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# FRANCISCANS IN PAPUA:

THE JOURNEY OF DUTCH OFM FRIARS  
WITH THE PAPUANS IN THE STRUGGLE  
FOR THEIR DIGNITY

By Budi Tjahjono and Ruth Kilcullen



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**Authors** – Budi Tjahjono and Ruth Kilcullen

**Editor** – Theo van den Broek

**Interviewers** – Elin Martinez

**Contributors** – Jan Nielen, Elin Martinez, Chris Duckett, Francesca Restifo, Steph Szakall, Susan Nielen, Silvia Palomba, and Alexandra Patricia

**Graphic Designer** – Teguh Prastowo

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**Cover Picture:** Fr Cleophas Ruigrok loved by his people © Franciscans International



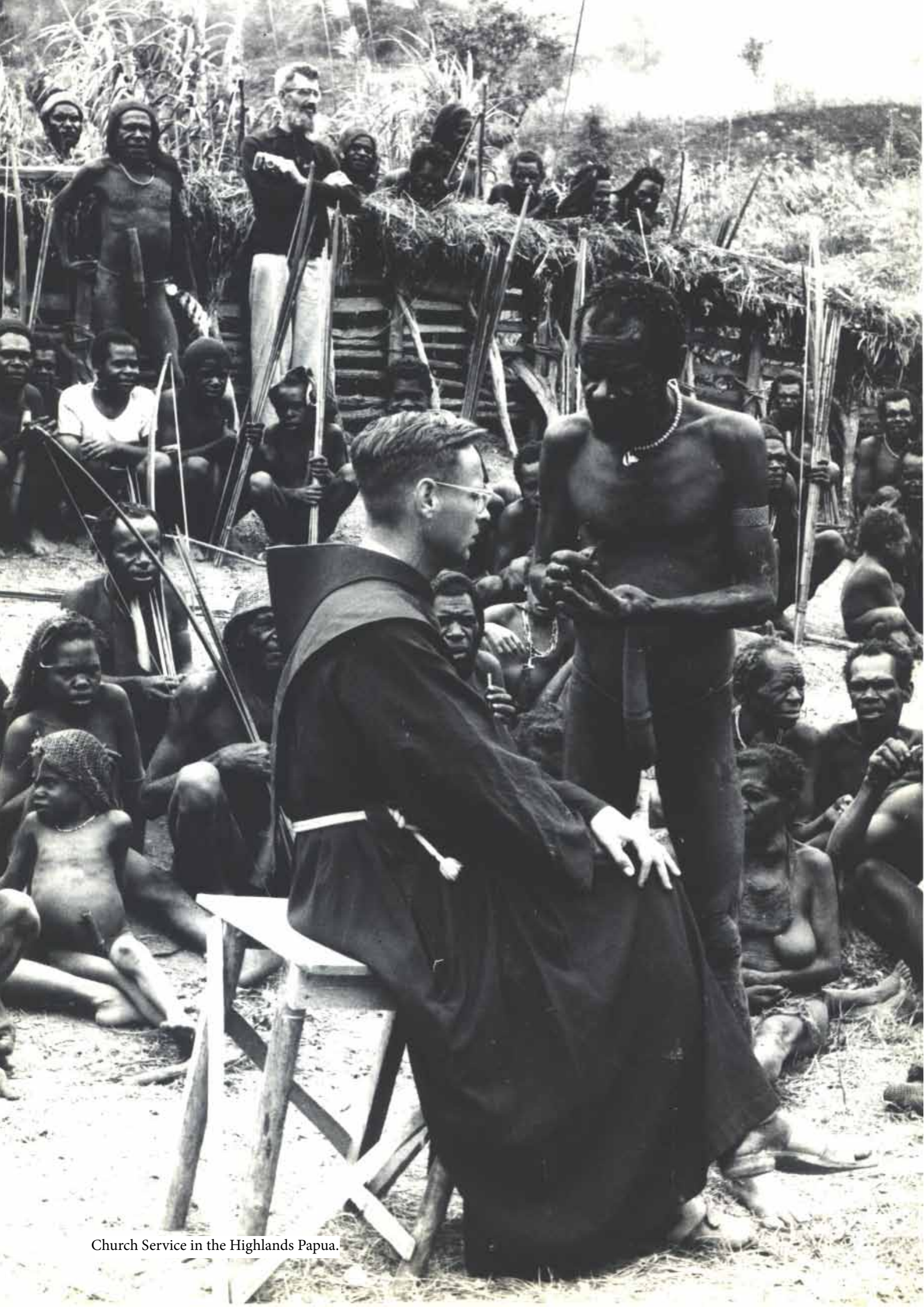
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Franciscans International  
37-39 Rue de Vermont  
1211 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Web: [www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org)  
Email: [geneva@fiop.org](mailto:geneva@fiop.org)

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Church Service in the Highlands Papua.

We are delighted to introduce this book of shared experiences about and by Dutch Franciscan friars with regard to their life and work in Papua. This interview project was a joint initiative of Franciscans International and CORDAID and an integral part of a lobby and advocacy program of Franciscans International on Papua Land of Peace (“Papua Tanah Damai”).

At the very start of the project the major theme we aimed to address was the way in which Dutch Franciscan friars in particular responded to the “signs of the time” in Papua as mentioned in the Vatican II document ‘*Gaudium et Spes*’ (Joy and Hope). How did they read the signs of the times? In terms of Franciscan spirituality, what is God saying to them about this as to how they are supposed to continue the mission of Jesus and follow the Gospel? How did they experience “being church” within a (changing) context of daily living? As it seems that theology in Papua church arises from grassroots activities rather than from academic settings, let’s talk about what’s happening on the ground, about renewal from the grassroots.

For, the period of time we are covering in these interviews was full of turmoil and radical transformations both in Indonesia and Papua and in the Church –to say the least. It was the time of the end of Dutch colonial rule in Papua (1962) and the ‘integration’ of Papua into the Indonesian state. During this period a military coup took place and the Suharto regime started its authoritarian rule for a period of almost thirty years. It was the time of the much disputed Act of Free Choice (1969). It was the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the awakening of the Church in and of Asia through the establishment of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences in 1970. In a relatively short span of time both within Papuan society and within the church drastic changes took place. The

Dutch Franciscan friars were both observers of and participants in these transformation processes.

Traditional descriptions of mission as “teaching” or “conversion” do not foster generally an attitude of humility and listening. The ‘gentes’ (‘pagans’) are in this description seen as targets of conversion and success of work is measured in the number of baptisms. This is traditionally called “*missio ad gentes*”. The Franciscan friars came as guests, probably even as uninvited and unwanted guests, bringing the Gospel as a joyful and liberating gift to be offered to their Papuan sisters and brothers. However, did they also experience a reversed conversion? Were they to some extent ‘evangelized’ by the Papuans? Were they able to open their minds and hearts and to be changed intellectually and transformed spiritually by this reverse mission of the Papuans to them? Did the effectiveness of their work depend on the extent to which the friars were open to being ‘converted’ by the Papuans? In other words, did the “*missio ad gentes*” become a “*missio inter gentes*” or even a “*missio cum gentibus*”? Was there a transformation process in the “mission” from “top-down” and “external-internal” to “bottom-up” and “inside-outside” approach?

The bishops of Asia used the term “local church” in their 1974 Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) plenary. The church in Asia must not only be geographically in Asia, but speak with an Asia voice, act in Asian ways in order to be authentic Asian Christians. The church in Asia must also be a church of Asia. To meet the challenges of today, the Christian mission in Asia has to be carried out in a triple dialogue, with the Asian poor through socio-economic empowerment, with Asian cultures through inculturation, and with Asian religions through interreligious dialogue. Was this triple dialogue reflected in the mission and the work of the Dutch Franciscan friars in Papua?

Some of these questions were addressed to in depth, others were dealt with in a more indirect way during the interviews. With a human rights background, the interviewer admits all responsibility for trying to shape the interviews according to each of friars' experiences from a human rights perspective. At times this proved disheartening for some of the friars, who would dispute that their work was not because of human rights discourse, but because of the teachings of St. Francis that all human beings and all creatures are a creation and gift of God and therefore should have a dignified life. At the first set of interviews, it was agreed on the sharing of the same belief: that the dignity of the Papuans had to be preserved. One might call them human rights defenders. They call themselves messengers of the Gospel.

The reader will notice the term 'justice and peace' is amply used in this book. Both CORDAID and Franciscans International have a long standing relationship with the Justice and Peace Commission of the diocese of Jayapura and the subsequent Commission of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Franciscans in Papua in the work for the promotion of human rights and human dignity in Papua. The latter is a condition sine qua non for the realization of Papua Land of Peace ("Papua Tanah Damai"). In the notion of "Papua Tanah Damai" we bring together an individual and community life which is marked by security, empowerment, and opportunities. Security involves protection and justice so that all people can live in safety and know that their rights as citizens are protected. There is mutual responsibility and caring for each other. Empowerment means the influence of people of all strata in decision making in social and political issues, then right of people to express their culture, their identity and religion freely and openly, and the capacity to realize inclusion and to deal with diversity. Opportunities include economic well-being, access to basic social services and infrastructure like education, health, sanitation, and a healthy and diverse ecological environment.

Other numerous books exist in Dutch, in Bahasa Indonesia, and in English that detail the history of the missionaries, the people, the land and numerous other topics. This publication is just a fraction of testimonies shared by the Dutch Franciscan friars.

Although there are undoubtedly other and better books about the work of Dutch Franciscan friars in Papua these personal stories are a testimony of quiet perseverance, pursued day after day and year after year. Our aim was not beyond this and we did not aim beyond a limited selection of a few Dutch Franciscan friars who were able to tell and to entrust us with many aspects of their lives and work in Papua and who inspire us in our own lives and work.

We deeply and sincerely thank Herman Munninghoff, Fred Dijkmans, Fons van Nunen, Jan Koot, Frans Lieshout, Piet Bots, Theo van den Broek, and Theo Vergeer for their willingness to participate in this project. Their words in these stories are far from idle.

We thank Chris Duckett, Theo van den Broek, and Jan Nielen for taking the initiative for this book. We thank Elin Martinez who conducted the interviews, Steph Szakall who assisted in the initial stages of the book and Susan Nielen who helped with translation work. We thank Budi Tjahjono, Ruth Kilcullen, Francesca Restifo, and advocacy team members of Franciscans International who took up the task to complete the work. A special thanks to Theo van den Broek who was kind enough to edit the draft text and to write the concluding chapter.

