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ON THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME PAPUA

1. Introduction

The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas divided the then still mainly undiscovered world between Spain and Portugal. According to this agreement, the Spaniards henceforward had to approach the Spice Islands by way of the Americas. On many islands in the West Pacific and in the Moluccas¹ they observed the resemblance of the frizzy-haired inhabitants to those of the Guinea Coast in West Africa (Urdaneta, in Torres de Mendoza 1866:63). The mainland of New Guinea received its name from the Spanish captain Yñigo Ortíz de Retes, who on 20 June 1545 claimed possession of the territory for the Spanish Crown near a river called Bièr in the area of present-day Sarmi.

In the modern sense, Papua(n) is the general name for the frizzy-haired population of New Guinea. Already in the first half of the sixteenth century, however, the Portuguese and Spaniards referred to the archipelago to the east of Halmahera and to the north of Ceram as the 'Papuan Islands'.

In English publications the Papuan Islands sometimes include the islands in Geelvink Bay, and even those farther to the east. The French terms *Papouasie* and *Papounésie* often refer to New Caledonia, and occasionally to all islands with frizzy-haired inhabitants in the Pacific.

When about 1900 the Dutch colonial administration was established in West New Guinea, the island-realms of the *Kalana Fat* (Four Kings) on Waigéo, Salawati and Misoöl, together with scores of smaller islands, gradually came to be known by the old Malay equivalent for this term, namely as the *Raja Ámpat* (Islands), Ámpat representing the regional pronunciation of Malay Empát. The name 'Papuan Islands' fell into disuse, and in 1952 the Raja Empat became a separate administrative district (*Gouvernementsblad van Nieuw-Guinea* 1952, no. 25).

Since in the vernacular of mainly East Indonesian petty officials and village teachers the word Papua was increasingly used in a pejorative sense, M.W. Kaisiepo in 1945 proposed replacing this name Papua with Irian, a

¹ Unless otherwise stated, 'Moluccas' is used in this article in the old sense of 'Clove Islands', i.e. Temate, Tidore, Makian, Motil and Bacan.

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word in his Biak mother tongue meaning 'to rise', like land from behind the horizon or warm air and steam over a cooking-pot; by extension, it could imply 'soaring spirit'. At the 1947 Malino Conference, the Papuan delegate F. Kaisiepo had this suggestion placed on record.²

In course of time, 'Irian' and 'New Guinea / Papua' acquired opposite political connotations, and when in 1963 Indonesian sovereignty was established over the western half of the island, it became government policy to replace both Papua and New Guinea with the name Irian. Outside Indonesia, however, the old names remain current in publications, maps and charts, and the eastern half of the island retained Papua New Guinea as its name when it became independent in 1975.

The origin of the word Papua has never been the subject of systematic and comprehensive research. In this article I shall attempt to define the area in which the name originated, and so endorse a possible etymology.

2. The etymologists

Since António Galvão, Captain of the Moluccas from 1536-1539, few writers on New Guinea have resisted the urge to volunteer in passing an etymological anecdote on the name Papua. The more bizarre ones include:

– Papúa = the papaya fruit. (The immense quantities of this fruit growing in New Guinea may have given rise to the name Papúa for the place and people, Papúa being the name of the natives of New Guinea for the papaya fruit ...) (Swettenham 1908:101).

– In Amboinese Malay allegedly a word '*papoewa*' existed, meaning 'tangled' in the literal sense, e.g. of a fishing-line. Amboinese seafarers supposedly used this word for the inhabitants of New Guinea (Van Hoëvell 1880:525).

– *Papua* has been compared to the Sundanese '*poea*, ants' nest hanging from a tree' and 'squirrel's nest that also looks untidy' (Van Hasselt 1947:177).

– *Papua* may have been inspired by the Biak word *papús* (riches, imported goods), which was repeatedly uttered on the occasion of foreign ships visiting (Kamma 1954: appendix sub VII, 2°).

