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## Mary, Motherhood and Nation: Religion and Gender ideology in Bougainville's secessionist warfare<sup>[1]</sup>

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### Introduction

1. The importance and significance of gender in religious ideas, practices and experiences is increasingly acknowledged and studied.<sup>[2]</sup> As these studies show, religion is a thoroughly gendered phenomenon. In this article I focus on the Catholic religion, and in particular, on women's and men's beliefs in Mary on Bougainville Island during and immediately succeeding the nationalist struggle for independence from PNG.
2. Mary (the mother of Jesus) is a fascinating example of the ambiguity of religion in terms of gender. From the 1970s onward, Mary was presented as an alternative role model for women, as she was heralded as a strong, determined woman who takes action in situations of injustice.<sup>[3]</sup> At the same time, scholars addressed the 'historical manipulation of the symbol of Mary by religious power-holders to impose a form of femininity characterized by modesty, purity, obedience, and sacrificial motherhood.'<sup>[4]</sup> This ambiguity of Mary to both empower and disempower those who follow her comes to the fore when analysing the Bougainville conflict and its aftermath.
3. The war on Bougainville, which lasted from 1989 till about 2000, caused immense human suffering and destroyed much of the island's infrastructure and the functions of the state. It is estimated that 5–10 percent of the total population died as a result of the crisis. Especially women and children suffered because of the denial of basic healthcare and schooling, and as victims of sexual violence.
4. The crisis began in November 1988, when Francis Ona and his group, later coined the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), sabotaged a power-line pylon, cutting off power to the Panguna mine and the mine port at Loloho. This mining project of an Australian-based company commenced operations in 1972, and had increasingly faced local resistance and demonstrations by landowners. Ona's initial grievance was over the division of mining royalties. Subsequently a group of Nasioi landowners led by Ona demanded compensation for past damage to their land and the environment. When their claims were not met, they started to sabotage the mine. The Papua New Guinea government, aided with Australian equipment such as patrol boats and Iroquois helicopters, responded with force to Ona's sabotage activities. It initially sent a police force contingent, and later the PNG Defence Force, who relocated civilians into so-called 'care-centres' and enforced an economic blockade.<sup>[5]</sup> Enflamed by the violent interventions of the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces (PNGDF), earlier secessionist aspirations<sup>[6]</sup> took root in Ona's environmental protests, which led to a more broadly-supported struggle to gain independence from Papua New Guinea.<sup>[7]</sup>
5. It seems that the conflict was mainly related to historical (colonial), environmental, economic and

political resentments and aspirations, as well as inter-generational differences and tensions. The crisis, however, developed in a particular cultural environment. In fact, among Catholics in the Koromira area of central Bougainville, it was the nationalists' espousal of *kastom* (tradition) and Christianity, and in particular of Marian ideals of motherhood and holiness, that played an important role, in staging the politics of the war and the dynamics of reconciliation.<sup>[8]</sup>

6. In this article it is shown that men and women have different roles in warfare and peace processes, and are affected in different ways by conflict. Moreover, it becomes clear how notions about manhood and womanhood are part of the ideological underpinnings of conflict. In particular, I pay attention to gendered religious symbols and metaphors that evolved in the context of Bougainville. Such symbols help individuals and groups to give meaning to their changing everyday realities in which violence and insecurity are paramount. Before elaborating on these symbols and the interplay between gender, religion and nationalist warfare, I first elaborate on the place of Mary in Bougainville, and how, albeit differently, both women and men incorporated Mary into their struggle for survival and justice.

### **Mary and motherhood in Bougainville<sup>[9]</sup>**

7. In 2000, the majority (69 percent) of the 180,000 Bougainvilleans were Catholic, followed by United Church (UC, 15 percent), Seventh Day Adventists (SDA, 7 percent) and Pentecostals (6 percent).<sup>[10]</sup> The Nasioi people living in the Koromira district, where I did most of my field research, are predominantly Catholic.<sup>[11]</sup> Eugene Ogan, who did fieldwork among Naisioi in the period 1962–1978, estimates that in the early 1960s, Catholics were in the majority among the Nasioi, outnumbering adherents to other religions by about four or five to one.<sup>[12]</sup>
8. Since 1902, European, and subsequent American and Australian missionaries of the Society of Mary (MSSM), referred to as Marists introduced the Catholic faith among the Naisioi, establishing a mission station in Kieta.<sup>[13]</sup> The society derives its name from the Virgin Mary whom the members attempt to imitate in their spirituality and daily work. Marists act from their love for Mary and with the compassion of Mary, aiming to bring others closer to God through their teachings of faith and practical skills. As Marist brother John Mauro from Bougainville expressed: 'For me personally, Mary is my mother. Through Mary, we try to become close to God. In fact our motto is: All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus. So Mary is our first superior.'<sup>[14]</sup>
9. Due to the zealous efforts of the Marist missionaries, the Marist spirit spread over Bougainville.<sup>[15]</sup> Especially during the crisis, the popularity of Mary and the rosary increased dramatically, as expressed and experienced by Catholics. The rosary was part of people's daily lives, with mothers, fathers, elders, soldiers and children carrying it on their bodies and reciting its prayers everyday. As an elderly couple from the Koromira area expressed: 'During the crisis, the rosary was special because we looked to Mama Maria as someone who could help us.' Likewise, the establishment of Marian devotions such as Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Mercy, The Marian Mercy Mission, and The Immaculate Conception all occurred during the crisis as people sought new spiritual guidance in order to deal with the hardships they encountered.<sup>[16]</sup>
10. The importance of Mary in the lives of many Bougainvilleans, both before, during and after the crisis, can be seen as among one of the influences the Marist fathers, brothers and sisters had on peoples' spiritual and mental mindsets. More recent Marist teachings, for example, inspired many influential Bougainvilleans, such as former Catholic priest and current president of the Autonomous Province of Bougainville John Momis, to act against the successive acts of

oppression that had faced Bougainville.[17]

11. Catholic Nasioi appropriated God, Jesus and Mary 'as a kind of super-ancestral spirit, and could be asked for practical benefits as villagers had done in the past'. [18] According to Marist Brother John Mauro and Koromira elder John Bovora, Bougainville people did not know Mary before the missionaries arrived, [19] but she was easily accepted due to her role as a mother, an important status in the matrilineal societies of North and Central Bougainville. [20] This is especially apparent among Catholic Nasioi where Mary is venerated as '*Maria niuko*, Mary our mother.' [21] As John Bovora from Koromira parish explains:

The idea of a creator existed with our ancestors before the missionaries came.... Within Catholic faith, God stays in heaven. For us, he stays with us. There was no customary idea of Mary, or of Jesus. But when the Marists introduced Mary, she was accepted as the mother of God. This is because we have a matrilineal system here. [22]

12. For many of the people I talked to, Mary is so popular because praying to her and asking for her help is like asking your mother for help. So, in addition to Mary's powerful role as the mother of God, the acceptance of Mary seems to have resonated with the importance of family relations among Catholic Nasioi, and among many other Bougainvilleans, for whom the principle of matriliney, and women's roles as mothers is central.

13. In traditional Nasioi societies, people affiliated themselves with dispersed matrilineal clans, locally called *muu*'. [23] This clan membership provided people with a fixed place in the social system as well as a basis for making land claims.