Before these Dutch Franciscan friars came to Papua, God already was there. The goal of the church is neither to convert people into the church and to increase the numbers nor planting the church by establishing more churches, but rather by prophetic witness that here God's reign is present by the celebration of life. Thus learning more and more the ways of the Papuans, their longings and aspirations, becomes an imperative for those who wish to share the lives with the Papuans. Only in this way the Papuan people will see us as partners in search for truth, just peace, partners in the quest of liberation from the societal evils of the times, partners in molding "Papua Tanah Damai", because they know we love them for who they are and not who they could be. And knowing that God was in Papua before Dutch Franciscan friars arrived, He will continue to be there after they have left.

**Jan Nielen**

The Hague, 30 June 2014



This chapter will address the transition period of Papua, from the Dutch administration to the Indonesian administration. This will cover the period between 1950's to late 1960's. During these periods, several Dutch OFM Friars were sent to different regions in Papua, to have the first contact with the Papuan people. Below are the sharing and reflections of Fr. Herman Munninghoff, Fr. Fons van Nunen, Fr. Jan Koot, Fr. Frans Lieshout and Fr. Fred Dijkmans.

### Herman Munninghoff

Herman M. Munninghoff, was born in Woerden, Netherlands in 1921. He was ordained as a priest on March 15, 1953. He was appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Jayapura on September 10, 1972. Jayapura then the capital of the Irian Jaya (West Papua) province of Indonesia. Munninghoff would serve until his retirement on August 29, 1997.

Becoming a missionary was not something Munninghoff had foreseen in his younger days. He went to university with the intention of pursuing a career as a notary but this ambition had to be put on hold in his second year of study with the advent of the Second World War. In 1940, Munninghoff was forced to flee his home, and spent the next three years in hiding in Holland. He was also in contact with some resistance groups, but he was not directly linked to their activities. Eventually, he found sanctuary in a Franciscan seminary in Megen, The Netherlands. By this stage, he was a fervent opponent of the German regime. The priests in the seminary, however, just insisted he lives peaceably with the seminarists and attend prayers and services with the community. Surrounded by one hundred aspiring disciples of St. Francis of Assisi, each unwavering in their devotion to a spiritual life, he questioned the goals that had motivated him before the war, and

reflected on what was truly important to him. As a student, he had pictured his adult life as a notary, happily married with six children who would all be educated and go to university. This unexpected turn of events shifted him from that course, and he decided to become a priest, following the example of St. Francis. His decision was welcomed and supported by his parents.

During his study in the seminary, he became interested in the life of a missionary. He asked his provincial about the possibility of working in Papua, a region in which he had been interested in for some time. He wanted to dedicate his life to working with people in this isolated and remote region. Finally, his request was granted.

In 1954, at the age of thirty-three, Munninghoff arrived in Jayapura, Papua, on his first assignment as a Franciscan missionary. Papua was still a colony of the Netherlands. The Franciscan mission had begun in 1937 with the arrival of six Franciscans. When Munninghoff arrived, the Apostolic Prefect of Papua was Mgr. Cremers, and Munninghoff was appointed as his secretary.

The Netherlands had had a significant presence in Papua since 1950, with numerous Dutch officials posted there to oversee the development of basic infrastructure. In 1956, two years after his arrival, Munninghoff was appointed as the parish priest in Arso, a small village situated inland around 40 to 50 kilometers from Jayapura. The absence of roads made access to the village extremely difficult, with only small foot paths connecting it to the outside. However, Munninghoff embraced the opportunity to go into the bush and be a missionary to the isolated communities there. His duties were mainly to celebrate mass and provide catechism in the villages within Arso parish. Each village was to be visited around three or four times a year and he would stay

for about two days on each visit. Due to the difficulty of travel, fulfilling his pastoral duty was an enormous challenge. It could take up to twenty-three days of walking to reach a village, with just two days work and rest before setting off again. Nonetheless, this didn't dampen his enthusiasm for the missionary life, and he found this period very fulfilling. In 1957 he was called back to Jayapura to be secretary to the first Bishop, Mgr. Staverman ofm, and to manage the mission's treasury.

In the 1950s, the office of the Bishop in Jayapura did not have a dedicated justice and peace programme as those sorts of issues were not considered a priority. The focus of the missionary work was spiritual, though the missionaries did also provide basic education in the Dutch and Indonesian languages. The schools in Papua were still under the Dutch administration at this time. The political situation started to change at the beginning of 1960s through a negotiation on the political status of Papua between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia. The United Nations (UN) facilitated the negotiation which resulted in The New York Agreement, signed on August 15, 1962, at the UN Headquarters in New York. This agreement provided for the transfer of authority over Papua from the Netherlands to Indonesia. The agreement also provided for the Act of Free Choice, a referendum intended to allow the people of Papua to choose whether to be independent or to be part of Indonesia. This referendum would not take place until 1969, and in the meantime, the Government of Indonesia extended its authority over Papua from May 1, 1963.

This period of transition from Dutch to Indonesian authority was fraught with difficulties for the people of Papua. The official name of the province under the Indonesian regime was changed to Irian Barat, a demonstration of the expansion of Indonesian influence over the Papuan people. This period saw the emergence of the Free Papua Movement (Indonesian: Organisasi Papua Merdeka – OPM). The OPM opposed the provisions of the New York Agreement which, in their view, exchanged one foreign colonizing state for another. They began a violent campaign against the Indonesian presence in Papua. Indonesian military forces arrived in Papua with the belief, according to Munninghoff, that they came as liberators, but their reception indicated a

very different attitude among the local population. Violent conflict prompted the Indonesian government to start a publicity campaign, styling Indonesia as the emancipator, delivering Papua from the yoke of Dutch colonization. However, the reality, Munninghoff maintains, was that only around 15% of the Papuan population was in favour of union with Indonesia. The presence of Dutch priests in Papua during this transition period was very delicate. The Indonesian government mistrusted their motives, asserting that “all the priests, all the nuns, all the sisters from Holland, staying here as bombs from the Netherlands... are not friendly to us. You are here as spies”.

The presence of Indonesia also caused a dramatic demographic change, as people from all over the country started to arrive. This was seen by many Papuans as an attempt to increase the influence of Islam within the country. The fact that the overwhelming majority of Indonesians were Muslim meant that it was inevitable that most of the Indonesian government officers who came to Papua were also Muslim. However, at that time, only 1% of the Papuan population was Muslim, and the capital, Jayapura, had no Muslim community at all. The perceived encroachment of this “foreign” faith served to further alienate many Papuans from the Indonesian newcomers. Tensions were also heightened by the deterioration of the economy in Papua between 1962 and 1969. Popular discontent with the Indonesian presence allowed the OPM to gain ground.

The Act of Free Choice [AFC] was held in 1969 with the stated purpose of ensuring the right of the Papuan people to self-determination. Through this referendum, they would choose whether to remain as part of Indonesia or become an independent state. Munninghoff, like many others in Papua at the time, believed the AFC to be a sham. Prevailing opinion among the local population, and observers like Munninghoff, was that the Papuan people had been deceived all along. Despite the UN-backed agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands to guarantee the AFC as a free, fair and binding act of political self-determination on the part of Papua, the reality was that six years after the new administration had taken control, the sizeable presence of government personnel, including

police and military, was well placed to engineer a favourable outcome for Indonesia.

## Fred Dijkmans

Fred Dijkmans was born in Tilburg in the south of the Netherlands on November 6, 1933. On August 30, 1954, when he was twenty-one years old, he decided to join the Order of the Friars Minor. He was ordained as a priest in 1961.

Dijkmans arrived in Kokonao, a village in the Mimika district in southern Papua, in September 1962 during the UN-led transfer of authority from the Netherlands to Indonesia. Immersed in the traditions of the local people, he soon learned the fundamentals of their way of life. For sustenance, the community relied on fish and sago. Sago flour is obtained from trunk of the sago tree, widespread in Papua and the main staple food. It was an essential part of their diet and people would travel to find it, mostly in areas around the coast. The people of Kokonao would stay in their village for a few months before returning back to the bush to gather sago, staying there for two or three weeks at a time. That was the pattern of life in Dijkmans' time and it continues to the present day.

Dijkmans notes that a very positive aspect of the arrival of Indonesia was the improved primary school system, which provided six years of primary education. This new system brought new teachers from Java, many of whom had been educated by the Jesuits. During the 1960s, these teachers were sent, either alone or in pairs, to teach in the villages, opening up to isolated communities the possibility of higher education. In the inland areas, Protestant and Catholic missions had also set up schools, and these often provided teachers to the government schools as well. The good relations maintained between the missionary teachers and the communities in which they worked were demonstrated when tension between the OPM and the government came to a head in the run-up to the Act of Free Choice in 1969, and violent uprisings broke out in the lake region. In the isolated area around Paniai Lakes, the local people helped their teachers to escape the conflict unharmed.

As tensions were heightening between the military and the OPM, Dijkmans recalls attending a meeting of all the young Franciscans in Enarotali in the Paniai Lakes region. They were told that they had to leave the area and return to their communities because an armed uprising seemed inevitable. Sure enough, conflict broke out around the Paniai Lakes in 1969 and Dijkmans went back to Kokonao to find that the military presence had also swelled in Mimika, steadily expanding throughout the villages. For the most part, the people of Mimika were not aware of the conflict in the highlands of the lake region. Like many indigenous communities in Papua, they were happy to remain relatively closed off and continue their traditional way of life. There were exceptions, particularly young local teachers who wanted to fight for independence. However, for the majority of people living in their remote villages, the issue had little interest for them.

Back in Mimika, Dijkmans and other Franciscan missionaries in the area felt cut off from Jayapura and the lake region in the north. News of what was going on elsewhere in Papua was hard to come by, except through occasional transmissions on the mission radio. However, based on the behavior and movements of the soldiers in Mimika, it was clear to Dijkmans that the military was increasingly exerting greater control. Reports started to reach Dijkmans in Kokonao that people were being arbitrarily arrested and disappearing, particularly teachers who were known to support the cause of Papuan independence. The Franciscans felt powerless. As outsiders, there seemed to be little they could do besides conveying to the military command their opposition to the conduct of the Indonesian soldiers, protests which had little effect. Though the military leadership in Kokonao received their protests, the reality was that they had little control over their personnel in the remote and isolated wilds of the region.