– A pet theory, conceived in 1945, which I abandoned at an early stage of the present study, was that the name was imported by the Iberians, who possibly tried thus to preserve the name Pappua of a mountain in Numidia where, according to Procopius of Caesarea (IV, iv, 26 and IV, xiii, 29), King Geilimer of the Vandals fled to a tribe of black barbarians in A.D. 512 to escape the Byzantian marshal Belisarius.

² Confirmed in a personal communication by M.W. Kaisiepo.

Conventional wisdom has it that the name Papua derives from *papua* or *puah-puah*, a Malay word meaning 'frizzly-haired'. Modern English, Dutch and Spanish encyclopaedias, as well as lexicographical and etymological dictionaries, leave it at that.³

Among the older Malay-Dutch dictionaries, Von de Wall (1880:442) cautiously lists under '*papoewah*': '1° New Guinea; 2° (in the Malay vernacular of then Batavia) woolly, frizzly, frizzly-haired person'. Klinkert (several editions, 1893-1947) only has *papoewah*, without any etymology.

In particular the Malay-English dictionaries attach considerable importance to *puah*² as the possible origin of Papua. The word *puah-puah* was first listed in 1852 by Crawfurd, who under Raffles was 'British Resident at the Court of the Sultan of Java'. Crawfurd wrote in the preface to his dictionary that it was based upon a copy of William Marsden's *Dictionary* of 1812, with annotations by its author, a few Javanese dictionaries, and two word-lists received by Marsden from the Rev. Mr. Hutchins at Penang and the Rev. Mr. Robinson, who had worked in Batavia and Benkulen. At least one of the Javanese dictionaries was an indigenous one, as is stated under '*Wungu* (Jav.), Purple'.

Crawfurd's dictionary was clearly compiled from several sources that did not use the same diacritical marks, and which sometimes contradicted each other. So we find on page 126: '*papuwah* (Jav. and Mal.) frizzled', 'a negrito of the Indian islands; an African negro', while page 135 has: '*pâpuwah* frizzled; the island of New-Guinea; an inhabitant of that island being of the negrito race'. In the English-Malay list, however, we find an item 'Negro (African): Häbsi, Zängi, Kafri; Negro of the Indian Islands: Papuwah, puwah-puwah'. Page 148 states under '*puwah-puwah* (Jav. and Mal.)': 'frizzled or woolly; a negro. It is applied to anything with a frizzled or woolly coat. Thus, a particular variety of the common fowl is called *ayam puwa-puwa*.' A few years later, Crawfurd wrote that Malaysians and Javanese called New Guinea '*tanah puwah-puwah*', 'which Europeans have corrupted into Papua' (Crawfurd 1856:299).

Since *puah-puah* does not appear in Marsden's dictionary, Crawfurd may have found it in the wordlists of the two missionaries, or possibly in the manuscript of the *Hikayat Nata Indera*, dated about 1830 (University of Cambridge Library, Add. 3813). I have been unable to trace his (indigenous or other) Javanese dictionaries.

Crawfurd apparently attempted to distinguish between '*papuwah*' (African or Indian) and '*pâpuwah*' (Papuan), but it is not clear whether he meant to indicate an attendant difference in pronunciation or stress between the two words. Although the dictionary treats *a* and *â* as different phonemes, both are

³ One of the latest to date is the Dutch *Etymologisch woordenboek*, 1990, Utrecht/Antwerpen: Van Dale Lexicografie.

used to indicate the *pépét* (*a* as in ago), while at the same time *a* is also used for other nuances.

Wilkinson (1932) wrote in the preface to his dictionary that his work was not based upon older dictionaries, but had been compiled anew from texts and manuscripts. For the meaning 'frizzly-haired, Papuan' of *puah-puah* or *pepuah*, he quoted from the *Hikayat Indera Nata* the passage '*kulitmu hitam sa-bagai puah-puah*', which he translated as 'your skin is black as that of a Papuan'. This translation seems dubious because an auxiliary noun like *orang* (man) or *bangsa* (race, people) before *puah-puah* is lacking. Furthermore, it is not frizzly but black that seems to be the characteristic feature of *puah-puah*. In any case, the manuscript is too recent to be cited as etymological evidence for a word that already existed in its 'final' form three centuries earlier.

