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Dirk A.M. Smidt (ed.), *Kamoro art; Tradition and innovation in a New Guinea culture; With an essay on Kamoro life and ritual by Jan Pouwer*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers/Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 2003, 157 pp. ISBN 90.6832.268.0. Price: EUR 39.50 (hardback).

JAAP TIMMER

'Papua is alive! Come and visit the Kamoro' is the slogan in the February-May 2003 newsletter of the National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde) in Leiden, the Netherlands. An appealing but problematic slogan to attract visitors to a major exhibition of Kamoro (Southwest Papua/Irian Jaya) material culture. Can we really come and see the Kamoro in Leiden? The colourful cover of the brochure shows a photograph of Papuans in war-attire but it is not clear who or what they are attacking. One of the warriors directs his anger towards the camera. It is a beautiful image, though out of focus (perhaps deliberately), and its message is unclear. Are these the Kamoro that we can meet in Leiden? Does the exhibition portray the Kamoro and in particular their ways of warfare? No, on the contrary, the exhibition gives us very little insight as to what is happening in the land of the Kamoro or to what the Kamoro aspire. It appears that Papua is much less alive in Leiden than suggested.

The museum in Leiden possesses an impressive collection of over thirteen hundred Kamoro objects, comprising large spirit poles, a variety of wood-carved human figures, ancestor boards, headdresses, dance aprons, small ornaments, clubs, penis sheaths, and drums. In the exhibition, we get a chance to see impressive pieces from this collection augmented with a few objects from other Dutch museum collections, making 128 objects in total. The exhibition includes a number of recently purchased works. The grouping of objects in the exhibition, spread over two floors, three main rooms and two corridors, follows the traditional succession of Kamoro feasts with themes related to the unity of life and death and the renewal of life. Through advanced lighting in rooms devoid of daylight, every large object is individually spotlighted. Clearly, the museum has shown great creativity to make a visually attractive display, in which the Kamoro human statues come to the fore reminiscent of images of saints in a dim cathedral, illuminated by spotlight to satisfy the tourist. The Kamoro pieces, already impressive in form, motifs and their quality of the carving, begin to emanate something sacral. The museum presentation transcends the context of the carvings in Kamoro daily life.

Almost half of the Kamoro objects in Leiden were collected during the first military exploration of Netherlands New Guinea under the command of

Captain Antony J. Gooszen, between 1907 and 1915. This was not the period of 'first contact' for the Kamoro since they were trading with Moluccans for centuries and were first visited by the Dutch during the Cartensz expedition in 1612 (and again in 1636 by another Dutch expedition led by Gerrit Pool). The next period of extensive contact between the Kamoro and Westerners resulted from the Triton Expedition, which spent eleven days in a Kamoro settlement in 1828. During this expedition, Salomon Muller acquired some of the earliest Kamoro objects in the Leiden collection. The responses of the Kamoro to foreigners went through a number of phases. Initially there was a perceived need for self-protection against these possibly evil and unclean strangers. Interest in particular foreigners grew during the twentieth century as Roman Catholic missionaries and the Dutch government established posts along the Mimika River, bringing messages of salvation and the promise of improved welfare. This coincided with a growing local hunger for commodities as the Kamoro attempted to use objects to track down the sources of spiritual power they believed the whites possessed. In the course of the twentieth century, however, the promised affluence did not materialize and it became apparent to most Kamoro that they were in an underprivileged part of the world. Moreover, due to migration of Indonesians from elsewhere to the Kamor6 region, the Kamoro community, now numbering around 18,000, are a minority in their own land. What has become of their material culture?

