came to be somewhat restored with the policies regarding the monopoly of the spice trade imposed by the Dutch VOC abandoned in favour of more flexible policies which enabled the renaissance or restoration of local trade.

The return of the Dutch to the region, following the Peace of Amiens of 1802, did not wipe out Nuku’s moral and material conquests: the Dutch were, in fact, obliged to accept the status quo. Although agreements were signed between the

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84 Haga, *op. cit.*, I, p. 413.
parties in order to facilitate relations and safeguard mutual political and economic interests, a nebulous aura of defiance against the Dutch persisted in the region even after Nuku’s death in 1805.85 The quiescent seeds of anti-colonial revolt were ready to dehisce at the first blasts of the winds of freedom.

Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this chapter has revealed that the two episodes of Gurabesi and Nuku can be considered as chronicles of Papuan history, identifiable by the peculiar ‘modal dynamics’ producing the narratives. The Papuan interpretation of these episodes, in fact, appears to be rooted in the cultural-religious tradition developed in insular and littoral areas inhabited by Papuans who had developed longstanding relations with the neighbouring Indo-Malay populations and which represented the basis of their ethnic identity. The narratives presented in this chapter reveal that the category ‘Papua’ is ‘glimpsed’ in its intersection with that of ‘Maluku’ so that both narratives come to belong to and reflect a ‘Maluku-Papuan World’. This can be geographically located in the triangle, Papuan littoral and insular territories-Maluku-Ceram, the structural-semantic boundaries of which continuously shifted over time to incorporate intrusive elements. How these narratives related to the West Papuan reality, assumed as a category, and the existence of which appears to find confirmation in the local relations between interior and coast, discussed in the previous chapter, remains problematic. Because of the paucity of documents and of material evidences, the relations between the Papuans of the interior and those inhabiting coastal and insular areas will remain one of the many mysteries of history awaiting to be unravelled.

85 *ibid.*, II, p. 432.
The analysis seems to suggest, however, that at the dawn of the Dutch colonisation of West New Guinea a Papuan historical hermeneutics, embedded in peculiar social-cultural templates, which were produced and determined by processes of adaptation to a peculiar eco-system, appear to have existed and through which it is possible that particular dynamics of ethnic self-perception and representation took place. That Halmahera/Gialolo was an important structural-semantic feature for the Papuans, inhabiting insular and littoral areas of northern New Guinea, is testified by its re-appearance in a prophetic movement, which took place in 1876-1877.\textsuperscript{86} Consequently it is possible to infer that the Papuans would perceive and systematise the colonial experience in the light of this peculiar cultural-historical hermeneutics.

\textsuperscript{86} Been M., ‘Verslagen Zendingswerk’, \textit{Berichten van de Utrechtsche Zendingsvereeniging}, 1, 1876, pp. 9-10.
Chapter V

Colonisation, Conversion and the Construction of Ethnic Identity

I descended again and drew a ship in the sand,
I designed it and it became a boat
A loaded boat, its cargo-mark nearly submerged
(…)
These are the treasures and the wealth
Which the gentlemen (the stranger) have.
These are the treasures which I own.
These are the treasures
Which the gentlemen (the whites) see and possess
And bring along with them (always) when they are coming.

(tercets, 35; 41-42.)

The words of the Beyuser of Manarmakdi probably echoed in the minds of the Papuans when they saw the first European ship docking in the tranquil and safe harbours of their coast in the Year of the Lord 1829 and then departing leaving on the shore a small contingent of European men with their strange cargo. Before then the Papuans, inhabiting insular and littoral areas had engaged in permanent relations with the outside world that had brought them to encounter the white people either on the high seas or in the ports and markets where they went to trade their goods. Tercet 41 of the Beyuser seems to suggest that this was the case.

The white man was therefore neither a ‘mystery’ nor a ‘novelty’ to the Papuans.

What constituted a ‘mysterious novelty’ was the fact that never before the year 1829, the date of the establishment of the Dutch post of Merkus-oord, did any white man set foot on their native soil with the intention of settling there ‘permanently’. The last line of the Beyuser seems to refer to these events and appears to create a sort of ‘temporal

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1 The text of the Beyuser or ‘song’ is that quoted by Kamma in Koreri. Messianic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Culture Area, pp. 59-63, based on a late version of his friend Robert Rumbaku. As Kamma himself observed the text is “scarcely translatable; several times allusions are made, and symbolic language is used, which is known only to the singers and spectators, but which, without further comment, is incomprehensible in a foreign language. A literal translation makes no sense”.

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anacoluthon’ or ‘parataxis’ when read in conjunction with the preceding lines and visibly points to two different, juxtaposed temporal and spatial experiences.

Although parataxis is usually seen as the correct way to read such traditions, the inferences derived from philological analyses are questionable since they often work on an oral, fluid tradition that has been continuously manipulated and interpolated over time before being fixed in a written, ‘standardised’ text. Textual analyses of this type end up being merely the ‘philology of a philological process’ still in fieri. Kamma himself, in reporting the text, states that the Beyuser of Manarmakdi is the product or collage of different texts.²

The Beyuser, however, has become and is regarded as an ‘historical text’, a Papuan narrative that the historian or philologist analyses to retrieve information and reconstruct past events reproducing that epistemological conundrum that Hayden White refers to as the ‘nature of histories’. As White argues these are not only about events but in particular about “possible sets of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure”, sets of relationship that are not immanent in the events themselves but that exist only in the mind of the historian reflecting on them.³

At the outset of undertaking the reconstruction of the modes and processes of the christianisation of West Papua, and the exploration of its relation to and influence on the processes that brought to the construction of Papuan ethnic identity between 1854 and 1938, one is confronted with the lack of sources sufficient to identify the dynamics, dialectics and dialogue between Papuans and missionaries. While the missionaries have provided ‘texts’ reflected in reports, letters, diary entries and books, regarding their understandings, perceptions and activities among the Papuans, the

² Kamma, ibid., p.59.
latter have only their material culture and oral tradition reiterated in the cargo cults and reported by the observers, not the participants. Consequently, while for the missionaries we possess narratives, for the Papuans we possess chronicles reconstructed and derived from those very narratives. More than a dialogue, the historian is left to examine a monologue and the reactions or choreography of an ideal but mute audience, a ‘drama of voiceless protagonists’.

In this chapter, I will first examine the international processes that prompted the colonisation of West Papua and the modes and means by which the missionaries established relationships with the local people. This will be done with reference to the first mission established in Mansinam. This represented the first ‘historical’ contact of the Papuans with Christianity. Here the terms of the dialogue with the native inhabitants were first articulated through the politics of space, the battle engaged by the missionaries to appropriate and control material and symbolic domains of Papuan life and the contest over language and representation. Since the activity of the missionaries was instrumental to the interests of the colonial government, I will also briefly outline the rules and regulations set up to control their establishment in colonial territories.

Furthermore I will explore how Christianity was presented to the Papuans. Christianity, in its ‘translation’ to West Papua, brought along those theological, exegetic and denominational differences that characterised its existence in Europe. In colonial settings these denominational differences manifested themselves in a variety of missiologies, which came to inform missionary activity. Christianity was not homogeneous in its outward manifestations but was simultaneously a uniting and divisive force and could have been used either to foster unity or division according to the interests it served.
Finally, it must be pointed out that, since this thesis aims at providing a comprehensive study of the genesis and development of West Papuan nationalism in a historical perspective, tribal distinctions as well as mission divisions will be set aside. I will not focus specifically on one mission or tribe at a time, as anthropological studies usually tend to do, but I will try to reconstruct a general picture of the processes and effects of christianisation in West Papua and how they affected the emergence and dynamics of nationalist ideologies, movements and discourses in the post-war period. In order to overcome the ‘localism’ affecting missionary accounts I will collate them with the documents of the Colonial Archives regarding policies and interventions in order to cast them into a wider ‘national’ perspective.

The World System and the Dutch ‘Discovery’ of West Papua.

During their ‘Golden Age’, the Dutch paid little or no attention to the territories of New Guinea. The mercantilist system, on which the Dutch seaborne empire rested, was sufficient to guarantee the political and economic control over territories, peoples and resources. The capitalist system, prompted by the industrial revolution, came to dominate the world in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and, along with the new system of international relations established by the Congress of Vienna (1815), introduced new paradigms of social, economic and political organisation and the demise of mercantilism. At the beginning of the XIX century, the attitude of the Dutch towards the Papuan territories, in fact, underwent a radical change. The archives, that had been scanty in yielding information on the territory of West Papua following the years of the ‘proto-anti-colonial’ struggle led by Nuku, suddenly invert their trend providing an increasing number of reports and accounts on the Papuan territories.
Portuguese and Spanish sources, dating back to the XVI century and referred to in the preceding chapters, clearly reveal that the Papuans had encountered the white man prior to this date, when the first galleons coasted and charted the coastlines of New Guinea. For two centuries the Europeans considered West Papua as a ‘useless’ territory, inhabited by ‘savage’ and ‘primitive’ people not worth colonising and consequently entrusted the territory to the Sultan of Tidore believing that the ‘few’ resources that the territory had to offer could have been easily accessed, without excessive costs and labour, on the regional markets of Banda, Ambon, Ceram and Tidore.

It is possible that the growing financial difficulties experienced by the VOC at the end of the XVIII century may also be held responsible for the little attention paid to the Papuans. This supposition seems to be corroborated by the fact that after the dissolution of the VOC in 1795 and the concomitant takeover of all its assets by the Dutch Government, documents regarding West Papua reappear in the State Archives confirming the ‘paradigm shift’ in Dutch politics and attitudes.

The collapse of the VOC was, however, a structural outcome of the changes taking place in the system of international relations. What contributed to or prompted the change in the patterns of relations between the Papuans and the Europeans was the changing economic and political relations in Europe. The intensification of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation as well as the accumulation of financial capital forced the European countries to consolidate their control over their offshore possessions. Mercantilist policies proved to be insufficient to sustain the growing European economies for its ‘political vulnerability’. The ‘World System’, to use Wallerstein’s designation,4 imposed the creation of ‘permanent peripheries’ able to

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guarantee both a stable and continuous flow of resources and profitable markets capable of absorbing the industrial and financial surpluses of the metropolises. Colonialism appeared to be the socio-economic and political response to the new European demands and challenges.

An attentive analysis reveals that industrialisation and urbanisation were not the only cause of the emergence of colonialism. As Philip Curtin argues, colonial discourses and processes did not have their *Sitz im Leben* only in the metropolis but also in the distant peripheries as the effect of that phenomenon identified as “man-on-the-spotism”. Traders, missionaries, administrators living in the overseas territories interpreted their task as one of maximising their own power and advantage at the local level. When the local budget was unable to bear the costs of particular projects, they turned for help to the metropolis justifying the request as furthering the common good. By doing this they were able to draw the economic and political core ‘to’ and ‘within’ the periphery shifting the original relations of structural dependency of the periphery towards one of inter-dependency between core and periphery.

These considerations cause us to re-consider the modes and means by which colonial enterprises and processes were prompted, planned and realised. Colonialism was not an ‘external’ importation and imposition but a phenomenon that took place in the colonial settings where cultural values, customs, norms and beliefs as well as political, economic and social interests had already undergone processes of change and differentiation under the influence of the new ecological and cultural milieu to which it was forced to adapt. The West transplanted in the colonial establishments, in other words, was ‘different’ from its original source. It was a ‘creolised’ version of the European world. New economic and political interests had matured at the local

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level among the colonisers, new values had emerged and the western socio-economic and political ideas had been able to follow different trajectories of development free of the stereotypes and prejudices imposed by a sclerotic, authoritative tradition.

At the dawn of the XIX century British power and influence were expanding in the east and south-east Asian regions and it appeared necessary to the Dutch to forestall any penetration in those areas, which had been until then an exclusively Dutch trade reserve. In 1824 the Treaty of London, defining the boundaries of the Moluccan archipelago, was signed excluding *ipso facto* any foreign power from trade in the area.\(^7\) This act was followed in 1828 by the so-called ‘Van Delden Proclamation’ by which the Dutch claimed colonial possession of the coast of New Guinea “van den 141sten graad oostelijke lengte van Greenwich op de zuidkust, en van daar west-en noord-waards op tot de kaap de Goede Hoop, op de noordkust gelegen”.\(^8\)

Viewed in this perspective the fate of West Papua appears to be intrinsically connected to the historical developments taking place in the European world and the ‘colonial entity’ of West Papua is nothing but the product of systemic forces fuelling and regulating the trends, processes, needs and wants of the people of the time.

West Papua found itself in that particular ‘situational context’ or ‘structure of the conjuncture’. Strategically important for its geographic position as the easternmost Dutch outpost on the borders with the British colonial possessions and presumably rich in those resources that the natives were trading on the regional markets, West

\(^6\) *ibid.*, p. 48.
\(^7\) *Openbaar Verbaalarchief*, doc. No. 28, 31 August 1824.
\(^8\) “From the 141\(^{st}\) degree of east longitude of Greenwich on the south coast, and from there west- and northward up to the Cape of Good Hope, situated on the north coast”. Müller S., *Reizen en Onderzoekingen in de Indischen Archipel, gedaan op last der Nederlansche Indische Regering tusschen de Jaren 1828 en 1826*, vol. I, Amsterdam, 1857, p. 109.
Papua gradually ceased to be regarded in the political and collective imaginary as the mythical *Ultima Thule*.

In 1824 the Dutch Government signed a series of treaties with the sultanates of Ternate and Tidore confirming the trading rights and relations that had been previously established with the VOC. In the *Openbaar Verbaalarchief* No. 84, dated 6 December 1824, the Dutch Crown confirmed the sovereignty of Tidore over the territories inhabited by the Papuans. However rumours regarding the establishment of a British post on the coast of New Guinea east of the Aru Islands,\(^9\) that later proved to be unfounded, prompted the Dutch to consider the establishment of an administrative post on the south coast of West Papua.\(^10\) The Dutch trading post of Merkus-oord was thus established at Triton Bay in 1828 to mark the official annexation of West New Guinea to the Netherlands.\(^11\) Local rulers were appointed in order to establish and maintain friendly relations with the natives living in and around the post.\(^12\)

Life in the first colonial outpost must not have been devoid of difficulties and hardships. Tensions with the local inhabitants represented a constant threat and the appointment of local rulers according to the well-established practice already adopted by Ceramese traders as seen in chapter three, did not bring about the desired effect of exorcising the latent risks of upheavals. In 1830 Du Bus Fort, the military presidium guarding Merkus-oord, was attacked by the Papuans forcing the intervention of the Governor-General stationed in the Moluccas. A warship was sent in to protect the

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\(^10\) *Openbaar Verbaalarchief* No. 77, 16 November 1826; No. 78, 20 November 1826; No. 45, 24 November 1826.


\(^12\) *Handelingen en Besluiten van de Gouverneur-Generaal in Rade, 1819-1836*, doc. 30, 29 May 1829; doc. No. 13, 23 June 1829.
Dutch personnel and a commission of inquiry was set up to investigate the causes of the attack.\textsuperscript{13}

From the archival sources reporting the episode, it appears that the cause of the attack was that Merkus-oord was interfering or competing with the previously established \textit{sosolot} trading arrangements in the area. Presumably the attack by the Papuans was instigated by their \textit{manibob} or ‘trade friends’ from Ceram in an attempt to expel the Dutch from the area. After a few years, in 1835, the Dutch decided to dismantle the trading post of Merkus-oord.\textsuperscript{14} The situation must have been exacerbated by a strong resentment spreading among the Papuans from the nearby Raja Ampat Islands because of a \textit{hongitochten} fitted out by the Sultan of Tidore in 1830. Since the Dutch had kept a tight control over the practice in the aftermath of the uprisings led by Nuku, the Governor of the Moluccas sent out a warship to investigate the veridicality of the accusations and the eventual reasons behind the Tidorese initiative.\textsuperscript{15}

The archival documents reporting the situation of the time record only the motivations, decisions and actions of the Dutch in response to Papuan activity or acts of aggression. The motives behind Papuan actions remain obscure and can only be inferred from the Dutch reports. Consequently what is referred to in the documents as a ‘reaction’ to Papuan actions may be in reality a corollary to a Papuan reaction to Dutch activity or presence. This once again shows how approximate and aleatory any reconstruction of historical processes and events is when using unilateral sources of information.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Handelingen en Besluiten van de Gouverneur-Generaal in Rade, 1819-1836}, doc. No. 37, 31 July 1830.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Openbaar Verbaalarchief}, doc. No. 8, 3 July 1835; doc. No. 39, 22 July 1835; doc. No. 12, 8 July 1835.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Handelingen en Besluiten van de Gouverneur-Generaal in Rade, 1819-1836}, doc. No. 14, 7 August 1830.
The Dilemma of Colonising West Papua

The failure of the first attempt to colonise West Papua forced the colonial government in Batavia to consider other means and methods to attain control over the territory. The indirect control through Tidore was considered a non-viable and ineffective solution. The Papuans, in particular those inhabiting the villages that had participated to the uprisings led by Nuku and had probably ‘traditionalised’ some sort of anti-colonial resentment, had manifested, on several occasions, their reluctance to ‘serve’ Tidore since this had lost its original mythical meaning of being a ‘power centre’ or mandala centre. The refusal to pay tribute to Tidore and accept the practice of the Hongitochten indicates the change in the Papuan collective imaginary of the symbolic meaning of Tidorese supremacy.

Furthermore the Dutch considered that ‘indirect control’ inherently meant putting oneself in a position of strategic weakness. The presence of military posts would have, by contrast, guaranteed the allegiance of the local populations and deterred the expansionist ambitions of other European powers. Consequently in 1840 the Dutch government decreed the necessity to carry out ‘small acts of sovereignty’ in their New Guinea territories following reports of an increasing activity of British vessels in territorial waters. On this occasion some of the representatives argued in favour of the necessity to find a suitable and healthy location for the establishment of a colonial settlement, a trend that had already begun in 1829 when a group of members of the Dutch Parliament suggested to organise an expedition to New Guinea to assess whether there was a suitable location for the establishment of a colony of European convicts.

17 Openbaar Verbaalarchief, 12 November 1829, doc. No. 72.
Although it was believed that English traders, established in Port Essington (Australia), did not represent a direct and imminent threat to Dutch interests in mainland New Guinea, there was nevertheless, as a political report on the situation in the East Indies reveals, a strong feeling among some of the Dutch stationed in Batavia and the Moluccas that these would have been able to succeed in penetrating the islands of Aru, Goram and Ceram.\textsuperscript{18}

In the meantime a commission, chaired by A.L. Weddick, to investigate and list the Tidorese possessions was set up in 1846. Two years later commissioner Weddick produced the results of his investigations including an ethnographical and geographical account of West New Guinea. Among the Papuan territories considered as being under Tidorese sovereignty were the Raja Ampat islands, the Geelvink Bay area and the Onin peninsula.\textsuperscript{19}

Between 1849 and 1851 commissioner van den Dungen Gronovius undertook an expedition to New Guinea to mark the Dutch colonial boundaries and provide ethnographic information regarding the inhabitants of the area.\textsuperscript{20} In his account he mentions the ‘caste Mafore’ that inhabited an area on the north coast of New Guinea. It is possible that this was a longstanding Muslim trading community or Sosolot that recalls the \textit{ceita de Mafoma} mentioned by XVI century Portuguese sources and that St. Francis Xavier found on his arrival in the Moro-Halmahera area.\textsuperscript{21}

In the middle of the XIX century the Dutch government in Batavia was experiencing a political impasse, as the archival documents of the time reveal. While acknowledging the strategic importance of colonising West Papua, it was well aware

\textsuperscript{18} Rapport Staatkundige Toestand Oost-Indië, 1836-1845, inv. No. 2955.
\textsuperscript{19} Geheim Verbaalarchief, ‘Nota over Papoea of Nieuw Guinea’, 7 August 1849, no. 290 (inv. No. 46 Supplementary archive). The list of the Papuan territories of Tidore are in Geheime Besluiten van de Gouverneur-Generaal buiten Rade, 1816-1849, 30 July 1848, doc. La VI.
\textsuperscript{20} Geheim Verbaalarchief, 20 August 1851, doc. No. 215.
\textsuperscript{21} In this regard see: Documenta Malucensia doc. 10, par. 10, p. 40 already referred to in chapter III.
that a repeat of the Merkus-oord failure would have represented a setback for the Dutch in the international balance of power politics and colonial expansion. It was also evident from the ethnographic accounts regarding the local inhabitants that there were longstanding Muslim Malay-Papuan trading communities that represented the real obstacle to Dutch establishment in the area. It was necessary, following the lessons learnt from Merkus-oord, for the Dutch to devise new means and strategies to penetrate ‘peacefully’ into New Guinea and take control over the area. The Christian missionaries represented a solution to the issue at hand. An article published in the newspaper *Indiër* of 13 December 1852 reveals that missionaries of the Utrecht Mission Society (UZV) had requested permission to establish a station in New Guinea.\(^{22}\)

To facilitate and encourage the establishment of mission posts in New Guinea, in 1857 the Governor-General authorised the payment of grants to missionaries who carried out work in those areas where there was no administrative post. These missionaries were also granted free passage on government ships.\(^{23}\) It is evident that the Christianisation of West Papua meant its transformation into a Dutch colony. The Cross, aided by the Crown, paved the way for the Colonial Flag in accordance with a customary European practice. The relationship between altar and throne will characterise and influence the modes, processes and trajectories of Papuan Christianisation and socio-cultural change.


As discussed in chapter III, the Catholic missionaries, who ventured to travel to the East Indies, were first sent there with the task of providing education and

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\(^{22}\) *Indiër*, 13 December 1852 in *Nederlandse Couranten Indische Onderwerpen*.

satisfying the spiritual needs of the European settlers in the towns. Only during the second half of the century did they endeavour to spread the Christian faith among the autochthonous populations, although the lack of personnel represented a constant impediment. This trend continued during the XVI-XVIII centuries when the Dutch took control of the Portuguese settlements in the region. It was, however, only in the XIX century and in particular after 1850 that the Dutch Government favoured the systematic christianisation of colonial populations.

The direct intervention of the government in regulating mission work, and the legislation it enacted to control its performance, influenced the work of the missionaries by constructing invisible barriers and demarcations, and channelling the processes of change along pre-determined trajectories and in established directions. The overt or latent conflicts among the various Christian denominations that characterised the religious status quo of the time in the mother country, were transferred to the overseas territories and brought about the partitioning of territories and populations in the colonial setting of West New Guinea. The effects of this territorial division did not fail to emerge when the first nationalist movements emerged.

The Dutch government adopted in its colonies the practice of non-interference in local customs and traditions and, in particular, in matters of native religiousness, a practice that became a principle and codified in the Government Regulation of 1836. The policy was reiterated in subsequent acts and constitutions and summarised in art. 124 of the 1854 Government Regulation and art. 178 of the 1925 Dutch East Indies Constitution stating as follows:

1. As far as the religion professed by each of them is concerned, the priests of the indigenous population who do not profess the Christian religion are put under the general superintendence of the princes, regents and heads.
2. The latter take care that the priests do not undertake anything incompatible with this act (this Constitution) and with the ordinances issued by or in the name of the Governor General.24

The mission stations established in West Papua, from the beginning, fell directly under government control. Mission activity was stimulated and favoured in order to open up and explore new territories with their rich deposits of resources and inhabitants whose ‘modernisation’ would have contributed to increase the capabilities of the metropolis. The flag of the national interest came consequently to encompass the religious discourse of the mission in a nationalist perspective.

Since Protestantism was the official religion of the Dutch nation-state and the Roman Catholics represented a politically irrelevant minority, the Dutch government continued to favour, as it had already done in the era of its Golden Age as part of its attempts to forestall Iberian expansion,25 the extension of Protestant evangelisation and the establishment of Protestant mission posts in its colonial territories. Furthermore, Protestantism was a religion that, disengaged as it was from external influences and allegiances, better embodied the nationalist character of the mother country and consequently better served Dutch national interests. In order to protect and favour the expansion of Protestant missions, the Dutch government set up an appropriate legislation by applying to the colonial territories the tenets of that Zuilen or ‘Pillarisation’ policy already enacted at home. By providing institutional autonomy to the two main religious groups, Protestants and Roman Catholics, in the colonial possessions, the Dutch were able to exert a more effective control over mission

24 Muskens, op. cit., p. 34.
activity \(^{26}\) and avoid the rise of socio-economic conflicts derived from a polarisation of society in religious terms.

The enactment of this legislation was occasioned by the diatribe, regarding ecclesiastical jurisdictional competencies, which had first manifested itself in 1845 in Jakarta and saw protagonists the newly appointed Catholic Bishop in Batavia, Mgr. Jac Grooff and the Dutch Governor-General, J.J. Rochussen. \(^{27}\) The latter, in fact, did not tolerate any other authority over the priests than the government. The difficulties between the Governor-General of the East Indies and the Roman Catholic Bishop led to a series of negotiations between the Dutch Government and the Vatican.

The respective competencies of the two parties were laid down in what is known as the *Nota der Punten*, or ‘Note of Items’, of 1847 establishing the number of priests to be sent out to the Netherlands Indies as assessed by ecclesiastical authorities. The Note also established that no priest was allowed to travel to the Indies without a certificate of admittance or *Radikaal* issued by the Dutch Government irrespective of whether the prelate was appointed and paid by the Dutch Government or not. \(^{28}\)

Jurisdiction and control over mission work and church activity by the Dutch government was further enforced by art. 123 of the 1854 *Regeringsreglement*, or Netherlands Indies Government Regulation. This stated that, besides the *Radikaal*, a

\(^{26}\) In this regard see: Müller-Krüger Th., *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien: Geschichte und Gestalt*, Evangelisches Verlagswerk, Stuttgart, 1968.