Puah-puah may be a West Malayan word for negritos and/or Africans, with the accent on black rather than frizzled. Here again I have not been able to make any progress.

On the Portuguese side, Machado (1967, III:1750) cited Gonçalves Viana and Lokotsch for the origin of the name being Malay *papua*, 'frizzled'. He erroneously stated that António Galvão's *Descobrimentos* was the first Portuguese source to mention it.

Gonçalves Viana and Lokotsch both quote Devic (1876:183) for the evolution from *pua-púa* to *papua* (Gonçalves Viana 1906, II:225-6) and for *Puah* (Lokotsch 1927: n° 1669). In point of fact, Devic's entry is primarily concerned with the Aptenodytes Papua, a penguin-like bird called after the country of *les Papous*, which name he took to be a contraction of *pua-púa*. For the etymology of these words Devic in turn refers to Marsden (1812:452) and Pijnappel (1863:226). Actually, Pijnappel had been the only dissident from this general consensus. In an ethnological study he posited that it was more likely that a local word had found general acceptance (1853:350-1). Ten years later, however, his dictionary joined the communis opinio concerning *Papoeah*.

Insofar as the authors actually did mention their sources, the trails in the end all converge in Marsden's dictionary of 1812, which has no entry *puah-puah*, and translates *papūah* as 'frizzled' and 'crisp curled (as certain plants)'. Marsden stated in his preface that he had endeavoured to use all the knowledge collected by his predecessors, but neglected to identify any of them.

In the Malay dictionaries older than Marsden's that I have been able to consult (Danckaerts 1623; Haex 1631; Heurnius 1708; and Gueynier 1708) neither Papua nor *puah*² is to be found. *Papua* and *puah-puah* in the sense of 'frizzly' are entries no longer in the modern Indonesian and Malay dictionaries (Poerwadarminta and Teeuw 1952; Iskandar 1970; Poerwadarminta 1982; Teeuw 1990), presumably because they were seldom if ever used.

Possibly this absence also reflects a policy to eliminate them altogether. On the other hand, all dictionaries list the current Malay word for 'frizzly', namely *k(e)riting*.

3. Papua: homonyms

Gonçalves Viana mentioned 'black' as the second meaning of Papua. This probably goes back to Couto (1612: IV, VII, iii), according to whom this was the meaning in the Papuans' 'own language', which statement in turn presumably was based upon Galvão's *Descobrimentos*.

The detailed information about *puah*² designating a type of fowl and the leaves of certain plants sounds trustworthy, and is reminiscent of António Galvão's description of a Sumatran chicken with meat as black '*como esta tinta*' (as this ink) that is also found in the Moluccas (Galvão 1862:120, 162). The *Treatise* (Jacobs 1971:64-65) mentions such hens with curled feathers in front, 'frightening to those who do not know them', in Ternate. Unfortunately, no indigenous names are mentioned.

There are two botanical homonyms of Papua on record, namely: *papua*, a shrub of the ivy family in the Philippines (Alonso 1958, III:3134); *pua-pua*, casuarina tree (Schmidgall-Tellings & Stevens 1981:263).

4. Francisco Rodrigues and Tomé Pires

When António d'Abreu sailed from Malacca to reconnoitre the route to the Moluccas in November 1511, he was accompanied by a highly regarded pilot and cartographer, Francisco Rodrigues. They had to wait out the westerly monsoon at Guli-guli, near the eastern tip of Ceram, before sailing on to Banda, where Abreu purchased a full load of spices. He then returned straight to Malacca.

Some of Rodrigues' observations during this voyage are recorded in his hand-written *Book*, which is preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée Nationale in Paris. The map on folio 37, dated about 1513 by Cortesão (1975:58), depicts eastern Indonesia with Timor, Banda, Ceram, the Moluccas, and a number of other islands.