It emerged that the facilities of Freeport-McMoran, a United States-based gold and copper mining company with operations in Mimika, were being used to detain some of those who had been arbitrarily arrested by the military. Dijkmans personally knew two teachers who were detained and died there. Freeport had been established in Papua in 1967 with a view to tapping into the vast wealth of natural resources in the mountains of Mimika. The initial

operations were limited to engineering, surveying and logistics, and at this time mining work had not yet begun. Their first major project was to build a road between Timika, the capital of Mimika, and Tembagapura, a small village near the proposed site of the mine. In 1969, this area was scarcely populated, but increasing numbers of local people, particularly of the Amungme and Kamoro tribes, started to work on the engineering projects. They were not paid with money, but with corned beef, sago and rice. In Kokonao, the Franciscans bought these goods from any of the workers who wanted money instead. They then used the food to supply teachers in the villages, since access to food was becoming more and more difficult.

In Mimika, the Act of Free Choice (AFC) was held on the south coast. According to Dijkmans, the people were very poorly informed about the issue in question and the process itself. He knew a teacher from Kei who was one of the men chosen by the Indonesian administration to participate in the referendum. Those who were chosen for that region were all brought to a camp where they were subjected to, in Dijkmans' view, indoctrination by the Indonesian authorities to vote in favour of the government. As an enticement, each man received a portable radio, a very important and useful item at that time. They were then brought from Mimika to Fak-fak in western Papua, a centre of Indonesian government administration. This choice of location for the casting of the votes was seen by Dijkmans as an attempt to intimidate voters.

## Fons van Nunen

Fons Van Nunen was born in Tillburg and ordained as a priest in 1947. Before starting his work as a missionary in Papua, he was asked to study anthropology first; The Apostolic Prefect in Jayapura, Monsignor Cremers was eager to appoint one of the missionaries to conduct ethnographic research. Van Nunen's undergraduate thesis examined the influence of education in changing social structures. After finishing his studies in anthropology in Sydney, he took a position as a chaplain on board a Dutch navy ship which eventually brought him to Papua where he got involved in the mission. He arrived in Jayapura on March 25, 1953. For half a year he

stayed in Jayapura to get acquainted with the policy of the mission there, and also to learn the Malay language. In September 1954, he was called to go to Epouto in the lake region, which was the centre of government administration and of missionary work at the time – it was known to these newcomers as “the centre of civilisation”. There was a Franciscan school in the Tage Lake area and this was his first appointment. The local population lived very traditionally. They lived in an economy dominated by barter; most of the bartering was based on cowry shells from the coast, which were considered very valuable. Van Nunen has vivid memories of arriving at his new home and finding that his toilet facilities consisted of “a few holes with some sacks around it in the bush”. He thought to himself, “if this is the beginning of civilization then there should be a toilet.” And so this was the first thing he built there by himself with local materials.

Before long, Van Nunen became the head of the education project and was appointed to supervise the village schools in the area. At this time, the Franciscans were also running schools that were funded by the Dutch government. All the schools in the interior were run by missionaries, either Protestant or Catholic. In 1955, the Franciscans started developing schools in the urban centres. The village schools offered three years of schooling while the schools in the towns provided six years, so young people from rural areas would travel to the towns to finish their schooling where possible and stay in the schools' boarding facilities. At that time almost all the supplies had to come from Biak, in the north of Papua, by plane, which was very expensive.

Around 80% of the mission work carried out by the Franciscans in Papua involved starting schools. In the 1950s, the Dutch government entrusted the education of the indigenous peoples in the interior to the Catholic and Protestant missions. In the entire eastern part of the Dutch Indies the government provided special subsidies for schools, which were known as the ‘civilization’ schools. Van Nunen's role was to report to the Dutch government about the schools' progress, and to oversee their development, including the building of new school houses using local materials and methods to reduce costs.

The 1950s saw significant expansion of the various Christian missions, and during this period forty-one new Franciscans arrived from the Netherlands. Significant progress was made in the education system and in economic development in Papua. There was real interest from the local population for more schools to be built and Van Nunen's got the impression that the missionaries were more accepted by the indigenous population than the government officials. There was a growing awareness among the Papuans of the complex political situation with regard to their homeland, as the governments of the Netherlands and Indonesia negotiated the future status of this region and its people. The Franciscan mission gave the highest priority to schools and education because this was seen as the most effective way to get access to the local communities in the remote and isolated areas. It was also the best way to forge partnerships with and between the indigenous communities, both in developing the church and also in creating cohesion and leadership in a time of political uncertainty. It became clear to Van Nunen that there was resistance to the idea of becoming part of Indonesia among the indigenous Papuan population.

After two years, Van Nunen moved out of the lake region. He worked in Enarotali for one year, continuing in the field of education, but he also became more involved in pastoral work. He built a school in Enarotali and a church in Kerapuan using local found materials. There were no carpenters so he and the Franciscans trained some of the local boys in simple construction. He did this work with great satisfaction, playing his part in the physical construction of the church as a fundamental part of establishing Christianity in the region. In 1958, Van Nunen went to live among the Moni people for a year to conduct research for his master's thesis in ethnography.

As van Nunen understood it, civilization in anthropology is tied to development: there are three stages of development, namely primitivism, barbarism and civilization. The process of development evolves through agrarian society to the development of urban centres, institutions, and the centralization of government. These tribes, spread out in isolated communities across Papua, had no central authority, no unified culture, or sense of a

collective identity. Van Nunen asks, "If you talk about the Papuans, who are the Papuans?" For example, at that time marriage between tribes was only acceptable in certain cases; members of the Ekagi tribe traditionally could not marry a woman from a Moni tribe although they are neighbors. One of the students at the theological school wrote a paper examining where these rigid social conventions about inter-tribal marriage came from. He challenged the adat, the traditional custom on which this was based, and as a result one of his fellow Moni decided to defy the custom and marry a woman from the Ekagi tribe. They named their first child Dobrakis. The Indonesian word *dobrak* is of Dutch origin and means 'broken through'. Van Nunen's anthropological education greatly informed the way he interacted with the local people; "just being with the people", and observing, was the foundation of his approach to the mission.

At the end of 1959, Van Nunen became the Diocesan Vicariate for the whole school administration, but in 1963 the system was transferred to the Indonesian government. He then became a pastor in Abepura for over three years. Part of his role throughout that time was setting up the inter-diocesan seminary in Jayapura. This was seen as an effective approach to furthering the development of the Church in the region. In August 1964, the seminary opened with a programme directed towards the formation of local priests. Van Nunen gave lectures there twice a week. However, the seminary proved unsustainable. They started with three students, then the next year two more joined, but after that there were no more candidates. In 1966 they had to close the seminary at the request of the Bishops' Conference. In September 1967, it was decided that they should establish a theological school with a much broader scope in terms of training people for developing the institutional framework of the Church. A three year preparation course was offered, not just for priests but also for the formation of church workers. They envisaged that this would include social work, which would essentially become the real work of the Church. For this role, candidates would have to develop an understanding of the social teaching of the Church, development work, and also practical skills in areas like finances and accounting. This approach was greatly influenced by the 2nd Vatican Council.

In 1966, Van Nunen left Papua to go to the Netherlands, and wrote his thesis on his ethnographic research. He went back to Sydney to present this for his master's degree and when he returned to Papua he started to work for the Inter-Diocesan office to promote the results of the 2nd Vatican Council. The bishop at the time was Monsignor Staverman who drove pastoral work and the pastoral aspect of the Church as the main focus of the mission by promoting the decisions of the 2nd Vatican Council. As the representative of Bishop Staverman, Van Nunen's work involved keeping up good relations with the other churches and promoting the establishment of the new theological school.

In the mid-1960s, Vatican II came about around the same time that Indonesia began the process of taking over authority in Papua from the Dutch. In light of the behavior of the military, the indigenous people started to ask Bishop Staverman to speak up on their behalf. There were many requests from the priests and the missionaries in the interior for support; these priests and missionaries had witnessed the actions of the police and the government officers. Bishop Staverman consulted with Van Nunen and the brothers about what could be done. They suggested that he also consult with the Bishops of Merauke and Sorong, as well as the leaders of the Protestant churches. However, they wanted to make it clear that the Catholic Church recognized Indonesian authority, in accordance with the decision of the United Nations.

When the Bishops came together in the Conference of September 1967, they produced a pastoral letter, which would also form the basis of dialogue with the Indonesian government and the military, about what was going on in Papua at that time. The people were still in a phase of transition, but they no longer lived within self-supporting ethnic groups. They were confronted with a different, modern society which was based on division of labour—one was a teacher, one was a policeman, etc. — and this was a great upheaval for a population that had deeply entrenched traditional ways of life. The Bishops also called on the authorities to ensure that the military did not abuse their power in Papua. The message of the letter was in large part informed by the theology of hope, which was taking shape at that time. This was a theological movement

emphasizing the fundamentality of hope within Judaism and Christianity. All ethics and morality should be in line with hope of a better world. The Conference which drew up this letter was convened in Jayapura, and was of a very different nature to the Bishops' Conferences that had come before. A much more open dialogue had existed between the churches and the government under the Dutch, but Van Nunen emphasizes that the dialogue became a monologue under the Indonesian administration, with the Ministry of Religion intent on dictating to the churches on matters concerning them.

According to Van Nunen, the Indonesians came to Papua as if they were liberating the people from the colonial powers, but the manner of their arrival gave the Papuans the impression that they came as occupiers of the land, as a new colonial power. In the 1950s, the Dutch government had made substantial strides in the development of Papua, particularly in education. They had educated the Papuan people with a view to the establishment of Papua as a self-governing state. By 1975, when the Dutch were to withdraw and hand the power over to the people to decide their own future, efforts had been made in every field to prepare the people for citizenship in the new Papua. This was seen in certain quarters of Indonesia as an attempt to undermine Indonesia's interests, and was a major cause of their mistrust of the Dutch.

The first Indonesian arrivals to take over from the Dutch officials were given instructions to start government schools. In Asmat, in Agats, which was an area where the Croziers were active, there was an American priest of Dutch origin of the Crozier fathers. He was immediately given orders by the local Indonesian authorities to send the students from the Catholic school to the government school. He refused, saying he couldn't force students if they didn't want to go to government schools. Shortly after, he was shot. The Croziers were certain of the identity of the culprit, an Indonesian government officer; he had already spent some time in prison for corruption under the Dutch authority. With the accession of Indonesia, he was appointed the government officer in Agats. According to Van Nunen, this kind of promotion of low-level Indonesian officers with dubious records of service was common in the early days of Indonesian rule.

Mistreatment of the local population by the Indonesian authorities was particularly evident in the crackdown on the use of the Morning Star flag, the traditional Papuan flag denoting independence. The flag was banned and those found in possession of it were severely punished. The harsh reaction of the army and police to the display of the flag was a key factor in igniting the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka or OPM). Van Nunen maintains that if the Indonesian authorities had been more lenient they could have managed a much smoother transition, but that was a missed opportunity.