\(^{27}\) Muskens, *op.cit.*, p. 42. Cfr. Brevoort A., O F M Cap., *The Capuchin Mission on Sumatra, 1911-1923*, Dissertatio ad Doctoratum in Facultate Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, Rome, 1983, pp. 22-23. The pretext of the Grooff-Rochussen incident was the suspension of three priests by the Apostolic Vicar. The latter on his arrival in the Vicariate of Batavia found that some non-orthodox customs had crept into the Catholic Church. Wishing to restore the official traditions of Roman Catholicism he suspended three priests who opposed his policy. The Governor-General, who believed that all institutions operating in Dutch possessions, including the Church, were to be subordinated to Government control, asked the reasons for the suspension. Mgr. Grooff refused to give reason affirming that he was accountable of his actions only to the Holy See. Since the two parties could not reach a compromise over the issue, the Apostolic Vicar was forced to leave the East Indies. Cfr. also in the regard: Velden van der A.J.H., SJ., *De Rooms-Katholieke Missie in Nederlandsch Oost-Indië, 1808-1908*, Nijmegen, 1908, pp. 101-116.
bijzondere toelating, or special permission, had to be granted by the government in order to carry out mission work in a selected territory in the Netherlands Indies. The article stated as follows:

De Christen-Leraars, priesters en zendelingen moeten voorzien zijn van een door of namens de Gouverneur-Generaal te verlenen bijzondere toelating om hun dienstwerk in enig bepaald gedeelte van Nederlands-Indië te mogen verrichten. Wanneer die toelating schadelijk wordt beroden, of de voorwaarden daarvan niet worden nageleefd, kan zij door de Gouverneur-Generaal worden ingetrokken.29

By establishing a series of obligations and requirements the Government was able to prevent non-Dutch and non-Protestant missionaries from travelling to certain territories and avoided the possibility that different denominations would carry out mission work at the same time in the same place.

The background of this policy, that is commonly referred to as Rust en Orde, peace and order, is to be traced in the liberal conception of the state, centred on the principle of non-intervention, embraced by Dutch policy makers.30 The provisions contained in art. 123 were reiterated later in art. 177 of the 1925 Indische Staatsregeling or Netherlands Indies Government Regulation. The manipulation of these provisions by the Dutch colonial government in Batavia resulted in heated discussions in the Dutch Parliament that often prevented missionaries from either contacting populations or renewing mission activity in particular regions.31

In the case of West Papua, art. 123 brought about the partition of the territory, fifty years after the arrival of the first missionaries, on the basis of ‘Biblical Exegesis’.

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29 Article quoted from Weitjens, *ibid.*, p. 2. Translation: “The Christian teachers, priests and missionaries must be provided with a special permission granted by the Governor General in order to carry out their work in any specified part of the Netherlands Indies. When the permission becomes in any way harmful or the conditions there are not the same anymore, the Governor General can withdraw the permission.
30 Muskens, *op.cit.*, p. 43.
The north, which encompassed the coastal area stretching from the Vogelkop Peninsula to Humboldt Bay and Lake Sentani, became the field of Protestant mission work, while the southern coast was assigned to the Roman Catholics.\textsuperscript{32} The central highlands were in a first moment excluded from any partition and attribution until they became open to exploration and penetration in the early 1930s.

Interestingly the partition did not cut across but followed the isotropic boundaries of the three ecological-cultural areas which can be identified in West Papua: that is, the salubrious north-west coast and off-shore islands; the swampy south coast from the Onin Peninsula to the Papua New Guinea border and the inaccessible central highlands. The criteria adopted to draw these boundaries, however, at the time remain obscure. It is improbable that the Dutch used ethnographic considerations since very little was known about the territory and the customs of its inhabitants at the time, except for anecdotal curiosities reported by either casual explorers or scientific expeditions, the latter more concerned with the flora and fauna or the identifications of possible resources to exploit than with the customs and beliefs of the inhabitants.\textsuperscript{33} It is more probable that the Dutch considered the commercial arrangements they had with the areas favouring the north-western shores because of their proximity to the Dutch Maluku settlements. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the ‘denominational allotment’ of the New Guinea territory in which the Protestants were allocated the more important north-western territories.

Political and economic considerations and conveniences may have conjured to determine the territorial partition, although practical evaluations cannot be excluded.

\textsuperscript{31} In this regard see: Weitjens, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 65-76.
\textsuperscript{33} The first ‘official’ expedition, recorded in the archives, to New Guinea is that dated 1828 carried out by the governor of the Moluccas. \textit{Openbaar Verbaal}, doc. No. 31 of 17 December 1828; No. 116 of 23 December 1828; No. 74 of 30 December 1828. A second expedition followed in 1830 led by the
The coastal areas of the north appeared to have been more receptive to engage into contacts with the non-Papuan world given the longstanding history of relations with Maluku. Since the influence of Tidore had consistently waned in the last century, the Dutch believed that the people, not paying allegiance to any foreign sovereign, would have been unable to oppose a stable European presence. Furthermore, the environment and climate was more salubrious and suitable for Europeans than the swampy and malaria-ridden areas along the south coast, as the high mortality rate of the Merkus-oord venture had demonstrated.34

The bellicosity of the native populations of the south may have also acted as a deterrent to the establishment of Protestant missions. The Dutch authorities wanted to succeed in colonising West Papua and turning it into a ‘Dutch colony’, that is subordinated to Dutch national interests, and Protestant Christianity best served the purpose of embodying Dutch nationalist ideology that supported those interests. At the same time colonisation needed to be carried out with minimum effort and costs, in particular by reducing and containing the cost of military expenditure that an eventual resistance by the locals would have caused to increase.

As shown in chapter III, the Papuans inhabiting the south coast had established commercial relations with Muslim Ceramese traders since the XV century. The Sosolot were a well-established presence in the area and represented the setting in which Papuan and Ceramese interests coalesced and thrived. As the Merkus-oord experienced had shown, this was a difficult area to penetrate ‘peacefully’. There was the risk that the polarisation of economic interests may have assumed religious

34 High mortality rates appear to have characterised the Merku-oord settlement as archival documents reveal in which there are constant requests for replacement of officers following their death due to disease: Handelingen en Besluiten van de Gouverneur-Generaal buiten Rade, 1816-1849, doc. N. 16 dated 2 September 1829; doc. No. 6 dated 15 September 1829 and doc. No. 2 dated 2 October 1829.
connotations. The territory was therefore assigned to the Catholic Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Jesuits. Using the Kei Islands, and in particular the mission stations in Langgur, as their launching pad, the Catholic missionaries began to penetrate the area between the end of the XIX and beginning of the XX century with the establishment of the mission station of Merauke in 1905 following the establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Irian Jaya-Maluku in 1902.

The different missiological approach adopted by the different denominations inevitably influenced the processes of cultural and social change bringing to the fore the latent cultural idiosyncrasies that characterised Papuan civilisation and there inevitable politicisation. The race between the missions to gain control over Papuan souls, coupled with an excessive missionary zeal, as will be shown, often caused frictions and clashes.

**Christianity and Missiological Heterogeneity in the Papuan Mission-Field**

The existence of a geographical partition on the basis of Christian denominations assumes importance when considered in the context of historical epistemology. The different missionary denominations prompted different timing and modes of material organisation and modernisation stemming from a peculiar Biblical exegesis, giving rise to different missiological discourses.


37 Muskens, op.cit., p. 94.

To understand the heterogeneous effects that Christianisation had on the native populations of West Papua, one must consider the differences existing between Protestant and Catholic missiologies. These differences never developed into any sort of structural antithesis or polarisation in Papuan Christianity, as it occurred in Polynesia and East Melanesia, although episodes of friction between Catholics and Protestants were recorded. Emblematic in this regard is the episode of the Catholic missionary Cappers in Merauke.

The different methods adopted by the missionaries of Christian denominations ignited different reactions at the local level in regard to issues of conversion and modernisation. These differences later contributed to mark the character of some of the people’s movements, which endemically emerged, as well as the degree of involvement of the missionaries themselves in the anti-colonial or nationalist movements.

The differences between Protestant and Catholic mission work revolve around four basic points: ecclesiology; the attitudes towards non-Christian cultures and religions; the nationalities of the missionaries involved and the measure of their ethnocentrism and nationalism; and finally the organisational structure of the mission.

From an ecclesiological point of view, according to Protestantism the primary aim of mission work was the achievement of individual conversion while for the Catholics it was represented by the foundation of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. This

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40 The controversy derived from the rejection of a request by Cappers to establish a mission school to serve four Kampongs near Fak-Fak. The permission was denied by the Governor-General on the grounds that the area had already been assigned to the UZV. The controversy is detailed in ‘Verslag Cappers’, *Koloniaal Missie Tijdschrift*, 8, 1925, p. 286ff. See also: *Koloniaal Missie Tijdschrift*, 9, 1926, pp. 278-279; *Koloniaal Missie Tijdschrift*, 10, 1927, pp. 174-181; pp. 387-392.
difference came to be reflected in the direction and organisation of the mission station and influenced the relationships with the colonial government.

Protestant missions were managed by laymen who were preachers of the Word often accompanied by their families setting a living example of the ‘Christian way of life’ in antithesis to the indigenous and heathen. They depended financially, apart from their mission headquarters in the metropolis, on the colonial government, although they were instructed to live of their own means in the mission station. This, of course, forced them to engage often in commercial relations with the local inhabitants as will be shown in the following pages.

The Catholic mission stations, by contrast, were managed by clerics who were priests as well as educators. They depended on the Vatican through their regional Apostolic Vicariates. They were financially and logistically supported by the strong network that the Holy See had been able to create superseding national boundaries to embrace ecumenical universalism. Consequently Protestant ecclesiology was inclined to or aimed at creating national churches where the Catholics tended to found new Christian communities as part of a universal ecumenical church. Protestant mission activity was regulated by the so-called three autonomies, namely self-sustainment, self-government and self-diffusion bringing about its indigenisation, while their Catholic counterparts tended to foster the creation of an indigenous clergy analogous to the missionary one.

The aim of indigenising Christian mission communities accounts for the different modes of conversion promoted and pursued by Protestant missionaries. The Protestant emphasis on the necessity of individual conversion explains the resistance of native populations to Christianity in the early stages of Protestant missionary enterprise. Individualism was a category unknown to pre-literate populations who
thought themselves as an integral part of a wider political, socio-economic and cultural unity represented by the tribe.\(^{42}\) The phenomenon of ‘detribalisation’, often imputed to mission work, has been one of the major traumas suffered by pre-literate populations when processes of rapid modernisation took place. This phenomenon has been regarded as the primary cause in prompting the rise of resistance movements.

The lack of individualism in some pre-literate cultures accounts for the frequent and deplored phenomenon of ‘mass conversion’ of entire tribal groups and consequently the presence of a nominal form of Christianity in colonial settings. Stepping beyond the missionary interpretations of the phenomenon, this clearly indicates the different meaning attributed to conversion by the local populations. Among the West Papuans, as will be shown, it will come to be intrinsically linked to the system of prestige and power of the Big Man.

Notwithstanding the exegetic, ecclesiological and missiological differences, Catholics and Protestants shared a common attitude towards processes of modernisation or, as the missionary texts refer to it, civilisation. This was primarily intended as technological and socio-economic amelioration or change. The sole difference consisted in the timing and modes by which modernisation, according to the missionaries, should have been attained. The Catholics maintained that Christianisation and modernisation had to be conducted simultaneously: the acceptance of Christian values, beliefs and norms should be accompanied by an overall re-structuring of native material and social life. Protestants, by contrast, did not have a unitary way of dealing with these two aspects, some of them believing that modernisation was a pre-condition to evangelisation, others the opposite.

Both Protestant and Catholic missionaries, however, intended modernisation in ethnocentric terms. Modernisation was conceived *tout court* as a synonym of ‘Westernisation’. With mission work the semantic equation ‘Christianisation = Westernisation = modernisation’ becomes a definite morphological entity and identity.

A perusal of the reports and letters sent by Dutch missionaries to their headquarters reveals how this equation represented an underlying assumption permeating their activities and their daily relationships with the locals. Their attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the native inhabitants in colonial settings were influenced by the general spiritual and cognitive atmosphere of Positivist European society of the second half of the XIX century in which contemporary notions of primitivism and evolutionism were contributing to construct an ‘axiomatic justification’ of colonial enterprise. In this context the missionaries were believed to be the “bringers of Civilisation”.

An article published in the colonial newspaper *Javabode*, dated 10 November 1860 reporting the activity of the first missionaries, Ottow and Geissler, in New Guinea. It bore the title *De Toekomst van Nieuw Guinea en Zijn Eerst Beschavers*, ‘the future of New Guinea and its first bringers of civilisation’, and clearly reflected the spirit and attitudes of the time towards the function of missionary enterprise and its intrinsic relation to colonisation:

(...) maar hoeveel dat ook beloofde, hoezeer dat ook getuigde voor den ernst der Hooge Regering, om zich het lot en de toekomst van Nieuw Guinea aan trekken, dat lot en die toekomst bleven tot heden onveranderd (...) dat eiland zullen geven geen hollandsche vlag en vorstelijk wapen alleen, maar een gezag en invloed tevens, die de booze geesten van slavenroof, kannibalendom en volslagen regeringloosheid daar bezweren, - tevens een nieuwe orde van zaken, een schoone toekmost zullen doen geboren worden voor dat eiland, - meer dan twee eeuwen lang door Nederland vergeten, zoo geheel aan zijn barbaarschheid en ellende overgelaten.43

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43 *Javabode*, 10 November 1860, No. 90 in *Register op de Indische Coranten*. The same article can be found in the *Bijblad bij Christelijke Stemmen*, Part VII, No. 22, 1861. Cfr. *Openbaar Verbaalarchief* 15
A note in the Colonial Archives in The Hague, dated 7 August 1862, refers to the missionaries as living among “eener gansch woeste en onbeschaafde bevolking”, ‘a savage and uncivilised people’.44 Earlier in 1854, the French Verguet, while taking a position in the debate between creationists and evolutionists, had already put the question in the same terms. When referring to the necessity to evangelise the peoples of Melanesia he asked:

Les Mélanésiens sont-ils nos frères? Avons-nous une même origine avec ses hommes dont la peau est si différent de la notre? (…) Vous devinez déjà ma réponse, je la tire de la Genèse.45

The terms ‘savage’, ‘uncivilised’, ‘barbarian’ along with the concepts of cannibalism and slavery appear in the parallel discourses of Christianisation and colonisation and contributed to create that intricate conceptual framework in which the Other represented the ‘negation of the West’.

In 1884 Haga, commenting on the positive effects of Christian missionary activity in West Papua, wrote that although the Papuans did not understand anything about Christian worship, when the sound of the gong rang through the village to signal the beginning of church services, men, women and children in their best dresses gathered in the missionaries’ house. He observes that “through all their gradual work,
the missionaries have found themselves in a position to win the Papuans’ trust, for the latter are now more properly clothed and have even begun to attend to their gardens”.46

It appears evident that the colonial archives represent the memory of the West and the memorial of its achievements and presumed superiority. They contain the narratives of the relations of the West with the colonial peoples that, not possessing an analogous ‘mnemonic architecture’, are dubbed as ‘history-less’ people. In power relations, analogy functions as an important criterion of establishing similarities and differences in colonial discourses. The lack of analogical terms generates the negative notion of ‘anomaly’. Non-western societies are consequently perceived as anomalous formations that need to be ‘normalised’. This process of normalisation can only be achieved by transferring the norms, along with the underlying values and beliefs, of Western society to the non-Western ones. These norms, beliefs and values were those of Christianity, which represented the ideology of the West.

The separation of the two powers, the spiritual and the temporal in the early modern era of European history was a natural evolution of the rationalism implicit in this type of epistemology. The secularisation of thought thus represented the main characteristic or connotative attribute of Western civilisation in clear contrast with either the mysticism or legalism, obsessed with purity and orthopraxy, of the Eastern societies. Modernity, that is the questioning of the validity of the axioms of tradition in the solution of issues stemming from historical and structural conjunctures, was the product of Western rationalism that called for a pragmatic and empirical attitude in understanding the world and reality.

From Merkus-oord to Mansinam: Christianity lands in Papua.

In the collective imaginary of the Dutch, New Guinea appears to have been envisaged as a sort of inhospitable, savage and wild land, a world of secrets to disclose as well as of people to civilise. That this was the vision and perception of the easternmost land of the growing Dutch colonial empire appears evident from the description provided by the naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace who in 1858, while standing on the deck of the schooner Hester Helena bound to New Guinea, contemplated the “rugged mountains retreating ridge behind ridge into the interior, where the foot of civilised man had never trod”. When he finally landed on the shore of the small island of Mansinam in Doreh Bay he met the two German missionaries, Ottow and Geissler, who had established a mission post in 1855 in the area. As Wallace reports “these missionaries were working men, and had been sent out as being more useful among savages than persons of a high class”.

The two missionaries sent to New Guinea were, in fact, artisans, members of the Comité van de Christen – Werkman (Christian Workmen Committee), a sort of guild that counted among its activities mission work and evangelisation. Before being sent to their final destination, Karl Ottow and Johan Geissler underwent a period of missiological training in Batavia and then were sent to Ternate to wait for permission from the Sultan of Tidore to travel to New Guinea. During their sojourn in Ternate, Otto Heldring, the founder of the Committee of which Geissler and Ottow were members, established the Utrecht Zendingsvereeniging (UZV) inspired by Pietism.

49 Pietism was a movement that figured prominently among the Lutherans and became influential in Germany during the first half of the XVIII century. It was based on the belief that the essence of Christianity was to be found in the personal relationship between the worshipper and God. Pietism was therefore fundamentally experiential, inward and personal. From a missiological standpoint pietists believed that one of the true Christian duties was to take the Gospel to the whole world. Their zealous social activity brought about the establishment of numerous orphanages and hospitals. However their
The UZV aimed at sending two kinds of missionary personnel, those who underwent theological training and were ordained, and laymen with more practical knowledge and technical skills. The conversion of people to Christianity had to be accompanied by the simultaneous transformation of their material and socio-economic life.

Once Ottow and Geisler obtained the letter of the Sultan of Tidore granting them permission to travel to the territory under his sovereignty, they set out to establish a mission station in the Doreh Bay area frequented by Moluccan vessels since time immemorial. The small island of Mansinam in the Bay appeared to be a suitable location. The reception by the local people was, however, far from the one they expected. Relying on the information on the inhabitants gathered during their residence in Ternate, they expected that the presentation of the letter of the Sultan of Tidore would have prompted the traditional reception-ceremony that the Papuans used to reserve to the Samsom party returning from Tidore.

Notwithstanding the almost complete indifference that the locals displayed for their arrival, the missionaries managed to set up their small settlement and after a few days began tilling the soil and planting the seeds they had brought with them. The missionary association had, in fact, imposed that its personnel had to be able to support itself without external assistance and without relying on help from the local inhabitants. The necessity of the economic and financial autonomy and self-sustainability of the mission was probably dictated by practical considerations, that of generating among the native population a particular perception of both the role and the meaning of the mission and the missionaries.

strict moral Puritanism, that often resembled bigotry, represented one of the limitations to its spread. See in this regard: Stoeffler F.E., The Rise of Evangelical Pietism, E.J.Brill, Leiden, 1971, pp. 180-246.
The first period of Ottow and Geissler’s residence appears to have been marked by a particular purpose, that of ‘rooting’ themselves in the chosen cultural and environmental setting and not simply ‘adapting’, as well as to testify their Christian identity ‘against’ the local one. The letters and the entries of their diaries report how they tried to assert and establish a Christian presence in the territory. This was constructed by carrying out normal daily Christian duties, such as praying, holding Sunday services and catechetical sessions and attending to work in the gardens surrounding the mission.\footnote{Ottow C.W., \textit{Die Biene auf dem Missionfelde}, Berlin, 1861; Geissler J.V., ‘Verslagen Zendingswerk’, \textit{Berichten van de Utrechtsche Zendingsvereeniging}, Utrecht, 1860-1869. In these two accounts Ottow and Geissler provide information regarding the first period of mission work in Mansinam.} By 1856 the mission had its house and worship centre completed\footnote{Schie G. van, \textit{Rangkuman Sejarah Gereja Kristen dalam Konteks Sejarah Agama-Agama Lain}, vol. 3, Obor, Jakarta, 1995, p. 161.} and by the time Wallace reached the island, Ottow had already learnt to speak the local language and had begun to translate portions of the Bible, probably made by using the 1691 Malay translation by Melchior Leidekker. As Wallace reports, probably on the basis of an observation made by Ottow himself, since the local language, that of Numfor, was poor from a lexical point of view, a considerable number of Malay words were used to convey the Christian message.\footnote{Wallace, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 377. For a complete history of the translation of the Bible into Bahasa Malaya see: Hunt R.A., ‘The History of the Translation of the Bible into Bahasa Malaya’, \textit{Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society}, 62, 1989, pp. 35-56. The translation of the Bible into the Papuan language of Numfor was completed by Held during the 1930s. See in this regard: ‘G.J. Held op Nieuw Guinea’, in Swellengrebel J. L., \textit{In Leijdekkers Voetspoor. Anderhalve Eeuw Bijbelvertaling en...}} At the time here were few nominal converts mainly children and women.

From the accounts of the missionaries it appears that the encounter between the UZV mission and the Papuans of Doreh Bay did not produce the desired results of individual conversion. The Sunday sermons were far from being listened to by the local population, let alone understood for what they really meant. The Papuans saw the white man preaching from the pulpit as either a trader bartering new exotic...
products for local ones or as a spirit of the dead that had returned from the West bringing them the promised cargo.

It appears that Ottow and Geissler’s arrival did not cause surprise among the inhabitants, who almost ignored their presence. It was the commercial activities that brought the locals to the mission, and the missionaries used trade as a means to attract them. The church, the school and the hospital, with their functions of converting, teaching and healing, were considered by the Papuans as places or markets where ‘transactions’ were carried out. It was only when the first Papuan converts, as Petrus Kafiar, and the Sangirese and Ambonese teachers were introduced into the mission that the Papuans began to change their original perception: the missionaries were not white and this meant that, apart from not being the dead ancestors, non-white men could become Pandita, missionaries.

The missionaries had established a school soon after their arrival, which was attended by children. Education was imparted at first in Malay, but later was replaced by the local language. The adoption of the local language in the education system seems to have been prompted by the elders who feared that the children proficient in Malay would have been employed to deliver letters to the incoming schooners and there captured by the slave traders.

On Sundays the missionaries held services in the house of worship situated in the mission compound. In order to encourage attendance the missionaries had refused to trade on Sundays. Consequently the locals, in order to be able to purchase tobacco and medicines, attended Sunday services. It was in this milieu of ‘tacit blackmailing’

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or ‘trade’ that the first conversions, or the acceptance of Christianity, in the area took place. The missionaries were to blame for this type of development and understanding. In order to approach the native people they exploited the structures of their material life by intruding into them, producing what Rutherford refer to as “docile bodies”.56 Wallace himself pointed out the ‘mercantilist’ mentality of the Papuans of the islands on his journey towards New Guinea:

They were very extravagant in their demands, being accustomed to sell their trifles to whalers and Chinese ships whose crews will purchase anything at ten times its value.57

Supposedly the same mentality existed among the Papuans inhabiting the littoral areas of New Guinea that had engaged in local trade relations with the nearby territories of Maluku since time immemorial.

At the beginning the missionaries, therefore, adopted trade as a means to ‘engage’ the Papuans. Over time, however, the missionaries themselves began to benefit from the commercial transactions as a source of sustainment and profit for the mission’s survival and expansion. This was a phenomenon that had already characterised the Maluku Mission at the time of the Portuguese expansion in South-east Asia and that has been referred to in chapter III. The mission station became a sort of trading post or market. Wallace again did not fail to notice the dangers implicit in this type of relationship.58

In their sermons and teachings Ottow and Geissler preached against the local agama based on ancestor worship and fetishism, but to little effect.59 In their weekly sermons the missionaries thundered against the pagan practices of idolatry and orgy.

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56 Rutherford, Raiding the Land of the Foreigners...cit., p. 184.
57 Wallace, op.cit., p. 376.
58 ibid., pp. 377-378.
threatening the people with the apocalyptic visions of the Second Coming, the beginning of the end, when the dead would have been resurrected and Mankind would have been subjected to the Final Judgment. The visions of punishment and call for repentance recall the sermons that St. Francis Xavier delivered three centuries earlier during his visit in the Maluku mission.

The missionaries tried to eliminate customary practices in order to erase any vestige of Papuan culture believed to be an obstacle to the propagation of Christianity and of Western civilisation, a belief that came to be one of the features of Dutch missionary and government attitudes toward the Papuans.60

The fact that the missionaries were from the West and that their medicines were able to heal and reduce mortality rates among the villagers, as experienced during the outbreak of measles in 1861,61 induced the people to believe that the Western pandita were not human. This perception was reinforced by the belief that they were an inexhaustible source of foreign goods for which it seemed they did not work.

With the death of Ottow and the arrival of three new missionaries, Klaasen, Ottespoor and van Hasselt,62 in 1863 the methods of evangelisation changed. More attention came to be paid to understanding Papuan culture and worldview, although acculturative methods were not yet replaced by inculturative ones.63 This will take place only later in the XX century mission field and will favour, as will be discussed in chapter VI, to the indigenisation of Christianity.