It is certain that Abreu did not sight the Moluccas or any islands to the north of Ceram. Clearly, Rodrigues copied the north coast of Ceram, the Moluccas and other islands from older Malayan and Javanese charts. Such charts were indeed the only ones he can have used on this first expedition.

To the east of the Clove Islands, his map depicts a large island that can only be Halmahera. It bears the inscription '*Jlha de Papoia e a Jente della sam cafres*' (The island of Papoia, and its inhabitants are heathen).

About a year later, in about 1513, Tomé Pires wrote in his *Suma Oriental* that near Banda there are three islands: Ceram, Aru and Papua, the latter lying at a distance of 80 *leguas* or approximately 450 kilometres. In a straight line, this distance would reach as far as Patani in East Halmahera and, rounding Ceram, the Waigéo-Gébé area. To underscore Banda's importance as the central market of that region, Pires added that people came there from many islands to buy cloth: from Tanimbar (*Bato Ymbo*)⁴ to Papua, and from Papua to the Moluccas. Pires himself did not travel beyond Java, and stated that he obtained his information from Moors who had been there, and from their charts, which he had often consulted (Pires 1944:208-11).

5. The Papuan Islands

Rodrigues and Pires unambiguously understood Papua as the name of an island, or possibly, like Aru and Banda, a group of islands. This is corroborated by subsequent authors.

The first Spanish ship to reach the Moluccas since Magellan was the one remaining vessel of García Jofre de Loaysa's fleet. It dropped anchor in the roadstead of Tidore on January 1st, 1527, after a journey of one and a half year. The pilot, Martín de Uriarte, explored the coast of Halmahera, and noted in his *Derrotero* (Navarrete 1837:287-8) that at 15 and 20 *leguas* (approximately 80 and 110 km. respectively) south-east (of cape Patani) lay '*las islas de las Papuas*', numbering more than eight large and small ones. These distances point to Gébé, whose 285-metre high peak Uriarte must have observed, and Gag. To arrive at a total of eight islands, at least Waigéo and a few nearby islands (Batan Palé, Bianchí, Gaman and Batantá) must have been included.

In the following year Alvaro de Saavedra tried to sail back to America from Tidore, but was forced to wait for a favourable wind '*en unas islas de negros, que llaman Papuas*' to the east of Halmahera (Urdaneta, in Torres de Mendoza 1866:32). If one is inclined to hesitate here whether to relate this name Papuas to the islands or to their inhabitants, Urdaneta makes his intention clear in the description of the islands surrounding the Moluccas, where he says 'there are many other islands, called *las Papuas*, ... those *islas de Papuas* are many ...' (Urdaneta, in Torres de Mendoza 1866:63).⁵ In all these quotations the feminine form indicates beyond any doubt that islands, not people, were meant.

⁴ Map XI of Bartolomeu Lasso's 1590 Atlas shows both *bataimbar* and *batotbor* in the Tanimbar area.

⁵ The older, sometimes more rigorously edited edition by Navarrete (1837, V:416) has 'islands, called los Papuas'.

6. From Papua to Papuan

As a matter of course, however, to the Iberians in the Moluccas the name Papua rapidly came to denote both the islands and their population. In Malay, no such toponym occurs substantivally, but only as a modifier qualifying a preceding noun designating a territory, race, or products. The Portuguese correctly sensed that Papua – or any other toponym, for that matter – was a name that could refer to either a region or its inhabitants, depending on the preceding noun, for instance *kepulauan Papua* and *bangsa Papua*. In Portuguese and Spanish, the same distinction could be made by means of gender, namely (*l*)*as Papuas* and (*l*)*os Papuas*.

In the course of the sixteenth century the name Papua gradually developed through ‘as Papuas’ for the islands, to ‘os Papuas’ for the inhabitants, and hence was extended to include the mainland of New Guinea and its population. Both the form ‘Ilhas das Papuas’ and ‘Ilhas dos Papuas’ remained current.