## Jan Koot

Jan Koot came to Papua for the first time in 1958, and was posted in the FakFak area of western Papua. Since Franciscans and members of other orders had been there since 1936, there were small Catholic communities, but the Church was still very much in its nascent stage. For Koot, being a missionary was much more than winning people to the Church. His motivation to work and live in Papua was based on his conviction that just to be with the people, to be in community with them, was the most important thing. When the local people questioned him about why he came, he would simply answer that it was his belief that he should be there.

On leaving FakFak in 1959, he went to work in Mimika. Despite the presence of two Franciscan friars over the previous two years, no lasting Catholic community had been established. When he arrived, he met a student named Moses Kilangin. A member of the Amungme tribe, Kilangin went on to study at the teaching school in FakFak. Afterwards he got permission from the Bishop to work with his people south of the mountains, where Freeport is now operating. Moses had already been working among his people in the Singa valley, preparing them for Christian life. When Koot arrived these people were ready for baptism. At first, Koot could not understand the local language but after two years he reached a level of proficiency that allowed him to communicate easily with the people.

Koot witnessed the growing tension among the Amungme caused by the Freeport project, particularly in the more isolated areas. When Freeport

conducted its first expedition to survey the land around the proposed mine site, they hired Moses Kilangin as their guide. The Amungme community asked Kilangin to catalogue in detail the traditional ownership of the land in the area in order to clearly outline to Freeport and the government their established claims to it. This report was related to Freeport, as well as the Bishop and the Governor. However, Freeport ignored it and began operations without any regard for the indigenous communities' claims to ownership of the land.

During this period, there were also local feuds among various different tribes. This was a challenging time for Koot, who witnessed violent fighting over slight offences such as the theft of a pig, and these bloody feuds could last for drawn out periods. As an outsider, he felt that all he could do was stay with the people, and if they asked him for advice or help, he would do what he could. Koot tried to understand the local people's concept of justice. When violence broke out, they would come to him and ask him about his views on the subject. They were interested to know more about his views on how to live together in peace. He wanted to remain neutral in the fighting, but also saw that there was room for him to do something positive. Koot decided to start a school for boys, and was soon joined by a teacher who had been working in the Wissel lakes. He believed that this project could help bring the people together and that education was crucial for the development of the communities. They started with basic, everyday things such as how to use clothes, how to wash them, and how to make soap.

From there, Koot started another mission in Ilaga, a very remote valley in the interior. There were no Christians there. To begin with, he had to learn the local language and make contact with the local people to get a sense of the population and their way of life. At first, he made contact with the young people, and employed a group of seven boys to help him build a hut for himself in the area of the local community. This was an opportunity for him to get to know them and learn about their people. It was not about evangelizing or baptizing them, but to see, to communicate, to understand how they live.

For Koot, being a missionary does not mean going to a new community "with the cross in hand". His

initial experiences with the Papuan communities he encountered were of watchful patience and observation, especially when the community was not Christian. The first step was simply to live in peace with them. Eventually the people would come to engage more and more with him and ask questions. It was only when they asked for it that Koot would give advice or help. Observing, asking questions of the people and learning from them were key elements of Koot's approach to living amongst the community. In this way, he came to know them and understand the traditions of their unique cultural life manifested each day, and they came to know him. They were interested to know about where he came from, where his parents and his wife and children were. A mutual understanding developed as the community accepted that, in essential ways, he was just like them. They realized that he had come to help them and in return were happy to help him.

As far as possible in this new environment, he lived his life as a western man maintaining his own traditions and culture. As a Franciscan friar, he also had his own daily programme of prayers and meditation. He kept a chair, a table, clothes, some books to read, a bible, a diary and radio. In the evening, he recalls, the people would come to his house to listen to the radio, especially when there was opera music playing. The local people were amazed at the voices coming from the small box; that the voices belonged to people, but they were not visibly there.

## Frans Lieshout

Frans Lieshout was born in Montfoort, the Netherlands, on January 15, 1935. He joined the Franciscan brotherhood in 1955. From 1956 to 1963 he studied philosophy and theology. He was ordained as a priest in 1962 and as preparation for his missionary work in Dutch New Guinea, he took some courses on Indonesian language, sociology and Islam. He left the Netherlands in April 1963 and arrived for the first time in Jayapura. During his first year there, he worked as a parish priest in the capital.

He became acquainted with the people of the Baliem Valley of central Papua for the first time in 1964,

when he was assigned to the mission in the town of Wamena. He stayed there until 1967. He was surprised with how easily he fitted in with the people. His Franciscan brothers brought him to the village where he would live and work. A small hut with a grass roof would be his home. The brothers said their goodbyes, and, as he recalls, after five minutes they all went back to Wamena leaving Lieshout to his own devices to begin his work with the people alone. He could hardly speak a word of the local language, which for sure was a real handicap, but in the beginning, each day brought new revelations about the community's culture and traditions, and how they lived together. The Franciscan mission had only recently expanded into the Baliem Valley, and the area was still very isolated and untouched by outside influences. The very first instruction the Bishop gave to Lieshout was to learn about the local culture. This was seen as crucially important.

Lieshout asked the other missionaries who were already there about their programs in order to know what he could do and how to go about it. They replied that they didn't quite know themselves, as they too were still in the process of learning about the local communities and getting to know the traditions and culture. They had no firm plan, except to prioritise the development of the schools to help the people progress through education. Lieshout started a clinic and worked as a teacher. The friars felt that their mission at this stage was simply to do whatever they could to help the people. They introduced new kinds of vegetables, and chickens and rabbits, which benefitted the health of the local communities. At first, they had no intention of preaching the Gospel, rather seeking to simply live with the community and befriend the people. The friars had to develop a good relationship with the communities if they were to be accepted and allowed to stay. They built in the traditional way, with local materials and grass rooves. The houses were very simple. They visited the villages, comforted sick people, and attended their ceremonies. Through forming bonds of friendship with the people and gradually being accepted, they eventually felt free to speak about the Gospel. They tried to find the connections between the local culture and the Gospel. Lieshout maintains that the local people's beliefs and view of the world already shared many similarities with Christianity.



The friars tried to study the origins of the local religion, and their beliefs about the world and the origin of life. They found it was not dissimilar to what is taught in the Bible. They could speak the same language, they shared very similar values. One of the other Franciscan friars in the area was an anthropologist and a linguist so he made a valuable contribution to the brothers' understanding. At the heart of the local value system was the importance of living together in harmony with each other, with their ancestors, and with the environment. The second pillar of their community life was the concept of sharing. A group would not start to eat if the other people of the community did not also have food. They waited until all the food was divided before eating together. Their vision about leadership also made a strong impression on Lieshout. If one wanted to be a leader, he had to clean the noses of other people. This is reminiscent of the centrality of

serving others in the Gospel; the idea of the leader as, first and foremost, a servant. After some years' exposure to the Franciscans' teaching, the people Lieshout worked with told him that they had already learned much of the Gospel from their ancestors.

One of Lieshout's most striking impressions of the establishment of the Indonesian regime in Papua was that they ignored the culture of the Papuan people. It seemed to him that many Indonesians did not believe that the people of Papua had a true culture. Overt manifestations of Papuan customs were not allowed. Lieshout remembers one occasion where a school boy tuned his transistor radio to Papua New Guinean radio to listen to Papuan music, causing a nearby soldier to confiscate the radio. To this day, many Papuans feel that Indonesians do not acknowledge traditional Papuan culture.

## Herman Munninghoff

Mgr. Herman Munninghoff OFM was made Bishop of Jayapura on 6 May 1972, replacing Mgr. R.J. Staveman OFM, who was sick at the time. Although Papua was already under Indonesian administration, most of the priests in Jayapura were Dutch missionaries, with the exception of one Indonesian Jesuit priest, Fr. H. Haripranata SJ, who was from Java and charged with the task as mediator between the Dutch and Indonesian government. During this period, Munninghoff explained that almost all Dutch priests supported the independence of Papua. However there were no indigenous priest from Papua.

### *Pastoral dialogue after 2nd Vatican Council*

Following the 2nd Vatican Council, Munninghoff took a new approach on the relationship between the Church and the Papuans. Instead of bringing the Papuans to the Church, he brought the Church to the people. In this way, he made the Papuans feel that the Catholic Church was there for them, with more lay pastors' involvement in the life of the Church.

He explained that the task of the parish priests in his diocese, including the Bishop, was only 50% ritual for the church and the catechisms. The rest of the Church's efforts went into improving the quality of life of the Papuan people. Justice and peace became important aspects of the Church's activities. Therefore they employed a wider understanding of the role of the church. Although often instructed by the Vatican to give full attention to the liturgy of the Church, Munninghoff believed that what was

important for the Church, not just in Indonesia or Papua but globally, was to improve the quality of life of the people. Munninghoff called people to actually practice what they prayed for and to assist those in need.

## Fred Dijkmans

Fred Dijkmans worked as secretary, as well as deputy, to Bishop Munninghoff from 1972 until 1987. In October 1988 he became Vicarious Episcopalis<sup>1</sup>, a role he filled until April 1996. From 1996 to 2002 Dijkmans was the Custos of the Franciscans.

Commenting on the the campaign '*We are the Church*', set in movement by Mgr. Munninghoff, Dijkmans observes that it was becoming increasingly difficult for foreign missionaries to get permission to live in Papua. It became apparent that the establishment of a self-sustaining Church was necessary for the continuation of the work of the Franciscans. This was achieved through *We are the Church*, which was intended to facilitate the transfer of the running of the Church to the indigenous population, emphasizing that everyone had a role to play. It started with catechism programmes in the mountain villages. While schooling during the Dutch period was only provided until grade three, during the Indonesian period it was extended until grade six. In towns, secondary schools were opened, but it was increasingly difficult for the Dutch Franciscans to be employed as teachers in these schools. In 1980, they started to send local candidates for these jobs: Papuan priests, catechists and pastoral workers. There were new seminaries opened in 1986, not only

<sup>1</sup> Vicaris Episcopalis stands for the person who is specially in charge for a part geographical part of the Diocese; in this case Dijkmans was in charge of the Biak Paniai-Timika-Mimika region in the diocese, that was meant to develop over the next years into the future Diocese of Timika.

for the education of priests, but also for pastoral workers. The Franciscans tried to have in each parish a team with one priest, one catechist and one pastoral worker. This expanded their capacity to minister to the more remote, inaccessible regions. The objective was, step by step, to transfer the work of the missionaries to the indigenous Papuans.