59 Rumainum, op.cit., p. 12.
62 Openbaar Verbaalarchief, 23 January 1863, No. 17.
Conversion, Convergence, Sub-Mission

The arrival of the new missionaries, and in particular of van Hasselt, represented a turning point in the history of the Mansinam mission. The mission in Mansinam became the headquarters for the opening of new mission posts along the north coast of West New Guinea: the station of Meoswar by Kampo, Wouders and Mosche; the station of Moon by Meuwig and those of Roon, Andai and Windessi were all established after 1863. The opening of new stations coincided with an increase in financial support by the Dutch government that allowed for the missionaries to devote more time to the evangelisation of the native populations. The concession of grants to the missionaries had the effect of endowing the mission and mission work with more autonomy not having to rely on local trade with the native population for their sustainment.64

Van Hasselt’s mission activity, covering a long period of time from 1863 to 1907, continued the process of convergence of the Papuans towards the mission that characterised the early period of Ottow and Geissler’s mission work. But gradually this spatial orientation assumed, through conversion, ideological connotations. The acculturative methods enacted by van Hasselt were coupled with a greater degree of sensitivity towards Papuan culture, although this approach did not entail the use of Papuan culture to explain or transmit Christian doctrines, values and beliefs. Van Hasselt’s catechesis was still strongly conservative and anti-syncretistic. Change was imposed by the mission and this meant the abandonment of traditional, native ways of life and practices and the total, intimate acceptance of Christianity.65

64 Openbaar Verbaalarchief, 5 June 1860 No. 22; 8 June 1860, No. 31 & No. 38 inform that grants of Dfl. 600 a year each had been assigned to the missionaries Fauser and Järsich working in New Guinea; Openbaar Verbaal, 26 March 1861, No. 28 reports that grants of 400Dfl. a year each had been assigned to Ottow and Geissler.
A cultural sensitivity towards the Papuans was manifested in the way the Christian message was delivered. The moralising and threatening sermons of Geissler and Ottow were replaced by a continuous attempt to engage the listeners in a dialogue. The centrepiece of van Hasselt’s approach was represented, in fact, by education in the form of schooling for which he was, at a later stage of his mission work, able to obtain government subsidies. Children and adolescents were his primary concern since he believed that they represented the foundation of a future Papuan Christian society. The adults attended evening catechetic sessions. He also set up programs aiming at introducing people to new methods of agriculture and to the cultivation of new crops in order to improve their quality of life. It is possible, although not explicitly stated in his mission reports, that the introduction of new technologies, techniques and crops aimed also at moving the people away from those pagan ceremonies connected to traditional methods of gardening. The aim of van Hasselt was the eradication of Papuan culture.

While this shift and developments in mission policies were taking place during the 1860s, the Dutch government began the exploitation of the coal deposits in Geelvinks bay. In 1864 a coal depot was established in Doreh Bay in a location not far from the mission of Mansinam, a coincidence that clearly shows how the political and economic interests of the colonial government tended to prompt and direct both the establishment of mission stations and missionary activity and contributed to the ‘ politicisation’ of Christianity in colonial settings.

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66 ibid., p. 115.
67 Oost Indisch Besluit, 9 May 1893, No. 27.
68 Kamma, Koreri…cit., pp. 270-271.
69 In this regard see: Hasselt J.L. van, ‘Verslagen Zendingswerk’, Berichten van de Utrechtsche Zendingsvereeniging, 1862-1907.
70 Javasche Courant, 9 December 1863, No. 98, in Register op de Indische Couranten.
Documents reveal that Christian missions and colonial government were at times at odds over policy issues. Some residents, such as the Resident of Ternate de Clercq, overtly obstructed mission activity.71

The *Oost-Indisch Besluit* of 7 January 1864 No. 15 decreeing the establishment of the depot, refers to the great danger in which the missionaries were living because of the tensions between the coastal and hill tribes. In the same year the Resident of Ternate was forced to intervene to restore peace and order among the native inhabitants and protect the missionaries.72

The archives are silent on the cause of these tensions. Presumably the animosity between the coastal and hill tribes could have been sparked by the exploitative attitudes of the coastal populations over those of the hinterland. As already pointed out in chapter III, Wallace observed that the coastal people of Doreh were often attacked by the ‘Arfaks’ of the interior,73 and Forrest added that there was a sort of dominance exerted by the people of the coast on those of the interior probably because of the existence of the Chinese system of trade.74 The mission may have represented an element that disrupted the traditional balance in the relationships between the coast and the interior by introducing new and larger quantities of commodities in the traditional trade cycle. Since the political system among the Papuans was based on a ‘quantitative system of prestige’ determined by the ability of the individual to monopolise and harness wealth in the form of material resources and valuables, the easy access to foreign commodities through the mission station and the

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72 *Javaasche Courant*, 23 January 1864, No. 7, in *Register op de Indische Couranten*.


quantity of these brought about increasing inequalities in the allocation and
distribution of power among Papuan communities based on their geographical
proximity to the mission station.

It appears clear that those villages situated closer to the mission and, consequently, to the source of foreign goods, wielded more power and prestige than those inhabiting distant areas. It is possible therefore that the original antithesis interior-coast, that both Wallace and Forrest identified, came to be replaced by that of a mandala, the centre of which was represented by the mission.

Tensions with the local inhabitants became a constant during the 1880s. The archives contain numerous requests by the missionaries for government intervention and the establishment of administrative posts to guarantee law and order in the region.\(^75\) In an article published in the *Haagsch Dagblad* of 26 October 1887, Van Hasselt pointed out the troubles the missionaries were experiencing because of the ill disposition of some of the Papuan tribes towards their presence in the area. He argues that these attitudes were probably instigated by local traders who considered the mission’s activity and presence as either competing against or endangering their economic interests and privileges. Because of the constant danger in which they were living, the missionaries of the UZV requested their societies to suspend mission work in West New Guinea and recall all personnel.\(^76\) The situation was further aggravated by the war that broke out in 1889 between the Papuans from Doreh Bay and those from Wandammen Bay that, as a Surabayan newspaper informs, was triggered by local trade issues.\(^77\) In the same year Papuan tribes of Geelvinks Bay declared war on

\(^{75}\) *Openbaar Verbaal*, 21 February 1887, No. 43; *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* 6 April 1887, in *Nederlandse Couranten Indische Onderwerpen*; *Openbaar Verbaal* 12 January 1888 No. 14; 13 February 1888 No. 7; 25 September 1888 No. 48.

\(^{76}\) *Bataviaasch Handelsblad*, 7 February 1888, No. 32, in *Register op de Indische Couranten*.

\(^{77}\) *Soerabaja Courant* 10 August 1889, No. 180, in *Register op de Indische Couranten*. 
the Dutch government. The Surabayan newspaper imputes the unrest to the weakness of the colonial government unable to assert control over the area and calls for the establishment of European settlements and administrative posts.

The Catholic missions, established on the south coast of West New Guinea, encountered less hostility. Documents contained in the archives of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), the first Catholic missionaries to penetrate the area, report very few incidents between local populations and the mission. The obstacles to the establishment of Catholic mission work came from the Protestants. The MSC established their mission in Merauke in 1905. The Catholics, however, had been seeking permission to carry out mission work in south-west New Guinea since 1892.

It is possible that several factors contributed for the relative acceptance of the Catholic missions by the Papuans of the south. First, the Catholic mission reproduced the monastic order. The autonomy and self-sufficiency that characterised the organisation prevented it from being perceived as a competitor that could intrude into the local socio-economic relations. The Catholic mission, in fact, maintained a relative independence from the colonial government not depending on subsidies or funding. The missionaries of the MSC posed the refusal of government funding as a condition to guarantee their autonomy. Furthermore, the missionaries, some of whom were indigenous, came from the Kei Islands, an area that had no relation with Tidore.

The Catholic missionaries selected strategic villages to establish their missions and from where they could have contacted a wider region. From Merauke, in fact, during the 1920s, the Catholic mission gradually extended into the Upper Digul area.

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78 Mailrapporten dated 1889, Nos. 488, 630, 697.
80 Mailrapport dated 1892, No.1192.
around Tanah Merah and along the Mimika coast. By 1931 there were seventeen schools with 634 students in the region. Traditional enmities between the Papuans of the coast and those of the interior, however, prevented the missionaries from either maintaining or establishing contacts with the populations inhabiting the inland areas. Boelaars reports that often the Papuans of the coast were reluctant or refused to accompany the missionaries in their inland journeys.

Apart from the particular organisational structure of the Catholic mission, what also favoured their penetration into the Papuan world and territory were the external features of their ceremonies. Mass services, rituals, processions and the colourful iconography and dresses were elements that appealed to the senses and aesthetics of the locals in contrast with the austerity and parsimony of the Protestant missions. The Catholics, also, attempted to change the customs of the local populations but they did this by using the local beliefs and practices: syncretism was not abhorred but used as a medium to facilitate the transmission of Christian beliefs and doctrines. In contrast with the Protestants who requested individual conversion, the Catholic missionaries allowed for mass conversion believing that this represented a form of abjuration and the first step towards a Christian way of life. Because of their apparent degree of tolerance, the Catholics were able to intervene directly in the social life of the local populations acting as mediators in tribal wars, as did the Mission in Okaba in 1910, and founded several ‘model’ villages by gathering a number of hamlets presided over by a priest or teacher.

81 *Openbaar Verbaal*, 23 July 1898, No. 2.
84 Boelaars, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
The new system of villages brought about a dismantlement of the social and economic structures of Papuan societies and with them the loss of a system of reference and meaning on which Papuan identity was founded. As Marilyn Strathern has pointed out, in Melanesian societies personhood is represented by a composite of relationships, a microcosm homologous to society at large. The person is not conceived or thought of as an ‘in-dividual’ but as a ‘di-vidual’, his/her identity being shaped by the template of relationships he/she is part of.\textsuperscript{86} The abolition by the missionaries of the celebration of particular cults, such as the \textit{Sosom-Bombari} among the Marind-anim, the practices of ritual gift-giving and of bride-wealth arrangements, along with the introduction of concepts, such as that of ‘sin’ and individual responsibility, alien to Papuan religiousness,\textsuperscript{87} contributed to generate a sense of latent disorientation among the Papuans that in the long run became frustration.

Van Baal reports that, when he was \textit{controleur} of South New Guinea in 1937, he had to intervene to lift the ban imposed by the Mission of Merauke on the celebration of the \textit{Sosom} in order to alleviate the sense of oppression among the natives who were still secretly performing the rituals, whilst avoiding a feud between administration and mission.\textsuperscript{88} The missionaries and previous administrators had justified the ban of native celebrations on the grounds that the homosexual practices that they entailed were causing the spread of venereal diseases.\textsuperscript{89}

The villages, established by the Catholic missions, had the benefit of preventing the spread of endemic diseases as well as those diseases derived from the sexual habits and customs of the native people. During the first two decades of the XX


\textsuperscript{87} For the Papuans ‘sin’ meant doing something wrong. This was compensated through payment and it always involved the community as a whole. Concepts of spiritual repentance and atonement were difficult to grasp. See in this regard Kijne I.S., ‘Alasan Jang Hidup’, \textit{Archieven der Raad voor Zending van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk}, Oegstgeest, pp. 24-25.
century venereal diseases, in fact, probably introduced by labourers indentured from Thursday Island to assist in the construction of the new settlement in Merauke in 1902, caused the birth rates among the Marind-anim tribes to dramatically drop.90

Disease was the main factor characterising mission activity in south-west New Guinea. Malaria was endemic and at times hindered the expansion of the mission field. In 1937-1938 an epidemic of influenza and grip forced people to flee the region into nearby Papua New Guinea.91 Because of the frequency of endemic diseases, a great part of the Catholic missionary work in the south was centred on the safeguarding and improvement of health conditions of the local people. Consequently the medical activities and health programs drove the social changes they implemented, as can be inferred from the account by the missionary Vertenten who worked in the region in the years between 1913 and 1927.

The fear of death among the local populations, a fear they tried to exorcise by a complex ritual system covering all aspects of their life, provided the missionaries with that support and receptiveness necessary to implement health care programs and socio-economic changes. The particular character of the Catholic mission was probably the reason why, in the period preceding the Second World War, the missionaries did not record episodes of cargo cultism or cargoism among the southern tribes.92 Conflicts arose between tribal groups triggered by accusations of sorcery, but never between the Papuans and the missionaries.93

88 Van Baal, Dema...cit., pp. 491-492.
92 Van Baal, Dema...cit., p. 37.
93 See in this regard the episode occurred in the territory of the Okaba Mission reported in: Koloniaal Verslag, 1910, Chapter C, paragraph 20.
It was from the southern missions that expeditions moved to penetrate and explore the highland territories of the interior following the Archbold expedition.\textsuperscript{94} The Catholic Father Tillemans reached the interior of Mimika in 1937. By the outbreak of World War II, which caused a temporary suspension of mission activity, nine Catholic mission stations were operating around Lake Paniai,\textsuperscript{95} while the CAMA (Christian and Missionary Alliance) missionaries were setting up missions around Enarotali.\textsuperscript{96} In both mission fields, the north and the south, the presence of the Catholic and Protestant missions prompted processes that brought about the redefinition of spatial relations shaping what can be defined as the ‘politics of space’.

\textit{The Politics of Space}

In their monumental work regarding the Tswana of South Africa, the Comaroffs defined the politics of space, prompted by the presence of the mission, as a sort of “taking place”.\textsuperscript{97} The aim of the mission was that of establishing itself at the heart of the indigenous social order, beside the ruler from where it would have engaged in spreading the “kernel of knowledge and truth, and work profound civilising transformations”.\textsuperscript{98} The mission was therefore located within the confines of the chiefdom’s capital. As the Comaroffs point out, what the mission in South Africa engaged in was a battle not for sacred sites, since religion saturated everyday activity but “for mastery of the mundane map of lived space”.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{97} Comaroff & Comaroff, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{98} \textit{ibid.}, p. 200.
The spatial dialectics of the missions in West Papua were different. Here the mission, as seen, did not locate itself ‘inside’ the village community, but outside or on its borders from where it acted as a pole of attraction or magnet. This particular location determined the modes of evangelisation and socio-cultural change of the local populations. It aimed inherently to shift the people away from the traditional spaces, and the symbolic meanings they entailed, to Christian and Western spatial categories. The people, as the accounts of the missionaries Ottow and Geissler reveal along with Wallace’s observations, were attracted to the mission by trade, by the ‘cargo’ that it could deliver. The Papuans tried to systemise the mission in the traditional space in accordance with the traditional symbolic meanings, those same meanings that the missionaries were there to challenge and change.

The struggle between the Papuans and the missionaries was substantially a struggle over space and meaning. The war over meanings and symbols was fought in the spatial dimension. The mission was geographically situated in an area not far from the village, in a peripheral but visible location that was to become over time a gravitational centre by operating a shift in the values, beliefs and material life of the locals. The mission came to ‘position’ itself as the antithesis of the native village and traditional way of life.

The shift of the spatial dimension caused a natural shift in the temporal one: time gradually lost its unitary character regulated by the seasonal cycle. The Sunday service and the establishment of working and market days brought about a fragmentation of time and its cyclic reduction, natural time giving way to normative time. This temporal reckoning was determined by the spatial existence of the mission, the centre of which was represented by the sacred edifice of the church. Consequently
the meaning of labour changed, its daily continuity elapsed with the construction of a spatio-temporal and semiotic caesura represented by the Sunday service.

The church replaced the traditional ceremonial centre of the Rum Sram and the school, especially when the missionary van Hasselt began to target the younger generation, interrupted the normal processes of enculturation creating a vertical generation gap in the community. The social space of the village was thus fragmented by disposing traditional age groups into a vertical stratigraphy that replaced the original template of horizontal complementarity, disrupting the modes of interpersonal relationships.

Literacy and Christian education became the discriminating factor between generations, the space of traditional enculturation replaced by modern socialisation. The church and the school represented two spaces where change was realised and the belief in their validity and effectiveness was reinforced by the function of the hospital or clinic in which medicine replaced the belief in evil spirits. The missionaries consequently came to compete, as Geissler narrates, with the local mon or witch-doctor,100 a pattern common also in many African missions. In the south, the missionaries report that because of the strong belief in sorcery, to which diseases and catastrophes were attributed, the mon was able to exert his influence over the community.101

As it has already been pointed out in the previous pages, the Papuans accepted this spatio-temporal caesura as part of a bargain. It was, however, in this spatio-temporal cluster that socio-economic change was initialised, where processes and discourses of modernisation were gradually being translated and enacted. As Andrew Lattas has argued in his study regarding the Bush Kaliai of West New Britain, in order

for people to contemplate and enact change it is necessary that they identify a space outside their daily lives from which they can view their lives critically and creatively. For the Bush Kaliai, he argues, the stimulus to change was represented by the colonial order.\textsuperscript{102} Since the colonial order did not allow for a total participation in the distribution of power and wealth, the Kaliai were forced to identify a creative space or ‘alterity’ in which change could be actualised. This creative space according to Lattas was represented by the Cargo Cults.

The same dynamics took place among the Papuans. The narratives of the missionaries are interspersed with accounts and reports of cargo cults observed among the Papuans, interpreted either as a reaction to their presence or as a sign of their low level of development or primitivism. The phenomenon of cargoism in reality represented the epistemological and spatio-temporal \textit{locus} in which the Papuans came to accept and systemise socio-cultural change while preserving their identity.

\textbf{Cargoism: the Political Space of the Papuans}

The polarisation of space between mission and village, between modern space and traditional space prompted the necessity to create a third space in which the colonised could reconstruct their identities in transition. As Goeffrey White wrote in his study of the Melanesians of Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands:

for an historical event or epoch to become an emblem of community definition it must be incorporated in local modes of understanding and communication that recreate it as a subject of collective significance.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} Kolk, J. van de, msc, \textit{Bij de Oermenschen van Nederlandsch Zuid-Nieuw-Guinea}, Tilburg, 1919, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{102} This theme is developed in: Lattas A., \textit{ Cultures of Secrecy: Reinventing Race in Bush Kaliai Cargo Cults}, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1998.

The milieu of cargo cults fulfilled this function of providing a meta-spatio-temporal dimension in which to systemise intrusive elements and redesign spatio-temporal and structural relationships, and a ‘political space’ in which to address the problematic of ethnic boundaries and meaning. Since ethnicity is determined by the categories of identity and culture, the change affecting one of the terms of the equation implies a change of the other. Missionary activity targeted in primis Papuan culture, that is their system of meanings and symbols, and the material structures by which it expressed itself. The presence of the mission itself affected the modes of self-definition of the Papuans and the perception of their identity. Processes of cultural change brought about a transformation of ethnic identity through the creation of new collective meanings and the reconstruction of a sense of community through mythology and history that were, in the long run, to become the bases for ethnic mobilisation.

As already argued in chapter IV, cargoism is nothing but an hermeneutical process by which knowledge comes to be structured into intelligible forms. Cargo cults are neither a psychotic nor neurotic phenomenon nor the manifestation of a primitive mode of thinking. In reality cargo cults do not exist, but are simply the product of a colonial discourse in which indigenous epistemological processes have been reified. Consequently more than a category of the colonised they are a category of the coloniser. Nancy Mc Dowell well described this process of reification when she stated that

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cargo cults do not exist or at least their symptoms vanish when we start to doubt that we can arbitrarily abstract a few features from context and label them an institution...as totemism did not exist, being merely an example of how people classify the world around them, cargo cults too do not exist being merely an example of how people conceptualise and experience change in the world.\textsuperscript{105}

Cargo cults are consequently a ‘native discourse’, a visible manifestation of an “underlying constant routine”.\textsuperscript{106}

The prophetic and millenarian movements recorded by the missionaries in West Papua support this hypothesis. Far from being a manifestation of primitivism, cargoism represents an epistemological process. During the revolt led by Nuku, as seen in chapter IV, the Papuans joined the struggle to restore the mythical centre represented by Giaiolo. The widespread participation of the Papuans inhabiting littoral and insular areas points to the existence of common beliefs and values underpinning their political, social and economic institutions. The situation of latent instability and uncertainty that characterised the XVIII century fuelled a millenarian movement in which the restoration of Giaiolo and the Golden Age it represented figured as its ideological centre-piece and Nuku the prophet or Messiah.

In the years preceding the arrival of the missionaries in West Papua, the archives report a series of uprisings in the Papuan islands fuelled by the presence of a self-proclaimed prophet. The first incident was recorded in 1852 when a prophet is captured on the north coast of New Guinea and transported to Ternate.\textsuperscript{107} The news was reported by the colonial newspaper \textit{Javaasche Courant} because of the problems

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Javaasche Courant} 1 September 1852, No. 70; 2 October 1852, No. 79; 8 December 1852, No. 98, in \textit{Register op de Indische Couranten}. 

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these prophetic movements were causing to commercial navigation in the waters of New Guinea. Trading vessels were often attacked.108

It is possible that the movements may have been a direct consequence of the increasing naval traffic and traders in the area that were disrupting the local trade networks in terms of quality and quantity of the commodities circulating as well as subverting the modes and meanings of traditional relationships.

In 1854 a new prophetic movement is reported in New Guinea. It was probably this movement that Captain Fabritius of the schooner Fear Not witnessed in Numfor and whose account has been reported by Goudswaard.109 According to the report a prophet claimed that Konori (the prophet/Messiah)110 had come to fulfil the soteriological expectations of the people. In order to accelerate the coming of Koreri, the age of happiness and prosperity, the people had to cease to pay the tribute to the Sultan of Tidore and make offerings to Konori. The cessation of the payment of the Samsom prompted the intervention of the Sultan of Tidore who sent out a hongitochten to collect the annual tribute and restore Tidorese supremacy. Later it was proved that the prophet was merely an impostor, a former slave that had taken advantage of the people’s credulity.

Whatever were the reasons of the deception, the episode shows how at the time the people were receptive to promises of salvation, liberation and change. In 1856 the archival documents report the activities of another Papuan prophet known by the name of Koepang. The sixty pages of the Openbaar Verbaalarchief dated 17 September 1858, No. 40 detailing the event reports that Koepang was a slaven handel en roof, a slave trader and robber, operating in the area between Waigeo and Misööl. The rajas

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108 Javasche Courant, 10 September 1853, No. 73, in Register op de Indische Couranten.
109 Goudswaard, op. cit., p. 93.
of Misool and Waigeo complained of the disruption caused by Koepang’s raids to their interests with the colonial government who sent the warship *H.M. Phoenix*, along with auxiliary forces from Tidore, to quell the revolt and restore peace and order in the region.

Although the lengthy report does not present Koepang as a prophet, nevertheless he might have been seen by some of the Papuans as a sort of Nuku *Redivivus*, with the characteristics or attributes of a prophet or *Konor*, a Big Man able to provide the people with valuables and commodities, whereas the Dutch considered him only a slave trader and a robber. What the episode reveals is that the increasing presence of the Dutch traders in the area was perceived as a disruptive element in the Papuan world prompting a reaction to protect their own spaces in which their traditional activities and relations took place.

**Cargoes and Missionaries**

The presence of the missionaries in the territory contributed to enhance the situation of strife determined by the dislocation of traditional spaces. In his *Die Biene auf dem Missionfeld* of 1860, the missionary Ottow reported that a movement emerged in Doreh Bay prompted by the arrival of two self-proclaimed *konors* (heralds) from the island of Numfor. These heralds announced that they had experienced the revelation of the secret of *Koreri* after having sojourned for five days in the Papuan heaven. Their predication caused the celebration of the so-called ‘Advent Nights’ during which the Papuans sang and danced until dawn waiting for the

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110 The myth of *Koreri* referred to the presence of a Messianic figure, a herald or prophet who would have preceded and announced the coming of *Koreri*, namely the ‘Golden Age’ or the ‘time of change’ as the etymology of word *Koreri* itself suggests.
arrival of Manseren Manggundi. The missionary describes how in his attempt to convince the villagers of the falsity of the message, he challenged the konors to take him with them the next time they visited the Papuan heaven. The missionaries strongly opposed such movements since they were hampering mission activity because of the influence the self-appointed prophet was able to exert over the people, as Van Hasselt clearly stated during a movement he witnessed in the mission of Doreh in 1871.

The cargo movements among the Papuans recorded during the first fifty years of mission work on the north coast of New Guinea present similar features and all appear to be caused by the situation of uncertainty and instability that characterised the Papuan world at the time. The movements share a common pattern and their ideology is centred on in the Papuan myth of Manseren Manggundi. The appearance of a konor or herald announcing the imminent advent of a new era of prosperity, the Koreri sets in motion a series of responses by the locals ranging from the destruction of gardens and the suspension of normal daily activities to the construction of Rum Sram or ‘Men’s Houses’, to the suspension of ancient obligations as the payment of the tribute to Tidore.

Although these seem, prima facie, to be the effects of the Konor’s message, at least this is the impression that the narratives of the missionaries convey, it is possible that they could have been in reality the causes triggering the movement. The widespread and latent dissatisfaction with the existing socio-economic conditions may have brought about the rise of a leadership able to catalyse popular resentments, the desires of change and aggrandisement and emancipation. This hypothesis seems to be

111 For the myth of Manseren Manggundi see the poetic text entitled ‘The Beyuser of Manarmakdi’ in appendix.
confirmed by the fact that the movements, as the missionaries’ reports reveal, came into existence concomitant with situations of crises.