The colourful catalogue under review here engages with this question. A lavishly illustrated book, it is an invaluable source of information on the Kamoro and their objects. Thoroughly documented as a catalogue, it also contains six intriguing essays. The texts of the essays are printed in the same small columns as the descriptions of the objects in the subsequent catalogue section. Amid these columns, numerous floating notes printed in small fonts and often excessively small plates dazzle the reader. Opposite these pages are blown-up plates of photographs that are often out of focus. The Franciscan Photo Documentation Bureau at Utrecht and the Sacred Heart missionaries in Tilburg made the most impressive older photographs available, while most of the recent ones were taken by Kal Muller. In recent years Muller has been involved with a range of public relations work for the Freeport mine, one of the world's largest gold and copper mines. Freeport began operations in Papua in the 1960s. Generating immense revenues for Western shareholders, the Indonesian government and the Indonesian military, the mining operations have radically altered the landscape and lives of the highland Amungme and also those of the Kamoro, their coastal neighbours.

During the zenith of Dutch governance in the late 1940s and the 1950s, it was already apparent to Indonesia and the outside world, in particular the United States, that Papua was abundantly rich in natural resources. During the period of United Nations-led transfer from colonial government to inte-

gration in Indonesia in the mid-1960s, American investors began the explorations which subsequently led to exploitation of gold and copper in the mountains of the Amungme. In a relatively short period, a massive mining project developed without any serious dialogue with, or significant involvement of, local communities. During the past few decades, the mythical mountains of the Amungme have become open pits. Human rights violations have been a natural concomitant. After an initial period of subtle intimidation, growing violent and non-violent resistance against the mine became controlled and instigated by the Indonesian military in often very sinister ways and with the tacit support of PT Freeport Indonesia and McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc., its mother company in New Orleans. In addition, the project affected parts of the natural environment through pollution far beyond the mining sites. As a result, many Kamoro rivers are empty of fish, drinking water is polluted, and forests full of important products are dead.

The anthropological and historical essays, among which are some gems, do not deal with these issues, probably because most of the authors were sponsored by Freeport in getting access to Papua and most likely wish to maintain this good relationship in order to return for further research and collecting in the future. Their accounts comprise: a history of the Kamoro collection in Leiden by the curator for Oceania, Dirk Smidt; a brief argument about the continuity and efficacy of principal Kamoro values by anthropologist Todd Harple and local ethnographer and civil servant Methodius Mamapuku; an impressive and elaborate rationalization of mythological and ritual themes and carving motifs, situating the objects in the context of a succession of feasts and rituals, by the anthropologist Jan Pouwer; a musing on social and cultural changes in the 1950s by the then administrative officer Hein van der Schoot; an explanation of the origin of woodcarving motifs that relate to both traditional and Catholic themes by the art historian Karen Jacobs; and a description, also by Jacobs, of the recent annual Kamoro Art Festivals organized and financed by Freeport.

Together, these articles offer a brief but detailed introduction to conceptual traditional Kamoro spiritual worldviews and ritual practices, in particular as imagined and articulated by academic outsiders. Jan Pouwer's essay is the most remarkable as it reflects the anthropologist's own insights in Kamoro culture, based on three years of fieldwork in the 1950s, combined with materials collected by the late Fathers Zegwaard m.s.c. and Coenen o.f.m. Pouwer's essay is a gem that meticulously presents mythological and ritual structures based on deep insights and careful analysis. The other essays, which at times aspire to relate to current issues, do not in fact give a very clear sense of what the Kamoro (women and men, young and old) actually think or to what they aspire today. The only essay to provide a glimpse of what is currently going on in the community is Jacobs' treatment of the

role of the recently collected objects in the lives of the Kamoro. This piece includes an eyewitness account of the 2002 Kamoro Arts Festival, describing the atmosphere during the event with specific emphasis on the auction of selected pieces and its social, economic and artistic effects for the woodcarvers. Jacobs' conclusion is that over the last few years the Kamoro have come to participate in the festivals with increasing enthusiasm, and increasingly begin to see them as opportunities to confirm and express their identity *vis-a-vis* local, regional and international outsiders. In what ways these identities relate to transgressions of their human dignity, to the ongoing conflicts with Freeport, to related acts of terror by the Indonesian military, and to the destruction of Kamoro subsistence resources is left out of the discussion. Dirk Smidt, who collected pieces for the museum during the festivals in 2000 and 2002, also seems to have overlooked the widespread resistance to Freeport and the Indonesian government among the Kamoro and their neighbours. I was also surprised that the book itself, with the exception of the collaboration between Mamapuku and Harple, includes no Kamoro voices.