## Fons van Nunen

Education in Papua was one of the main concerns of Van Nunen after the Act of Free Choice. Two religious congregations, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) and Franciscans had started to work on the educational sector in earlier times when Papua was still under the Dutch administration, especially around the fifties. They provided dormitories for students coming from different regions in Papua. The Dutch government provided subsidies for the missionary schools to build schools and to pay the salaries of teachers who were graduates from teacher training schools.

After the arrival of Indonesia, the educational system changed. The Dutch style of administration was no longer applicable. The Indonesian government reappointed new teachers. Many of them came from Java or other places outside Papua. There were also cases where the wives of newly posted Indonesian officers were also appointed as teachers. Unfortunately, many of the governments' teachers never turned up in schools despite the salary they received, which often double the then average salary in Java or Sumatra. Van Nunen gave an example of one school in the Star Mountains. The teacher who was supposed to teach in this missionary school did not turn up for the first year. However, the pupils still received their diploma at the end of the school year which practically would not be accepted by any university if they wished to continue their study. The main Catholic missionary schools had little or nothing to say over matters of the teachers' misbehavior.

Van Nunen was very critical on the change of situation in Papua, especially on the strong presence of Indonesian military. He had the impression that the high military officials were not always informed on the behavior of the military in the field, especially outside the cities. The lower rank officials

were involved in human rights violation against indigenous Papuans without facing any sanctions from the military authorities. Van Nunen had the impression that the Governors of Papua could not exercise their control over the military. The recent development where Papua was divided gave the impression of the old tactic of divide and rule.

As an anthropologist, Van Nunen had a different view from the Indonesian government on how the development should be brought and introduced in Papua. He recalled the government policy called Operasi Koteka in early 1970's. Koteka is traditional clothing used by men in the highlands in Papua to cover their genital. Traditionally it is made from a dried gourd. Van Nunen and Fr. Herman Peters, another Franciscan antropologist, were called by an army general in Papua who explained that there was a special fund provided for clothing, education and welfare for the Papuans, especially for those who live in the highlands. Considering Papua as a backward region, the government adopted the Operasi Koteka policy. The aim was to bring the Papuans to a different level of civilization, in a shortest time possible. The government sent instruction to local district officers requesting people, among others, to shave their beards, to abandon their Koteka, to wear clothes and to give away the traditional sacred objects by delivering to the government officers. The Papuans were also asked not to organize big traditional feasts where they slaughter pigs.

Van Nunen did not agree with this policy. He mentioned that the Pastoral Council (mid 1970ties) of the Baliem region protested against this policy. One of the members of the Council was a woman who was a member of the local parliament. As a consequence, she was dismissed from the parliament, although she was rehabilitated later. In the Paniai area, the people were already wearing clothes when this order came out, and then they threw away their clothes because they did not accept this. The women started using their traditional skirts again as sign of a protest. The Dutch missionaries working in the region wrote a letter to the government questioning this policy. According to Van Nunen, the missionaries also would like to bring the Papuan to better level of civilization, but it should be done together with the people. Their approach was let the people themselves make the choice.

## Jan Koot

During the 1970s, Jan Koot worked in Keerom, in the border region with Papua New Guinea, where there was much political tension. Koot was responsible for a vast area which required him to travel extensively, by plane and by foot. When he arrived, the opposition of the people to the expansion of Indonesian authority over Papua was the dominant political issue and the driving force of tension in the region. The reaction of the Indonesian Government to these anti-Indonesian attitudes was to label their opponents as terrorists. The political tension caused many people to move across the border to Papua New Guinea. Whole tribes - men, women and children - left, leaving behind them empty villages.

Koot acted as an intermediary between the local people and Indonesian authorities. He maintained contact with the military and government officials to keep track of the situation, and remained in the area until, slowly, the people started to return to their villages. He stayed with the people and believed that they felt reassured of their security with his presence. The authorities also welcomed his presence since he had such a close connection with the locals, but Koot felt there was little he could do in a practical sense to ease the tensions except to be present with the people. He organized meetings of the tribes so that they could discuss their grievances and try to address what would be best for their communities and how they should proceed under this new Indonesian regime. Koot would play an important role in relating the outcome of these meetings to the authorities, acting as a channel of communication between the local people and the government.

Jan Koot was actively involved in the *We Are the Church* movement. He organized groups of people to come together and discuss issues related to the Church and their relationship to it. A council was held in Waris in the border area, and men and women walked for days to take part. The council lasted for three days, and during that time the people of Waris opened up their homes to host those who had come to take part in the discussions. Despite speaking different languages and coming from various tribes, Koot recalls how the people came together, sharing songs and stories, and when the council was ended,

a large group from Waris set out to accompany their visitors for the first day of their journey home. "That was so human", he recalls, "bringing them together as friends. In just three days they were saying 'We are the Church! What can we do? Not only the men, but also the women - where are the women? Lift your voice!'" Koot believed that *We Are the Church* reassured the people that the Church was responding to them.

Koot's efforts to develop positive relations between the local people and the Indonesian authorities often bore fruit. He recalls one episode in Ubrub.

*When the villagers moved back to their homes to start their lives again, the military came once more. In Ubrub there was a Catholic commander who was a very good man. So were his men. He was very helpful and understood the difficulty of the situation, and we worked together very well. We were both involved in an important local occasion when the community decided to remove murder from the adat [local custom]. It had been acceptable to kill in battle and to kill those who used black magic. All the tribal chiefs, the military commander, the police and the government officials came together to have a ceremony, and the men who had killed before gave a demonstration about how this had been done in the past in accordance with the adat. The ceremony took place outside the church and then the people burned relics of this past behavior, and brought them into the church where these were buried. The site was blessed with a prayer and a song. This was a good example of the locals coming together with the government and the military. In a situation like that in the border area, with all the political tensions, as a man, as a Franciscan, I had to ask myself 'how can you make peace?' Live together to try. Work together with all people of good will.*

## Frans Lieshout

In the early years, the Franciscan missionaries were not actively trying to recruit new brothers. According to Lieshout they "never thought about it," it wasn't a priority in their mission. The brothers were scattered across the remote villages, working individually with communities. Once a month they would come together for three or four days to be together, to talk about their work and their experiences, but for the most part, they were

separated from each other. Nonetheless, Lieshout never felt lonely. Usually friars live together in community but Lieshout felt that if they did so, and had to travel the long distances from their friary to see the people in the villages, their experiences and the impact of the mission would have been greatly diminished. In later years, this immersion of the Franciscans in the local communities became less frequent, and Lieshout believes that the missionaries lost certain closeness with the people because of it.

After ten years of working in the Baliem Valley, Lieshout became the Director of the Teacher Training College in Jayapura. At that time, there were three boys at the college who came to him and said they wanted to become Franciscans. He was surprised as the Franciscans had not given much thought to the possibility of finding new members of the order. He reported this to his Superior who said he would send a letter to Jakarta to ask them if it was possible for the young men to have their postulancy there. Lieshout disagreed with this, believing that they should support their vocation in Papua, and help them to develop a Franciscan way of life in the context of Papuan culture. This was a new challenge for Lieshout and his brothers. They were there first and foremost to help the Bishop to build a church and a community, not the Franciscan order.

As more and more Indonesians continued to arrive, Lieshout witnessed the increasing division between the natives and the newcomers. For the most part, they lived as two groups in peace, but there was hardly any communication between them. The Indonesian communities were based in the towns, and many Papuans didn't trust them. There were two parallel worlds. Lieshout was in Jayapura when he met a young Javanese couple. They were watching a very large navy ship carrying Indonesian soldiers arriving in Jayapura, and they said to Lieshout, "Father, we are proud, they have come here to defend us and to make us feel safe." He then spoke to a group of Papuans, who said "Father, look, they come here to *pukul kami* (hit us)." That was the root of the division; the Indonesians and Papuans felt threatened by each other. Lieshout maintains that; even if these exchanges were quite some time ago, "the feelings are the same now, perhaps even stronger."

Lieshout witnessed first-hand the animosity between the local people and the Indonesian authorities when he was working in the teacher training college. As the OPM continued its campaign, Indonesia's security policy was growing increasingly hostile to indigenous Papuans as a whole. At the college, students were often arrested and detained for speaking out about Papuan freedom. The Franciscans were in a difficult position, considered untrustworthy outsiders by many in the Indonesian administration. Nevertheless, Lieshout felt compelled to speak out against what he saw as a great injustice. The negative attitudes towards the indigenous population of many ordinary Indonesians exacerbated the ever-growing rift between the natives and newcomers. As long as this rift continued between the two populations, the military's actions would be seen as justified in Indonesian eyes. Confined to the urban areas for the most part, few Indonesians saw the extent of military aggression towards the indigenous communities of the remote and isolated highlands. Lieshout sought to change these attitudes through readings and sermons, and spoke with many pastoral workers on the subject. In the Baliem valley, he once had the opportunity to work with young pastoral workers before they started their training program. He was invited to give an introduction to the culture of the people that they would be working with, and he emphasized the importance of respecting local customs and keeping an open mind. He went on to conduct training for young postulants in cultural sensitivity with a view to challenging entrenched negative attitudes towards the traditional life of the indigenous people. "We tried to open their minds, particularly for those that have very different cultures, those who have other roots. They have to know how to understand other people. But of course that's very difficult -one has to leave one's cultural arrogance, cultural background behind, and approach the Papuan people more openly. Only then are you free and open to really see the Papuans."

## Piet Bots

Piet Bots arrived in Papua in 1975. His focus was economy and he was one of the last Franciscans coming in to carry out the mission in the far west of Papua, he became involved in a variety of social projects in the area. One of his first impressions

was that he was automatically trusted by the local people. It seemed to him that, as a foreigner living among the ordinary people, it was assumed that he supported the Papuan people and disagreed with Indonesia's harsh regime. Once, while walking from a remote village to Enarotali in the lake region, a local man walked with him for a while and shared openly with him his opinions on the Act of Free Choice and the revolts in the area. Bots is sure that this man would not have had that conversation with an Indonesian, but he was comfortable talking to Bots about these controversial issues despite the fact that they were perfect strangers.