14. Ideally, these clans were exogamous, [24] but among the Nasioi, marriages did occur within the same clan. [25] The Nasioi, as most Bougainvilleans, lived in hamlets or villages that consisted of several households. Each household was comprised of a husband and a wife or wives and their children. Upon marriage, sons would ideally move to another matrilineal hamlet. With matrilocality being the ideal, working together in the gardens further strengthened the mother-daughter ties. [26]

15. Nasioi gender relations were characterised by an ideological opposition between the sexes, with a sharp division in labour, in which men cleared land and planted perennial trees while the women did the gardening and harvesting of crops. [27] While men and women shared garden work, the completed garden was the exclusive province of the women. [28] Gender relations were not hierarchical, but rather complementary with women having similar rights as men. [29]

16. During the period that Eugene Ogan did his fieldwork among the Nasioi, 'women played an active role in all aspects of social life,' being especially active in matters to do with birth, marriage and residence. [30] Josephine Sirivi, the wife of former BRA commander Sam Kauona, founder of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom movement and initiator of an Open Learning Centre at Aropa Beach, expressed women's status as follows: 'In the past, women were considered holy. They are the custodians of the land, of life. They give birth to the next generation, and they organised ceremonies, such as female initiations.' [31]

17. Traditionally, women have thus an important place in the family, and a vital role in the life of their clan, including in matters concerning land. However, despite the importance of matrilineal kinship in the transmission of land rights, as symbolised by frequent Nasioi statements that 'the land is the women's affair', land rights were normally exercised by men. [32] According to Ogan, this was the

result of colonial interferences with traditional gender relations and gender roles as the Australian administration only dealt with males, ignoring Nasioi men's messages that 'land belongs to women.'<sup>[33]</sup> In fact, according to Ogan, especially from the 1960s onwards, it was the impact of colonising forces, such as administrative officers and patriarchal Catholic missionaries,<sup>[34]</sup> which tended to undermine Naisioi women's status.<sup>[35]</sup>

18. Women's status was particularly recognised and valued with respect to childbirth, 'an occasion to demonstrate solidarity and a matter of great importance in which their [women's] special powers and interests are publicly recognised.'<sup>[36]</sup> Maternity and motherhood were thus great sources of value and power for women. According to John Braithwaite et al., the concept of motherhood, which is central in all Bougainville societies, denotes a broad range of affiliations.<sup>[37]</sup> It first of all means that a woman is mother to the children who stem from her womb. Second, it means that she is mother to 'all the children born in the land over which a set of multigenerational mothers and grandmothers are custodians.' Third, it means she is mother to all those younger than herself.<sup>[38]</sup> As conceptualised by Nasioi, every adult belongs to the *muu* ' of his or her biological mother,<sup>[39]</sup> meaning that all adults are children of their mothers' clan and land. Fourth, women are mothers of all Bougainvilleans.<sup>[40]</sup> With the veneration of Mary as 'mother of God' and Mary as 'our mother,' Bougainville mothers and their experiences and qualities, became entangled with those of Mary and her veneration. As expressed by John Bovora:

Mary is the mother of all mothers. She carried our Saviour. Mothers look after everything and everyone: they prepare food, go to the gardens. Mothers know how to plan, they know when there is shortage of money. Mary is inside all mothers. Mary is a covenant; so all mamas are a covenant too. They all carry a miracle.<sup>[41]</sup>

19. By equating Bougainville mothers with Mary, motherhood becomes sacred and, moreover, obtains iconic power. This latter affiliation between Bougainville women and Mary gained momentum during the Bougainville crisis and its aftermath.

### **Holy women, holy land and holy war**

20. According to mainstream analyses, the Bougainville conflict was related to historical, environmental, economic and political resentments and aspirations.<sup>[42]</sup> However, these studies are problematic as they give 'a residual and non-causal status to the ideas, values, norms, beliefs and symbolic representations that constitute the cultural world of the people involved.'<sup>[43]</sup> This absence of indigenous cosmologies in post-conflict explanations of the conflict has also been criticised upon by Simon Kenema, who argues that in order to 'fully comprehend how and why the conflict eventuated' one has to understand 'pre-existing systems of cultural logic.'<sup>[44]</sup> This paper will not discuss the various perceived causes of the conflict,<sup>[45]</sup> but instead, will try to illuminate particular values and belief systems that, from a local post-conflict perspective, are dominant in local ideological underpinnings and legitimisations of the conflict. In particular, attention is paid to the gendered religious symbols and metaphors that came about in the conflict of Bougainville.

21. The general conviction of Nasioi today is that prior to the conflict, foreigners were corrupting Bougainville. In particular people coming from the Papua New Guinea highlands, referred to as 'redskins,'<sup>[46]</sup> are blamed for disrespecting Bougainville customs and, in particular, 'local sexual mores.'<sup>[47]</sup> Various informants told me that PNG Highlanders were notorious for sexually assaulting and raping Bougainville women. It is not known how many women were actually

attacked, but as John Braithwaite, discussing rape prior and during the Bougainville conflict puts it: 'A single rape was one of the important sparks that lit its [Bougainville's] civil war.'<sup>[48]</sup>

22. In 1988, a very popular nurse was raped, murdered and mutilated while staying with her sister in the Koromira area. This brutal act unleashed a fury against all 'redskins' (men, women and children), who were driven out of Koromira by the 'Koromira Home Guard,' burning 'redskin' settlements and killing any men who resisted.<sup>[49]</sup> Soon after, Francis Ona mobilised his followers to sabotage the mining company, which catalysed the violent intervention by the PNG army. Braithwaite offers no further explanation of why the rape of one woman could eventually result in a wave of violence that displaced more than a third of the population from their homes and killed between 10,000 and 20,000 people.<sup>[50]</sup> Obviously, the rape was not an isolated event, and years of tensions between and resentments against, in particular, squatters from PNG, were vented in the communal outrage it provoked. But it is clear that, as in other wars, the rape of women became 'a dominant metaphor of the danger to the nation from its enemies,'<sup>[51]</sup> in this case people from PNG. When considering local conceptualisations of Bougainville as holy land and women as 'mothers of the land,' the ideological justification of violence against those who were believed to violate Bougainville land and women, and, as such, Bougainville culture and life, becomes more comprehensible.
23. For Bougainvilleans, land is intrinsically part of Bougainville life, culture and people. Many believe it is given by God. Moreover, Bougainville is considered to be holy, *Me'ekamui*.<sup>[52]</sup> *Me'ekamui* refers to sacred sites at which ancestors are believed to reside. These are located all over Bougainville. In the past, each village had a caretaker of its sacred places. These sites included stones, trees, and rivers, and they were visited to make offerings and to pray for ones well being. As Koromira elder John Bovora related: 'The early Christians, our *tumbuna* [ancestors], had sacred places they would use for making offerings on stones in preparation of the harvest, for example. What was asked for during the offerings, would come to pass. Our *tumbuna* knew God exists. They knew how to pray to *Kumponi*, to God.'<sup>[53]</sup> Importantly, the Panguna mining site was considered such a sacred and mythical place. Landowners objected to the commencement of the Panguna mine because of the removal of a huge stone, which was locally believed to serve as an abode for the spirits.<sup>[54]</sup>
24. By calling Bougainville a Holy Land, people claim it as the land of their ancestors and, as such, as the land that spiritually and physically belongs to indigenous Bougainvilleans.<sup>[55]</sup> This way of claiming land is powerful, as it is grounded in the conviction that land, God, and people are spiritually linked. Koromira elder John Bovora explained that when the land is disrespected, for example by taking its resources without acknowledging and praying to the spirits, the people live in sin and consequently disarray, as they do not acknowledge the holiness of the land. The ancestors and God distance themselves from the people, because the people do not care about the land. Although environmental activists, including Francis Ona, blamed the mining company for environmental degradation,<sup>[56]</sup> the mining activities were, from a local cultural logics perspective, actually violating reciprocal relations between humans, spirits and place, and thereby desecrating the land. Moreover, Papua New Guinean mine employers were also blamed for violating the custodians of the land, Bougainville women. Together with anti-white sentiments that developed during the course of Bougainville's colonial history and more recent resentments and tensions, this violation of Bougainville land and women fuelled people's 'anti-foreigners' and nationalist feelings. As a Koromira church-worker and Eucharist minister expressed:

Before the crisis, these redskins and Europeans, they were coming to Bougainville, bringing their customs. During the crisis, we got rid of them all. All the squatters [settlers from PNG in the cities of Kieta and Arawa]

are gone now. The crisis has straightened all this. God gave us the crisis, so now a new Bougainville must come up.