In the museum exhibition, likewise, one does hardly get a sense of the difficult interactions between Papuans and the Indonesian state that have created much discontent. Here one can learn about critique of the mine only in one corner of a room where a computer terminal provides access to a number of internet sites that are listed by the exhibition organisers. The exhibition is introduced by a short film in which there are powerful references to the mine and to the immigration of other Indonesians into Kamoro country. But even here- despite the fact that film is an excellent medium for giving voice to an out-of-the-way people's concerns- we hear no Kamoro voices. Only in a video presentation in another room we can see some Kamoro at work- making a canoe and carving a drum and a spirit pole.

In the meantime, *reformasi* has stagnated in Papua, which has seen a virtual return to Jakarta-bred New Order politics. The dialogue that started in 1999 between President Habibie and one hundred representatives from all the districts of Papua, and then the promising, but ultimately very confused meetings of Papuans with Abdurrachman Wahid, suggested that Jakarta was developing an appreciation of Papuan discontent. But since the fall of President Wahid, old New Order ideologies and presumptions appear to be taking hold again among those who feel capable of developing strategies to deal with Papuans. The current Megawati government is trying to put a lid on sectarian, racial, communal, and separatist tensions through a combination of military force and inducements to regional elites. Positive developments that are supported by a growing number of critical politicians and academics have largely failed to influence the mainstream thinking of the generals and of many other local and Jakarta elites whose thinking is blinkered by vested economic and political interests.

But there are also positive developments. The Kamoro, like other groups in Papua, are becoming increasingly engaged with a wider world. They have begun to organize their own communities in new ways that are more appropriate to current needs and concerns. Civil society organizations like church groups, development-oriented NGOs and legal aid institutes now speak out more critically and are able to put increasing pressure for change on the government and the companies involved in resource exploitation. Themes such as human rights violations among Papuans, domestic violence, gender differences, racism and discrimination are discussed more often and in more critical ways than in the past. More Kamoro and Amungme now study at universities, vocational schools and theological colleges, and some of them occupy high positions in business corporations, in schools and universities, and in the government. It is a shame that the museum in Leiden has missed an opportunity to involve the Dutch in these more pressing aspects of Kamoro life.

Amy L. Freedman, *Political participation and ethnic minorities; Chinese overseas in Malaysia, Indonesia and the United States*. London: Routledge, 2000, xvi + 231 pp. ISBN 0.415.92446.4. Price: GBP 12.99 (paperback); ISBN 0.415.92445.6. Price: GBP 45 (hardback).

SIKKO VISSCHER

Comparison is a noble cause, especially in research analyses concerning ethnic minorities, in which the danger of cultural essentialization is ever-present. From this point of view Amy Freedman needs to be commended for the effort she has made in looking at political participation by ethnic minorities in disparate settings. It is, however, a pity that her unit of comparison, as well as the contextual dynamics in which it is studied, does not allow a real and useful comparison.

Freedman wants to look cross-nationally at how and why ethnic Chinese communities have accessed the political arena of their countries of residence. For this purpose she has selected four case studies: Malaysia, Indonesia, Monterey Park (California), and New York. The observation that for ethnic Chinese communities outside of China, levels of political participation are not correlated with socioeconomic variables such as income or education, serves as a point of departure. With this stance, and the manner in which she operationalizes this in her research questions, she belies a bias toward a Western-style, liberal democratic political model as a yardstick to measure other polities. She presupposes, for instance, that in a country with elec-