During the epidemic of smallpox in 1861, Mansinam was the stage of a movement led by a Konor who claimed that he had the power to expel the disease, which was thought to have been caused by evil spirits. The Konor incited the people to rebuild the Rum Sram that had collapsed some year earlier in which to display the korwars of the ancestors. The collapse of the Rum Sram, but above all the failure to rebuild it was interpreted as an omen of future disasters for the community.114

The failed reconstruction of the Rum Sram following its collapse may be imputed to the phenomenon of ‘shifting spaces’ prompted by the presence of the mission. The climate of anxiety and precariousness generated by the smallpox epidemic among the local population may have triggered a reactive nativistic movement aiming at restoring atavistic beliefs and ceremonies as well as traditional power relationships within the community by local power agencies. The veridicality of the conjecture cannot be proved since the missionary sources do not offer sufficient information. By inference however it is possible to assume that the movement can be interpreted indirectly as a reaction to the presence of the mission.

The occurrence of epidemics and natural disasters appear to have represented the ideal milieu for the rise of cargo movements. This is because the coming of Koreri was thought to be preceded or accompanied by apocalyptic phenomena. The movement recorded in Amberbaken, on the north coast of the Vogelkop Peninsula in 1864, and reported by the missionary van Klassen, was caused by the occurrence of a

tidal wave that brought havoc and misery to the affected villages.\textsuperscript{115} Geissler reports that on this occasion, for the first time, hostility was manifested towards the missionaries believed to be the cause of the catastrophe.\textsuperscript{116}

It is possible that the resentment against the missionaries was triggered by the failed actualisation of the \textit{koreri} that prompted that social phenomenon known as scape-goating.\textsuperscript{117} The frustration generated by the failed fulfilment of their expectations probably raised their level of latent aggressiveness. This came to be directed against the most accessible target that could be blamed for their discontent. The missionaries representing an alien minority in a Papuan setting fulfilled this function.

Apart from sociological explanations, other factors may have contributed to generate attitudes and feelings of hostility towards the missionaries. One factor could have been directly derived from their teachings and attempts to change the Papuan way of life by abolishing religious practices, such as the initiation rituals performed in the \textit{Rum Sram}, or forcing changes in the traditional social customs and rules such as marriage and bride-wealth arrangements. These changes also affected the distribution and allocation of power in Papuan society generating \textit{foci} of resentment. Significantly, some movements were triggered by the village \textit{mon}.\textsuperscript{118}

Another factor was represented by the growing awareness among the Papuans of the relationship that the missionaries had with Tidore. In this regard Goudswaard reports that, during the prophetic movement in Wandamen of 1861, Geissler had publicly threatened the participants that he would inform the Sultan of Tidore of the


Konor’s activities. To confirm this assumption some movements, such as those that took place in Dusner and Wandamen in 1867, targeted foreigners, usually missionaries, traders and government officials irrespective of their functions, but whose presence somehow was contributing to change the Papuan way of life. As Geissler reports, at the time the Papuans had begun to hand in to the missionaries their Korwars or sacred objects because they were willing to become Christians. It is possible that the prophets, emerged among the mon or headmen, were trying to reverse the trend that was undermining their socio-economic privileges, by appealing to the traditional promises of Koreri.

The feeling of uncertainty and anxiety that the social and economic changes implemented by the mission were contributing to spread among the Papuans caused the emergence of prophetic movements that called for a restoration of the ‘old world’ as the basis of a future palingenesis. The missionary Bink reports that in 1875 a native informant explained him why the reconstruction of the Rum Sram that had collapsed in 1864 was necessary. The Papuan informant declared:

The Rum Sram collapsed in the earthquake of 1864, but since then we have suffered from the ill effects. The Dutch were the cause of all these calamities that have visited the population, for all these things [the smallpox epidemic and earthquakes] were unknown before they came. Manseren Nanggi was angry with the people because they did not follow the adat faithfully as before.

The statement is extremely important because it manifests the attempt of the Papuans to rationalise the events they were experiencing. As Festinger suggests, once

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118 Kamma, Koreri…cit., p. 132.

119 Goudswaard, op.cit., p. 102.


a prophecy has failed to actualise there is a tendency to rationalise the failure in order to reduce the dissonance caused by dis-confirmation.\textsuperscript{122} This process is also accompanied by an attempt to reformulate the individual and group identity and cast it into a new perspective by which to control the future developments of the situation. In a later movement, witnessed by the missionary Jens in 1884, the same attempt to rationalise the diffused feelings of alienation, frustration and relative deprivation appear to be present. When Jens tried to convince the people of the falsity of the prophet’s promises, the Papuans gave him an answer similar to that of Bink’s informant:

The Lord of Heaven made the Papuans first when he did not quite know how, therefore they are stupid \textit{[bodoh]} and black and do not wear clothes. After that he made the Malays of Ternate, they are lighter-skinned and wear clothes. And it was only after that that he made the Dutch; they are white, wear good clothes, know a great deal and eat bread and good food every day.\textsuperscript{123}

Jens’ information reveals that, at the time, the identity of the Papuans was formulated initially by referring to the Malay and then to the Dutch. Categories of stupidity, blackness and the lack of clothes became the markers of a Papuan mode of identification.

In the second half of the XIX century it appears that Papuan identity was in transition. The tribe no longer figured as the system of reference, at least this is what can be inferred from the missionary accounts, but a wider unity of self-identification was being constructed, that of ‘Papuans’ and with it the category of ‘Papuanity’. The socio-economic changes that the mission’s presence contributed to enact prompted processes of detribalisation and the creation of new networks of communication.

\textsuperscript{122} Festinger, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 25-30.
During the movement in Dusner of 1868, already referred to, the missionary Geissler observed that in all the villages, the Konor had appointed delegates that appeared to cut across tribal and clan divisions.\textsuperscript{124} Since the movement spread to the villages that were affected by the mission’s activity, it is possible to speculate that the system of communication of the mission became the channel through which the ideology of the movement spread.\textsuperscript{125} Old networks of communication, however, were still operative, as the prophetic movement, which emerged in 1877 in the Papuan villages of Halmahera and that spread to north-west New Guinea, seems to suggest.\textsuperscript{126}

More than being torn between the old and new, it appears that the Papuans were struggling to bridge and synthesise tradition and modernity. The years between 1886, when the cargo motif first appeared in the movements’ ideology\textsuperscript{127} and 1895 appear to have been characterised by a widespread unrest and rebellions among the Papuans.

The archives confirm the reports of the missionaries in recording the occurrence of local anti-colonial uprisings and episodes of civil disobedience. In 1886 punitive expeditions were sent to Biak following the killing of part of the crew of the Ternaten ship \textit{Coredo} in Geelvink Bay.\textsuperscript{128} A letter of the missionary van Hasselt regarding the situation in New Guinea and published in the \textit{Haagsch Dagblad} of 26 October 1887 well illustrates the conditions of the time. The missionary calls for the sending of civil servants to the region in order to appoint and control local rulers. He believed, in fact,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{124} Geissler J.V., ‘Verslagen Zendingwerk’, \textit{Berichten van der Utrechtsche Zendingsoeeniging}, 5, 1868, p. 73.
\item\textsuperscript{125} Analogously in 1926 a movement emerged in the Paidado Islands spread as far as the Vogelkop Peninsula. Kamma, \textit{Korori...cit.}, pp. 140-141.
\item\textsuperscript{126} Been M., ‘Verslagen Zendingwerk’, \textit{Berichten van der Utrechtsche Zendingsoeeniging}, 3, 1877, pp. 34-35.
\item\textsuperscript{127} Van Hasselt, ‘Verslagen Zendingwerk’, \textit{Berichten van der Utrechtsche Zendingsoeeniging}, 4, 1887, pp. 50-53.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
that the establishment of administrative posts would have contributed to pacify the area and restore law and order.\textsuperscript{129}

The unrest among the Papuans seems to have been fuelled by a growing sense of relative deprivation. The attacks appear to have targeted traders and hunters entering the New Guinea area to buy or gather local products. The \textit{Javaasche Courant} of 1 February 1887 No. 9 reports the killing of a Tidorese trader and two of his employees in Humboldt Bay. A punitive expedition was set up by a group of Ternaten traders to avenge the deaths of their colleagues and ended up with the burning of a Papuan village. The retaliatory act forced the colonial government to intervene in order to prevent an escalation of events.\textsuperscript{130}

The continuous hostilities in the region manifested against traders were damaging Dutch interests and hindering the expansion of mission activity in particular in the Wandamen and Doreh Bay areas.\textsuperscript{131} Presumably the increasing demand for specific commodities was causing a series of ecological changes that directly impinged on the life of the people. It was probably for this reason that the colonial government in 1897 established a series of measures to limit cassowary hunting in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{132}

In the south, in the years 1890-1891, raids of the Tugeri tribes, also known as the Marind-anim, in nearby British New Guinea, were causing problems.\textsuperscript{133} It was probably the necessity to establish a presence in the area, that might have prevented the recurrence of raids and border crossings, that the requests for the establishment of a Catholic Mission by the Mission of the Sacred Heart (MSC) was finally considered.

\textsuperscript{129} The Headquarters of the UZV had already forwarded a similar request to the government. See: \textit{Openbaar Verbaal}, 21 February 1887, No. 43.

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Mailrapport} dated 1895, No. 611.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Openbaar Verbaal}, 27 June 1890 No. 40 in particular the file entitled ‘Onlusten op Nieuw Guinea’ providing details of the punitive expedition sent against he Wandamen tribes.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Insulinde}, 1897, No. 48, in \textit{Nederlandse Couranten Indische Onderwerpen}. 
Piracy and slave trade was, also burgeoning along the south coast creating a continuous state of social instability.\textsuperscript{134}

It appears that, in concomitance with the systemisation of Christian elements in the cargo ideology, socio-economic resentments came to assume political connotations. Tax payments, corvee obligations and the continuous exploitation of natural resources were considered an unbearable burden by the Papuans since these directly encroached on their traditional customs such as bride-price and inter-village ceremonial exchange. The uprisings staged in Manokwari in 1920\textsuperscript{135} and in the Raja Ampat Islands between 1931 and 1934\textsuperscript{136} were triggered by social and economic unrest and directed against the exploitative policies of the Dutch administration. Analogous motivations seem to be at the basis of other movements in the north.

The intensification of European presence in the Humboldt Bay\textsuperscript{137} and Lake Sentani areas, following the rescheduling of the shipping services of the Royal Packet Navigation company (KPM) in the 1920s from an eight-week to a service every four weeks, and the imposition of corvee obligations and taxes appear to be accompanied by the emergence of cargo movements. In these the motifs of the imminent return of the dead and the distribution of wealth appear to have played a major role in mobilising the population. In the Lake Sentani movement, in fact, recorded by the Protestant missionary Bijkerk stationed in the area, the leader Pamai convinced the

\textsuperscript{133} Mailrapport dated 1891, No. 489.
\textsuperscript{134} Mailrapport dated 1892, No. 33.
\textsuperscript{135} Van Hasselt, Letter dated 24 November 1920, Archieven van de Raad voor de Zending van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, Oegstgeest.
\textsuperscript{137} For the movement in Humboldt Bay see: Galis K.W. & Kamma F. Ch., Papua’s van de Humboldt Baai, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1955, pp. 145-146.
local inhabitants of the villages of Ormu and Gresi to refrain from performing the labour services imposed by the Dutch.\textsuperscript{138}

Concomitant with the widespread unrest caused by socio-economic factors in the last decade of the XIX century, Christian symbols and beliefs gradually began to be systemised in the cargo ideologies. The first case of identification of Jesus Christ with Manseren Manggundi, recorded by the missionary Bink, appears in a movement that took place on the island of Roon in 1894.\textsuperscript{139} A few years later, on the same island, the missionary Metz reports that the Bible’s message was placed within the framework of local myths.\textsuperscript{140} The demands for western commodities as well as schools\textsuperscript{141} and factories\textsuperscript{142} became prominent during the first three decades of the XX century, bringing about the particular connection between Christianity and modernity that will characterise mission work in the aftermath of World War II.

Contrary to the Marxist belief that modernisation will prompt processes of secularisation,\textsuperscript{143} it appears that the Papuans merely ‘cargoised’, that is ‘indigenised’ the message of both modernity and Christianity. Religious practices and institutions did not lose their social significance but were simply re-systemised following the transition to Christianity. Emblematic in this regard is the episode that took place in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{138} Bijkerk J., ‘Jaarlijks Berichten’, 1929, Archieven van de Raad voor de Zending van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, Oegstgeest.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Bink G.L., ‘Verslagen Zendingswerk’, Berichten van de Utrechtsche Zendingvereeniging, 2, 1895, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Metz G.J., ‘Op Roon begint de Victorie’, Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlansch Zendinggenootschap, 84, II, 1940, pp. 319-325.
\item \textsuperscript{141} The demand for schools appeared in the movement witnessed by the missionary Bijkerk in the villages of Gresi and Ormu on Lake Sentani in the early 1920s. Bijkerk, \textit{op. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{142} The request for factories appeared in the movement in Batanta of 1934. Kamma, \textit{Koreri...cit.}, p. 151.
\end{itemize}
the Ayau Islands in 1933 where the local inhabitants farewelled their ancestors by performing rituals to justify their acceptance of Christianity.¹⁴⁴

**Conclusions**

The arrival of the missionaries and the implementation of Dutch policies in West New Guinea prompted a series of cultural and socio-economic changes among the native populations. The gradual dismantlement of tribal structures, caused by the mission at the local level, prompted a parallel shift in the modes and means of identification of the Papuans.

The fact that the Dutch and the missionaries did not ‘deal’ with the Papuans by referring to their tribal divisions and structures, but as a single unit, along with a redistribution of wealth and functions that disregarded or overlapped the existing traditional ones, forced the Papuans to consider their identity in the terms of the new ‘alter-ity’. Ethnicity, rather than tribalism, emerged as the element that acted as the basis for the reconstruction of Papuan identity. This shift is evident in the ideologies of the cargo movements witnessed and reported by the missionaries. Christianity as an overall ideology, cutting across atavistic tribal divisions, was able to foster the creation of networks and systems of communication and of a common system of beliefs and symbolic meanings on a larger scale. Traditional cargoist practices represented the epistemological process and mould in which Christianity came to be indigenised creating the basis and structures for the creation of a new Papuan ethnic identity. However, in order for ethnic identity to become the basis of an ideology for ethnic mobilisation, the occurrence of a precise event was necessary around which the Papuan people could coalesce and invent themselves as a nation and a political entity.

¹⁴⁴ Kamma, *Koreri...cit.*, pp. 149-150.
Chapter VI

The Tension between the ‘Ethnic’ and the ‘National’ in Papuan Nation Building

Ethnicity and nationality are two distinct categories although both are concerned with the construction of a form of collective identity. Ethnic identity is a self-conscious perception of one’s own collective existence “substantialising and vocalising” attributes such as race, language, religion, territorial occupation and attaching them to collectivities as an innate possession and mythical-historical legacy.1 Central ideas of ethnicity are therefore those concerned with the existence of a collective name, myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, specific cultural traits, association with an original homeland and a sense of solidarity shared by ‘significant’ sectors of the population.2

Ethnicity is the logic category functioning in the perception of an ‘objectified Self’. The perception of the ‘Self’ can be achieved only in relation to a ‘Other’ that has been defined according to analogous criteria or parameters. It is the dialectics with and the existence of the ‘Other’ that represents the hub or seedbed of any form of principium individuationis or ‘Id-entity’, the third entity between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’, between the Freudian Ego and the Es. It appears evident that it is the ‘Id-entity’ that comes to act as the metaphysical locus where differences are reified. Geoffrey White3 and Patricia Spyer4 in their analyses of Melanesia and Indonesian societies respectively acknowledged the importance of past encounters with different

peoples in the creation of criteria of inclusion and exclusion or, as they define them, oppositions of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.

Among the ‘ethnic ideas’, however, figure elements that concur to define national identity, such as the existence of an historical homeland, shared myths and historical memories and a common mass public culture.5

Although some scholars have argued that the distinction between ethnic identity and national identity is contentious if not spurious,6 I tend to agree with Anthony Smith in the substantial difference between the two since I believe that the nature of the processes generating the two categories are different.7 I assume culture is the outcome of processes of adaptation to a particular ecosystem, which prompts parallel processes of internal, societal integration. Consequently it appears clear that Papuan ethnic identity can be defined only with reference to the peculiar traits and features these processes contributed to generate vis à vis the neighbouring Malayan people and which acted as the basis or the structure for the occurrence of particular historical developments or conjunctures.

The elaboration of common myths of origin as, for instance, that of either Fakok and Pasreﬁ or Gurabesi, presented in Chapter IV, aimed at providing an aetiology of the structures and infrastructures of Papuan culture as well as integrating the Papuan world within the regional cultural reality. These ‘ethnic myths’ acted as ideologies justifying and sustaining the system of relations in the wider Maluku-Papuan region

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7 Aristotle, Politics III,3: 1276a 24, also draws a distinction between ἔθνος and πόλις: “In the case of a population which inhabits a single territory, we may ask ‘when should we consider that there is a single city?’ For, of course the identity of a city is not constituted by its walls – it would be possible to surround the whole of the Peloponnese by a single wall. Babylon (which, it is said, had been captured for three a whole days before some of the inhabitants knew of the fact) may perhaps be counted a city
of which the West Papuans were an integral part. Economic and political processes contributed in the selection, development and transmission of particular myths that have endured the test of time revealing that they were somehow, as Weber once argued, the product of “political action”.8

Papuan ethnic identity, prior to European colonisation, was rooted in and supported by those myths presented in chapter IV. In these myths the Papuans found the existential and essential meaning of their identity. In the previous chapter I have shown how the establishment of Christian missions, which prompted processes of christianisation and modernisation, along with the intensification of Dutch colonial policies and interventions in the territory brought about a re-definition of Papuan ethnic identity. In the epistemological milieu of cargoism the Papuans systemised the intrusive elements of Christianity and modernity by restructuring the system of reference and meaning on which their ethnic identity was based. This process of re-formulation or re-definition of ethnic identity, prompted by the necessity to adjust to the new behavioural norms and institutions being introduced into the physical environment, did not, however, bring about the creation of a national identity. For ethnic identity to evolve into national identity, the occurrence of a milestone event was necessary, which could have acted as the catalyst of national consciousness, by which a “political community” could be “imagined”,9 and the locus in which the reification of ethnic identity could take place. This temporal context would represent the ‘political space’ in which a nationalist ideology could be articulated.

In this chapter, I will examine how Papuan ethnic identity, reformulated by the processes of Christianisation, modernisation and colonisation, acted as the foundation

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for the development of Papuan national identity and nationalism between 1938 and 1962. In these twenty-four years, the constitutive elements of Papuan nationhood were clearly defined through the reification of their ethnic identity and a Papuan nation was built. It will be argued that the so-called ‘cargo movements’ that took place between 1938-1943 in the Geelvink Bay area represented the crucial turning point of the Papuan transition from ethnicity to nationality in which Christianity and modernisation played a major role in shaping the emerging nationalist ideology. Although during the Second World War mission activity was interrupted, the mission network continued to function and became the means of a nascent political consciousness.

The process of nation-building undertaken by the Dutch ran parallel and, often, in contrast with the ‘natural’ or autochthonous development of Papuan national identity. The cargo cults of the 1950s in the highlands and the protests fuelled by socio-economic discontent in the urban centres are nothing but movements of resistance to neo-colonial policies prompted by that process of ‘national identification’ already initialised during the war period. Ethnic traits of identification, as Comaroff pointed out, “may take a powerful salience in the experience of those who bear them often to the extent of appearing to be natural, essential, primordial”.10

After detailing the processes and events of the *intermezzo bellico*, I will consider the role of mission activity and Dutch administrative policies in the processes of nation-building and in the politicisation of national identity, through the formation of political parties, until 1962 when finally West Papua was transferred to the Republic of Indonesia and how these were inspired by neo-colonialism rather than

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decolonisation. Christian institutions and ideology played a major role in this process by creating ‘spiritual colonies’ of the West and inevitably drawing West Papua into the contentions of the West.

*From Koreri to the Second Coming*

In the first two decades of the XX century mission activity intensified in the areas along the coast and in particular in the area surrounding the Mansinam mission that had become the centre of Protestant missionary expansion. In these years Christianity in West Papua was expanding at a rate never recorded before following the occurrence of a significative event that prompted and marked the transition from animism to Christianity and that took place in the years 1906-1907. It was this event that allowed for the religious element to become a structural component of the construction of Papuan national identity.

In 1906 on the instigation of the Sultan of Tidore, the local people were pressured by the local rulers to abandon their old religion and convert to Islam. The Sultan of Tidore had realised that his influence and sovereignty over the Papuan territories was waning because of the increasing presence of the Dutch in the area, a presence that was undermining his economic interests as well. The missionary Van Balen reports that the people did not want to accept Islam, viewing the alternative represented by Christianity as more advantageous. The Islamic prohibition regarding the consumption of pork, that represented the main source of proteins in their diet, was probably the major cause of their refusal to convert.

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The same trend will manifest itself later in the 1960s and 1970s in some Papuan villages such as Inanwatan where the acceptance of the *Injil* or Christianity was devised as a means to counteract the dangers of Islam associated with the economic and political centre of power. In this regard see:
In 1906 the people from Roon and the villages of Geelvink Bay began flocking to Mansinam asking for Christian teachers. In this atmosphere of spiritual unrest, the episode of Yan Ayamiseba took place: an episode that, in the spiritual history of the people of the area, represented a caesura between past and future, tradition and modernity, heathenism and Christianity.

Yan Ayamiseba was an emancipated slave who, before dying from injuries suffered in an accident, told the people of his village that he had had a vision in which he was urged to accept the new religion of Christianity. Three days after the vision he died. This episode would have passed unnoticed if the wife of the teacher of Roon did not have a dream in which she saw Ayamiseba ascend to heaven. The dream was interpreted by the locals as a confirmation of the veridicality and importance of Ayamiseba’s hierophanic experience. Van den End claims that the episode assumed a foundational importance in the acceptance of Christianity, equated to a sort of Revelation, because, for the first time, the Christian message was being presented within the framework of Roon’s mythology and in the modes and by the means of Papuan religiousness. Metz, who was a missionary in Roon at the time the events took place, reports that the episode of Ayamiseba was part of a wider movement that began in 1900 and whose leader was Marisi, a foster son of the former missionary Bink.

Marisi had grown up in the mission compound and had been educated in the mission’s school. Presenting himself as an envoy of Jesus Christ and boasting thaumaturgic powers he was able to draw a great number of people from the nearby areas to the island of Roon to listen to his teachings in which Christian elements were

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13 End van den, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.
14 *ibid.*, p. 118.
fused with the local myth of Manseren Manggundi. Challenged by the missionary to present himself in Church to account for his deeds, Marisi preferred staying at home where he sat on the ridge of the roof waiting for the advent of Manseren Manggundi. For the occasion he had also erected a flagpole. The flagpole was probably an imitation of the flagpoles erected by the Dutch in their compound and came to achieve a symbolic meaning and function in the collective imaginary of the Papuans. It represented the first association of Christianity with political power and domination, an association that will reach its apex of development twenty years later.

The episode of Yan Ayamiseba caused an increase in the number of people converting to Christianity as the mission reports contained in the archives reveal. The act of conversion was marked by the symbolic gesture of handing over to the missionaries the sacred objects to be ‘ritually’ burnt. The increasing number of converts compelled the mission headquarters to establish more mission posts in the area. Mission stations, comprising schools, churches and, in some cases, permanently staffed hospitals, were established in the Schouten Islands and in the Waropen region, the most important post being that in the village of Supiori on Biak established in 1910. It was, however, the nearby mission of Numfor, as the missionary van Hasselt reports, that in 1913 recorded the greatest number of converts and school enrolments. The growing presence of indigenous evangelists and teachers, who began to assist the missionaries in those years and whose number rose sharply after 1917, may have also contributed to the increasing number of conversions.

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16 Still today the act of hoisting the *Sampari* flag is interpreted as an act of assertion and power.
20 Kijne I.S., *De Opleidingschool voor Papoese Voorgangersonderwijzers*, Amsterdam, 1948, p. 3.
The indigenous evangelists and teachers, who came mainly from Maluku and Sangir, were less prepared than the Dutch missionaries from a theological and catechetical point of view, but their willingness to live in isolated villages coupled with the ability to endure harsh living conditions and endemic diseases were sufficient reasons to overcome the conservative attitudes of many of the Protestant missionaries regarding native catechists. In time, some of the indigenous evangelists were able to reach high positions in the mission hierarchy.21

The influence of Maluku Christianity in West Papua was strengthened by the establishment of the missions of the Moluccan Protestant Church in Merauke, Fak Fak and Sorong, an area that rated high in the percentage of Papuan and Malay Muslims. This circumstance probably forced the mission headquarters to increase a countervailing Christian Moluccan presence in a region that had been assigned to the Catholic missions inevitably causing frictions with the latter.22 It was, however, the presence and activities of the indigenous teachers from Maluku that contributed to establish Malay as the language of worship23 and to continue a West Papuan relationship or connection with Maluku.

Winds of Change

The period between the two World Wars was a time of deep and radical change in West Papua. Mission and administrative activity gradually intensified as interest in West Papuan resources and the awareness of its geo-political and strategic capabilities grew in the Netherlands. The winds of change grew stronger by the day affecting the

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21 As an example of how native evangelists were able over time to become part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy see: Kamma F.C., De Roepsten Volgend: Autobiografie van Goeroe Laurens Tawamal, J.N. Voorhoeve, The Hague, 1952, pp. 14-29.
22 As to the problems created by the ‘double mission’ see: Haripranata, op.cit., I, pp. 8-15.
eco-system and consequently, Papuan material life and worldview. Societal relations mutated, disrupting cultural templates, while the Pauans adapted to or resisted the changing environment.