In 1544 António Galvão’s successor, Jorge de Castro, used the expression ‘Arçepeligo das Papuas’ in a letter to King João III (Sá 1956-88, I:388). Gábril Rebelo, who arrived in Ternate at about the same time, on the other hand, wrote ‘Arçepelago dos Papuas’ (Sá 1956-88, III:393).

The Dutch and English traders could not make such a distinction by gender, however. They had to make do with ‘Papoésche Eilanden’ and ‘Papuan Islands’.

The oldest Portuguese map to show the Ilhas dos Papuas is an anonymous chart of about 1537, attributed to Gaspar Viegas (*PMC* I: est.52), which much further to the east also depicts Biak, the island where Jorge de Meneses ‘hibernated’ during the westerly monsoon in 1526-27. Most subsequent Portuguese maps show the Papuan Islands in the same way, usually in the masculine form, and always at a short distance from Halmahera, whereas the Islands of Dom Iorge always lie far to the east.

In 1553 João da Beyra wrote from the Moluccas about a land that was called New Guinea, and by another name Papuas (Sá 1956-88, II:91). In 1554 Vicente Pereira, writing from Amboina, on the other hand described a people ‘que se chama os *Apapuas*’, the reflexive form of the verb suggesting that he took this to be the name in their own language (Sá 1956-88, II:137). António Galvão used a similar phrasing in his enumeration of regions where the Chinese claimed control, viz. ‘*os ... Selebres, Macasares*’ (which he believed to be separate groups of islands), as well as in his claim to have christened many ‘*dos celebres Mocasares*’ (Galvão 1862:19, 208). One has to bear this in mind in order to be able to correctly interpret Galvão’s passage, ‘the Moluccans call those people *os Papuas* [Mal. *orang Papua*] because they are black, and have frizzly hair, and the Portuguese also call them so, because they copied it from the [Moluccans]’ (Galvão 1862:177). This remark should be read not as an etymology but rather as a link between

the usual name Papua and the physical features of the dark and frizzy-haired people who came to the Moluccas to trade their products.

It has generally been overlooked that Galvão mentioned 'black', not 'frizzled', as the first characteristic of the Papuans. Diogo do Couto (1612:IV, VII, iii) elaborated on this with a note, saying '*Os Papuas*, which in the language of the natives means "blacks", because they look like the *Cafres*, with curly hair in large frizzy mops'. Gábel Rebelo stated in the same casual manner in his *Informações* (Sá 1956-88, III:393) that '*Papua*, em todas as linguas de Maluco diz *Cafre*' ('Papua' in all Moluccan languages means 'heathen').

7. In quest of Papua

The name Papua, whether pertaining to islands or a people, or both, was restricted to a limited area in and near eastern Halmahera, where on most sixteenth-century maps Suma, Maba and Patani are already shown, and in some islands beyond, including Gébé and Waigéo, the latter not yet with this name. Rebelo gave a description of the ornaments used by *os Papuas*, *Mauas*, *Wedas* (those of Papua, Maba and Weda) on the stems and sterns of their proahs (Sá 1956-88, III:385).

This limited interpretation was still used by Valentyn at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He wrote of the inhabitants of Kowiy (south-west New Guinea) that 'they look rather like the *Papoas*, but are of a more stalwart build' (Valentyn 1862, I:253, 247). In 1670 'those of Weda and other *Papoas*' regularly raided Ceram and Ambon. In about A.D.1700, Papuans living east of Hoti, in North Ceram, many of whom had originally migrated from Misoöl, were causing so much trouble that the Government decided 'to attack the Papuans not only on our shores, but even in their own eyries on the coast of Maba, Weda and Salatta [= Salati, a village south of Weda]' (Valentyn 1862, II, *Amboina* 1:60-61).