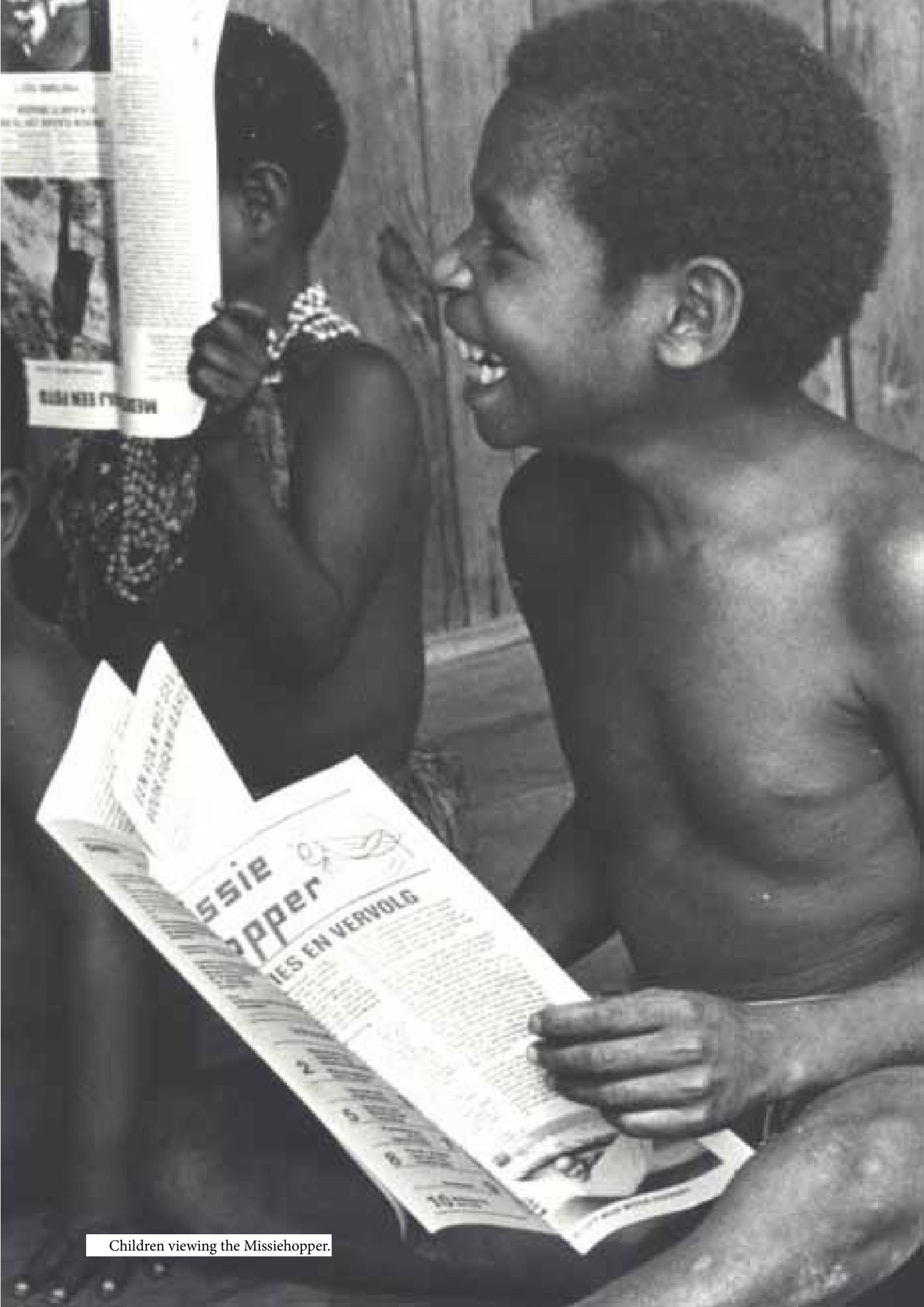
The locals often came to the Franciscans for support and it wasn't difficult for Bots to get in contact with the leaders of the tribes and the OPM. They were willing to listen to the Franciscans. He met with two of the OPM leaders in the early eighties and advised them that they were taking the wrong route to independence. With much smaller numbers than the Indonesian military and no access to arms, Bots asked them what could be gained from a continued violent conflict. They listened politely, he recalls, but they were undeterred.

His first appointment was in Moanemani in the lake region for two years, working on a dynamic development project initiated by another Franciscan, Fr. Sjel Coenen ofm, called the Pelima project. Teachers came to train the local people in agriculture, and Bots provided training on cooperatives and economics. When Bots first arrived, many people were suffering from poor health and two thirds of children did not survive beyond the age of five. This was related to a severe lack of protein in the local diet. The Franciscans tried to promote eating protein-rich beans and meat. After two years of education programs, they introduced livestock. The people were given ducks and chickens at first, and after a year would pay for these and receive more valuable animals like goats. As their livelihoods improved they were able to pay for larger animals, the most valuable of which were cows. This whole process, from initial training to building a stable livelihood on livestock, took about ten years. The Pelima project also provided for coffee cultivation, which could then be sold at market. After farmers were trained, teachers from the project center, Bots included, visited the farmers to see their progress and

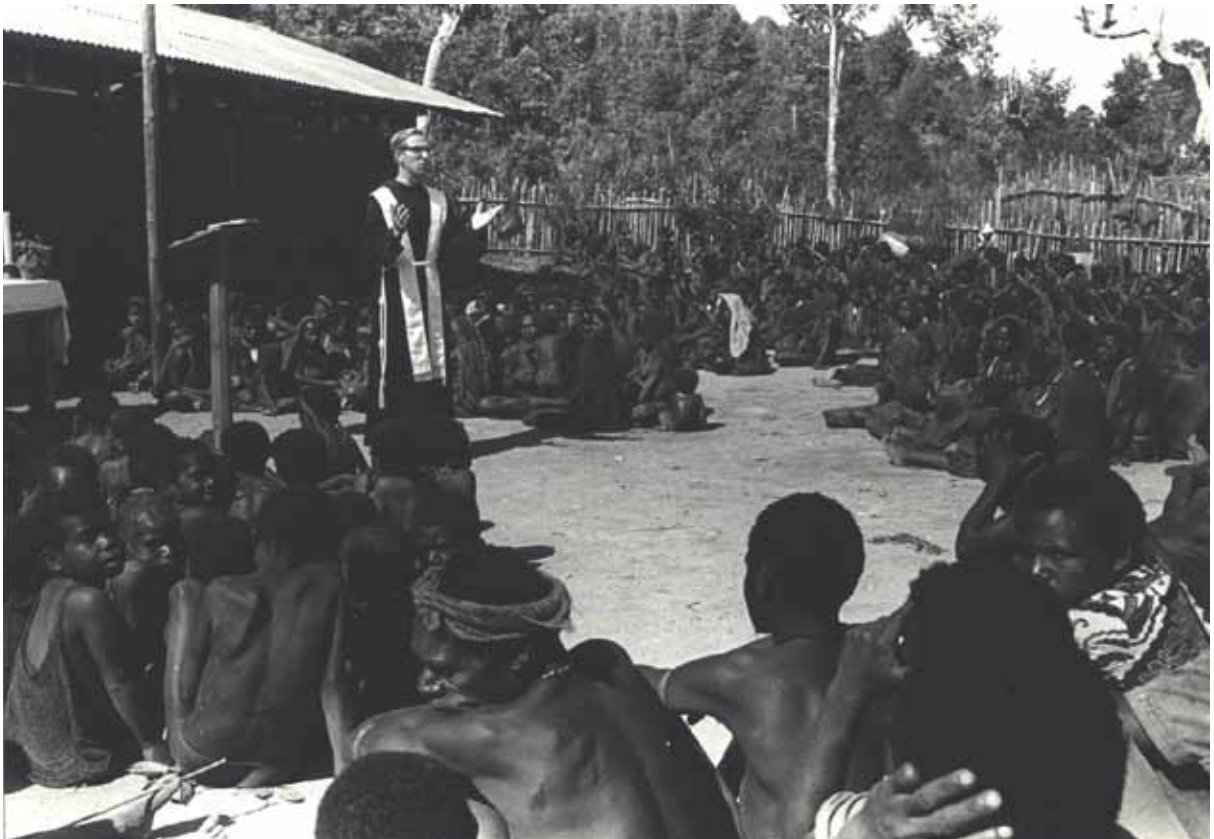
provide help and support where it was needed. In the beginning, getting people to attend the farming school was challenging but the project became a success, with over six hundred graduates from the training programs. There were also programs specifically for women about health, farming and animal husbandry.

As far as children were concerned, the Church had been running about fifty schools in and around the Paniai Lakes, but by this stage the education system had deteriorated. The well-organised system of government subsidies for schools during the Dutch era had facilitated development of schools, and the arrival of highly trained Jesuit-educated teachers from Java in the years immediately following the establishment of the Indonesian regime ensured good quality education for many Papuan children. But most of these Javanese had left in 1969 when opposition to the Act of Free Choice had ignited violent conflict. When Bots arrived in Papua, the education system was facing severe difficulties. Whereas the churches had played an important role in education under the Dutch and maintained a strong, collaborative relationship with the government, the foreign missionaries no longer had much input when Indonesia took control. Bots and many of his brothers played a significant role in the running of the schools, but they were rarely teachers themselves. Nonetheless, despite the decline in the quality of the teachers, the Franciscans had no authority to remove them from their schools.

Bots recalls working in Enarotali and hiring extra workers to support the mission. He interviewed one young man who came with his father. The candidate had finished secondary education, so he had been in school for twelve years. Bots asked him to answer a simple mathematical problem. He couldn't answer it, but his father could. His father had had only four or five years of education but he had been taught by the highly trained Javanese teachers. For Bots, this incident illustrated the change in quality of education that had occurred. In the Paniai area, during the Dutch time, the Dutch system made it compulsory for parents to send their children to school, and for children to attend. This was well supervised. In the earlier days of the mission, it took only six years to finish school and then you could get a job and have an income.



Children viewing the Missiehopper.



Top: Fr Gem Keizer being offered a piglet as sign of gratitude for installing a Single Side Band radio connection in this mission in Bidogai.

Below: Fr Frans Lieshout in Bidogai - Moni area at the end of 1960's.





Top left: Fr Sibbele Hylkema working on the construction of a simple airstrip in his parish in Abmisibil at the end 1960ties.

Below: Fr Sjel Coenen and Bishop Herman Munninghoff in the Kamu Valley probably Moanemani.

Top right-upper: Mgr Munninghoff probably at the priest ordination ceremony in 1980

Top right-lower: Mgr Herman Munninghoff and Fr Herman Peters together with the first graduates of the theological education highschool for pastoral workers.



Top left: One of the franciscan missionaries attending the kids.  
Top right: Fr Jan Peeters in the church building with the younger part of his parish.  
Middle left: Mgr. Herman Munninghoff in the middle of the community.

Middle right: Fr Sibbele Hylkema, probably in the Abmisibil, time for a smoke and a chat.  
Below: Sr Marie Gemma DSY on a tour in the Wissellakes-area taking care of the sick.