The expansion and intensification of Dutch administrative control in the region prompted a gradual, but radical change in the ethnic composition of the Papuan coastal populations. Indonesian and Chinese immigrants began to settle in West Papua attracted by new employment opportunities. Mining activities had, in fact, begun in Sorong and Bintuni Bay before 1920. By the 1930s one thousand Papuans are recorded to be employed in the Sorong-based *Nederlandsch Nieuw Guinea Petroleum Maatschappij* and more than one thousand Papuans and Indonesian immigrants were employed by Japanese companies in copal production.

The immigrants, once established in West Papua, tended to gather into small ethnic communities and, where there was a teacher from their own ethnic background, they founded local associations that were formally recognised by the local mission. The presence of these local ethnic associations inevitably forced the Papuans on the other side, if not to coalesce willingly, at least to consider themselves as a separated, distinct entity in relation to the newcomers.

The number of non-Papuans in the region was also boosted by the exiled political activists deported to the region in the years following the rebellion of Java in 1926-1927 when the Dutch chose West Papua as a gaol. Eight hundred prisoners were deported to Tanah Merah, 500 km up the Digul River. The influx of political prisoners lasted until 1937 and in the collective imaginary of the Indonesian nationalists, West

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24 Osok, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.
27 Osok, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5.
Papua became a symbol of their resistance, resolve and suffering against colonial rule. Some of these prisoners were allowed to relocate to West Papua with their families and in the 1930s a small Javanese, predominantly Muslim, community of rice farmers and traders flourished near Merauke.28

During the 1920s Western education and Christianity began to have an impact on the local people increasing the request and need for more schools and mission posts. The acceptance of Christianity by some villages was also prompted at times by the need to protect themselves from traditionally hostile villages, a trend that had already been recorded in 1868 by the missionary Mosche;29 but that appeared to have endemically persisted.30 It is possible that the inter-village hostilities were instigated or renewed by outsiders who had some vested interest in a particular area. Traditional Muslim traders from Maluku and Ceram perceived the advance of Christianity as a threat to their longstanding economic interests and privileges in West Papua. In some cases, in coastal and insular villages the influence of Islam was strong and deeply embedded because of persistent local Sosolot arrangements, already referred to in Chapter III. Some missionaries were forced to use the establishment of schools or health centres as means to enter a Sosolot village that was barred to evangelising activities.31

In some cases, as van Oosterhout’s recent study of the local narratives of the Inanwatan inhabiting the south coast of the Vogelkop peninsula reveals, conversion to Christianity was prompted by the need, and used as a means, to counteract the

31 Osok, op.cit., pp. 6-7.
‘dangers of Islam’ which was identified as political and economic influence from the regional and, later, also national centre of power, namely Java.\textsuperscript{32}

Following the episode of Ayamiseba, Papuan Christianity came to assume peculiar connotative features initiating that important process of vernacularisation that prompted the rise of either independent churches or proto-political associations. Cargoist hermeneutics favoured a reinterpretation of Christianity in the light of the autochthonous Papuan myth of Manseren Manggundi by which the Pauans were able to ‘take possession’ of the Christian ideology or, as Rutherford’s Derridean reading of the myth suggests, to defer “the emergence of a modern Christian subject – at least until the ancestor returns”.\textsuperscript{33} While I am reluctant to accept the implicit ‘displacement or procrastination of aims’, which the deferral of meaning entails,\textsuperscript{34} I believe that, if the study of socio-cultural templates is considered in the mould of a semantic-structural or generative-transformational approach, such an understanding or interpretation could account for the Papuan ‘acceptance’ of failed insurgencies and ‘national persistence’. As shown by Otto in his study regarding religious change in the Pacific, local populations play a central role in directing processes of cultural change without losing their identity and local traditions, such as religion, which contribute significantly in determining that direction.\textsuperscript{35}

This process was accelerated during the 1920s probably favoured by the new missiological approach implemented first by the Catholic missionaries and then by the Protestants. This new approach called for the adoption of ‘inculturative’ methods,

\textsuperscript{32} Oosterhout, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{33} Rutherford, \textit{Raiding the Land of the Foreigners...cit.}, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{34} According to Derrida’s concept of \textit{Difference}, the deferral of meaning or the concept imagined replaces the signifier, which becomes therefore inaccessible. Transposed to the domain of historical inquiry, this approach would deny the possibility of action and human agency.
implying the respect of local traditions and customs and the ‘empowerment of the native’, instead of the traditional acculturative ones. Indigenous culture was not to be completely erased and replaced by Western Christianity but allowed to become the ‘vehicle’ or the ‘mould’ through which Christianity could be transmitted, understood and accepted. The signifiers of traditional cultural templates were emptied of their symbolic-semantic value and turned into signs or icons of new meanings. In this way the epistemological structures of indigenous cultures were maintained and turned into the receptacles of new meanings, whilst averting the risk of syncretism. Father Coenen, who was in charge of the Catholic mission in East Timika in 1956, reports that the church used the local culture and narratives as vehicles to explain Christianity to the local populations. The new missiological approach was also favoured by the government, which viewed the previous missionary keenness to stamp out Papuan customs as counterproductive. The Resident Beets in 1938 established, in fact, that if native feasts and dances do not pose a threat to public peace and order, they should not be prohibited.

Since Christianity was being introduced along with the modernisation of Papuan economic, political and social systems and the introduction of new technology and scientific knowledge, the Papuans tended to associate modernity with Christianity. Flag poles, schools and factories became emblems of power and domination but also of Christianity. This explains why the Papuans associated the requests for Christianity

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36 In this regard see the Encyclical by Pope Pius XI Rerum Ecclesiae of 28 February 1926. The transition from acculturation to ‘inculturation’ had already been initialised by Pope Benedict XV with his Encyclical Maximum Illud of 30 November 1919.
37 Syncretism was one of the main problems confronted by mission activity. In this regard see: Kraemer H., ‘Syncretism as a religious and a missionary problem’, in The International Review of Missions, 43, 1954, pp. 253-273.
38 Harple, op.cit., p. 179.
with that of schools and factories and why the flag and the flag-pole became an important symbol during the nationalist struggle.\textsuperscript{40}

Conversion to Christianity, that meant also a conversion to modernity, caused a complete \textit{semantic} restructuring of Papuan culture. The Papians had to adjust to Christianity by creating new cultural and cognitive templates of external adaptation to \textit{structures of modernity} and, consequently, of internal, societal integration. Kinship ties lost their social function and significance and were replaced by the communitarian ideal of Christianity stating that everybody, irrespective of existing blood ties, are brothers and sisters. The communitarian ideal was promoted and actualised by removing clans from their original habitats and resettling them into larger villages. In the years between 1910 and 1925, for instance, the tribes living near Sorong were resettled in a single village.\textsuperscript{41}

By 1937 mission records show that, of an estimated population of 312,000 inhabitants, there were in north-west Papua 7,500 Protestant Christians organised into 400 congregations led by local elders and served by seventeen UZV missionaries and 300 native teachers with 157 schools and 8,650 students. On the south coast there were 42,687 Catholic and 584 Protestants.\textsuperscript{42}

The boost to Christianity in the region during the 1930s may have also been fuelled by the influx of Indo-Europeans and Eurasians to the northern coast of West Papua, in particular in the urban centres of Hollandia (modern Jayapura) and

\textsuperscript{40} For the importance of the flag in the current nationalist movements in West Papua see: Giay B. & Godschalk J.A. ‘Cargoism in Irian Jaya Today’, \textit{Oceania}, 63, 1993, p. 340. Giay and Godschalk report of a cargo type movement that took place in 1988 in a small island off Japen Island coast and led by Dr. Thomas Wainggai.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{The Cross Across the Pacific}, National Missionary Councils of Australia and New Zealand, Sydney, 1948, pp. 46-47.
Manokwari. The ‘Indo-European Trek’, as Danilyn Rutherford refers to the immigration of Indo-Europeans to West Papua, while contributing to the establishment of a creolised form of Western culture and to Curtin’s phenomenon of “man-on-the-spotism”, also prompted the expansion of Christian institutions, beliefs, values and way of life. Many Papuans became servants in the houses of these new immigrants and their increasing presence in the urban centres may have contributed to strengthen the association of Christianity and modernity on one side and Christianity and colonial rule on the other, a development that, in my opinion, is the cause of the rise among the Papuans of the belief or myth that the Europeans were withholding the secret of the Bible from them.

By the late 1930s, Christianity seems to have finally established itself in the coastal areas but did not yet constitute an element or feature of their identity. For this to eventuate, it was necessary that their ethnic identity underwent a process of ‘ politicisation’ in which Papuan Christianity could have functioned as a foundational ideology by creating autochthonous representations, visible through social relations and practices, able to countervail colonial ones.


In the Archieven van de Raad voor de Zending van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, located in the small town of Oegstgeest near Leiden, I came across a 230 pages unpublished manuscript by Kamma’s informant K. Mandof, entitled Tentang

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44 I here accept the definition of ideology proposed by Althusser according to which “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”.

*Pergerakan Koreri*, narrating the events of the *Koreri* movement that took place in the Schouten Islands between 1938 and 1943.45

The importance of this particular movement lies in the fact that for the first time political and nationalist claims appear articulated according to the categories of native cargoist hermeneutics and cast into the mould of the indigenous *Koreri* ideology. A number of Christian elements, usually in the form of symbols, images and ritual acts, appear in the movement and that were used to convey a vernacular or Papuan form of Christianity. It was the use of these symbols of ‘colonial’ faith and power that led to the ‘ politicisation’ of the *Koreri* myth and of Papuan ethnic identity. Rutherford refers to this process as the product of that allure of “foreignness” patterning Papuan culture, arguing that the 1938-1943 *Koreri* movement in Biak is “an episode of renewal in a pattern of dealing with outsiders with deep roots in the regions past”.46 The process of politicisation prompted the definition of a nationalist ideology that reached its maturation in the aftermath of World War II.

As Mandof’s manuscript informs, the movement began in the village of Supiori on Biak in the Schouten Islands. A woman, whose name was Angganita Menufur and who had lived for years in isolation as an outcast on the small island of Aiburanbandi because affected by a supposed incurable skin disease, became the leader of a movement that was to spread over a vast area along the north coast of West Papua and last for almost five years. Following her miraculous recovery, on her return to the native island of Insumbabi she narrated that she had been visited by a man. Kamma

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46 I thank Dr. Chris de Jong of the Church Archives in Utrecht who indicated to me the location of this manuscript. This manuscript was provided to Kamma by one of his informants, Kuri Mandof, and has been largely used by Kamma in his *Koreri. Messianic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Area* published in 1972, used and quoted in this dissertation.

reports the words by which the mysterious visitor addressed Angganita as they were referred to him by one of his informants, Kuri of Numfor:

I have seen the misery and all thou hast had to bear, the sorrow and the persecution, and all the foreign oppression. I shall give thee a reign of permanent peace and therefore thy name will be Bin Damai or Nona Mas ro Judaea (Woman of Peace or The Golden Lady of Judea). Today I send thee forth to lead the people to Koreri. In order that this may come about thou shalt never shed blood, for blood bars the way to Koreri, since I know thy people is one that likes to wage war. And this shall be the token to thee all, the flag that shall fly out over all New Guinea in blue, white and red – faith, peace and courage – or from above comes peace and war. I am Kayan Sanau who comes from the West and who wages all the wars of the world. If, O Irian, thy right and thy flag are not recognised, if again thou art oppressed, then a third world war shall destroy the whole world. But I, Kayan Sanau, shall lead the world war, do not fear.47

It appears evident from the text that the words attributed to the man, identified with Manseren Manggundi-Jesus, and who visited Angganita, are not these. Several elements point to later interpolations, in particular the reference to a third world war that presupposes the occurrence of the Second World War. The second world conflict becomes therefore the terminus post quem for the chronology of the version reported by Kamma. It is however possible to identify an original nucleus represented by the reference to the Koreri myth fused with Christian elements.

Two years after its appearance, the movement grew stronger. Many Papuans went to the island of Insumbabi to either listen to or be cured by Angganita, believed endowed with thaumaturgic powers. The protracted absence of people from their villages and daily activities attracted the attention of the district officer of Sowek and of the missionary of Korido who ordered the people to stop the movement and bring Angganita to Sowek. Since the people disregarded the order, the district officer dispatched a police patrol to the island with the order to burn all the houses that had been built after Angganita’s return by pilgrims and migrants. The police action had

47 Kamma, Koreri...cit., p. 158.
however the opposite effect prompting a second intervention and the arrest of the woman. Towards the end of 1941 she was released and her return to the island of Insumbabi was saluted as a victory since it was custom that the prophets, known also as *konors*, once arrested, were sent to serve their time in the prisons on Ternate. Angganita resumed her activity as prophetess and thaumaturge. Her message this time was imbued with political overtones and directed against the colonial administration and the mission.

The war with Japan and Japanese occupation of the island allowed the movement to grow and expand since many missionaries and administrators were forced to leave their posts. It was during the war period, that represented an *intermezzo* in the colonisation and christianisation of West Papua, that the national and political identity of the Papuans was forged. The Christian Papuans were isolated since their foreign leaders, the missionaries, the administrators and teachers, were forced to leave causing the temporary closure of mission and administrative stations.\(^48\) To exacerbate their conditions, was also the fact that they were looked upon with suspicion by the Japanese occupiers.\(^49\) In the south of West Papua, Japanese occupation had a smaller impact on the missions since these were mainly situated in the areas that never fell under Japanese occupation because of their insalubrious environment and presumed low economic potential. Here Christianisation continued in particular among the Muyu in the Upper Fly region.\(^50\)

The situation of isolation, brought about by the war, caused the Christian Papuans to continue in the way of life adopted when they converted to Christianity, or in which they were born, without external guidance, a fact that induced them to ponder and define their place in the society generated by colonial processes. Once


again it appears that the processes of world history intersected and interacted with local history drawing and determining new trajectories.

Japanese rule proved to be a time of hardship for the Christian Papuans. Japanese policies, in fact, discriminated against the Papuans, because they were considered pro-Western and anti-Japanese, in favour of the Muslim Papuans or migrants. Since the Japanese considered Christianity as Agama Belanda, Dutch religion, they encouraged the formation of pro-Japanese Muslim organisations, as the Djimayah Islamyah Ceram, as well as sponsoring programs of Islamisation in particular in the industrial area of Sorong.\textsuperscript{51}

The religious polarisation of Papuan society prompted by Japanese policies created a fertile ground in which Papuan Christianity could define itself in political terms moving away from ethnic modes of definition. Discrimination came to be structured, articulated and voiced in political terms in the form of an anti-Japanese ideology. It was the division between Muslims and Christians in Papuan society, bringing about the stratification in the Papuan ethnos, that made possible the ‘ politicisation’ of Christianity that had, since the occurrence of the Ayamiseba episode, become a feature of Papuan ethnic identity, and the emergence of a national identity and nationalist ideology.

A strong anti-Japanese sentiment brought the Papuans to join the war effort. Paradigmatic in this regard is the episode of the Dutch controleur Vic de Bruijn who, with a group of Papuans, engaged in acts of intelligence-gathering missions for the allied troops in the interior of West New Guinea. Here in the mission of Enarotali he formed a group, the Oak Party, comprising Indonesians and Papuans.\textsuperscript{52} Analogous

\textsuperscript{50} Haripranata, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, pp. 56-57.
\textsuperscript{51} Neilson, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 116 & note 26.
operations were conducted by the commissioner of police in Manokwari, J. van Eechoud with a small group of Ambonese and Papuans that later were to represent the first members of the Papuan Battalion established at the end of the war.53

The wartime activities of de Bruijn and van Eechoud deeply affected the development of political consciousness among the Papuans involved. For the first time they were fighting, united as Papuans against a foreign enemy, the Japanese. As van Eechoud stated at the time “de eerste symtomen van het zelfbewustzijn onder de Papoea’s zin direct na de verdrijv in de Japaners duidelijk aan het licht gekomen”.54 In my opinion it appears evident that Japanese policies regarding religion and the system of corvée they imposed allowed for and prompted the incorporation of Christianity into the emerging Papuan nationalist identity and political and nationalist ideology.

The Christian Papuans, however, did not constitute a compact, unitary group. In the north, Papuan Christianity was divided between the ‘Gospel Christians’ and the ‘Koreri Christians’, the former believing that the Gospel was incompatible with the Koreri ideology while the latter maintained that the apparent incompatibility stemmed from the fact that the missionaries had torn out a page from the Bible where the identification of Manseren Manggundi with Jesus was clearly stated.55 In the nationalist struggle that was to follow the Koreri Christians were able to prevail. This because through the creation of interpretations or myths, as that of the page of the Bible withheld by the missionaries, they were able to provide their own representations of the colonial order. This was obtained through the cargo epistemology, the locus where native paradigms and models were able to exert their

54 Eechoud J. van, Nota Bestuursbelied, Hollandia 10 March 1947, p. 4. Translation: “The first symptoms of self-consciousness among the Papuans occurred clearly during the expulsion of the Japanese”. 
hegemony and that guided the assimilation of Christian practices with local interests and meanings. The ‘stories’ or ‘narratives’ of Christianity become part of Papuan cultural heritage and history constituting the basis of a new identity and ideology. Christianity became a means of self-definition.

During the war period the movement of Angganita became the harbour of persecuted Christians. The movement grew and developed into a fully structured and functional organisation. It was in the years 1941-1942 that the Papuan flag, with the Sampari star and the cross as icons, made its appearance for the first time. Meetings were held on a regular basis to accelerate the coming of Koreri. To force people to join the movement, in 1942 a group was appointed to propagandise the message of the movement. This proselytising activity often caused clashes with the local police and Japanese authorities due to the anti-Japanese elements contained in their message. This prompted Japanese intervention to suppress the movement and caused the arrest and imprisonment of Angganita.56

The movement, deprived of Angganita’s leadership, did not wane. A new leader, Stephanus Simopyaref, released from the Japanese prison in Manokwari, took the helm. It was under his leadership that the Koreri movement became political and nationalist. The core of Stephanus message and political propaganda was the attainment of the political independence and national unity of West New Guinea. In an address to his followers, the characteristics or distinctive traits of Papuan identity and nationalist ideology clearly emerge, with Christianity, ethnicity and territorial independence prominently figuring:

We are Christians, but now we see it all in a new and true light. The missionaries have deceived the Papuans on purpose. They have torn out the first pages of the Bible, where it is clearly stated that Jesus was one of our

55 Kamma, Koreri...cit., pp. 183-187. Kamma identifies several subgroups in the two major divisions pointing out the different interests and goals animating the Papuan Christians.
56 ibid., p. 168.
own race, a Papuan, and not a white foreigner as the missionaries wanted us to believe. From the moment the foreigners arrived we had to obey orders and were no longer free people in our own land. But our time is coming, the masters will be slaves and the slaves masters.57

Influenced by the events taking place at the time, with Stephanus the movement becomes political engaging in military actions against the Japanese. A Council of War or Fandurna Mamun, was established and an army was set up. Biblical passages, in particular the Book of Joshua because of the warrior and nationalist ideology characterising it, as well as Biblical expressions, were used in the speeches of the leader rallying his troops and calling them to take arms against ‘the invader’. Nationalist claims were articulated in a symbolic language and structural template provided by Christianity. Captured by the Japanese Stephanus was sentenced to death and the leadership of the movement passed on to Stephanus Wanda.

In those same years an analogous movement was taking place in the Tanah Merah district, south of Hollandia, led by Simson Sommilena. The movement started off as protest against Dutch taxation and forced labour. Strongly animated by the traditional beliefs regarding ancestor worship and cargo expectations, the movement aimed at expelling colonial rule by resorting to the use of force and transferring power and wealth to the members of the movement. Notwithstanding the persecutions of the Japanese, the movement was able to survive until the arrival of the Americans.58

Dazzling Images of Freedom and Equality

The landing of 140,000 American and Australian troops in the bay of Hollandia in 1944\(^59\) represented a further step towards the elaboration of a Papuan national identity. The city of Hollandia became the operational centre of the American Command in the area. Tonnes of equipment and supplies were brought in and the Papuans were employed in odd jobs and in the construction of roads and bridges.\(^60\) During the American occupation the Papuans had a taste of socio-economic equality and modernisation, as emerges from the words of Nicolaas Jouwe who later became a leader of the nationalist guerrilla movement Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM)\(^61\):

My father was a tribal leader in a Kampung near Hollandia. He, with the men of the village went to find out what was happening. They saw how Negroes, who were as black as we, were building roads, driving large army trucks, and were able to do all sort of things just as well as the Whites. They saw black pilots, black sailors, blacks in beautiful uniforms with bottles of coca-cola. Of course they had no idea about racial discrimination in the USA. But what they saw opened their eyes. They had always been despised and treated as savages. Not so much by the Dutch but by the lower ranking officials. They had always been at the lowest point of the ladder: firstly there were the Dutch, then the Chinese, followed by the hated South Moluccans (‘the Black Hollanders’), then the Javanese, and finally the Papuans. So this contact of the coastal population with the American forces in 1944 contained the germs of the later growth of political consciousness.\(^62\)

The same perceptions and feelings echoed in the words of another Papuan leader, Markus Kaisiepo, some years later:

It wasn’t just the goods of the Americans which seemed important to us. We also noticed something else. The army had men with dark skin who lived in

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\(^{61}\) When the OPM was established Nic Jouwe was living in the relative security of Delft. He and Markus Kaisiepo had been the leading figures in the neo-colonial version of Papuan nationalism: in fact, when the Dutch left the country in 1962, they went into exile. However, many of those who joined the Papuan resistance movement after 1962 recognised the leadership of both Jouwe and Kaisiepo.

the same way as the Whites. We even saw black officers. Then we were sure that our people too could live differently than they had been living.\textsuperscript{63}

On the basis of these \textit{post-eventum} statements it appears that the display of ‘racial equality’ in the American military camps was an important factor in the growth of political consciousness among the Papuans. It also reveals that the Papuans had, until then, accepted their social and racial inferiority in the colonial order. The epithets of \textit{Papua Bodo\textbf{h} or Bintung Bodo\textbf{h}}, by which they were often addressed by the Indonesian migrants employed by the Dutch colonial authorities, began to be questioned.

The ‘rapid deployment’ of Western technology and power brought in by the American troops, comprising both Whites and Blacks, made a huge impression on the Papuans. As the Dutch missionary Teutscher, who was stationed in the Lake Sentani area in those years, wrote, “this technical and comfortable civilisation of the West had suddenly broken in upon the Papuan area with a tremendous force and unsurpassed perfection. And it found the Papuan rather dazed and upset”.\textsuperscript{64}

The Papuan people had experienced a rapid change, the landing of the Americans literally turning up side down the world they lived in. Their arrival created a caesura in their temporal dimension. It was a significative event that marked a new beginning and created the consciousness of the past order of things. Being already affected by the changes introduced by colonisation and christianisation as well as by the terrible experience of suffering and persecution under Japanese rule, the Papuans were on that crucial threshold between two worlds. This experience was characterised by a strong feeling of soteriological expectation and anxiety that brought them to

consider the American landing as *eventful*, as an important *signifier*. Some Papuans were, to use Daniel Lerner’s expression, in that crucial “point of engagement”, the painful threshold where the intimate psychological restlessness and the historical events are on the point of being linked to each other. Lerner justly argues:

The meaning of events is best clarified by those whom we perceive at the moment of ‘engagement’ – a moment which occurs when an expansive Self, newly equipped with a functioning empathy, perceives connections between private dilemmas and public issues. This is political consciousness, in the larger sense, and its acquisition distinguishes those who have been pierced by the present and in responding shape the future.65

The conjuncture between the cultural and psychological structure and the external event acted as a formidable catalyst and ground for future developments.

It was in this period that the connection between Christianity and modernity was finally actualised. Teutscher reports that the Americans used to visit Papuan churches, participating to the religious services, praying with their “black brothers” and putting their offerings into the common collection box.66 The Papuans were overwhelmed by the abundance and prosperity brought in by the Americans and to which they were allowed to participate. They also realised that their culture was useful and not inferior as they had been forced to believe since then, as Teutscher writes, “they were called to become head-hunters again and to pursue fleeing Japanese who had hidden in the deep forests. Now they were no longer despised and abused, but seemed to be of use and highly appreciated even by those clever Americans”.67

The war period proved to be a time of awakening, a turning point experience in the development of Papuan political consciousness and that contributed to the development of a Papuan national identity. The experience of suffering at the hands of the Japanese who cruelly repressed the *Koreri* movements and devastated Papuan

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65 Lerner, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
67 *ibid.*, p. 418.
villages and lives, forced the Pauans to coalesce into a new unity far wider than that
of the village or tribe and become aware of their own strengths and potentialities. The
seeds of Papuan nationalism were ready to dehisce at the first favourable winds.

In assessing the war experience it appears evident that it had brought to
completion the detribalisation process already initiated by the missionaries in the pre-
conflict years. As seen in the previous pages, Christian missions had created a
communication network that cut across tribal divisions. The Koreri movement had
used the Christian network and ideology to spread in a way unthinkable a century
earlier. This appears evident when comparing the spatial diffusion of the first
movement reported by Captain Fabritius in 1854 with the great Koreri movement of
the war period.

The withdrawal of missionary personnel from the region or their confinement in
camps by the Japanese at the outbreak of the war, forced the Christian Pauans to rely
on their own strength and resources. Assisted by few indigenous teachers, they
continued to run the mission stations holding church services and spreading the
Christian message. It was in this period that they became aware of their potentialities.