The people of these settlements and others like Patani, Sawai and Buli speak Austronesian languages belonging to the South Halmahera - West New Guinea group, and 'may well represent a gradual westward expansion from the nearer end of an ancient dialect chain that was once confined to the northern Vogelkop Peninsula and Sarera [= Geelvink] Bay' (Blust 1978:211). Indeed, in Patani a tradition has been recorded that its inhabitants had migrated from *Mambrun Sawa*, i.e. the Moor Islands in Geelvink Bay (De Clercq 1893:882-3). At the other end, in Biak and in Geelvink Bay, the tradition of the Saway migration to Halmahera and other islands in the 'west' is accepted as a historical fact, without any mythical overtone. Biak-speaking people of West Geelvink Bay in 1582 told Miguel Roxo de Brito, then in the Bintuni Gulf, about their kinsmen beyond the Gébé area (Boxer and Manguin 1979:188-9).

The toponyms mentioned in connection with Iorge de Meneses in 1526/7

(Barros 1615:IV, I, xvi) and Hernano de Grijalva's expedition in 1537/8 (Galvão 1862:202-4; Jacobs 1971: chapters 57 and 58) are almost without exception names of Biak villages on the Bird's Head Peninsula, Numfoor, Biak and North Yapen Island. Within living memory these stood in a special relation to the Raja of Waigéo, and through him to the Raja, later Sultan, of Tidore.⁶ Clearly, the people referred to as 'Papua' in the sixteenth-century Portuguese and Spanish sources belonged almost exclusively to the Biak tribe – the seafarers of New Guinea, who from time immemorial had exported *massoia* bark, birds, slaves and jungle products to the Indonesian Archipelago. In the same way, the evidence from maps and charts points to the region of East Halmahera, Gébé, Gag and Waigéo as the cradle of the name Papua. A considerable proportion of the inhabitants of this area belong(ed) to the Biak tribe.

A few places in this area bear or bore names which vaguely resemble Papua. The Kofiau Islands, now inhabited by Biak people, were called Popa, or Poppang, until the late 19th century. The pre-Biak population, according to Roxo de Brito in 1581 more than two thousand men, probably died out during the influenza epidemic of 1917. Around 1900 the name of the southern cape of uninhabited Gag island was recorded as Papuapu (Chart no. 3250, Royal Netherlands Navy). An *apu* is a (Triton) shell used as a horn.

8. Sup i papwa

In 1954 Kamma (1954, Appendix, VII, 1°) wrote that in Biak and Numfoor the Raja Ampat islands were occasionally referred to as 'Sup i babwa' (the land below, i.e. below the sunset); in the Biak dialect of the Raja Ampat this is pronounced 'Sup i papwa'. Kamma suggested that in course of time '(Sup i) papwa' might have developed into the name Papua. Regrettably, he never elaborated upon this suggestion.

The shift from voiced to voiceless labial occurs not only among the Biak-speaking inhabitants of the Raja Ampat, but also in the 'Bulic cluster' in East Halmahera and in Wandamen Bay. For instance, in the Buli area an older toponym Batan (land, large island) became Patan-i, and Austronesian **banua* (land) is pronounced *pnu* (village). On Yop island, in Wandamen Bay, De Clercq noted the pronunciation *Pinu* as distinct from Numforese *mnu* (De Clercq 1893:848). In Dusner, a village on the mainland opposite Yop, a *p* in many cases is found where in Biak an *f* occurs (Anceaux 1961: Comparative Word-list, e.g. nos 32,35,43,48,69,84).

Idiomatically, *sup i babwa* is certainly not an artificial expression; its counterpart can still be heard in the current Biak expression for 'to ascend' to a destination in the east (personal communication A. Mampioper). The

⁶ Over the centuries, the Raja of Salawati and the Sengaji of Gébé have claimed to be the rightful intermediary, depending on the regional balance of power.