25. Bougainville's nationalist ideology reveals the role of gender in the construction and reproduction of nationalism. As demonstrated by feminist research on nationalism, women often become the 'iconic representations' of cultural and ethnic-national identity.<sup>[57]</sup> In Bougainville, women were classified as holy mothers, as symbols of cultural purity who represented Bougainville people, custom and, in particular, land. There is a saying in Bougainville that women are 'mothers of the land.'<sup>[58]</sup> This conception of Bougainville women as mothers of the land of Bougainville was, according to Braithwaite et al., 'enlivened by struggles against colonial conceptions of national boundaries that made no sense to Bougainvilleans.'<sup>[59]</sup> It became of growing significance in the resistance against the new nation of Papua New Guinea (1975), which drew on the concept of a 'nation of fathers' with Sir Michael Somare as national leader.<sup>[60]</sup> Being constructed as 'mothers of the land,' women were thus intimately intertwined with Bougainville's struggle for independence. In fact, women, as mothers, seemed to 'embody the nation.'<sup>[61]</sup> As expressed by Francis Ona in a letter published in the Papua New Guinea *Post-Courier* at the onset of the crisis on 28 April 1989:

...Life will not exist on our Island. Our very government is hiding this fact. It will sacrifice our lives for the sake of PNG economy. You mothers of this nation must talk it out now in order to save your children's lives. We, your men folk, are doing our part in this jungle....<sup>[62]</sup>

26. The Bougainville nation could only be saved by the actions of male heroes, by Rambos, as the revolutionaries initially called themselves. Taking as their role model, the protagonist of the popular Sylvester Stallone action film saga, members of the BRA mimicked Rambo's attitude and appearance.<sup>[63]</sup> In particular, they seem to have been inspired by Rambo's one-man guerrilla fight against his and his nation's enemies. Protecting the Bougainville nation against sinful, foreign, elements who were violating local women and the land and culture of Bougainville, justified the use of violence and warfare. This representation exemplifies how Bougainville men, as in other conflict areas, were expected to 'defend the moral consciousness and the ego of the nation.'<sup>[64]</sup> So, next to exalted motherhood, heroic manhood figured as an icon of Bougainville's nationalist ideology. This shows how 'men too are cast in certain roles in relation to the nation.'<sup>[65]</sup>

27. Significantly, this representation of heroic masculinity was also enhanced and sanctified through religious symbols and values. Of particular significance was the concept of holiness. First of all, the struggle to deliver the land to its rightful owners was perceived as a 'holy war.'<sup>[66]</sup> Secondly, soldiers had to stay holy before, during and after the fight. For Catholic BRA members, as well as non-combatants from the Koromira area, the feminine symbol of Mary became an important role model for obtaining this holiness. As Paul Kaanamà put it:

During the crisis holiness was very important. Our work, thinking, actions should be holy. Because Mama [Maria] is holy, we must be holy too. Our children, who fought as BRA, they fought with holiness. No BRA boys of ours [Koromira] died, because they fought with holiness.<sup>[67]</sup>

By mimicking Mary, the Revolutionaries thus strove to obtain God's blessing, to turn them into holy warriors. Ex-BRA combatant and BRA prayer leader Albert Natee of Koromira parish, explained:

Francis Ona said this land must become holy again, *Me'ekamui*. We prayed to God and he gave us strength. This directed us to engage in a clean battle. We were fighting for our rights, to get rid of all these bad companies and their effects. All BRA and all Bougainvilleans—everybody practiced this holiness. We had to stay with the Church. Our spirits had to be holy, so God would get rid of Satan [the mining company and immigrants from PNG]. We had to stay holy to get rid of it. And God helped us. How? His power worked through the rosary.

28. In short, *Me'ekamui* ideology promoted the BRA's struggle for independence from an exploitative Papua New Guinea and outside interference. Deeply informed by a strongly localised Catholic discourse, this ideology constituted a form of ethno-nationalism with fierce antiforeigner or anti-'redskin' sentiments, as well as the notion of a traditional customary society in which women and land are considered holy. As a result, the struggle against Papua New Guinea and Australian hegemony was conceptualised as a holy war to restore Bougainville and its people to the status of the unblemished holy island it once was.<sup>[68]</sup> Importantly, this ideology relied heavily on 'iconic representations' of Bougainville women and men.<sup>[69]</sup> In the next section, the importance of the symbol of motherhood during the war and in processes of peace-making is analysed.

### **Motherhood, war, and peace**

29. It may come as no surprise that although (especially in the Koromira area of Bougainville) the conflict was conceptualised as a holy war that should not bring harm to the guiltless, the war actually caused many innocent victims. As in other parts of the world,<sup>[70]</sup> the Bougainville conflict was for a large part waged on the bodies of unarmed civilians. Women's experiences differed in some respects depending on whether they were in government-controlled or BRA-controlled areas. As narrated by Bougainvillean Sister Lorraine Garasu:

For those of us in government-controlled areas, it was 'life between two guns.' Women experienced harassment by both the BRA and the PNGDF forces. Our lives were constrained by rules and regulations such as the curfew from dawn to dusk. Freedom of movement and communication were restricted whenever there was a military operation, affecting the supply of medicines, basic store goods and the provision of education. Restrictions on movement meant that women often had to wait a few days before they could go to their gardens to collect food.<sup>[71]</sup>

In another part of Bougainville the people had fled into the mountains, establishing semi- or permanent bush camps. While women living in the BRA-controlled areas had in general better access to food, they had to deal with continual attacks, like bombardments by PNGDF and local resistance forces. As Garasu explained:

Families who had fled into the hills had to establish new food gardens and while waiting for their crops to ripen, the women would return to their old gardens to harvest food. This was a long and dangerous journey and caused many health problems. Women behind the blockade struggled to care for their children without medicines, immunisations and adequate food supplies. Many babies died from preventable childhood diseases. Those in the mountains suffered from lack of warm clothing.<sup>[72]</sup>

Due to this particular warscape, combat zones were not confined to particular areas, but constantly shifting, thereby permeating boundaries between domestic and public spheres, between safe areas and battlefronts.<sup>[73]</sup> With the PNGDF and the BRA controlling different areas, people could get cornered between fighting parties and risked being killed. As Marilyn Taleo

Havini expressed, 'No one has escaped the twists and turns of fighting zones, having families trapped in opposite camps.'<sup>[74]</sup> On top of that, many people have lost loved ones through the denial of basic services, medicines, and access to help. In addition to grief, traumas resulting from torture and rape are widespread. Bougainville society seems to have had a low level of rape, but 'as in most wars, rape became common in Bougainville during the conflict.'<sup>[75]</sup> As Garasu explained, 'Women and girls in both areas were at risk of rape by soldiers from all factions.'<sup>[76]</sup>

30. Considering the individual and social impact of the crisis, it comes as no surprise that people longed for spiritual guidance and help. Especially in the period between 1990 and 1994, people committed themselves strongly to their various churches.<sup>[77]</sup> The need for economic, medical and social help was tremendous and people started to look to the church as a source of aid. As stated by Bougainvillean Ruth Saovana-Spriggs, 'the churches played a pivotal role in providing services from their few stored resources, which soon ran out.... Services delivered with love and Christian fellowship became the most important aspect of people's social life.'<sup>[78]</sup> In addition, in the Catholic communities, belief in Mary provided women with a strong role-model and symbol of hope to fight for peace.
31. Bougainville women are internationally renowned for their role in bringing peace to Bougainville. Since the beginnings of the crisis, women all over Bougainville contested the violence, both individually and collectively. In the beginning women organised peace activities at village level, while at a later phase peace demonstrations, conferences and meetings were held.<sup>[79]</sup> Church groups became especially important in connecting women from different areas, different denominations and with different loyalties in the conflict.<sup>[80]</sup> For example, while some Bougainville women supported the BRA and the independence struggle, others were strongly opposed to the BRA's activities and supported the resistance forces. Organisations such as 'The Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom' (which was pro-BRA), 'The Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum' and the 'Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency' (founded by members of the Catholic Women's Organization in Buka) were crucial in bringing women with different backgrounds and affiliations together.<sup>[81]</sup> In August 1996, 700 women from all over Bougainville attended the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum in Arawa, which became a turning point in the conflict.
32. For those involved, the peace process could not have succeeded without the help of God. As narrated by Catholic women involved in the peace process, mothers were standing in the front line, in between the fighting men, praying and clasping the rosary in their hands in an attempt to stop the shooting. According to these women's experiences, it was Mary and the rosary that gave them strength to intervene. As told by Anastasia le Pointe from Buka, who was involved in women's protests against the violence from the 1990s onwards:

Without Mary I would not have been here. She is the mother of Jesus. She cares, loves.... I address her in all my prayers.

During the crisis, I had a very hard time. Had it not been for Santu Maria, it would not have been possible to achieve peace and reconciliation.