That all had changed by the time Bots arrived, and with longer periods of compulsory schooling before students would be eligible for university, it took a long time for parents to get their investment back. Many stopped sending their children to school as a result.

There was often a difference in the rate of attendance at school among girls and boys, particularly, as Bots recalls, in the Paniai Lakes region. During his time there, the number of girls in school was growing, and it seemed that girls were more dedicated to their schoolwork. There was a real difference between Paniai and the Baliem where, at that time Bots served there in 1978, there were very few girls in school. Bots sees the explanation of this disparity in the fact that the people of the Baliem valley were more or less content with their lives already, so they did not see the merit of schooling, particularly the men. The soil was very fertile and the people could make a sustainable living from agriculture. In contrast, around the Paniai Lakes the soil was very poor and people had to work very hard to make a living from their land, so they were keen to develop new ways to strengthen their livelihoods. They recognized that this could be achieved through education.

By the time Bots arrived, many Indonesian migrants were settling in the highlands, especially traders from Bugis. These migrants controlled the flow of goods into these areas which heightened the tension between these newcomers and the indigenous people. On the one hand, the locals benefited from the availability of new goods in the markets, but they also resented the increasing influence that these traders wielded. Bots noticed a great difference between the two communities which he believed was in large part based on a fundamental condition of being a migrant; the struggle to establish a sustainable livelihood in a new and unfamiliar place. Bots noted the hard-work and determination of the migrant community as they assiduously endeavored to make a new life for themselves and their families. As the Papuans continued in their traditional ways, maintaining a lifestyle that had persisted for generation upon generation, the migrants worked to better their situation. The result, as Bots observed, was that these new communities prospered while the local tribes maintained their status quo. Migrants were employed in better jobs and were

installed in positions of influence and authority, and with their arrival came Islam. The indigenous populations were uneasy of these changes, and, in Bots' view, resented the extent to which the migrant community flourished while they largely remained at a disadvantage under the Indonesian regime. The power structures of their society were changing. The value of the cowry shell was steadily decreasing as currency. "In some ways," as Bots recalls, "they wanted to get on with their lives as they were, they didn't want to change or adapt to these new circumstances. With the coming of migrants, they were forced to change." The head of the Pelima project once told Bots that "we're losing our identity. The cowry shell has gone."

For Bots, the cowry shell is an important symbol of the changing situation in Papua. As the primary form of currency, cowry shells had been crucial to the tribal community. The hierarchy of the tribe was reflected in the wealth of cowry shells held by its leadership. With the introduction of new currency from trade and the expansion of Indonesian influence, people had greater access to money. As other members of the tribe increased their wealth, earning monthly salaries as teachers or in other forms of government employment, and gaining greater influence in their communities as a result, the traditional leadership structures were disrupted. These people, as Bots observed, had no experience of this kind of role within the community. Bots felt that, whereas the traditional elders were accustomed to the responsibilities their position entailed, active in their roles as leaders within the community, those who grew wealthy and influential under the Indonesian regime "had their own priorities." Community dynamics often suffered as a result of this shift in power and influence.

The Franciscans placed a huge emphasis on cultural sensitivity. Anthropologists within the mission, like Fons van Nunen, had a huge impact on the Franciscans' approach to working within the context of the local cultures. Bots had "read all the books there were" about Paniai, about Ekagi, and came to Papua aware of the importance of listening to the people. His approach was to immerse himself in the local culture and let change happen organically. "But that doesn't mean that I didn't have expectations," he recalls. "Perhaps I have learned a bit that I should

have listened to the people more in the beginning. Objectively speaking, I knew this at the time, but perhaps not in my heart yet? I went there thinking I wanted to improve their world. Coming from the Netherlands, from a better quality of life, I brought that mentality with me, and then during the time there I slowly learned that change is not so easy, and that it takes a lot of time.”

When he arrived to work on the Pelima project in the 1970s, the women’s education centre had just been set up. The farming school was already running at that point, and the two programs were designed as an integrated project. The idea was to educate men and women, and then they would go back to their villages and be an example to others. The reality was that, when they went back to their villages, “they formed ‘an island’ within their village.” The disruption to the traditional tribal hierarchy caused tension, as members of the community were seen to rise above their appropriate status. This was something the Franciscans had considered from the beginning, but their expectations were not borne out by the results. The integration of whole communities in this development project proved much more difficult than they had anticipated.

The *We Are The Church* movement was a major project for the Franciscans in Bots’ time. In his experience however, Bots found that the momentum of the movement was largely among the “upper layers” of the church community in Papua. One of his criticisms of the efforts of the Franciscan mission was that it “worked too fast.” “Perhaps,” he recalls, “it wasn’t possible to do it another way. But it was too fast. Changes don’t happen in one or two years, maybe not even in a generation. I always told our visitors to use the analogy of trying to stop smoking. It is nearly impossible to stop smoking. To really change yourself. The idea was that everyone has a responsibility for the Church. The Church is not something from outside, it is us. We own the Church, we have to make the Church. To build the churches, prayer houses, but also to build a community to educate ourselves, and so on. ‘Don’t be dependent on the priests, on the foreigners,’ we told them. The people must believe ‘we are the church and we have to work together.’ It was a very good idea, very difficult though.”

In Bots’ view, it was crucial to contextualize the Gospel. He did not feel the need to speak about Jesus Christ; for him, simply being among the people and trying to help them to improve their daily lives in whatever way he could was living the Gospel. In his work with the Pelima project, his training courses in cooperatives and farming were translated for him by a catechist, since he had not yet learned the local language. Time and again, he heard the name ‘Jesus’ mentioned in the catechists translations. Initially, the links between the Franciscans’ pastoral work and their development work were much clearer to the local people he worked with than for Bots himself.

From 1975 onwards, the Franciscan community in Papua took on Indonesian and Papuan friars. These young friars followed the examples set by the Dutch Franciscans in their approach to the missionary work. By the end of the 1980s however, the influence of the Dutch friars was diminishing as their numbers decreased. During this period, the local friars took on a greater role in directing the course of the mission’s pastoral work. As Bots explains, “In the traditional context, when you become a pastor you follow the examples set by those who came before you; a pastor goes around to do the mass, the baptism and other celebrations. A pastor is usually less exposed to development and social work. The new generation of friars had seen our example. Some of our friars were more traditional, while others were more involved in the field of development work. A number of them were more interested in taking the approach of *kehadiran* (being there), practicing through presence.” There was thus a great diversity in the approach that individual friars took to carrying out their pastoral work as they saw fit.

For Bots, one cannot separate pastoral work from other issues. In the deteriorating political context of Papua, with ongoing conflict between Papuan activists for independence and the increasingly authoritarian Indonesian regime, the lines between Franciscan pastoral work and their efforts to foster peace and promote justice were blurred. “You have to speak about pastoral work,” says Bots. “Pastoral work is about church-building, the formation of communities. That has to do with justice and peace. ‘Justice and peace work’ is a lot broader than fighting for justice and calling for peace, because so many social factors are interlinked. A pastoral relationship

is central to this. Through our pastoral work, we become more aware of the role of religion in justice and peace, in peace-making or war-making. For example, how did we behave with other religions there? How did we integrate into other customs?”

Bots recalls that in 1977, in the Kamu Valley, a community of local Protestants built a church, and the local Catholics burned it down. Bots asserts that “that had to do with our influence, the leaders from outside, the pastors from the Protestant churches and the Catholic church.” It was also a result of traditional tribal rivalries and feuds. There was tension between certain villages and families, and religion had become intertwined with this. Religion was sometimes used to emphasize old tribal divisions; in Paniai, one village could be Catholic while its neighboring village would be Protestant. The Pelima project was initially targeted at Catholics, given the fact that the populations of most villages were entirely one denomination or another. Over the years, the project reached out to Protestants. It was a strategic move to improve inter-denominational relations, but, in Bots’ view, it wasn’t a great success. At the end of the 1980s, they began to arrange regular meetings between the leaders of both communities. This was a real challenge due to what Bots describes as the ‘closed mentality’ of local religious leaders. There was an improvement in this inter-religious dialogue during Bots’s time, but that ‘mentality’ was engrained among the local church leaders, from both sides. “Some of the missionaries really wanted to establish a Catholic church in a narrow minded way,” Bots recalls. “Others were far more open. But it belongs to our history. It’s good to be self-aware.”

When the violence in the Paniai Lakes and the Baliem valley escalated in 1977 and 1978, most people fled. Despite the conflict between the OPM and the Indonesian military, the Franciscans stayed and so did a small number of Indonesian migrants, teachers in particular. These people stayed in the friary with the Franciscans. There wasn’t much the friars could do in this dangerous situation, but, as foreigners, their presence kept their house, and those seeking refuge in it, safe from the military. The Papuan independence movement in the Paniai Lakes region was undermined by in-fighting, as villages turned against each other. “Over anything,”

Bots recalls. “A pig, or a piece of land”. It was sad to see the situation unfolding like that. It was very sad to see this happening. Their vision at the time had no clear future. I often hoped to break it open, but then they had to do it by themselves, we could only talk to them and make suggestions, but not much more than that.” The approach of Francis to the Gospel is twofold, enshrined in his first and second rules. “The first rule,” as Bots explains, “is just to live a good life – not in the sense of a rich and luxurious life, but one in which you don’t make war, don’t fight, and try to be a good friend to others. The second way is to preach when the time is right, to tell people about Jesus. For me the first way is an important approach, and when you do the first part the second part will happen.

## Theo van den Broek

Van den Broek arrived in Papua in 1975 and began to focus on social issues in his work. It seemed to him that during the process of political transition in the early 1970s, the situation had been more or less settled, and people had no choice but to accept the new reality. Politically, the transition was done; administratively, it was complete. When he arrived in 1975, it seemed clear to van den Broek that he was entering a part of Indonesia. This attitude was naturally quite different from many of the friars who had been in Papua for years, whose projects and activities had evolved under Dutch administration, and this difference of perspective sometimes stood in the way of clear dialogue and mutual understanding between incoming friars like van den Broek and their well-established brothers, who had a retrospective awareness of all that had been lost with the advent of the Indonesian administration, and wanted to restore the good work that had been done in the past.

By 1975, the ‘Republican project’ was well under way. Suharto had been in power for almost ten years, and a key part of his plans for Papua was a massive migration scheme with a view to attracting investment to the area. The result of Suharto’s economic plans for Papua was a huge extraction of wealth from the region without any significant reinvestment of the profits for the people of Papua. This was a period in which, Van den Broek

maintains, people felt used. Some attention was given to social services, including education and health care, but the human resources to manage such services were not there. The infrastructure was very weak and dependent on missionaries and the Church. A lot of the mission movements or groups, among them quite a few fundamentalist ones, had a strong presence in the highlands where most of the indigenous peoples lived, and there was a heavy dependence in those areas on foreign organizations. Although there was a lack of civil service to manage the government's social service programs, there was an increased presence of the Indonesian government administration.