Numforese, upon arrival in Tidore to pay tribute to the Sultan, used to announce themselves as '*Kawasa ori sâr* = the people from the [country of the] sunrise' (Van Hasselt 1947:177). In 1950 the non-Biak Raja of Salawati, Abu Kasim Arfan, told me that *Sup i babwa* (or *papwa*: at the time I was ignorant of any difference) meant 'the subjected land' (i.e., subjected by his putative ancestor, Gurabési) to support his claim that the regional Biak population owed him obedience.⁷

Sup i papwa would also decide the old debate about whether the correct pronunciation is Pápua or Papúa. In Malay, the pronunciation Papúa is the natural one. In Portuguese and Spanish the same applies, unless there is an accent mark indicating a different pronunciation; unfortunately, this was not yet a fixed rule in the older sources. It is noteworthy, therefore, that Navarrete (1837, V:124) wrote 'las Islas Pápuas' in his commentary, and that on the Portuguese side Gonçalves Viana gave Pápuas as possibly the correct pronunciation in his *Apostilas* (Gonçalves Viana 1906). However, on the map of the *Duyfken*, the first Dutch ship to explore the south coast of New Guinea, in 1605-1606, with the aim of finding the Unknown South Land, New Guinea is referred to as '*os Papúas*', with a superfluous accent possibly of non-Portuguese origin.

To the best of my recollection, Pápua is (was) the usual pronunciation in the Raja Ampat. With the spread of Malay as the language of commerce, Christianization, education and administration, however, Papúa became current.

Kamma's *Sup i papwa* not only represents a plausible origin of the name Pápua.⁸ It also explains why no specific location has ever been associated with this name.

9. The Raja Papua

Antonio Pigafetta, a Florentine patrician who accompanied Magellan on his voyage around the world as an observer for Italian bankers, noted at Tidore towards the end of 1521 that the island of *Giailolo* (Halmahera) was inhabited by Moors (= Muslims) and heathen. The Moors were ruled by two kings (probably the *Kolanos* of Jilolo and Loloda). The extremely wealthy king of the heathen was called '*Raya Papua*' and lived in the interior (Pigafetta 1906:76-77).

There has been considerable debate about what exactly Pigafetta meant and whether he correctly understood his informant. In fact, he had a good interpreter in Magellan's personal servant and confidant Enrique, a Moluccan

⁷ A variant is mentioned by R. Hoogeveen, *Memorie van Overgave* 1948, ARA.

⁸ Ironically, Kamma preferred Papúa, in accordance with the practice of the Protestant Mission; the Roman Catholic Missionaries retained Pápua.

slave who had been purchased at Malacca in about 1512 and who spoke *muy ladino* (Transilvano 1522:271-3). He also had occasion to discuss local information with the Portuguese companions of Francisco Serrão, one of Abreu's officers, who had lost his ship in the Lucipara islands, made his way thence to Ternate, and died there shortly before Pigafetta's arrival. Probably Pigafetta was told that the Raja Papua lived behind the mountain range that filled the eastern horizon, which he interpreted as 'the interior'. He could not know that Halmahera consists virtually only of this one range.

In East Indonesia and New Guinea the imported title Raja has been borne by countless petty coastal kings. They acquired power and sometimes wealth from their position as middlemen between the population of the interior and foreign traders, who would rather purchase wholesale from local agents than wait interminably for the delivery of promised products, and miss the monsoon back home. Some founded powerful dynasties, others disappeared without a trace. Some claim a foreign founder, others local ancestry. In course of time, many became dependent upon their more successful fellows like the Moluccan Sultans, and later still on the central government.

Pigafetta's wealthy Raja Papua apparently lived in the area comprised by East Halmahera, Waigéo and Batantá, where of old migrants from Biak and Geelvink Bay had settled among, and in many instances intermingled with, the 'original' population. This does not imply that the Raja was of Biak origin; in fact, traditional Biak society is characterized by the absence of central authority, except in times of war.

The *Treatise* contains a reference to the Raja Papua which is of an earlier date than Pigafetta's visit and the name Papoia on Rodrigues' map. The extant manuscript of the *Treatise* has been dated by Jacobs around 1544, but older notes and reports were used in its compilation. Chapter 13 relates the oldest known (and apparently Ternatese) version of a familiar Moluccan tradition. According to this, after the Chinese had stopped coming to the Moluccas to buy cloves and not long before the Malaysians and Javanese came, four serpent's eggs were found in Bacan, from which three men and a woman were born. They grew up to become kings: one of Bacan, another 'dos Papuas', and the third of Butung and Banggai, while the woman married the King of Loloda, in north-west Halmahera.