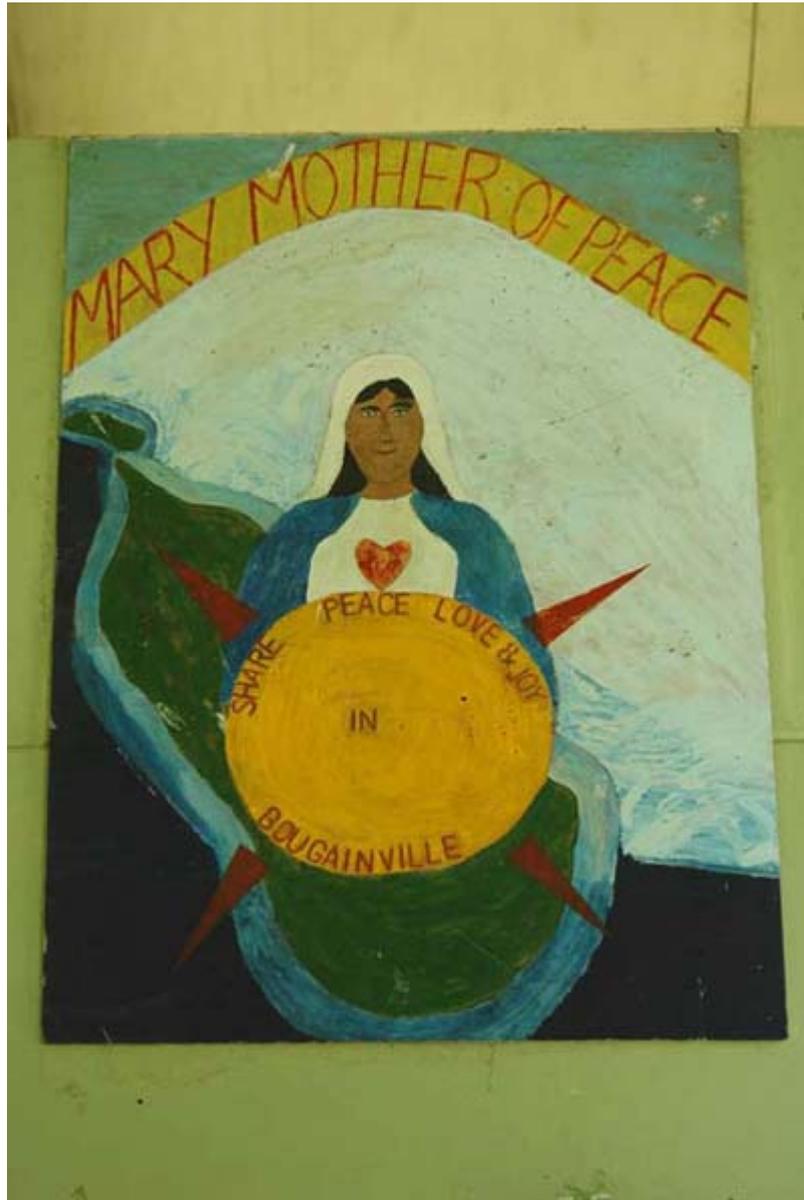
In 1992, we [Women's group, Catholic Women's Org.] travelled from Buka to Arawa. There we went into the bush to talk with the BRA. We took a statue of Mary with us to negotiate with them. We prayed with the BRA, they got our pamphlets about the rosary and rosary beads.

In 1996/1997, I went to Buin with John Momis [the current president of the Autonomous Government of Bougainville] to negotiate with the BRA to release the policemen/soldiers they had taken captive. Before we

went, I prayed all night to Maria. I dressed up in white and blue [the Catholic Women's Federation's uniform]. I felt the spirit of the Lady with me, so I talked to the PNGDF about we all having one mother.

We went into the BRA controlled area near Buin, entering the village where the captives were held. I told the local women to keep following Santu Maria. We are all mothers! We are the home of all fathers and children. A mother must model her life after Santu Maria. As long as you stay behind Mama Maria, you will not loose. I was begging the BRA to release the captives. I did not come as a policeman, but as a mother, as a mama. I told them: "All mothers, we are worried, you must stop the fighting." The prayers to Our Lady, they worked. A month later, the captives were released.

Anastasia's narrative shows how she tapped into her identity as a suffering, mother who finds comfort and strength in Mama Maria, who, like Bougainville mothers, was in pain due to the loss of her child. Maternity, pain, suffering, endurance, submission and love are presented as part of Anastasia's identity as a Bougainville mother. These physical and emotional qualities strongly resonate with the virtues ascribed to Mother Mary.<sup>[82]</sup> Moreover, Mary's attributes of forgiveness and peace are entangled with these representations of Bougainville motherhood, of Bougainville mothers bringing peace (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Painting showing Mary, as 'Mother of Peace,' depicted on a map of Bougainville Island. Source: Painting in Church at Tinputz village (Northeast Bougainville Island) Artist unknown, photographed 2005.

33. Other women and women's groups in Buka and Bougainville followed Anastasia's initiatives and efforts to stop the violence.<sup>[83]</sup> Like Anastasia's story, their stories show it was women's role as mothers that was significant in these mediations. Women 'portrayed themselves not just as mothers of their own sons, but of all Bougainville's people, and in other instances members of the Papua New Guinea Security Forces, and indeed of the land itself.'<sup>[84]</sup> In her work on gender and peace in Bougainville, Ruth Saovana-Spriggs mentions that women's peace-building activities were sometimes resisted as men argued that this was not women's customary role. Nevertheless, it seems that Bougainville's matrilineal traditions were a crucial factor in the success of women's peace efforts.<sup>[85]</sup>

34. In her essay on the role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation, Garasu explains the importance of motherhood in women's peace efforts.<sup>[86]</sup> She argues that because of their high status in the family, women were able to negotiate peace in their communities. Moreover, due to their roles as mothers, women were capable of mediating between the warring factions and setting up constructive dialogues,<sup>[87]</sup> also negotiating with women who had different loyalties in the conflict. For example, during the Arawa peace talks that were held from 10–14 October 1994, Agnes Titus, one of the founders of the Buka based NGO Leitana Nehan and, at that time, president of the Provincial Council of Women, delivered a plenary speech that aimed to bring together the women of both sides of the conflict:<sup>[88]</sup>

I want to talk to my sisters Mrs Ona, Mrs Kabui and Mrs Kauona [the wives of the secessionist leaders] and all sisters and mothers. What you feel, we have felt. The pain of mothers giving birth in the bush—we have felt it. I am a mother and I have children that I love. You are the same. My heart cried when soldiers on both sides were killed. We are mothers; we carried these children. Why must this go on? Give peace a chance. Come out of the bush. Please hear us. All mothers, please hear us.<sup>[89]</sup>

### **Motherhood in post-conflict Bougainville**

35. After the signing of a truce in 1997, the intensity of the violence between the conflicting parties decreased, resulting eventually in a peace agreement. However, this peace was characterised by a high level of criminality and of sexual violence, including domestic violence against women. Moreover, many Bougainville women have been stripped from the agency and power they obtained as advocates against the war. Although actively involved in the peace mediations, with for example fifty Bougainvillean women attending the Lincoln Peace talks in January 1998,<sup>[90]</sup> they are now struggling to get access to social and political power domains.
36. The decline of women's social roles in society has been targeted by the Buka based Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, which started as an ad hoc humanitarian relief organisation during the crisis.<sup>[91]</sup> Since the ending of the crisis, they have attempted to re-establish women's social roles, 'which had been eroded by colonialism prior to 1975, the mining operations and their associated social disruption, and by the ten years of civil war.'<sup>[92]</sup> In his analysis of Leitana Nehan's conceptualisations of 'gender, development, and peace,' Peter Ninnes shows that the NGO deployed 'culturally oriented discourses of gender that emphasised the important roles that Bougainville women have traditionally played in Bougainville societies.' As its founder Helen Hakena explained, 'the early emphasis was on improving family life. Mothers give birth to men and children. Since mothers are custodians of the land they are therefore leaders in improving family and community life.'<sup>[93]</sup> From a focus on women as mothers and their traditional roles, Leitana Nehan's emphasis shifted to women's rights and the need to improve women's social status as part of creating a non-violent society.<sup>[94]</sup>
37. What can be regarded as iconic for women's social position today, is the way some men try to limit women's social (and political) mobility by controlling female public appearance. In several villages, women face considerable restraint and resistance from their male village elders and councils of chiefs who have enforced rules that preclude women from wearing jeans and shorts.<sup>[95]</sup> Some women I spoke to perceive these rules as interfering with women's rights and, in particular, with the autonomy of their bodies. Others, however, remarked that this emphasis on female proper dress is justified, relating it to 'traditional' Bougainville moral values. As explained by Garasu, it is part of 'our moral life':