Communication among distant Christian groups continued to be nurtured and
maintained. They understood that it was important to maintain the network if they
wanted to survive Japanese rule and its policy of Islamisation. Paradigmatic (and
emblematic) in this regard was the Simson movement, already referred to, in which the
‘telegraphists’ played a central role. The telegraphist was said, in fact, to be able to
communicate with the ancestors who were believed to live in Bandung, through a wire
at the end of which a used milk can had been attached. Through the wire the
telegraphist was believed to receive orders issued by the ancestors.68 According to

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68 Hogerwaard T., ‘Herlevend Heidendom’, De Opwekker. Tijdschrift Nederlandse Indische Zendings
Bond, 86, 1941, pp. 487-489.
Penders, the city of Bandung was chosen as the home of the ancestors because the leaders of the movement were aware of the fact that this was the main telecommunication centre in the Netherlands Indies.\textsuperscript{69}

Communication was a means of survival, the conduit in which and by which Papuan political consciousness came into being and a social and political public emerged. In the light of Deutsch’s theory of nationalism\textsuperscript{70} we can state that it was this group that allowed for ‘a common history’ to be experienced as ‘common’ by balancing the current war experience with recalled Koreri traditions, by linking ‘private dilemmas’ with ‘public issues’. Communication networks, established by mission activity to spread Christianity, fulfilled the same function in building national consciousness in a similar process to Anderson’s print capitalism. As the development of ‘print-as-commodity’ represented the key to the generation of new ideas of simultaneity,\textsuperscript{71} the mission network, in spreading the contents of Christianity, prompted a change in the perception of temporal and spatial dimensions.

That some of the Papuans directly involved in or affected by the conflict became aware of their ‘political potentialities’ appears in the words of van Eechoud on the day he inaugurated the \textit{Bestuursschool} in 1945:

\begin{quote}
We came here in 1828 and we told you what to do. Today you are called to take the government of this country in your own hands, today the new Papuan is being ‘born’.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

Political consciousness among many of the Papuans, who had been educated in mission schools or were born Christians prior to the outbreak of World War II and those who had converted to Christianity at some stage of their life, was a fact. A 1948 report by the district officer Courtois clearly states that the Papuans were “politically

\textsuperscript{69} Penders, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{70} Deutsch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{71} Anderson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 37.
active” in the years following the conflict. A diffuse and embryonic sense of community had been forged in the struggle against the Japanese invader. From the ashes of devastation, the idea of a Papuan nation began to loom on the horizon.

The Return of the Missionaries.

And suddenly the war was over. (…) Ship after ship left the harbour. Camp after camp was evacuated. Papua became silent and empty again. (…) And in silence and emptiness a great bitterness and disappointment prevailed. This time the new age had come so near. But just as they tried to catch it, it had disappeared again (…) the missions came back.

The missionary Teutscher well describes the state of post-war West Papua. The Papuans had experienced a time of prosperity, a time of empowerment and suddenly everything had disappeared. Dutch administrators and missionaries returned to the territory, but something had changed both in Papua and the world.

The process of decolonisation had begun bringing about the creation of new state entities and a restructuring of international relations shaped by a new ideological dialectics, that generated by liberal democracy and communism, a process that brought to complete maturation also that process of the “Death of God” initialised at the beginning of the XX century. While the Papuans were experiencing the effects of change at the local level triggered by the internalising of acculturation processes, the colonial powers were also affected by a series of changes at the macro-level. These two concentric circles suddenly collapsed on their centre.

72 Quoted by Penders, op.cit., p. 93.
74 Teutscher, op.cit., pp. 418-419.
The creation of the independent Republic of Indonesia in 1945 determined the future developments of West Papua’s history. At the Linggadjati\textsuperscript{75} and Renville\textsuperscript{76} agreements as well as at the Round Table Conference of 1949\textsuperscript{77} the question regarding the fate of West Papua was postponed. The Dutch retained temporary administrative control over the territory pending a final settlement of the issue with the Republic of Indonesia.\textsuperscript{78}

On their return to their colonial possessions the Dutch were faced with a political task, that of preventing West Papua from being incorporated into Indonesia. This was a battle that was fought at an international level in the United Nations General Assembly, and at the local level by engaging in a program of nation-building, which would have justified a request for the constitution of an independent West Papua. While the Dutch politicians in The Hague were occupied in lobbying the international agencies, the missionaries were working on the internal front in implementing the program of nation-building. The process of creating a Papuan nation was cast into the mould of Western-Christian institutions and ideologies. Christianity came, consequently, to be assumed as a distinctive, ‘nationalist’ marker of ‘Papuan-ness’ against an Islamic Indonesia.

\textsuperscript{75} The Linggadjati Agreement was signed in November 1946 with the Dutch recognition of the Republic of Indonesia having de facto authority in Java, Madura and Sumatra. On the occasion both parties agreed to cooperate for the creation of a Federal United States of Indonesia in which the Republic will be one of the states and the Dutch queen was to become the symbolic had of the Union. Ricklefs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 224.

\textsuperscript{76} The Renville agreement was negotiated following the first Dutch ‘police action’ in Java and Sumatra in 1947. The agreement recognised a cease-fire along the artificially determined ‘van Mook line’ that connected the most advanced Dutch points on the islands. Ricklefs, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 225-226.

\textsuperscript{77} The Round Table Conference was held in The Hague. During the Conference the existence of a loose union of the Netherlands and the Republic of the United States of Indonesia was recognised. In this Union the Dutch queen figured as a symbolic head of state while Sukarno was formally recognised as the president of the Republic. Various guarantees were also provided regarding Dutch investments in Indonesia and other financial matters. Sukarno and Hatta were, however, forced to make concessions regarding the status of West Papua, retained by the Dutch, and the Netherlands East Indies debt. Ricklefs, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 232-233.

Because of the presence of a conspicuous number of Indo-Europeans and Indonesians in West Papua, Papuan society was gradually undergoing a process of polarisation that had already began to manifest itself during Japanese occupation. The negative effects of this influx of Indonesian and Dutch settlers was expressed by van Eechoud in a letter to de Bruyn in 1947. The letter emphasised how the Papuans had changed since the war and how ‘sensitive’ they had become to socio-economic issues.79 It is possible to speculate that the religious dichotomy between Christians and Muslims, which will appear in more recent stages of West Papuan nationalism and which appears to have been prompted by Indonesian repression of the nationalist movement and by the ongoing transmigration policies, although there is an attempt to stress the ‘ethnic dimension’ of Papuan nationalism by drawing into the movement Papuan Muslims, has its seedbed in the dichotomy between the pro-Indonesian Kaum Kiri and the pro-Dutch Kaum Konan, as described by van der Veur.80

The pro-Dutch group in 1950 founded the Gerakan Persuatuan Nieuw Guinea, or New Guinea Unity Movement in opposition to the pro-Indonesia party Partai Kemerdekaan Indonesia, or Indonesian Freedom Party for Irian, founded in 1946. The party’s program was the creation of an independent Papua with the help of the Dutch.81 It appears clear that Papuan political consciousness came to be clearly articulated in the dispute between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia. Dutch policies towards West Papua also changed. The embryonic national identity and nationalist ideology that emerged during the war effort was not considered as a convenient foundation stone for future political developments in the area. Van der Veur well illustrates this change in Dutch attitudes by dividing Dutch colonial policy of the post-war period 1950-1962 into two distinct phases: the first phase, between

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1950 and 1960, is represented by what he defines as ‘neo-colonialism’ and a second shorter phase from 1959 to 1962 of “terminal colonial democracy”.82

Van der Veur’s interpretation of Dutch colonial policy in West Papua indicates that the processes of nation-building were guided by Dutch neo-colonial interests and that the Papuan nation that emerged was a mere artificial construction of neo-colonial policies. Colonial administration and mission activity tended to complement each other in the enterprise of nation building re-creating that indissoluble ‘connubial bliss’ between the flag and the cross that has always accompanied the construction of colonial societies.

The Dutch missionaries returned to West Papua with the task of preparing the Papuan Church for independence. The key word was not restauratie but reconstructie, not ‘restoration’ but ‘reconstruction’.83 In this program the neo-colonial intent appears evident. In order to reconstruct it was necessary to destruct or de-construct what existed, that is what had been built until then during the colonial period. The post-war paradigm shift of Dutch policy towards West Papua entailed the destruction of the colonial society of the pre-war years in order to create a new society in tune with the demands and needs of neo-colonialism. This stance called for the ‘erasure’ of Papuan ethnic identity forged during the colonial era and the formation of a new ‘national’ identity in which the constitutive trait of ‘ethnicity’ could have functioned as an anti-Indonesian value. This process of reconstruction could only be attained through the implementation of an ad hoc education system.

As Bourdieu argues, the function of legitimating the established order is not only carried out by the mechanisms traditionally regarded as belonging to the order of

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81 Lagerberg, Jaren ...cit., p. 85.
82 Veur, op.cit., p. 60.
ideology but it is also articulated through the system of symbolic goods of production and the educational system that may, because of the logic of their normal and normative functioning, fulfil “ideological functions”. Their effectiveness lies in the fact that “the mechanisms through which they contribute to the reproduction of the established order and the perpetuation of domination remain hidden”. Consequently ideologies, considered by Bourdieu as “legitimising discourses”, are able to assert themselves through specific ‘institutional’ mechanisms or means. The educational system, established by the Dutch in West Papua following the Second World War, was meant to support the dominant ideology, that of Papuan nationalism, and the neo-colonialist interests and needs of the coloniser. Papuan national identity, realised through those structures of neo-colonial domination, acted also as mechanisms of defence and control of Dutch interests.

Education was the main focus of mission activity in post-war Papua since it was believed that through education it was possible to create an elite capable of governing the country. Van Baal, who was governor in West Papua from 1953 to 1958, argued, that “education is the most important tool for the advancement of acculturation”, a statement that clearly indicates the trajectory and intention of Dutch post-war policies. Education was considered, in fact, as an effective means of disseminating neo-colonial pro-Dutch propaganda and a tool by which it was possible to shape the form and contents of the Papuan nation.

The education system was managed by Christian missions, so that, as the Australian missionary Roscoe, who was touring West Papua in the late 1950s, reports: “every school in Netherlands New Guinea is a Mission school”. The Report on

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Netherlands New Guinea of 1961 indicates that there were 496 unsubsidised mission schools with 20,000 pupils where the content of teaching was almost exclusively religious. The missions also ran the 776 subsidised primary schools with 45,000 pupils in which religious contents did not figure prominently. Many students were also attending secondary schools in which technical and vocational subjects were taught.

Literacy programs were centred mainly on the reading of the Bible, the textbook *par excellence*, and the schools often shared the same Church building. This caused a blurring on the division between the religious and secular realms of modernity and concurs to explain, in my opinion, the ‘mystic’ character of nationalist ideologies and movements in decolonising realities.

Administratively the school system depended on the government. Each of the major mission denominations appointed a General School Manager whose salary was paid by the Dutch government. Roscoe observed that the Dutch recognised the different educational needs of the children living in urban areas and those who lived in rural settings. Since the ethnic make-up of urban areas was rather composite the primary schools were divided into two distinct categories, a Primary A for children who spoke Dutch at home and a Primary B for those who spoke either Malay or Chinese. Following the completion of primary schooling, the students attended the Intermediate School or MULO in which denominational divisions tended to disappear.

Secondary education was reserved to a very small group of Papuans selected and instructed to be the future political elite of an independent West Papua. In 1961, 22

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Papuans were attending the single secondary school in the territory and 95 Papuans were studying abroad.\textsuperscript{89}

The village schools, by contrast, fell under the tutelage of a specific mission. In the areas of the interior opened to full scale foreign penetration only in the aftermath of World War II, the children, before undertaking normal schooling programs attended to the so-called \textit{beschaving school}, ‘school of civilisation’, in which they became accustomed to order and routine.\textsuperscript{90}

In inaccessible and remote areas of the interior, that had not yet been fully explored and brought under either missionary or administrative control in the 1950s, schooling and christianisation activities were carried out by the so-called ‘witness men’. These were Papuan representatives from different areas, chosen by the villages themselves and not by the missionary, who came to the mission station to be educated into evangelical teaching. As the missionary Myron Bromley informs in an article published in \textit{The Alliance Witness}, the lesson consisted of a series of ten teachings so that they could be easily memorised and remembered. The contents of these groups were the creation story, the ten commandments, the story of Jesus’ birth, His death and Resurrection, the foundation of the early Church, the Apostles’ profession of faith and a paraphrased version of the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark.\textsuperscript{91} Classes were conducted for three days from Tuesday to Thursday. On Friday the ‘witness men’ returned to their villages where they taught their village fellows what they had learnt.

The Witness School system, while proving to be a useful means to contact a wider number of people in distant hamlets and villages, allowed for the emergence of a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{90} Roscoe, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 42.
\end{flushright}
new Christian leadership, although errors and misunderstandings often occurred, ending up with some witness school men propagating the wrong message.\textsuperscript{92}

In almost all the schools, but in particular in rural or village settings, teaching was initially in Malay since it was carried out by a native guru, who was either Papuan or Indonesian. It appears evident that the spread of western and Christian values was the fundamental aim of Dutch educational system. But while Christian religion appeared to be the dominant feature of education, the issue regarding the ‘creation’ or ‘choice’ of a national language was poorly addressed in the nation-building process.

During the van Eechoud period and the governorship of Waardenburg that witnessed the opening up of vast unexplored areas of the interior, the Dutch language replaced Malay in the new schools established in the highlands following the re-opening and the establishment of mission stations. The adoption of Dutch was explicitly stated in a memorandum by the Catholic Bishop of Hollandia A. Cremers to Dutch Bishops and politicians, which pointed out the nexus between Dutch language and the promotion of a western-Christian civilisation in West Papua.\textsuperscript{93} The replacement of Malay with Dutch had already been proposed by van Eechoud in 1949,\textsuperscript{94} probably conscious also of the risk in favouring the adoption of one Papuan dialect over others that could have caused fragmentation and the resurgence of tribalism.

There were, however, problems regarding the implementation of educational institutions and programs. The international climate, once again, affected this specific sector of Papuan development.

\textsuperscript{92}The missionary Larson is said to have witnessed one of these misunderstandings: on the occasion of a baptismal service in a village in the Ilaga Valley the local inhabitants released the waters of a dam and one of the leaders shouted to his fellows not to wet their feet in the water that had been contaminated by the sins of those who had been baptised. See in this regard Hayward D. J., The Dani Before and After Conversion, Region Press, Sentani, 1980, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{93} Esterik C. van, Nederlands laaste bastion in de Oost, In den Toren, Baarn, 1982, pp. 38-39.
Maju against Reconstructie: Conflicting Goals in Post-Colonial West Papua.

As van der Veur points out, the poor socio-economic conditions of the country, the unequal distribution of wealth among Eurasians, Indonesians and Papuans could have favoured the rise of an ‘intellectual proletariat’. The same fears appear to have been cautioning van Eechoud and reflected a widespread belief in the capitalist world at the dawn of the Cold War prompted not only by the reminiscences of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution but also by the more recent and traumatic experiences and dynamics which brought to the rise of nazi-socialism in Germany. Van Baal effectively summarises the risks entailed in implementing an educational program unmatched by socio-economic development:

When education is far ahead of economic development, young people leaving school will not succeed in finding work where they can apply the knowledge they have gathered. They have to be content with poorly paid jobs. Socially the disappointment experienced by these young people is a serious drawback, eventually big enough to create a class of unemployed or underemployed semi-intellectuals.

In the years immediately preceding and following the Second World War a series of socio-economic changes had begun to take place. In the highlands, for instance, the devaluation of the cowrie shell that had traditionally functioned as currency and the measure of wealth, coupled with the penetration of Christian missions had triggered a series of institutional changes. Dubbedan reports that the increase of shells circulating in those areas allowed ordinary people to become less dependent on their traditional headmen. The interest in commodities from western trading stores grew and guilders, necessary to buy those commodities, were attainable by selling their garden produce and by working for the government. The availability of

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95 Veur van der, op.cit., p. 62.
96 Eechoud van J., Nederlands Indies, Verslag van de Studiecommissie Nieuw Guinea, Batavia, 1949, p. 67.
money and commodities for the payment of the traditional bride-price, along with the practice of monogamy introduced by the missionaries, prompted changes in social and political relations.\textsuperscript{99} Many traditional practices continued however to be upheld, and were not always a symptom or sign of resistance but stemmed from practical necessity revealing the unequal distribution of socio-economic benefits.

Besides the missionaries, Dutch administrators or \textit{Binnenlands Besturen} played an important role in prompting and directing change. Pim Schoorl, in fact, refers to them as “een agent van ontwikkeling op Nieuw Guinea,” an agent of development in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{100} Rudy de Iongh, who was \textit{controleur (Onderafdelingshoofd)} in the Mappi, Muju and Asmat regions of West Papua between 1958 and 1962, reports that head hunting raids were often recorded among the locals, notwithstanding their conversion to Roman Catholicism. In 1959, for instance, the Jacquai of the Mappi area set up a headhunting expedition against the people from the Tjitak area travelling to the town of Kepi to trade crocodile skins for tobacco, batteries, machetes and textiles. On their way home, passing through the territory of the Jacquai, they were ambushed and sixty of them killed. The only survivor was a boy who was able to escape and inform the administration in Kepi. The fathers of the mission in Kepi who were responsible for the conversion of the Jacquai were greatly disappointed by the crime of their converts and blamed the \textit{controleur}, who acted also as judge, for the lack of severe punishments meted out for crimes. Relations between the administration (\textit{Binnenlands Bestuur}) and the mission, in fact, were often marred by conflicts regarding jurisdiction and specific interests. What the Roman Catholic missionaries,

\textsuperscript{98} Van Baal, ‘Erring Acculturation’...\textit{cit.}, p. 119.
however, referred to as crimes were usually Papuan customary practices, the return to which was caused by the need to procure skulls as bride price still regarded at that time as *a conditio sine qua non* for marrying. Consequently, as de Iongh reports, once the perpetrators of the crime were captured they were judged by considering both the *adat* component, which prompted the action, and the fact that contact with the West and conversion to Christianity were very recent. The *Wetboek of Strafrecht voor Nederlandsch Indie*, which merged *adat* law and Dutch criminal and civil law, provided the guidelines to deal with the matter.\(^{101}\)

The changes implemented by the Dutch also caused traditional leaders to lose their influence over local people and, notwithstanding the acceptance of Christianity, often opposed government presence in the area.\(^{102}\) The persistence of traditional practices, as that previously reported, can be also attributed to the action of local headmen who were using *adat* to maintain their power. As will be argued later in this chapter, the uprisings, such as that which took place in Obano in 1956, are a symptom of the diffuse anti-colonial feelings among some of the Papuans.

Literacy programs were integrated with programs aiming at socio-economic development and at the improvement in the quality of life of Papuan communities as the ‘mobile’ health system and hygiene programs the Dutch set up to fight endemic diseases. As de Iongh informed me, in every *onderafdelingshoofdplaats* (administrative centre) there was a doctor, several nurses and a hospital the size of which depended on that of the *onderafdeling* (administrative unit). Doctors and nurses travelled every two to three weeks to visit remote villages, although in some villages there were local nurses who had received basic training, as did also the district officers

\(^{101}\) Rudy de Iongh, Private Communication, 1 September 2003.

(controleurs), agricultural extension officers (landbouw ambtenaren) and police commanders.\textsuperscript{103} The administration believed, in fact, that the improvement of socio-economic conditions and literacy programs should have been simultaneously implemented in order to warn off the risk of a spread of communist ideologies which were incubating in the pro-Indonesian movements and the emerging political parties.\textsuperscript{104}

The motivation behind the formation of political parties in the aftermath of World War II had a social motivation more than being dictated by genuine nationalist aspirations. The social and racial discrimination experienced by the Papuans vis-à-vis the Indo-Europeans colonists in Manokwari and the land settlement disputes in Merauke, forced the Papuans to address socio-economic issues. The key word, as Lagerberg observed, was at the time maju, ‘progress’ and not merdeka, ‘independence’. With the return of the Dutch and the implementation of anti-Indonesian policies, the Papuans saw that the jobs that had been previously held by the Indonesians, in particular, the Moluccans, were becoming available to them. Social tensions seem to have characterised the post-war situation in West Papua.\textsuperscript{105}

Party ideologies in Papua had different origins and aims: some focused on local issues and concerns; others reflected missionary influences by endorsing, for instance, ideas regarding ‘God’s sovereignty’ or ‘peace against violence’; a few presented themselves as anti-communist who believed that independence could have been

\textsuperscript{103} Rudy de Iongh, Private Communication, 28 September 2003.
\textsuperscript{104} Sukarno himself was sympathetic towards Communism. His idea of revolution was inspired by this sympathy as well as that of ‘perpetuating the revolution’ by using the West Papuan question. One must not forget also the role played by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the West Papuan issue in 1961-1962. In this regard see: Ricklefs, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 270-271.
achieved through an alliance with the Dutch even going as far as adopting the Dutch language as their ‘national’ idiom. As van der Kroef notes:

despite such seemingly divergent emphasis, a Papuan self-perception in terms of what perhaps may simply be called ‘development mindedness’ clearly emerges as a common undertone in these party programs, along with a search for a Papuan national identity, not just anti-Indonesian, but also reaching out beyond the cocoon of Dutch colonialism.

While anti-Indonesian sentiments, instilled by colonial propaganda, were growing and spreading, social consciousness and dissatisfaction, generated by that social phenomenon known as relative deprivation, was increasing proportionally. In 1950 a strike of waterfront workers in Hollandia brought to a standstill the Dutch oil company operating in the area. Ten years later, in 1960, the dismissal of mainly Indonesian labourers in Sorong and low wages in Hollandia caused the outbreak of violent street manifestations and strikes. The episodes reported by Lagerberg show not only that the situation of socio-economic tension persisted during all the 1950s but also that this was aggravated by the anti-Indonesian policies implemented and that inevitably affected the process of Papuan nation-building. The failure of some development projects such as the ‘Nimboran Community Development Plan’, in the lake Sentani area, also contributed to nurture social unrest. Here the unrest took the form of cargo movements known as Kasiep characterised by strong political overtones. Van Baal tried to address the widespread socio-economic dissatisfaction

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109 Lagerberg, *West Irian and Jakarta Imperialism...cit.*, p. 69.
generated by the failure of the project by establishing the Blitung-farms, a system based on the cultivation of cash-crops in which the Papuans were able to make a personal profit.\textsuperscript{112}

The Christian church actively participated to the socio-economic contentions by supporting the claims of workers and the dispossessed. It was the Protestant church that inspired the constitution of a Protestant labour union, the Christian Workers of New Guinea in 1960.\textsuperscript{113} It is possible that the Dutch-educated Papuan elite found a fertile ground in this milieu of social and economic dissatisfaction which brought to the foundation of the anti-Dutch and pro-Christian Partai Nasional or PARNA in the ‘model village’ of Hamadi near Hollandia.\textsuperscript{114}

The formation of political parties spurred by socio-economic issues and backed by union associations, allowed for the incorporation of these issues into the nationalist claim promoted by the Dutch. Nationalism became a response of the anomic and dispossessed working classes to both the neo-colonialist policies of the Dutch and Indonesia’s colonialist program that came to be connected, in the collective perception of the Papuans, with the influx of non-Papuan migrants. It was at this point that social tensions came to be connected with the request for national independence.

The Dutch designed a national economic system by cutting off all previously established commercial ties with the territories that had become part of Indonesia and reoriented Papuan trade towards other areas, such as The Netherlands and Singapore. The ties with Maluku were also severed. Van Eechoud, from the very beginning, had declared the necessity to abandon the treatment of West Papua as an extension of Maluku. The detailed plan that he presented in 1947 to the Batavian Government was

\textsuperscript{112} Lagerberg, Jaren...cit., pp. 124-128. The Nimboran Community Development Project had, in fact, failed because not much attention had been given to the promotion of private enterprise in order to encourage cooperation.
\textsuperscript{113} ibid., pp.151-155.
formulated on this important premise.\textsuperscript{115} This, of course, caused resentment among the southern Moluccans who had always considered west Papua as their ‘backyard’ or private reserve. In their own program of national independence West Papua was to be part of either a Moluccan Commonwealth, comprising North and South Moluccas and New Guinea, or of the \textit{Republik Maluku Selatan} or Republic of South Moluccas. The Muslim \textit{raja} Sialana of Morella (Ambon) is said to have declared in 1947:

> Concerning the economic problem, I feel it is very necessary that New Guinea becomes part of our area here, because previously it was included in our Residency. With New Guinea I am convinced that we here need not in the future be scared of rich European countries or Indonesia, even though we withdraw from East Indonesia and become a nation ourselves, because in New Guinea there is a great deal of gold, silver, oil, coal and also fertile land for an expanding economy.\textsuperscript{116}

It was probably the Dutch insistence on severing persisting historical ties with the Moluccans or disengaging the territory and the Papuans from any Indo-Malay connection in general, in name of a newly founded national identity, that prompted Frans Kaisiepo’s proposal to change the territory’s name from ‘Papua’ to ‘Irian’ during the Malino Conference in 1946.\textsuperscript{117} Kaisiepo, in fact, who is known to have fully adhered to the policies formulated by van Eechoud, is reported to have stated on the occasion:

> De band van het landschap Tidore met Nieuw-Guinea dient te worden verbroken. De naam Papoea moet worden afgeschaft, omdat dit woord in het Tidoreesch ‘slaaf’ betekent. Het volk wenscht het land ‘Nieuw-Guinea’ te noemen en het volk ‘Irian’.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{114} ibid., pp. 182-187
\textsuperscript{116} Quoted from Chauvel, \textit{Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists...cit.}, pp. 239-240.
\textsuperscript{117} The Malino conference was organised by the Dutch in 1946 in order to gain support for their proposal regarding the constitution of a federal Indonesian state against the unitary state proposal put forward by Sukarno and Hatta. At the conference 39 Indonesia representatives of the \textit{rajas}, Christians and several ethnic groups of Eastern Indonesia and Sulawesi supported the idea of a federal state. Ricklefs, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{118} Wal S.L. van der (ed.), \textit{Kort Verslag van de Vergadering van de Malino-Conferentie op 18 Juli 1946}, in \textit{Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische betrekkingen 1945-1950}, V, 16 Juli-28 October, 1946. Translation: “The bonds tying the territories of Tidore and New Guinea to each other should be cut. The name Papua must be abolished, because this word in Tidorese means ‘slave’. The people want the country to be named ‘New Guinea’, and its population ‘Irian’.”
The Dutch poured millions of guilders into the economic development of West Papua and in the establishment of Western institutions as schools, hospitals, administrative offices Dutch expenditure affected, in particular, the urban and industrial centres of Hollandia, Manokwari, Merauke, Biak and Sorong.\(^{119}\) Lagerberg reports that in 1962 the government budget amounted to 142 million guilders and the Dutch grant in aid 101 million. The European Economic Community (EEC) granted 133 million guilders for the development program over the whole period of Dutch rule, while West Papua’s own share of the budget was, in 1961, 37 million guilders.\(^{120}\)

Provisions derived from shipping and commercial activities benefited in particular the ethnically heterogeneous coastal populations and centres with an increase in cash incomes. Education was in great demand among the Papuans since they realised that it was a means to become *tuan tanah*, owner of the land.