What is relevant in this legend in the present context is that in about A.D.1500 the first Raja Papua was considered in the Moluccas to have been of the same stock as the princes of Bacan and Banggai, and therefore non-Papuan. This once again points to Papua being a toponym rather than the name of a people. An elaborate attempt to approximately specify the period to which this tradition refers is beyond the scope of this article, however.

If the *Treatise* version of this legend is interpreted as referring to the arrival of the first merchant-settlers, then these were attracted by pre-existing trade. Probably the sea-faring Biak-speaking people in Geelvink Bay already carried products to the Waigéo-Halmahera area then, and quite naturally

called those islands 'Sup i Papwa'. An indication that there indeed already existed relations with Halmahera and perhaps the Clove Islands might be provided by the Biak title *mambri*, which seems to represent the Biak pronunciation of Ternatese *momolé*, both meaning 'war-leader, champion, hero'. The Moluccan princes were styled *momolé* before they adopted (or were given) the title *Kolano*, according to tradition in the thirteenth century (Van Fraassen 1987, II:6,8,11). The bestowal of a title on a Papuan envoy to Tidore in return for presents or tribute was still a common practice in the first half of the 20th century.

The last Raja Papua about whom we have definite information was mentioned by Miguel Roxo de Brito, who in 1581-2 spent some time with the King of Misoöl. He twice referred to this gentleman-pirate as 'Rey Papua' (Boxer and Manguin 1979:182), but did not once use this title with reference to the King of Waigéo, with whom he travelled extensively in the Raja Ampat and the MacCluer Gulf.

No individual king has been styled Raja Papua since, but the title and its former glory have survived in local tradition. In Koréri (a Messianic cult), 'Raja Papua' has sometimes been mentioned as an equivalent of *mansrèn* or *konoor*, designating key figures in the cult. This has up to now been explained as a probably inaccurate legal Malay translation from Biak (Kamma 1972:139,148). This explanation may now have to be reconsidered, since recently a lament for a Raja Papua was recorded in Yènbekaki, in the Raja Ampat.⁹ A transcription was not yet available in the final stages of writing the present article.

10. Summary and conclusion

The generally accepted etymology of 'Papua' as a Malay word meaning 'frizzled' cannot be traced back any further than William Marsden's dictionary of 1812. The suggestion that it is a (European) contraction of *pua-pua* was not put forward until 1852/1856, by Crawfurd. In the final analysis, the strongest argument against this etymology is the fact that '*papua*' has never been used in connection with the frizzy-haired population of Timor and other parts of eastern Indonesia.

For the first Portuguese cartographers and authors, in particular Francisco Rodrigues and Tomé Pires around 1513, Papua was the name for Halmahera and/or a group of islands to the east of it. Since the first Portuguese can only have quoted or copied Javanese and Malayan informants and maps, Papua was already the usual name of that area in, and probably before, the fifteenth century.

A few decades later, Papua designated in particular the region of the

⁹ Personal communication by Ph. Ramandei, of the Dewan Kesenian Irian Jaya, who was present at the recording session.

villages of Weda, Patani and Suma and their inhabitants in East Halmahera. The languages of this region are now known as the Austronesian 'Bulic cluster', which is closely related to the languages of Geelvink Bay. This restricted geographical denotation was still used by Valentyn around 1700. The name survived as Papuan Islands in many languages. In course of time the name Papua came to extend to the inhabitants of those islands as well as of the mainland of New Guinea.

Kamma's tentative etymology according to which Papua derives from Biak (Sup i) Papwa ((land) beneath, of the sunset) is in agreement with all the available evidence. It seems to provide the correct answer to a question that has kept worrying me since I first posed it to my superiors upon arrival in New Guinea in 1945.

Taradeau, December 1992.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

- ARA Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague
 BKI *Bijdragen (tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde) van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden*
 PMC *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica.*

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