It is crossing the boundaries, stepping on men's toes. These women and girls are getting into something that is not theirs. It belongs to men. It doesn't suit our culture when women start wearing men's clothes. In our culture, men and women do not wear each other's clothes. I can wear my sister's, but not my brother's. We keep to our sides. If I would wear my brother's laplap, that would be very disrespectful.[96]

38. In addition to the wearing of jeans and shorts, Bougainville women are also prohibited from wearing t-shirts displaying the national symbol of Bougainville, the upè. The upè features as the key-symbol on the Bougainville flag and is regarded as the national symbol. Especially during the crisis, this symbol became of great importance in Bougainville's aim to get autonomy and eventually independence. Now elders claim that this symbol of power is prohibited for women, because it is actually the sacred hat that was worn by male initiates. Origin myths tell that this symbol of power and wisdom initially belonged to women. As Marist brother Willy Abel narrated:

The emblem of Bougainville shows the upè [the sacred hat], which is used during the initiation of young boys. The hat contains power and wisdom about what the future holds. Women used to hold this hat, but men took it from them. They were hungry for that power and feared of being overpowered by women, so they stole it and kept it secret. Since then, women are not allowed to touch it, as it contains all the power and wisdom.[97]

This myth is symbolic for the status women once had in their communities and its decline, in particular with regard to land and political matters. Instead of being respected as holy custodians of the land and mediators of peace, several women I spoke to who aspire to public and political positions, feel overruled and pushed to the margins. This time, not by colonial officers and patriarchal missionaries,[98] but by the legacies of a civil war and by Bougainville men (re)claiming social status and political power.

39. During a 'leadership and management workshop' organised by the council of women in Arawa prior to the first post-war elections in 2005, many participants vented their frustration regarding the male domination of national and local politics. Elizabeth Sawai, president of the women's group in Kieta said: 'There are mainly men in the ABG [Autonomous Bougainville Government], if they think women are not a priority, they are wrong. Women are important for social development.'[99] Not only at a national level, but also locally, women have difficulties in being acknowledged as stakeholders. 'Despite being a matrilineal society, men still put us in their pocket,' exclaimed another woman.[100] Mary from Buka narrates:

In my district, the council of elders had a meeting with members of the ABG. They would not let us [women] participate. The council of elders refused us because they do not believe in women's organisations. This is men's style. Every decision is made by men, they just call us in for approval. Our women are not happy. They played an important role during the crisis, but this is not acknowledged.[101]

40. The results of the 2005 elections saw three women being elected. However, these three positions were secured seats. Saovana-Spriggs expresses it was after a lengthy and difficult process that Bougainville women's initial proposal was cut down to twelve seats, but at the end, they could only secure three seats.[102] So, in the constitution there are three seats guaranteed for women. This implies that out of a total of forty seats in the ABG, including the President, women make up less than 10 percent of the decision making positions.[103] After the recent 2010 May elections, this picture remains the same. However, unlike the 2005 and 2007 presidential elections, this time a

woman, Magdalene Itona Toroansi, contested the presidential seat among six other male candidates. As the woman representative in the ABG Parliament for Central Bougainville, Toroansi gave up her reserved seat 'to test the women of Bougainville for equal votes for a woman to lead this second presidential seat.'<sup>[104]</sup> A year earlier, she had challenged the autonomous government to ensure gender equality at all levels of government. Failure to ensure this had, according to Toroansi, resulted in fewer women contesting elections in the region.<sup>[105]</sup> She claimed that women in Bougainville had been 'denied their rights to participate and contribute to the decision-making process in Bougainville'.<sup>[106]</sup> Tapping into Bougainville women's roles as mothers, she said: 'Women are mothers of society and, through their everyday association with the communities, they understand better the problems faced by the people and the solutions to these problems.'<sup>[107]</sup> Toroansi was defeated by John Momis.

### **The role of gender and religion in nationalist warfare**

41. In short, the Bougainville case shows how gender is intertwined with the construction of a nationalist discourse focusing on re-claiming Bougainville land and asserting Bougainvillean existence and identity against outsiders. The crisis is perceived as something that was necessary to circumvent the decline of sociality and morality, caused by PNG 'redskins' and whites who had come with their own customs, and were violating the Holy Nation of Bougainville and its female custodians. As expressed by Ona: 'This war is to protect the land environment and social/cultural system on Bougainville. It was something that every Bougainvillean wanted, in terms of the rights for Bougainville.'<sup>[108]</sup>
42. Nationalist struggles like those of Bougainville revolve around the assertion of cultural, religious, and traditional identity.<sup>[109]</sup> This concern with identity implies that gender is also part of nationalist projects. Not only because people's thinking and rhetoric is shaped by the gendered war discourse that permeates their thinking,<sup>[110]</sup> but more so because defining gender identity and gender relations is at the core of nationalism. As noted by Giles and Hyndman, in general nationalist projects 'assign roles and responsibilities for the reproduction of the group and for the custody of cultural values and cultural identity to women,' thereby 'reviving and celebrating traditional gender codes and male power.'<sup>[111]</sup> In Bougainville, women's local customary roles as mothers and custodians of the land, was expanded to women being represented as mothers of the Bougainville nation 'as mothers of the land.' In fact, the crisis is believed to have revived matrilineal culture, which had been eroded in the colonial era.<sup>[112]</sup> Celebrating women's roles as 'mothers of the land' and sanctifying this role by denoting both women and land as holy constitutes an image of exalted motherhood.
43. While essentialising women's role as reproducers and custodians of land and culture, men are expected to defend and protect the Holy Nation and its people. These specific representations become, as remarked by Giles and Hyndman for prevailing war images, iconic representations or symbols of women and men in war. Importantly, they tend to serve 'strategic, nationalist or state purposes' and thus 'tell us little about the diversity of women's and men's experiences and their various roles.'<sup>[113]</sup>
44. This tendency to construct essentialist images of both women and men reveals the power relations and gender politics that are at the centre of nationalist projects.<sup>[114]</sup> In fact, as argued by Cynthia Cockburn, nationalist or 'ethnic wars are, in a sense, also gender wars':

The communal power these political movements, armed with guns, seek to establish or defend is (among

other things) gender power, the regimes they seek to install are (among other things) gender regimes. As well as defining a relation between peoples and land, they shape a certain relation between women and men. It is a relation of male dominance, in some cases frankly patriarchal.[\[115\]](#)

Bougainville's nationalist ideology defines dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, prescribing attitudes and influencing aspirations, both in conflict and post-conflict situations. For example, in post-conflict Bougainville, the emphasis in public media on women's dress, and thus on women's moral behaviour, reflects how particular notions of femininity are being inscribed, or rather, prescribed, on women's bodies by particular agents. Moreover, not only with regard to dress are women expected to behave according to 'traditional' gender codes, but also with regard to their participation in male-dominated national politics. The fact that during the 2005 elections 'women who did show interest in running for a local constituency seat were pressured to back down "for the sake of their brothers",[\[116\]](#) reveals that women's political aspirations may be restrained by dominant notions about women's and men's proper roles in the nation.[\[117\]](#)

45. One of the main problems for Bougainville women today, is that while during the crisis women's role as mothers provided them with a certain amount of status and 'a platform on which to approach and appeal to powerful men,' this now 'undermines their desire to be taken seriously as political players.'[\[118\]](#) Essentialising women's motherly roles as the custodians of the holy nation and messengers of peace might effectively obstruct, as Mary from Buka so aptly expressed in the previous section, their inclusion as active decision makers in political arenas.[\[119\]](#)
46. On a more abstract level, the global tendency to equate motherhood with peace places mother's 'preservative love' in opposition to military conduct,[\[120\]](#) thereby obscuring the various, including supporting roles women may play in warfare.[\[121\]](#) This identification played an important role in Bougainville's nationalist rhetoric, but it also enabled women to mediate for peace.
47. According to scholars such as Cockburn quoted above[\[122\]](#) and Joanne Nagel in her article on masculinity and nationalism, the particular role women occupy in nationalist discourse and collective action 'reflects a masculine definition of femininity and of women's proper place in the nation.'[\[123\]](#) This would suggest that the image of mother of the nation is a masculine creation. However, as the Bougainville case shows, Bougainville women were and are very much part of its construction. For example, Josephine Sirivi founded a women's political independence movement, 'The Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom.'[\[124\]](#) This movement, as illustrated in Sirivi's publication '... as Mothers of the Land,' represents Bougainville women as mothers of both land and people who are being exploited and violated and, at the same time, as being resilient and instrumental in 'setting their land on the path towards lasting prosperity, peace and freedom.'[\[125\]](#) Likewise, the local NGO Leitana Nehan portrays Bougainville women as having an exceptional place in Bougainville's, matrilineal societies. As a result of their customary roles, Bougainville women have specific capabilities and 'roles to play in peace-making and post-conflict recovery.'[\[126\]](#) Presidential candidate Magdalene Toroansi, who identified women as 'mothers of society,' deployed a similar rhetoric. In all these representations, Bougainville women are identified with motherhood and peacemaking, as well as with the nation's future. This point is also argued by Margaret Jolly in her article on motherlands, 'mothers are subjects of such imaginings, and not just a site for masculine constructions.'[\[127\]](#) The question to be asked is, to what extent does a gap exist as Jolly phrased it, between 'the glorification of the mother as a nationalist icon' and 'the mundane mother of quotidian existence'?[\[128\]](#)