At the same time the government was trying to regulate the influx of migrants to the region. In 1959 it was estimated that 21,965 Papuans were living in the major urban centres of Hollandia, Manokwari, Biak, Sorong and Fak-Fak along with 15,190 Europeans and 9,806 Asians. Foreign presence appears to have increased eight fold if one compares these same estimates with those of 1930 in the same areas.\(^{121}\) Xenophobic attitudes among the Papuans had begun to emerge, as the newcomers were perceived to be ‘economic competitors’. As previously pointed out, Van Eechoud had clearly expressed his reservations and concerns regarding the immigration of Dutch settlers to West Papua in a letter to de Bruyn:

\(^{120}\) Lagerberg, *West Irian and Jakarta Imperialism...cit.*, p. 106.
\(^{121}\) Estimates are derived from data provided by Lagerberg, *Jaren...cit.*, p. 154; p. 34. Under the heading ‘Europeans’ in Dutch statistics of the time are included also the Euroasians that had migrated to Java following the declaration of independence. See in this regard: Lijphart, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-58.
I must admit that I am not very enthusiastic about colonisation in New Guinea of Europeans from Holland. In the first place I doubt it will be successful. Furthermore it seems to me that the import of Europeans will sow the seed of future conflict.\textsuperscript{122}

Among the Muyu of the Merauke region, for instance, Christianity and western capitalism came to be integrated into the traditional expectations of wealth and prosperity.\textsuperscript{123} The Kuram movement that took place in the 1950s displayed xenophobic and proto-nationalist sentiments.

Xenophobic attitudes were directed in particular against the Indonesians and Chinese who were resented because they were believed to be destroying and obstructing Muyu’s social mobility and economic growth with their presence.\textsuperscript{124} According to Rudy de Iongh, in the Muju area where he worked as controleur, xenophobic attitudes towards the Indonesians had their origins in the attitudes of the Indonesian teachers sent there from the Roman Catholic missions stationed in the Kei and Aru islands since the 1930s. Most of these teachers began, in fact, to act as autocratic rulers demanding produce and free labour from the villages and when their requests were met by Papuan refusal, they resorted to the use of force. This consequently resulted in the rise among the Muju of an anti-Indonesian feeling which reached its peak in the aftermath of World War II when the United States increased the pressure on the Dutch to hand over the territory to Indonesia. De Iongh noticed that the Muju’s attitude towards the Indonesians was in stark contrast to that of the nearby Asmat where he was stationed in 1962: the Muju were, in fact, more educated and had greater access to means of information, such as transistor radios, than the Asmat who appeared to be more indifferent to the takeover.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{122} Derix, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 165-166.
\textsuperscript{124} Pouwer, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 252-253.
\textsuperscript{125} Rudy de Iongh, Private Communication, 7 November 2003.
It appears clear that the Dutch policy of Papuan nation building aimed at antagonising Indonesia’s claims over the territory. There was a widespread conviction among Dutch policy makers that this goal could be achieved only by stressing Papuan distinctiveness. The Bot plan set up at the end of the 1950s aimed, consequently, at the ‘Papuanisation’ of the public administration and at the political development for the attainment of self-determination and independence of West Papua as part of a wider Melanesian entity.126

‘Papuanisation’, however, did not mean or entail a ‘re-evaluation’ of Papuan culture, but merely the ‘replacement’ of European civil servants with Papuan ones. The way the educational system was set up, in the mould of Christianity and managed by Christian missions, also indicates that modernisation, in tune with western categories, could have been achieved only by adopting an ideology that would have created a ‘sense’ of ‘spiritual affinity’ with, if not dependency from, the Western World.

By the 1950s Christianity, filtered through the native cargoist hermeneutics, had become an integral part of Papuan life. Dutch neo-colonial policies brought to completion the connection between Christianity and the Dutch government perceived during colonial times. In some cases this connection was mythologised and ‘historicised’. Pouwer reports, for instance, that the Mimika had invented the story of two sisters who had once arrived in Kaimana or Fak-Fak, built an aeroplane, and left for the land of the white man. There the eldest called herself Maria and the youngest Wilhelmina. Maria went to heaven where she gave birth to Jesus, and this is how

Christianity came about, and Wilhelmina founded the *Kompanie* and the Dutch Colonial Government.\(^{127}\)

The nation building project tended to introduce cultural elements and values antithetical to the Indonesian ones. ‘Papua-ness’ and Papuanisation, which figured prominently in van Eechoud’s program of nation-building, in reality meant christianisation and westernisation, a trend that was clearly marked during Van Baal’s governorship and expressed in his statement that “education must bring them at least something of the elementary fundamentals of Western secular success”.\(^{128}\) If the nation-building program served the narrow neo-colonial interests of the Dutch, it also served wider, international ones. By implementing the creation of a nation through the use of Christianity and Christian institutions, it was possible to ward off the ideological risks of communism. Ironically it would be the fear of communism that would decide the fate of West Papua in 1962.\(^{129}\)

\(^{127}\) Pouwer, *op.cit.*, p. 252.


\(^{129}\) The failure of the Netherlands to gain support for the West Papuan cause was basically due to a chain of circumstances occurring in the international arena. At the time the United States, and the Western bloc in general, were pursuing a strong anti-communist policy of ‘containment’ by isolating the communist countries and by supporting those nationalist governments that were at risk, for domestic political and economic instability, to become an easy prey for communist propaganda. According to a widespread political theory in the United States, in the Indo-Chinese region since the end of World War II a domino effect had been taking place and that in the long run would have affected Indonesia too. It was vital for the United States to avoid the constitution of a Jakarta-Phnom Penh-Beijing-Pyongyang axis across East Asia. On the basis of this consideration, it seemed that the act of preventing Indonesia from becoming a communist country had priority over any other issue. Close economic relations established by Sukarno with the USSR, consisting mainly in the purchase of military equipment, induced the United States to accelerate the process that brought about the final definition of the West Papuan question. In a secret letter dated 2 April 1962, addressed to the Netherlands Prime Minister De Quay, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, referring to the consequences of a possible conflict with Indonesia, wrote: “Such a conflict would have adverse consequences out of all proportion to the issue at stake. This would be a war in which neither the Netherlands nor the West could win in any real sense. Whatever the outcome of particular military encounters, the entire free world position in Asia would be seriously damaged. Only the communists would benefit from such a conflict. If the Indonesian Army is committed to all out war against the Netherlands, the moderate elements within the army and the country would be quickly eliminated, leaving a clear field for communist intervention. If Indonesia were to succumb to communism in these circumstances, the whole non-communist position in Vietnam, Thailand and Malaya would be in grave peril and, as you know, these are areas in which we the United States have heavy commitments and burdens”. Quoted in: Lagerberg, *West Irian and Jakarta Imperialism…*cit.*, p. 87.
The religious institutions and the institutions managed by religious authorities represented the ‘means’ by which the Papuan nation was being constructed. Religion shaped Papuan ideology, social structure and national identity. A Papuan was first and above all a Christian.

**Papuan Response to Dutch Neo-Colonialism**

As pointed out in chapter IV, we do not possess a Papuan narrative of the events that took place in the period under examination. What we possess is only the narrative of the colonisers, the missionaries and administrators, but in which one can possibly identify ‘Papuan chronicles’. In order to assess the reaction of the Papuans to the program of nation building implemented by the Dutch in the post war decolonisation era, one needs to resort to these narratives and these possible chronicles.

Resistance to Dutch neo-colonial policies as well as to Indonesian colonialist ambitions, was rife during the years of ‘reconstruction’. This resistance manifested itself in the religious milieu in which Papuan ethnic identity had been forged during the pre-war years. Papuan autochthonous national identity began to emerge ‘distinctively’ during Japanese occupation and the ensuing American liberation, in which the traits of ethnicity and Christianity figured prominently.

Christianity had played a major role in shaping Papuan ethnic identity that culminated with the creation of the myth of the ‘torn page of the Bible’ and the Papuans representing themselves as the ‘elected people’ to whom the message was originally directed. In coastal and urban centres, however, this message, under the influence or pressure of socio-economic factors and contingencies, had undergone a process of ‘politicisation’ represented by the formation of political parties. In the highlands, by contrast, which had only experienced an intensive program of
christianisation and modernisation in the post-war era, the *merdeka* spirit manifested itself in the form of movements and uprisings that still preserved some typical cargoist traits. Presumably the *Wege* movements that took place in the Wissel lakes area in the 1950s were initially an expression of the resistance of the Papuans to the Dutch neo-colonial policies of nation-building. For the first time the region of the central highlands became the stage of nationalist movements.

In contrast to either Lagerberg’s belief that the movements were a sign of economic and social backwardness and primitivism, or to Van Baal’s theory that it was an example of “erring acculturation”, I believe that these movements were an evident, rational expression of resistance to external interference and precisely to the neo-colonial policies of the Dutch government. This trend had already appeared in the resistance to Japanese policies of Islamisation.

To express their dissent and socio-economic distress, the Papuans resorted to traditional cargoist practices. The movements took their ideological inspiration from the autochthonous myth of Situgumina, widespread among the people of the Wissel Lakes region, who is said to have fled to the West with a *cowrie* shell. Here she performed miracles and went to Surabaya where she made the people rich. From the Wissel lakes, the movement spread to the nearby areas of Paniai and East Tigi where it was recorded to be still active in 1960.

Benny Giay, a Papuan CAMA Minister, in his doctoral thesis on the *Wege Bage* movement of the 1950s, informs us that the core belief of the ideology of the movement was that the Christian doctrines preached by the missionaries were already

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130 Lagerberg, *West Irian and Jakarta Imperialism*...cit., p. 72.
131 Van Baal, ‘Erring Acculturation...cit., pp. 110-111.
132 A complete report of the *Wege* movement is provided by Grootenhuis G.W., ‘De ’Wege’ beweging in Paniai en Oost Tigi, Gouvernement van Nederlands Nieuw Guinea’, Bureau of Native Affairs, Hollandia, 15 September 1960, doc. No. 150, in *Archieven van de Raad voor Zending van de Hervormde Kerk*, Oegstgeest.
known to them long before the arrival of the Europeans.\textsuperscript{134} This view is supported by Hitt’s observations regarding the Dani people who reports that “when the missionaries came and talked about Christ, the Son of God as the Creator and Redeemer who was able to restore true life to man, the Danis linked the message to their myth [\textit{Nabelan-Kapel/Hai}] and the messengers to Bok, the God-man ancestor”\textsuperscript{135}

Social and economic changes had affected the local people during the previous two decades. The presence of police patrols guarding the \textit{Pax Nederlandica}, the Dutch administrative policies and the educational activity of the missionaries had contributed to create a climate of latent tension and unrest. Resistance to the immigration of new settlers and government policies, in particular in the area of the administrative and mission post of Enarotali, had already sparked revolts as early as 1938. In that year, in the village of Kebo, the people had tried to drive out the foreigners during a census registration by van Eechoud, the \textit{Bestuurassistant} in Enarotali. A year later, in 1939, the Netherlands Geographical Society members and an assistant of de Bruijn, who was at the time head of the government post in Enarotali, were subjected to hostile treatment by the locals and forced to leave the area. Pig feasts and ceremonial gatherings were used by the leaders as means to rally the people of other villages to join the uprising and expel the foreigners from the region.\textsuperscript{136} The instability that the uprisings were causing in the region, and that was hampering Dutch penetration in the area, forced the government to intervene to restore law and order.\textsuperscript{137}

Similar revolts were also staged during Japanese occupation. The xenophobia manifested during the war years swayed between hatred and fear. Hatred because of

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Wege Bage} means ‘disturbers of Peace and Order’.
\textsuperscript{135} Hitt., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{137} Rhys, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 81-82.
the harsh conditions of servitude and exploitation in which they were forced to live, and fear because of the punishment they were threatened with in case of resistance or disobedience. The missionary Mickelson, in fact, on his return to the Paniai region after the war, found that xenophobic attitudes were still strong among the locals. Still fearing an imminent return of the Japanese, they believed that if they allowed the missionary to stay they would incur in some form of severe punishment. Thanks, however, to the mediation of a local headman, Weakebo, who had become a friend of the missionaries operating in the region, Mickelson was able to establish a mission post in the region.\textsuperscript{138}

Weakebo’s friendly attitude, towards the foreigners entering the region in the years following the Second World War, was prompted by his ambition to further his personal social and economic interests,\textsuperscript{139} and contrasted with that of other Papuan Big Men. Van der Hoeven, in fact, reports a series of anti-colonial revolts in 1953-1954 in the Aga Valley led by a local headman.\textsuperscript{140}

The involvement of local headmen as leaders of the uprisings staged during this period indicates that political and socio-economic factors were playing an important role in fuelling discontent and unrest. As already stated in the previous pages, many local leaders had seen their influence wane with the introduction of modern values, norms and means of production that brought about a restructuring of the native social and economic organisations. Between 1950 and 1955 in the area of Obano, a decline in sweet potato yields along with the outbreak of an epidemic that reduced the pig population were attributed to the activity of the foreigners and the innovative methods

\textsuperscript{140} Hoeven J.A. van der, \textit{Ratten aan ’t Spit}, De Standaart, Amsterdam, 1964, pp. 9-17.
of cultivation they introduced. The foreigners were also thought to have caused the epidemic of measles that ravaged the area causing the death of many children.\textsuperscript{141} The revolt, which ensued, consequently targeted the missionary and government personnel in Obano. Schools and other ‘foreign’ buildings were burnt and some teachers were killed. It took two months before the Dutch were able to quell the uprising and restore law and order.\textsuperscript{142} A period of famine characterised the aftermath of the revolt, nurturing latent tensions. This climate of socio-political unrest and psychological distress provided the ideal setting in which the activity of Zakheus Pakage could assume a particular meaning.

Zakheus Pakage was a Papuan Christian who had been a member of de Bruijn’s Oak Party and, after the war, had been educated as a catechist.\textsuperscript{143} On his return to the Wissel Lakes, he began to implement a program of Church building that, in his opinion, would have brought about the transformation of society and the beginning of a new era of peace and prosperity.\textsuperscript{144}

The highland districts were, in those years, witnessing the rapid expansion of Christianity. Among the Dani of the Baliem and Ilaga valleys, fetish burnings, symbolically marking the conversion to the new religion and way of life of the foreigners, were gaining momentum.\textsuperscript{145} The conversion to Christianity had been prompted by the similarities that the native populations identified between Christian eschatological beliefs and their autochthonous belief of \textit{Hai}, the promised era of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Hoeven van der, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 9-11.
\item Post W., \textit{The Alliance Witness}, 20 December 1947.
\item Giay, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 53.
\item Hayward, \textit{The Dani...cit.}, pp.126-139. Cfr. Eechoud J. van, \textit{Woudloper Gods}, de Boer, Amsterdam, 1955, pp. 198-202. Van Eechoud narrates the initial phases that brought to the development of the movement by the activity of Moses Kelangin, a Papuan converted to Christianity and that was educated as a school teacher, who arrived in the region with Father Kammerer of the Roman Catholic Mission.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
wealth, peace and happiness. This is, *grosso modo*, a concept similar to that of *Koreri* of the Papuans inhabiting the northern coastal areas. Both notions are rooted in the myth narrating the race between the snake and the bird in primeval times that, although with local variants, appears to be common to many Papuan people. Hai movements were not new to the region. Ellenberger has, in fact, been able to chronicle, on the basis of oral and written accounts, a history of at least ten movements that took place between 1870 and 1977. The Hai movements, however, that took place in the 1950s are those better documented.

In the context of the preaching activity of Zakheus, the Christian message was understood as forecasting the imminent actualisation of the soteriological expectations of the Papuans that had been activated by the diffuse and latent dissatisfaction and discontent with their socio-economic conditions. As Giay argues, Zakheus “helped in expressing the people’s political-theological aspirations”. In these socio-psychological conditions of 1951, mass conversions to Christianity accompanied by fetish burnings took place among the people of the Ilaga valley.

Not all the Papuans, however, joined Zakheus’ movement. Opposition came from those who had converted to Catholicism and from the local headmen, such as Waektebo, who felt that their positions and privileges, obtained by supporting the mission and the government, were threatened.
The centrepiece of Zakheus program was the founding of a school believed to be the sole effective means through which propagate his message and teachings. As Giay reports:

what he taught was related to his own view of God he invented out of his father’s teaching and that of Christianity, some things on community development such as: how to keep the village clean, and the importance of working hard in cultivating the land.152

It appears that Zakheus’ educational program included not only Christian religious teachings formulated in the terms of the Papuan tradition but also projects aiming at the socio-economic development of the region.

Grootenhuis, who travelled to the region in 1951, reports that the students of Zakheus’ school became preachers of the Wege Mana, ‘the disturbers of peace and order’, and the founding fathers of various villages known as ‘Wege villages’.153 This foundational activity was in tune with Zakheus’ program of ‘relocation’ consisting of physically removing the people from their original native villages to newly founded ones. The migration had a symbolic meaning that indicated the total abandonment of the ‘old way’ of life and the beginning of a ‘new way’. The ‘Exodus’, as Benny Giay calls it, appears to have been strongly influenced by the Biblical story of Moses leading the Hebrew tribes out of Egypt to the ‘promised land’.154

To confirm the assumption that the Wege movement was inspired by Christian beliefs and Biblical stories concurs a piece of information provided by the missionary Troutman stationed in the area in 1959. Having asked one of the Zakheus followers

152 ibid., p. 80.
154 The ‘Great Trek’ of the Boers from the Cape Colony to Orange Free State and Transvaal between 1835 and 1840 took its ideological inspiration from the same Biblical passage and became the foundational myth of South African Nationalism. The trekkers saw themselves as the chosen people being led to the Promised Land. In this regard see: Prior M., The Bible and Colonialism. A Moral Critique, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 81-84. It is possible to speculate that the same feelings were inspiring Zakheus followers.
why he adhered to the *Wege*, notwithstanding his conversion to Christianity, he was told that “*Wege and the Gospel went together*”.155

By 1961 the movement became decisively political influenced by the rumours circulating regarding the imminent settlement of the dispute over West Papua between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia, but also by Dutch initiatives in the region and the establishment of the New Guinea Council.156 The missionary Catto wrote at the time:

…the cult that was up there and seemed to die out has taken its stand again and possibly at this time is not only a religious movement but is swinging into a political movement. This I think is an outcome of the preparations being made at the present time for this New Guinea Council which will be inaugurated on April 5. The spirit of nationalism at the moment is real strong although they still want the Dutch to remain and prepare for their independence.157

And again, some months later, observing the expansion of the movement he reported:

The *Wege* movement in the Kapauku country continues to advance. This movement is first nationalistic, communist and religious and continues to be a threat to the Christian community of the tribe.158

On the basis of the information provided by the missionary Catto it appears that what caused the politicisation of the movement was the establishment of the New Guinea Council by the Dutch government that had the function of preparing the local Papuans for political independence. Between 1959-1962 the Dutch had begun to accelerate the program of nation-building in the region stimulating what may be regarded as the ‘institutionalisation’ of Papuan political consciousness, that is by establishing institutions representing politically the Papuans *vis à vis* the Indonesians. Zakheus and his followers did not oppose resistance to the Dutch initiative since the

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158 *ibid.*, p. 724.
program contained the implicit clause that, once political and national independence was attained, the foreigners would leave the country.

Analogous movements took place in the other areas of the Papuan highlands in the same period. It appears from the missionary accounts that these were interconnected. It is believed that traders and travellers acted as carriers or propagators of the message. The fetish burnings, that took place among the Damal of the Ilaga Valley in the early 1950s, already referred to in the previous pages, appear to have spread to the nearby Western Dani by 1958. In that year the Dani, who had begun to negotiate with the local mission in Pyramid, began to convert. As Hayward points out while “the Damal had listened to the promises of the Christian Gospel from the perspective of their aspirations for Hai…the Dani were hearing it from their aspirations for Nabelan Kapelan”, the Dani belief in a time of happiness at the dawn of creation lost due to the foolishness of man.

When the missionaries arrived and began preaching the Gospel of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins, the Dani understood it in the sense that they were being offered a second chance at immortality. Fetish burnings, instigated by a self-proclaimed prophet, Jabonep, were the most visible and momentous aspect of the movement indicating not only their acceptance of Christianity but, as O’Brien and Ploeg observed, also their willingness or desire to accept the European way of life.

The Dani proved to be receptive to the message and many of them emerged as political leaders. It is possible that the receptiveness that appeared to characterise their initiation to Christianity was determined by the way Christianity was being presented

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160 The belief stems from a common Papuan myth regarding the race between the bird and the snake referred to earlier.
at the time. Although scholars, such as O’Brien and Ploeg, argued that the rapid conversion to Christianity by the Western Dani was influenced by the phenomenon of cultural stress, as they were already dissatisfied with their original culture,\textsuperscript{163} I am inclined to attribute it to the fact that this dissatisfaction was prompted by the acceleration of nation-building processes mediated by Christianity. This appears evident in the way that ecclesiastical organisation was implanted among the Western Dani. In fact ecclesiastical organisation appears to have been juxtaposed to the native political one, with parishes overlapping the traditional division of sub-confederacies and dioceses overlapping that of the confederacies. This was not a conscious decision made by the missionaries but, as Hayward reports, seems to have been a Dani initiative.\textsuperscript{164} That the receptiveness was prompted by the way Christianity and Christian institutions came to be implanted among the Western Dani, that is without producing social and political disruptions, seems to be confirmed by the resistance that the Dani inhabiting the Baliem valley demonstrated in opposing Christian penetration.\textsuperscript{165} While the Western Dani lived in scattered and distant villages and hamlets, the Dani of the Baliem Valley presented a complex inter-village organisation. Christian ecclesiastical organisation could not be established without disrupting this system.  

It appears evident from the movements that took place during the period of intensive Dutch colonial rule in the region that, notwithstanding the conversion to Christianity, native Papuan culture and worldview persisted and continued to assert itself. Irrespective of the nation-building process that was being implemented in the

\textsuperscript{163}ibid., p. 291.
\textsuperscript{164} Hayward, \textit{Vernacular Christianity…cit.}, pp. 93-94.
mould of Christian institutions and ideology, the Papuans were able to exert control over the process itself through their native epistemology and gnoseological categories and forestall Dutch neo-colonial tendencies.

**Persisting Trends and the Eternal Return**

The Papuans were able to assert their own ethnic identity shaped before and during the Second World War, following the acceptance of Christianity, against the Dutch nation-building program that was attempting to construct and impose a national identity that favoured the interests of the colonial power once national independence was attained. While Christianity and anti-communism provided the content of the nationalist ideology propagandised through the institutions the Dutch established and the policies they implemented, since these ideas played against Indonesia’s colonial ambitions, Papuan autochthonous culture, that had ‘inculturated’ Christianity, was characterised by an anti-colonial ideology.

It has been shown in this chapter that the majority of the Papuans accepted Christianity following its re-interpretation and reformulation in the light of their traditional epistemology that allowed it to become meaningful and value-charged. The myth of the Biblical secret withheld by the missionaries acted as the catalyst prompting conversion.

Conversion to Christianity brought about a redefinition of Papuan ethnic identity in religious terms. *Koreri*-Christianity, derived from such redefinition, along with the communication network established by the missionaries, played a major role in fuelling the emergence of Papuan national, ‘super-tribal’ consciousness and identity in the anti-colonial struggles of the late 1930s and early 1940s. In the aftermath of the war it was *Koreri*-Christianity, in fact, that hindered the neo-colonial tendencies in the
Dutch nation-building program, which implicitly aimed at imposing a constructed, artificial national identity that suited their (neo-colonial) interests. It was in the milieu of intensive Dutch colonial rule and nation-building that the Koreri Christians forged their own national and political identity as the cargo movements and urban uprisings, which characterised Papuan society during the 1950s, reveal and in which Papuan claims and discontent appear to have been voiced through the native cultural heritage against the acculturative attempts of Dutch Christianity.