48. The relation between women's daily lives as mothers and their representation in both conflict and post-conflict national rhetoric is obviously not simple. As Jolly extrapolated for India and Africa, 'mothers are credited with value and some power in all these situations.'<sup>[129]</sup> Moreover, like Indian and African women, Bougainville women have deployed various images of motherhood—from victims of violence and conflict to agents of peacemaking, reconciliation and change. Importantly, religion is very much allied with these imageries, which (re)produce gender relations and gender identity. Women like Anastasia appropriate ideal models of womanhood found in scripture, and in particular, in the image of Mary. Mary, who is represented as a powerful, holy, loving and patient mother, provides women with a strong, but also coercive role-model of motherhood. Discourses such as these demand respect for women, but at the same time impose a form of femininity characterised by modesty, purity, obedience, and sacrificial motherhood on women's bodies. From an etic perspective, these constructions effectively limit women's gender mobility, thereby 'reinforcing traditional sexism.'<sup>[130]</sup> In the context of nationalism and nationalist warfare, the interplay between gender and religion thus seems to be troublesome for women in particular. Faced with a conservative hegemonic religious and customary discourse that favours women's role as mothers, women have to struggle and negotiate with their male counterparts to obtain their aspired novel positions in the new nation. However, considering the resilience and agency of Bougainville women and the work they have done, 'the mothers of the land' will not eschew this battle between the sexes.

## Endnotes

[1] The research on which this article is based was made possible by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Institute for Gender Studies and the Research Institute for Religious Studies and Theology at Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands. Special thanks to the anonymous reviewers and, in particular, to Prof. Eugene Ogan and Dr. Ruth Saovana-Spriggs for providing useful comments on earlier drafts of this essay. The remaining faults, as well as the viewpoints presented, are my own.

[2] Ursula King (ed.), *Women and Spirituality. Voices of Protest and Promise*, London: Macmillan Education, 1989; Ursula King, *Religion and Gender*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995; Elizabeth A. Castelli (ed.), *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, New York: Palgrave, 2001; Ursula King and Tina Beattie (eds), *Gender, Religion and Diversity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, New York: Continuum, 2004; Susan Calef and Ronald A. Simkins (eds), 'Women, Gender and Religion,' Special Issue of *Journal of Religion & Society*, vol. 5, (2009).

[3] Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans, 'Introduction: The Power of Marian Pilgrimage,' in *Moved by Mary. The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, ed. Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans, Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, pp. 1-13, p. 5.

[4] Hermkens et al., 'Introduction,' p. 5.

[5] Anthony Regan, *The Bougainville Conflict: Origins and Development, Main 'Actors,' and Strategies for Its Resolution*, Port Moresby: Faculty of Law, University of Papua New Guinea, 1996, p. 71.

[6] Since colonial times, Bougainvilleans have been confronted with oppressive regimes, which often led to feelings of resentment and resistance. When Bougainville became part of the Australian mandate area of Papua New Guinea, further protests followed. After having been under foreign control for more than fifty years, Bougainvilleans were not very eager to become a province of an independent Papua New Guinea in 1975. See Anthony Regan, 'Why a neutral Peace Monitoring Force? The Bougainville conflict and the peace process,' in *Without a Gun. Australians' Experiences Monitoring Peace in Bougainville, 1997–2001*, ed. Monica Wehner and Donald Denoon, Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2001, pp. 1–18, p. 2. Especially the Nasioi have been strong supporters for secession, forming the core of the early Napidakoe Navitu secessionist movement, and opposing the incorporation of Bougainville in the new nation of Papua New Guinea. See Eugene Ogan, 'Snapshots from Nasioi 1963–2000,' in *Bougainville Before the Conflict*, ed. Anthony J. Regan and Helga M. Griffin, Pandanus Books. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. The Australian National University, 2005, pp. 388–99, p. 394.

[7] Regan, 'The Bougainville Conflict,' p. 71. [Simon Kenema](#), 'An analysis of post-conflict explanations of indigenous dissent relating to the Bougainville copper mining conflict, Papua New Guinea,' in *eJournal of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies*, issues 1.2 and 2.1 (April 2010), paragraph 7, online: <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/pacificcurrents/kenema.htm>, accessed 10 September 2010.

[8] Anna-Karina Hermkens, 'Religion in war and peace: unravelling Mary's intervention in the Bougainville Crisis,' in *Culture and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2007):271–89.

[9] Field research in Bougainville took place between October 2005 and January 2006 and was mainly conducted among Nasioi people living in the Koromira area, which is regarded as the stronghold of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army.

[10] In addition, slightly less than 1 percent identified as non-Christians, and 2 percent did not indicate a religion (National Statistical Office, *Papua New Guinea Census 2000 North Solomons Provincial Report*, Published by the National statistical office, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 2002, p. 19.

[11] Unfortunately, there are no census data available from before and during the crisis, nor does the 2000 census differentiate per district or area, so it is not known exactly how many Nasioi are Catholic, Methodist, SDA or adhere to another, or no religion.

[12] Eugene Ogan, *Business and Cargo: Socio-Economic Change Among the Nasioi of Bougainville*, New Guinea Research Bulletin No.4. Port Moresby and Canberra: The Australian National University, 1972, p. 50.

[13] Douglas Oliver, *Black Islanders. A Personal Perspective of Bougainville 1937–1991*, Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991, p. 29. Hugh Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians. A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands*, Canberra: Australian National University, 1976. In 1920, the Methodists (UC) settled in the southern part of Bougainville, while the SDA came to the southeast coast of Bougainville in 1924. See Oliver, *Black Islanders*, pp. 40, 63.

[14] Interview with Brother John Mauro in Goroka, 2 September 2005.

[15] Obviously, not all Bougainville communities accepted the Marists' teachings. Some Bougainvilleans did not agree with the new spiritual powers that were introduced, perceiving the Catholic pantheon as being responsible for disrupting the traditional spiritual power balance and order. See James Tanis, 'Reconciliation: my side of the island,' in *Weaving Consensus: The Papua New Guinea–Bougainville Peace Process*, ed. A. Carl and Sr. L. Garasu, Accord 12. United Kingdom: Viking Associates, 2002, pp. 58–61. Others converted to Methodism or Seventh Day Adventism, thereby causing religious divisions among the Nasioi, of whom most had converted to Catholicism. See Eugene Ogan, 'The Bougainville Conflict: perspectives from Nasioi,' *Discussion Paper Society and Governance, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies*, no. 3 (1999):1–9, p. 3.

[16] For an analyses of the establishment of Marian movements during the crisis, see: Anna-Karina Hermkens, 'Circulating matters of belief. engendering Marian movements during the Bougainville Crisis,' in *Beliefs Beyond Borders*, ed. Matt Tomlinson, Lenore Manderson and Wendy Smith, Springer, forthcoming.

[17] Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, *Enemies Within: Papua New Guinea, Australia and the Sandline Crisis. The Inside Story*, Sydney: Doubleday, 1999, p. 17. John Lawrence Momis, 'Shaping leadership through Bougainville indigenous values and Catholic seminary training—A personal journey,' in *Bougainville before the Conflict*, ed. Regan and Griffin, pp. 300–16, pp. 305–08.

[18] Ogan, 'The Bougainville conflict: perspectives from Nasioi,' p. 3.

[19] See also Oliver, *Black Islanders*, p. 60.

[20] In fact, as Brother John Mauro argues for Bougainville in general, 'Mary was often easier accepted than her Son.' See Interview with Brother John Mauro in Goroka, 2 September 2005.

[21] Ogan, *Business and Cargo*, p. 46

[22] Interview with John Bovora, Berasinau village, Koromira parish, 28 November 2005.

- [23] Ogan, *Business and Cargo*, p. 95.
- [24] Beatrice Blackwood, 'Mountain people of the South Seas,' in *Natural History*, vol. 31 (1931):424–33, p. 430.
- [25] Ogan, *Business and Cargo*, p. 14.
- [26] According to Ogan, *Business and Cargo*, pp. 97, 101, entire clans did not operate as corporate units, but localised segments did carry out important social activities as ad hoc groups. For example, brothers and brothers-in-laws would frequently work together in cash crop production.
- [27] Ogan, *Business and Cargo*, p. 101.
- [28] Ogan, *Business and Cargo*, p. 24. Among neighbouring Nagovisi groups, men and women shared garden labour, which was conceived of as being part of marriage. Men and women who had no sexual relations with each other, should not work together in the garden. Like Nasioi women, Nagovisi women controlled both the garden work and its produce. See Jill Nash, 'Women, work and change in Nagovisi,' in *Rethinking Women's Roles: Perspectives from the Pacific*, ed. Denise O'Brien, Sharon W. Tiffany, Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, 1984, pp. 94–119, pp. 100, 102.
- [29] Ogan, 'The Bougainville conflict,' p.2.
- [30] Prof. Eugene Ogan, personal communication 31 July 2010; Eugene Ogan, 'A note on Nasioi childbirth,' *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 92, no. 1 (1983):99–105.
- [31] Interview with Josephine Kauona Sirivi, Damako village, 11 November 2005.
- [32] Eugene Ogan, 'Nasioi land tenure: an extended case-history,' in *Oceania*, vol. 42, no. 2 (1971):81–93, p. 84. See also Roselyne Kenneth's essay on land matters in matrilineal Haku (Buka) society, where women, although absent from public life, had the power to exercise authority, especially in matters concerning land and other inherited rights. Kenneth, 'Land for agriculture-silent women: men's voices,' in *Bougainville before the Conflict*, ed. Regan and Griffin, pp. 374–87.
- [33] Ogan, 'Nasioi land tenure,' p. 84; Ogan, personal communication.
- [34] In his essay on women in the churches of Oceania, Charles Forman emphasises that Catholic missionaries were unmarried priests and brothers, thereby presenting and implementing a very male-dominated image of Christianity. See Forman, "'Sing to the Lord a new song": women in the churches of Oceania,' in *Rethinking women's roles*, ed. O'Brien and Tiffany, pp. 153–172, p. 155.
- [35] Ogan, personal communication, 1 August 2010; Jill Nash ('Women, work and change in Nagovisi,' pp. 115, 117) remarks for neighbouring Nagovisi people that local women were not encouraged to enter modern institutions or professions in Nagovisi society. In effect, the colonial administration was biased towards patri-institutions, ignoring women's roles and status in traditional matrilineal society. However, the introduction of cash cropping did not undermine women's local position, as it actually strengthened matrilineal institutions.
- [36] Ogan, 'A note on Nasioi childbirth,' p. 104.
- [37] John Braithwaite, Hilary Charlesworth, Peter Reddy and Leah Dunn, *Reconciliation and Architectures of Commitment: Sequencing Peace in Bougainville*, Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010, pp. 93–94.
- [38] Braithwaite et al., *Reconciliation and Architectures of Commitment*, pp. 93–94.
- [39] Ogan, 'Business and cargo,' p. 95.
- [40] Ruth Soavona-Spriggs, personal communication, 26 August 2010.
- [41] Interview with John Bovora, Berasinau village, Koromira parish, 2 December 2005.
- [42] Anthony Regan, 'Causes and course of the Bougainville conflict,' in *The Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 33 no. 3 (1998):269–85; Gerard A. Finin and Terence Wesley-Smith, 'Coups, conflicts and crisis: the new Pacific way?' in

*Race and Class*, vol. 42, no.4 (1998):1–16; Helen Ware, 'Demography, migration and conflict in the Pacific,' in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 42, no. 4 (2005):435–54.

[43] Philip Smith, 'Codes and conflict: toward a theory of war as ritual,' in *Theory and Society*, vol. 20, no.1 (1991):103–38, p. 103.

[44] Kenema, 'An analysis of post-conflict explanations,' paragraph 32.

[45] For a detailed overview of the various causes and history of the Bougainville conflict, see Ronald James May and Matthew Spriggs (eds), *The Bougainville Crisis*, Crawford House Press, Bathurst, 1990; See also Matthew Spriggs and Donald Denoon (eds), *The Bougainville Crisis; 1991 Update*. Political and Social Change Monograph No. 16, Department of Political and Social Change, RSPacS, Australian National University and Crawford House Press, Bathurst, 1992.

[46] The most distinctive marker of Bougainvillean identity seems to be dark skin colour. Bougainvilleans refer to the lighter-skinned people of other parts of Papua New Guinea as 'redskins,' while whites are referred to as 'whiteskins.' In general, the term 'redskins' is used in a negative manner, referring to the bad influence these people are believed to have on Bougainvillean society and culture. See Jill Nash, 'The red and the black: Bougainvillean perceptions of other Papua New Guineans,' in *Pacific Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1990):1–17. According to Kenema, the alleged use of skin-colour as a unified marker of difference is a recent, post-conflict, construct, instead of a general historical shared, island-wide concept. In Kenema, 'An analysis of post-conflict explanations,' paragraph 28.

[47] John Braithwaite, 'Rape, shame and pride,' in *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2006):2–16, p. 6.

[48] Braithwaite, 'Rape, shame and pride,' p. 2. According to Ogan, the first casualty was Francis Ona's agnatic uncle Matthew Kove, who disappeared and was probably murdered. From that point, everything escalated, unintentionally fostered by the actions of the PNG government (Ogan, personal communication, 5 August 2010).

[49] Patrick Howley, *Breaking Spears and Mending Hearts*, London; Sydney: Zed Books & The Federation Press, 2002, pp. 34–35.

[50] Braithwaite, 'Rape, shame and pride,' p. 2.

[51] Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 369.

[52] Anna-Karina Hermkens, 'The power of Mary in secessionist warfare: Catholicism and political crisis in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea,' in *Powers. Religion as Social and Spiritual Force*, ed. Meerten ter Borg and Jan Willem van Henten. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, pp. 121–28.

[53] Interview with John Bovora, Berasinau village, Koromira parish, 27 November 2005.

[54] Kenema, 'An analysis of post-conflict explanations,' paragraph 15.

[55] James Tanis, 'Reconciliation: my side of the island,' p. 60; See further: Hermkens, 'Religion in war and peace,' pp. 278–79.

[56] Kenema, 'An analysis of post-conflict explanations,' p. 2.

[57] Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 'Introduction: Gender and Conflict in a Global Context,' in *Sites of Violence. Gender and Conflict Zones*, ed. Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, pp. 3–23, p. 9.

[58] Sister Lorraine Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' in *Weaving consensus: The Papua New Guinea – Bougainville peace process, Accord 12*, ed. Andy Carl and Sr. Lorraine Garasu, United Kingdom: Viking Associates, 2002, pp. 28–31. Josephine Tankunani Sirivi and Marilyn Taleo Havini (eds), ... *As Mothers of the Land. The Birth of Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom*, Canberra: Pandanus Books, The Australian National University, 2004.