The attempts to quell the revolts and protests of the time, which were dictated by a diffuse socio-economic malaise and political dissatisfaction, forced the religious ideas fostering the movements to undergo a radical modification and to become, to use Bryan Wilson’s expression, “the ideological justification for revolutionary activity”.166 When the Dutch finally relinquished their sovereignty over the territory to the Republic of Indonesia in 1962, the revolutionary activity became the organised, armed struggle of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka.167

Papuan culture and Christianity are still today fundamental features of Papuan national identity and nationalist ideology. As the anthropologist Eben Kirksey has recently observed:

The word merdeka (freedom) – an important political concept – is also key to understanding contemporary Papuan culture. This powerful concept unites West Papua’s diverse cultural groups. Merdeka is broadly defined by Papuans: it is variously a desire for divine salvation, equitable development, environmental sustainability and political independence. Christianity has been practiced in West Papua for nearly 150 years and a distinctively local form of this religion flavours Papuan aspiration for freedom.168

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It is possible to state, at this stage, that an ‘inculturated’ form of Christianity represents the core or ‘kernel’ of West Papuan nationalism. This Christian core is continuously nurtured by the function that the Christian church has played and still plays in the territory and its role in implicitly structuring nationalist claims for independence. As advocates against human rights abuses, the Papuan churches continue their function of structuring the myths of Papuan nationalism.

The myth of the *Memoria Passionis*, ‘Memory of Suffering’, has replaced the early myth of the ‘secret withheld by the missionaries’, but it still has an analogous function: that of coalescing and catalysing Papuan nationalist claims. According to Fr. Theo van der Broek, the *Memoria Passionis* has its source in three major experiences: the development policy pursued by the Indonesian government during the last thirty-eight years; the occurrence of human right violations in Papuan territory following its integration into Indonesia; and the behaviour of the Indonesian armed forces characterised by an arrogant display of brutality and power.

The attempts made by the Indonesian government to wipe out any vestige of Papuan culture through the endemic implementation of policies of modernisation, such as the infamous *Operasi Koteka* of the 1970s, or to either encourage or plan the migration of people of different ethnic and religious affiliations to West Papua, has only had the effect of strengthening the terms and modes of Papuan identification. In fact, since the annexation of the territory to Indonesia, the Papuans believe that the

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Indonesian officials come to West Papua only “for business and not to build the territory”. This is a belief that has contributed to enhance their sense of alienation towards Jakarta and Indonesia as a whole. In this regard in 1970 an Australian journalist noted:

Some Indonesian government officials talked of 100,000 non-Irianese eventually arriving in the province, using the paternalistic argument that the local people were unwilling to work or unable to learn how. But glaringly whenever I inquired I could find no evidence that efforts were being made to educate local people in the basics of business practice, thus enabling them to share in the economic development of the province...So far Irianese anger has manifested itself only in market place disturbances, it is hard to believe that Djakarta government should be pursuing such an obviously incendiary policy.

However where the policies of the Indonesian government have failed, the tourist industry, managed by the Indonesians, might succeed. By selecting fragments of Papuan cultural heritage, the tourist industry empties them of their semantic and symbolic value neutralising their ‘political potentialities’. Ironically, the cultural heritage that survives will be that fused with the Christian message, so that Papuan Christianity and the Papuan Churches will strengthen their political and nationalist role and function in a world that has recently rediscovered the force of religious beliefs and fervour. Is this the ‘Dawn of the Gods’?

Indonesian transmigration programs, promoting the relocation of hundreds of, mainly Muslim, Indonesians from densely populated Java to West Papua, has further enhanced the importance of the religious factor in West Papuan nationalism.

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175 Benny Giay in a private conversation (19 December 2003) supported my opinion that West Papuan national identity is moving towards a definition in ethno-religious terms.
176 In 1960 93% of the population in West Papua were Christian. However the census of 1981-1982 shows that Indonesian occupation has sensitively altered the religious (and ethnic) composition of Papuan demography. According to the above-mentioned census, 62.3% of the Papuan population were Protestants (in the north) and 23.6% were Catholic (in the south and in the highlands); 11% were
native Papuans voice their concerns in regards to fears that the migrations of Javanese will dilute their culture, and deprive them of their identity, not only by outnumbering their already dwindling population but also by altering the environment, which has shaped their identity.

Papuan culture, in fact, still functions as a means to antagonise acculturative policies of ‘Indonesiasation’ that aim at stamping out secessionist movements and aspirations. The so-called ‘renaissance of spiritual beings’, a phenomenon observed in the Papuan highlands during the 1980s, more than being a sign of the inadequacy and unequal distribution of development programs, as Benny Giay argues, is an evident expression of the West Papuan willingness to assert their ethnic distinctiveness.

This interpretation seems to be corroborated by Eben Kirksey who argues that West Papuan indigenous peoples are fusing modern environmentalism with mysticism to produce a revolutionary ideology that is being used to resist, and strike fear into, the Indonesian Army - and to drive logging companies out of the rainforest.

This phenomenon, observes Kirksey, stems from the Papuan belief that, when the boulders and trees fall on the logging roads, when soldiers and logging workers become ill or die because of diseases or by spider or snake bites, it is a sign of the intervention by the Spirit of Nature, or Alam, that is assisting the native people in their struggle against the oppressor and the invader. Furthermore, Rutherford notes that the

Muslim; 0.1% Hindu and 0.1% Buddhist. In this regard see: Djopari J.R.G., *Pemberontakan Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, Pt. Gramedia Widiarsana Indonesia, Jakarta, 1993, p. 81.  
traditional Biak *wor* (song/feast) functions as the means by which nationalist aspirations come to be articulated into meaningful narratives.\(^{180}\)

Along with the persistence of autochthonous beliefs and ‘inculturated’ Christianity the establishment of Christian institutions, in particular the Churches, have prompted and fostered processes of cultural integration and unification in West Papua. Their action still aims at cementing and nurturing the Papuans’ feeling of unity and belonging by acting as the beacons that safeguard and uphold the people’s human dignity and rights. The institution of the *Sekretariat Keadilan & Perdamaian* (Office for Justice & Peace) as a functional unit of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura reporting on human rights abuses in West Papua in June 1998 is a tangible sign of ecclesiastical involvement in the struggle.\(^{181}\)

This role is acknowledged by the Papuan people because of the longstanding presence of the Christian churches in the territory. In a recent survey carried out by USAID in West Papua, it has emerged that 50% of the local population respect and trust only religious institutions.\(^{182}\) This central role, played by the Christian churches and missions in Papuan society and politics, manifested itself clearly during the 1996 hostage taking. On this occasion the hostage-takers, in settling for a strategy of negotiation with the Indonesian authorities, insisted on dealing only with Christian mission contacts.\(^{183}\)

Attempts by the Indonesian government to forestall the expanding political influence of the Christian missions and churches have been made. In 1993, responding to the pressure by Muslim groups who were concerned that Christian missionaries were luring Muslims away from the Islamic fold, and in line with their program of

\[\text{\(^{180}\) Rutherford, *Raiding the Land of the Foreigner...cit.*, p. 73-108, pp. 212-218.}\]
\[\text{\(^{181}\) Fr. Theo van den Broek, Private Communication, Jayapura, 20 September 2000.}\]
‘Indonesianising’ church activities, the government implemented a series of restrictions. These restrictions included the issuing of visas to foreigners engaged in social development work and missionaries, consequently, came to fall in this category.184

Religious institutions, although not a dominant force,185 were directly involved in the negotiations with the Indonesian government in regard to the issue of granting Special Autonomy to the region, and opposed any attempt of the Indonesian government to undermine Papuan national unity. The Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian (the Office for Justice and Peace) of the Catholic Diocese in Jayapura currently plays a leading role in the negotiations.186

Recently the division of the province into three regional districts enacted by the Presidential Decree, INPRES No. 1/2003, inherently undermines Law No. 21/2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua.187 This prior unity is already affected by the unequal spatio-temporal modes of colonisation, reflected in the factionalism characterising the OPM.188 It is an unquestionable attempt to undertake a policy of dividit et impera, to ‘tribalise’ the national movement by reversing historical trajectories in order to wipe out the secessionist and nationalist movement.

The international climate further provides Jakarta with opportunities to forestall Papuan claims to independence. Outsiders supporting the activities of the Islamic fundamentalist group Laskar Jihad to spread from the Moluccas to West Papua incite

187 ‘Statement about the position of the religious leaders of Papua with respect to the implementation of the Special Laws for the province of Papua in a more constructive way’, Jayapura, 5 February 2003, Doc. No. 035/SKP/03/7.2. Forwarded by Fr. Th. Van der Broek. Private Communication.
religious conflict in a predominantly Christian province. In April 2002, it was reported that *Laskar Jihad* was operating in the Papuan territory recruiting and training people in combat skills as well as distributing homemade weapons. According to the *Laskar Jihad* spokesman Ayip Syafraddin there were two hundred members in West Papua and branches had been established and were operative in the territory.\(^{189}\)

The activities of *Laskar Jihad* provide Jakarta with a justification for military intervention in the area, a military presence and repression that could find also its justification if the Indonesian government is able to have the OPM listed as a terrorist organisation.\(^ {190}\) The killing of two American miners in Timika in September 2002, was attributed by Indonesia to the OPM, but more likely was carried out by the members of the Indonesian military. This appears to have been an attempt to attain this end.\(^ {191}\) Furthermore the epithet ‘terrorist’, used to qualify or denote the Papuan resistance movement,\(^ {192}\) has been part of the Indonesian discourses of Papuan separatism since the early 1970s.\(^ {193}\)

In the post-Cold War era the fear of terrorism has replaced that of communism in the world’s collective imaginary. After a decade of ideological inertia, at the dawn of the XXI century, a new dialectics has emerged based on the old antithesis of the East and the West, with religious doctrines replacing ‘secular ideology’. The new dialectics may be reflected in the West Papuan struggle for *Merdeka* since the

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\(^{192}\) In this regard see the article by Richards which seems to implicitly assume this process: Richards C., ‘Dying to Live: is the War on Terror in West Papua an expression of Institutionalised Racism?’, *Arena Magazine*, 2003, pp. 46-49.

\(^{193}\) Newspaper articles of the early 1970s reporting clashes between the Indonesian army and the OPM freedom fighters already used the adjective ‘terrorist’ to qualify the Papuan insurgents. See e.g.: *Antara*
antithesis Christianity-Islam appears to have been a structural-semantic component of Papuan identity through its involvement with Maluku.

Gianbattista Vico, in his *The New Science*, theorised the cyclical pattern of history, a reality that constantly re-proposed itself with small variations.\(^{194}\) The veridicality of the theory seems to be verified by the Papuan quest for independence. In 1962, in fact, West Papua was ceded to Indonesia because of the fear of communism rampaging in the region at the time. The war on terror, inherently a war on Islamic fundamentalism, will impede and postpone, once again, the realisation of the Papuan dream of *Merdeka* and its secession from the country with the world’s largest Muslim population.

*I am waiting our ancestors
But no-one is coming, no-one came.
Go watch for tracks in the dust.*\(^{195}\)

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\(^{195}\) The Beyuser of Manarmakdi Strophe 39. For the full text of the song see appendix.
Conclusions

In a recent article Octavianus Mote and Danilyn Rutherford argued that “Papuan nationalism cannot be reduced to the inevitable outcome of the population’s exposure to ‘modernity’ (…) rather the current movement must be placed in the context of a particular colonial history and a particular global environment”. Although contesting the latent primitivism lurking in the reference to ‘colonial history’, I agree that a ‘particularist’ approach to the study of West Papuan nationalism is necessary.

Based on the premise that religious-cultural consciousness is the fons et origo of historical consciousness, a domain in which feelings and discourses of identity come to be forged and shaped, this dissertation has shown that the West Papuans had developed in pre-colonial times a peculiar ‘historical’ perception and narratives as well as a particular ethnic identity shaped by their relations with the neighbouring Malay populations of Maluku and Ceram. While it appears that these narratives belong to Papuans inhabiting coastal and insular areas, documents reveal the presence of common beliefs, such as Koreri and Hai, as well as myths and values showing that the Papuans inhabiting the interior of West Papua were also part and parcel of this world of relations, long before they were ‘discovered’ by Western explorers and missionaries in the 1920s and 1930s. It follows that the Western myth of the history-less-ness of the Papuan people is a colonial fallacy generated by a colonial historiography and perpetuated by post-colonial readings, which claim that Papuan history only began in 1945.

Furthermore, it has been shown that Papuan narratives, besides testifying to the historicity of the Papuan people, reveal the existence of a peculiar hermeneutics

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underlying both Papuan worldview and epistemology. This has been referred to as cargoism or cargo cultism and it informs Papuan narratives and epistemology. It has been shown that it was through the categories of this hermeneutics that Christian and Western ideas, beliefs and norms came to be inculturated and systemised in the Papuan cultural-religious template, becoming a trait of Papuan ethnic and national identity. Consequently Western Christianity did not create West Papuan nationalism but merely prompted its ‘institutionalisation’: as such, Papuan nationalism happened in and was linked to a World System in and with which West Papua came to interact. At the same time the World System provided a ‘communication network’, which allowed the Papuans to ‘imagine a community’.

In this new and wider system of relations, West Papuan ethnic perceptions and identity, which had been until then formulated and defined during longstanding relations with the neighbouring Malay world of Maluku and Ceram, underwent a process of re-definition. These perceptions adapted to the changing ‘terms of relation and reference’. The Christian mission, which since 1854 had become a permanent and visible feature of West Papua’s landscape as well as the ‘semiotic’ embodiment of Western civilisation, provided those institutions and networks which facilitated the adaptation and re-definition of Papuan national identity.

The identification of Papuan heroes and narratives with Christian ones reveals that the Papuans actively inculturated Christianity rather than being passively acculturated. The great cargo cult of the Angannita, which took place in the Biak-Numfor area between 1938-1942, represents the final stage of Papuan inculturation of Christian and Western ideas and beliefs and the beginning of the politicisation of Papuan ethno-national identity. It was during the struggle against Japanese rule and Islamisation policies that Papuan national consciousness and nationalist ideology
came to be clearly articulated, bringing together the Papuans of the coast and those of the interior as the de Bruijn’s episode reveals.

The return of the Dutch missionaries and administrators, however, forestalled such development in order to promote a form of nationalist ideology, which would have suited their neo-colonial ambitions. The educational system established by the Dutch did not include elements of Papuan culture in the construction of Papuan national identity: the policies of Papuanisation consisted in merely ‘replacing’ a Dutch with a Papuan. Papuan culture was not considered at all. Selecting and targeting specific segments of Papuan society with the intention of creating ex novo a Papuan elite, Western values of modernity and Christianity were used as structuring forces of identity by the colonial agency.

The exclusion of Papuan culture from the process of identity formation can be attributed to the political motivations that informed Dutch ‘development’ policies and programs. These policies aimed at retaining a virtual (neo-colonial) control over the territory, something possible only by prompting and structuring an ad hoc national ideal of independence able to forestall Indonesian annexation. It follows that Christianity is increasingly becoming one of the ‘markers’ of Papuan identity to contrast and in contrast with Islamic Indonesia, although attempts have been recently made by the moderate strand of the Papuan movement to avoid this tendency in order to include also the few Papuan Muslims into the movement.

The inclusion of Christianity in Papuan nationalitarian identity had already been further strengthened during Japanese occupation as a direct consequence or reaction to the policies of Islamisation enacted by Tokyo during the war. Education proved to be an effective demiurgic force in shaping and creating the (Dutch-inculcated) Papuan nation. This process, however, did not always run smoothly.
Resistance or *nationalitarian* movements emerged to challenge Western acculturative practices and programs. It has been shown that the movements did not reject modernisation and Christian-Western education *tout court*, only the suppression of Papuan culture and epistemology. The *Wege Bage* movement, which visibly incorporated Christian elements into autochthonous Papuan narratives revealing a cultural-religious origin, stands as an example of such a form of resistance. This was not revivalism or nativism, since these are specific categories of Western epistemology, but the outcome of a peculiar Papuan hermeneutics. It was an attempt to restore Papuan autochthonous ethno-national identity after it had been challenged by Dutch neo-colonial policies and programs.

This thesis has shown that Papuan national history is characterised by the presence of two forms of nationalism, the imported nationalism of the Western-educated Papuan elite selected and targeted by Dutch policies and the ‘nationalitarianism’ of the common Papuan people, germinated in the pre-war *Koreri* movements and well-rooted in the cultural and historical experiences of the Papuans, which forged or prompted the perception and definition of their ethnic identity. The Papuan government in exile, who seeks support for its cause mainly from the former colonial power and the West and who believes that Papuan history begins in 1945, can be contrasted with the Papuans who live their daily lives in an occupied land and believe in the forest spirits, the dead ancestors and Manseren-Jesus. The altercations within the Papuan Presidium, the factionalism of the OPM, and the existence of a politically fragmented Papuan Diaspora confirm the existence of differing views in regard to the means, modes and aims in the pursuit of national independence among the Papuans. The causes of this politico-nationalist heterogeneity rest in the dynamics of Papuan history and the aborted intentionalities presented here. Thus this thesis
could pave the way to or inaugurate a new approach to the study, not only of West Papuan nationalism, but of the nationalisms in Melanesia in general.

The split in the nationalist movement in West Papua between the western nationalism of the few and the *nationalitarianism* of the many, produced by Dutch nation-building programs, weakened Papuan chances of self-determination and independence and facilitated the incorporation of the territory into Indonesia.

Sacrificial victims on the altars of *Real Politik*, the Papuan people continue their quest for an elusive *Merdeka* while they fall like *sue warek*, “dead birds”\(^2\) in the shadows of the Cross and the Morning Star.

\(^2\) I here allude to the myth of the race between the snake and the bird, the choice between immortality and mortality the Papuans were granted at the beginning of time. The expression is typical among the Dani. See in this regard Gardner & Heider, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
Appendix

The following song or beyuser is that recorded by Kamma F. Ch., Koreri. Messianic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Culture Area, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1972, pp. 59-63. The version of the text was passed on to Kamma by his late friend Robert Rumkabu. Some of the explanatory footnotes have also been taken from Kamma.

The Beyuser of Manarmakdi

Fuar

(a. Introduction)

1. Oh, you brethren of the ancestor,
   Who left Yamina mountain,
   From the landward side of Sopen.

2. It was the mockery, yes, the mockery,
   Which caused the famous chiefs
   To disperse, yes, to scatter.

(b. The song: monologue of the Old Man¹)

3. This was the reason, Oh Maidens:
   You mentioned me in dismay, both of you saying:
   Someone whose anger arose about nothing, really.

4. Someone whose anger arose because of small bones:
   The tailbones of a pig.
   Someone whose anger arose because of leaves:
   The leaves of the bakdi-fruit.²

5. A widower I was, so I went away,
   Descending the mountain, embarking in a canoe,

¹ Manseren Manggundi or Manarmakdi is often referred to as the ‘Old Man’. In fact the name Manarmakdi is believed to derive from mansar: ‘old man’ and armaker; ‘scabies’ meaning the ‘scabious old man’. Others instead suggest the following etymology: mansar: ‘old man’ and mak: ‘star’, so the meaning would be ‘old man of the star’ connecting the old man with Sampari, the morning star stealing the palm wine tapped by the old man. For the above etymologies see: Kamma, Koreri...cit., pp. 17-18.

² The Bakdi-fruit is a creeper, the leaves of which are used in the steaming-pit.
The small *kabasa*-canoe.³

6. I was a widower and had scabies all over my skin,
   So I left and went along the coast,
   I went until I saw the Uri⁴ rock.

7. I floated on the spot, took shells from the rock,
   Which once the hero Uri had perforated adulterously
   In the pursuit of women.

8. I went along the coast,
   Arrived at the shore of Bariasba,
   Meeting there my nephew, Padawankan,
   And my nephew showed me pity.

9. He gave me a spear and I speared a Manenef fish.
   He took the head, I took the tail.
   I took the tail to Sokani⁵
   To the shore of the bay of Sokani.

10. He gave me a coconut,
    Which I did not eat as I wanted,
    But brought with me, brought to Sokani.

    (c. *Intermezzo*)

11. The women of Anyoba⁶, Anyoba far away,
    She gave it, yes, she gave me the coconut,
    Which I brought with me and planted.

12. This was the one I planted,
    And it grew and grew, and blossomed –
    The one which I tapped and tapped.

13. Maids, it is because of your mockery,
    Because of your despising me,
    That the island of Auki lies in the way,
    Hampering the view (to Meokwundi Island).

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³ The *Kabasa* is a small canoe with an outrigger on one side only.
⁴ Uri is a mythical hero, protagonist of the Papuan saga of Uri and Pasai.
⁵ Sokani is a village of the Paidado islands.
⁶ The possible etymology of the word Anyoba is ‘land of the dead’.
14. And this was what you said of me:
   From his very youth, yes, when still a child,
   He walked with a cane and a twig,
   A twig to drive off the flies (from his ugly sores).

15. I was a widower, so I descended
   I descended seeking a woman,
   The lady of Anyoba, far, far away.

(d. Continuing the narrative)

16. And the star, the Morning Star\(^7\) descended.
   It was the star who drank, he did the drinking,
   I however, accused and accused.

17. I accused the woman, for whom I lay in wait,
   I accused the men passing by in their canoes.
   I accused the women of the place.

18. How ashamed the Morning Star must have been,
   How utterly ashamed,
   When I took hold of him.

19. He promised me the spell for wealth,
    But I refused.

20. He promised me the spell for fishing,
    But I refused.

21. He promised me the Koreri,
   To be realised at one on the spot,
   But I refused.

22. Then he offered me the Mares fruit\(^8\),
    And being a widower,
    I accepted and took hold of the fruit.

23. I threw the Mares fruit at the chosen maid,
    (I threw it and it hit her),

\(^7\) The Morning Star is Sampari who was caught by Manarmakdi stealing the palm wine.
\(^8\) The Papuan myths show that the mares fruit is believed to produce pregnancy.
And her breasts itched, they itched.\(^9\)

24. And that day did not become night
    Before she had given birth –
    She gave birth to a child.

25. And the dance(rs) started and they sang,
    They danced at Yuberi-beach,
    The child watched and watched, alas, my mother,
    Alas, my mother, father was not among them.

26. And the answering-dance started in the shadows,
    The shadows of the oil-tree; the boy watched, but alas,
    Alas, my mother, father was not among them.

27. And the dance started at Sokani-beach.
    The child watched, and watched, but alas, my mother,
    Alas my mother, father was not among them.

28. And then they started, the dancers and the singers,
    Under the *Aibesobin* (Mares) tree.
    Behold, my mother, behold, my father is there,
    Leaning on a cane, and holding a switch.

29. They tore the places to pieces,
    They demolished our village and left it,
    Yes, they scattered and left it.\(^{10}\)

30. When a canoe went you took a bat,
    You took a bat to strike my grasping fingers,
    Grasping the side of your canoes.

31. Everyone left, left us alone,
    And I, I addressed my brother-in-law, saying:
    Stay behind, join me, let the two of us use the tap-knife.

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\(^9\) The Papuans believe that the itching of a woman’s breast was a sign of pregnancy. Manarmakdi threw the Mares fruit to the daughter of the village headman. The woman did not know who was the father of the child. Since the child, whose name was Manarbew, cried without pause, the villagers decided to organise a dancing party to find out whether the child was able to identify his father. See Kamma, *Koreri…cit.*., pp. 31-32.

\(^{10}\) Once the villagers learnt that the old scabious man was the father of the headman’s grandson, outraged by what was believed to be an offence, they left the island. Manarmakdi was left on the island with the child and his young wife and without any means of subsistence since everything had been destroyed.
32. It’s because of the oil-tree (coconut palm)
That the Indwar fish crowd under our sleeping-place,
Feeding on debris and sea-weed.

33. And he (my brother-in-law) ate, and he ate
Until satisfied, satisfied.
But I went to the beach and speared,
Speared the fish so that they floated.

34. Before that day turned into night,
Yes, before nightfall, I descended,
Descended and roasted my body in flaming wood.11

35. I descended again and drew a ship in the sand,
I designed it and it became a boat,
A loaded boat, its cargo-mark nearly submerged.

36. And we floated in the direction of Krawi,12
Krawi the bay of abundance,
But they rejected me, yes, they rejected.13

37. What shall I do now, what must I do?
Reincarnate myself in a dolphin,
(Between) Runi and Ayawi?14

38. The stream I followed, upriver I went,
The Manberamon,15 the current in turmoil,
Directing myself under the setting sun.

39. I am waiting our ancestors,
But no-one is coming, no-one came.
Go and watch for their tracks in the dust.

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11 This has been interpreted by some scholars, such as Horst, as the ‘baptism by fire’ derived from Hinduism. Following this ritual, Manamakdi was re-juvinated.
12 A village on the island of Japen in the Geelvink Bay.
13 This is the rejection of the koreri, following which Manarmakdi left the islands and went to the west, believed to be the land of the dead and the source of valuables, from where one day he will return.
14 Ayawi is located to the west of the Schouten Islands and also in the Radja Ampat Islands.
15 The etymology of Manberamon is ‘man who went to become a moni’, that is the ‘soul of the dead’. Here it refers to the Mamberamo River on mainland New Guinea believed to be the gate to the underworld. From a philological point of view this section represents an earlier stratum of the myth when the Biakkers still lived in the Sarmi-Sentani area before moving to their later island settlement since the Mamberamo is situated to the west of that earlier location.
40. Go to the town of the dead, the great town,
   Where the roofs are touching, touching each other.
   There you will find the treasures which I possess.

41. These are the treasures and the wealth,
   Which the gentlemen (the strangers) have.
   These are the treasures which I own.

42. These are the treasures
   Which the gentlemen (the whites) see and possess,
   And bring along with them (always) when they are coming.
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