- [59] Braithwaite et al., *Sequencing Peace in Bougainville*, p. 94.
- [60] Braithwaite et al., *Sequencing Peace in Bougainville*, p. 94.
- [61] According to Goldstein, the nation is often gendered female. As such, women in a sense embody the nation. Goldstein, *War and gender*, p. 369.
- [62] Francis Ona, 'To members of the Panguna Landowners' association,' in *Bougainville, Perspectives on a Crisis*, ed. Peter Polomka, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 66 (1990):7–10.
- [63] DVDs with action movies, like Rambo, are very popular in Bougainville, also before and during the crisis. Likewise, T-shirts displaying photographs of Jean Claude van Damme, Bruce Lee and other Rambo-like 'heroes' are very popular and many young men and boys dress themselves up Rambo-style, not only during the crisis, but also in the current 'post-conflict' situation. See also Braithwaite, 'Rape, shame and pride,' p. 13.
- [64] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 11; Goldstein, *War and Gender*, p. 369.
- [65] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 11.
- [66] Elizabeth Idua Momis, 'The Bougainville Catholic Church and "indigenisation",' in *Bougainville Before the Conflict*, ed. Anthony J. Regan and Helga M. Griffin. Canberra: Pandanus Books, The Australian National University, 2005, pp. 317–29, p. 326.
- [67] Interview with Paul Kaanamà, Darakananko village, Koromira mountains, Bougainville 21 November 2005.
- [68] Hermkens, 'Religion in war and peace,' pp. 281, 284; Hermkens, 'The power of Mary in secessionist warfare,' pp. 128–131.
- [69] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 9.
- [70] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 3.
- [71] Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' paragraph 5.
- [72] Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' paragraph 6.
- [73] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' pp. 3–5.
- [74] Marilyn T. Havini, 'The role of Bougainville women in the war and peace process,' in *Building Peace in Bougainville*, ed. H. Geoff, N. Ahai and R. Spence, The Centre for Peace Studies, 1999, pp. 39–43, p. 39.
- [75] Braithwaite, 'Rape, shame and pride,' p. 2.
- [76] Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' paragraph 6.
- [77] Ruth Saovana-Spriggs, 'Christianity and women in Bougainville,' in *Development Bulletin*, vol. 51 (1992):58–60, p. 58.
- [78] Saovana-Spriggs, 'Christianity and women in Bougainville,' p. 58.
- [79] Hilary Charlesworth, 'Are women peaceful? reflections on the role of women in peace-building,' in *Feminist Legal Studies*, vol. 16 (2008):347–61, 352.
- [80] Charlesworth, 'Are women peaceful?,' p. 353.
- [81] Sirivi and Havini (eds), ... *As Mothers of the Land*; Ruth Saovana-Spriggs, 'Gender and peace: Bougainvillean women, matriliney, and the peace process,' PhD Dissertation, Canberra: The Australian National University, 2007, pp. 186–200.
- [82] See also Kalpana Ram's study of coastal Tamil women in India who relate to Mary as someone who 'presides

over women's experience of maternity' as 'she understands the sufferings of women on earth and can be called upon ....' See Ram, 'Maternity and the story of enlightenment in the colonies: Tamil coastal women, south India,' in *Maternities and Modernities. Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 114–43, p. 134.

[83] Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' paragraph 8.

[84] Saovana-Spriggs, 'Gender and peace,' p. 4, cited in Charlesworth, 'Are women peaceful?,' p. 353.

[85] Saovana-Spriggs, 'Gender and peace,' p. 8, cited in: Charlesworth, 'Are women peaceful?,' p. 353.

[86] Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' paragraph 8.

[87] Garasu, 'The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation,' paragraph 8; Saovana-Spriggs, 'Gender and peace,' pp. 69–70.

[88] Peter Nannes, 'We must help ourselves,' in *NGOs and Post-conflict Recovery: The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Bougainville*, ed. Helen Hakena, Peter Nannes, and Bert Jenkins. ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press, 2006, pp. 11–21, p. 18.

[89] Alan Weeks, 'Bougainville demands peace,' *Peace Research*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1994):25–29, p. 25. Nannes, 'We must help ourselves,' p. 18.

[90] Charlesworth, 'Are women peaceful?,' p. 353.

[91] Peter Nannes, 'We must help ourselves,' p. 16.

[92] Nannes, 'Gender, development and peace,' in *NGOs and Post-conflict recovery*, ed. Hakena, Nannes, and Jenkins, p. 92.

[93] Nannes, 'Gender, development and peace,' p. 92.

[94] Nannes, 'Gender, development and peace,' pp. 92–93.

[95] Especially in Buka, this issue of prohibiting women from wearing jeans and shorts was regularly broadcast via the radio.

[96] Interview with Sister Lorraine Garasu, Arawa, 18 October 2005.

[97] Interview with Marist brother Willy Abel, Bomana, Papua New Guinea, 13 August 2005.

[98] Ogan, personal communication, 1 August 2010. See also: Terence Wesley-Smith & Eugene Ogan, 'Copper, class and crisis: changing relations of production in Bougainville,' in *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1992):245–67.

[99] Interview with Elizabeth Sawai, Arawa, 18 October 2005.

[100] Interview with Rachel Tsien from Kunua district, Arawa, 19 October 2005.

[101] Interview with Mary, Arawa, 19 October 2005.

[102] Ruth Saovana-Spriggs, who was a member of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom movement and a member of the then Bougainville Negotiation team, wrote these submissions and tabled them to be presented to the newly formed Bougainville Reconciliation Government in 1999 (Dr. Ruth Saovana-Spriggs, personal communication, 28 August 2010).

[103] [Sharon Bhagwan Rolls](http://www.peacewomen.org/news/Bougainville/June05/femTALKenews.pdf), 'Campaign Blong Meri,' an Enews Special bulletin from *femLINKpacific*. URL: <http://www.peacewomen.org/news/Bougainville/June05/femTALKenews.pdf>, site accessed 10 May 2010, paragraph 2.

[104] Gorethy Kenneth, 'Seven candidates vie for Bougainville President,' in *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier 2010.7*,

April 2010.

[105] Gorethy Kenneth, 'Call for gender equality in Bougainville,' 5 February 2009, Online: *Pacnews (Marianas Variety News and Views)* p://www.mvariety.com/pacific-news/call-for-gender-equality-in-bougainville.php, site accessed 2 September, 2010.

[106] Gorethy Kenneth, 'Call for gender equality in Bougainville.'

[107] Gorethy Kenneth, 'Call for gender equality in Bougainville.'

[108] Wayne Coles-Janess, 'Interview with Francis Ona,' for *World in Focus* (Broadcast, 4 March 1997), URL: <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/stories/s400627.htm>, site accessed 10 May 2010.

[109] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 9.

[110] Carol Cohn, 'Wars, wimps and women: talking gender and thinking war,' in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 227–46.

[111] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 9.

[112] Saovona-Spriggs, 'Gender and peace,' p. 5. According to Jill Nash, there was a great consciousness of matrilineality and the importance of women among Nagovisi when she visited the area direct after the conflict in 2000. Nash further suggests that in the post-conflict period, matrilineality may 'emerge as a significant component of difference, as "blackness" and "non-violence" did in an earlier period.' See Jill Nash, 'Nagovisi then and now, 1963–2000,' in *Bougainville before the Conflict*, ed. Regan and Griffin, pp. 400–09, p. 407.

[113] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 4.

[114] Giles and Hyndman, 'Introduction,' p. 9.

[115] Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space between us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*, London: Zed Books, 1998. p 13.

[116] Rolls, 'Campaign Blong Meri,' paragraph 10.

[117] According to Saovona-Spriggs, personal communication, 28 August 2010, despite a few problems, the 2005 elections and women's participation in it was in general regarded as 'a cause for celebration.'

[118] Judy El Bushra, 'Feminism, gender, and women's peace activism,' in *Development and Change*, vol. 3 (2007):131–47, p. 140.

[119] El Bushra, 'Feminism, gender, and women's peace activism,' pp. 131–47.

[120] Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, p. 3.

[121] Charlesworth, 'Are women peaceful?,' pp. 347–61.

[122] Cockburn, 'The space between us,' p. 13.

[123] Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations,' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1998):242–69, p. 252.

[124] Josephine Tankunani Sirivi, 'Life in the jungle during the blockade,' in ... *As Mothers of the Land*, ed. Josephine Tankunani Sirivi and Marilyn Taleo Havini, Canberra: Pandanus Books, The Australian National University, 2004, pp. 35–44.

[125] Sirivi and Havini (eds), ... *As Mothers of the Land*, back flap.

[126] Nannes, 'Gender, development and peace,' pp. 92–93.

[127] Margaret Jolly, 'Motherlands? Some notes on women and nationalism in India and Africa,' in *Taja*, vol. 5, nos. 1 & 2 (1994):41–59, p. 57.

[128] Jolly, 'Motherlands?,' p. 42.

[129] Jolly, 'Motherlands?,' p. 57.

[130] Goldstein, *War and gender*, p. 371.