This put the Papuan people in a very ambiguous position. On the one hand, there were efforts made by the government to improve the quality of life in Papua in terms of health and education, but such measures were based on an Indonesian model and way of life in which there was no room for Papuan cultural expression. This was compounded by the perceived encroachment of Islam. The result was a Papuan identity crisis. Where did they fit in this new Republic? Where and how were they recognized and identified? And what was the underlying goal of Indonesian policy on Papua? Was it informed by a genuine intention to uplift the Papuans as a people, or was it merely an attempt to consolidate Indonesia's hold over the region?

Van den Broek maintains that, as missionaries and also as a Church, they had never been indifferent to political rights. Even if one cannot apply the technical term of 'human rights' to the work of the missionaries, the nature of their work, from as early as the 1950s, was undoubtedly the defense of human rights as we understand them today. So the basic attitude of most missionaries is very human rights oriented, even if they might not use that term themselves. "I think if you take the textbook definition of a human rights defender and you apply it to certain actions of the friars," says Van den Broek, "then they would fit the definition." One of his most striking first impressions when he arrived in Papua was the closeness of the missionaries and the people. There was a very strong urge among the missionaries to be with people, to defend them in any situation, and to ask that they be respected and acknowledged. That was the bottom line for the vast

majority of missionaries that he knew in Papua. Not just the Franciscans, but also the MSC, the Crossier fathers, and the Augustinians. Van den Broek attributes this attitude among the Franciscans to their spirituality; in his words, "do good for people, and deal with people, and respect everyone- they are different, but they are all human beings with dignity. To see how the Papuans lost out against everyone who came from outside, and how they are looked down on as 'primitive'; our response was to be with them...any Franciscan that I know has been protesting in whatever possible way, individually but also as a Church."

When Van den Broek arrived in Papua in 1975, he was put in charge of social justice issues. As one of four social delegates –one from each diocese– his first project was to report to Amnesty International (AI) about political prisoners, and the absence of due process in their detention and sentencing. The information used by AI came from the churches, both Protestant and Catholic. His work involved information dissemination to keep other organizations informed of what was happening. Gradually, Van den Broek and his fellow social delegates began collaborating with the Protestant church. It was an informal process where people from both churches sat together, discussed the issues, and wrote statements to inform foreign agencies about the situation. AI published a list of Papuan Prisoners of Conscience every six months. Van den Broek recalls that "they did an excellent job for Papua; they would speak out whenever something happened." Van den Broek and his colleagues mainly did the reporting, rarely getting into direct relations with the people in jail. That was the task of the local priests; the social delegates acted as a bridge between the prisoners and AI.

Van den Broek recalls that, with so many different projects underway to respond to a multitude of needs, the friars were often called on to conduct activities for which they were unprepared. Van den Broek himself was involved in setting up training courses in cooking for young women, establishing a chicken farm, and helping in the development of fish farms. "Ok, as a son of a farmer," he says, "I knew a bit about chicken and cattle, but I didn't know exactly what had to be done!" They worked with the local pastors, but didn't have the professional

experience to cater to all of the calls for support. This was an important factor in motivating the mission to be more instrumental in the establishment of local NGOs. They started to support organizations that had the capacity, the skills and the people to respond appropriately and comprehensively to the needs of those the Franciscans were working with. The mission was involved in setting up the very first development organization, *Yayasan Pengembangan Masyarakat Desa (YPMD)*. It was initially set up to spread information on practical issues, publishing a bulletin on village development as well as doing practical research; gradually it broadened its scope by also offering trainings and practical skills needs in the field.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the social delegates were working in every diocese in Papua. They regularly received requests to take action on violations of property rights, land rights and other legal issues which they simply didn't have the skills for. Suharto's migration policy was a critical issue for the social delegates at this time. The people called on them to be very outspoken in their opposition to it. It was seen by many in Papua as a policy of colonization. Migration was causing a lot of problems in terms of land distribution, as traditional tribal ownership of land was ignored by the Indonesian authorities. The result was that indigenous communities lost vast tracts of their ancestral land as migrants arrived and occupied it. There were cases of forced removal of communities. Large agro-business investments exacerbated this problem, as local communities were very rarely properly reimbursed for the land which they vacated. In response to this, the Franciscans got involved in setting up a Papuan Legal Aid organization as a branch of a larger NGO in Jakarta (LBHI), and invited people from Jakarta to Jayapura to raise awareness about it. This decision was supported by the four Bishops of Papua at the time, and it was a very important step in linking the work of the Church more closely with the field of human rights. These were the practical issues that Papuans had to contend with on a daily basis in their efforts to preserve their culture and their identity.

The portfolio of the social delegates was very broad, encompassing all aspects of social development including health, agriculture and the promotion of justice and peace. It was a very challenging role,

which essentially amounted to the overall planning of the Church's activities in the diocese, particularly after NGOs had been established to take on some of the work that the Church had been doing. Van den Broek also got involved in pastoral planning. This allowed him to travel and meet with the missionaries and local communities. Together they would discuss pastoral developments and measures to implement for the improvement of pastoral care. For Van den Broek, this was a very effective way to "get inside what was really happening in the Church in Papua."

Van den Broek arrived at a time when the *We Are The Church* movement was really taking off. He saw the positive impact it had on the local people, empowering them to play an active role in the development of their Church, and instilling in them the confidence and belief that they could make an important contribution to their community. Many Papuans were interested in taking part and contributing to the work of the church, but joining the religious life was not an option for them. It was of paramount importance within many local cultures to have children and pass on the family name to a new generation. The Vatican Council, however, had opened up a lot of space for lay people to become involved with the work of the Church. In Papua, a number of missionaries saw this as an opportunity to ensure lay people had pastoral functions and to leave them completely in charge, thereby expanding the reach of the pastoral care. Van den Broek describes the "mistake" of asking Rome for permission to hand over these responsibilities to lay people, which involved leading mass and officiating celebrations. Permission was inevitably denied, which Van den Broek considered a pity; he "felt it was better to get moving with your church so that things could develop."

The Franciscans capitalized on the opportunity that emerged out of Vatican II to shape the local church with the support of local lay people. The process started with educating people to prepare them for leadership roles within their parishes. The theological high school in Abepura had a mix of students, male and female, who started this training after graduating from school. There was a steady influx of students in the 1980s, but this slowed down in the 1990s. Van den Broek felt that there was an ongoing tension caused by the disparity

between official church teaching on the role of lay people and the actual responsibilities they took on. As friars from Flores and other parts of Indonesia arrived, the dynamic between the lay workers and the clergy changed; often, the friars from other parts of Indonesia took a more conventional approach, with a focus on priests leading the Church.

According to Van den Broek, the Indonesian friars had difficulties to accept the way of interpreting *We Are The Church*; it was a Dutch construction. The Dutch missionaries had gradually learned through their collective experience in Papua that this new approach would be effective and workable, and it also complied with new approaches to theology of the day. However, the Bishops Conference in Jakarta saw it a different way. The Bishop of Malang, who was the head of the Conference in Indonesia, was appointed as Bishop of Sorong, in Van den Broek's view, to bring the church in Papua back to the orthodox ways of the Church of Rome. The Conference felt that there was too much emphasis on the role of lay people, and referred to it as the 'lay church of Papua'. However, for Van den Broek, the result of the Papuan Concillium was unequivocal. They had been called on to make the Church more local; local in its expression and its administration. That view was widely held among the Catholic community of Papua from the 1970s up until the beginning of the 1990s.

## Theo Vergeer

Theo Vergeer arrived in Papua in 1978 to work at the theology school in Jayapura. As the last Dutch Franciscan to join the mission in Papua, he was excited to be part of the crucial process of handing down the work of the Dutch Franciscans to their Papuan successors. In the early 1980s, a formation program for Franciscans was set up at the theological school in Jayapura. Students came from each of the dioceses to take part in the program, which also involved short-term stages, or placements, in other parts of Papua. Vergeer travelled around the dioceses to supervise the students on placement, which allowed him to visit many other parts of Papua. Vergeer was also involved in training pastoral workers and priests. The Church in Papua was firmly established at this point, but the Franciscans had their own, long-established traditions in Papua, and felt it was important to maintain this theological

school, not just for their own brothers, but also to provide a sound theological foundation for the Papuan Church. Vergeer recalls that the students were very proud to be educated in Papua. Coming from diverse backgrounds, with various views of spirituality and differing images of the Church, the program fostered cohesion among the students. Vergeer saw the success of the students' training in the attitudes with which they went on to serve the people of Papua. The ethos of the theological school emphasized the importance of respect for the local culture. He was proud to see his students immerse themselves in the communities in which they worked, accompanying the local people through the economic and political challenges which plagued the region.

Anthropology and scripture were at the heart of the school's curriculum, as the Franciscans encouraged their students to consider how best to integrate the Gospel into their specific local contexts. What was the best way to live out their faith in the contexts in which they found themselves? Vergeer recalls that a core value he encountered among many communities in Papua was the importance of living harmoniously with others. Whereas the western approach to resolving discord is often confrontational, the Papuans place greater emphasis on finding a solution by building good relations. He recalls, however, that the centrality of ancestral heritage in many Papuan cultures can be an obstacle to progress. *"Papuan people look to their ancestors for guidance in life. Our faith drives us to look forward with hope, but the Papuans are often very retrospective in their thinking, and this presents challenges when talking about development and the future. For the Papuans, we are all part of one great caravan, walking together from the creation of the world until the end of time. Our ancestors began that journey, we join them, and future generations move with the caravan further down the road; in that sense, both the future and the past are always with us."*

In Vergeer's view, the values of one's faith and ancestors remain with us, but we must not let that be an obstacle to moving forward. One of the major challenges the Papuan people faced was succeeding in building a positive future without breaking with their past.



In Vergeer's experience, the Papuan people often deferred to their ancestral traditions when faced with grave challenges. Relations between the indigenous communities and the Indonesian military in the border region were extremely tense. The people often responded to military violence by retreating from their villages into the bush and reverting to the way of life of their ancestors. Vergeer saw this as a reaction to feeling vulnerable and powerless for them to defend themselves. In the face of a hopelessly difficult situation, they "*went back to the past.*" This tendency was indicative of the challenge of moving forward for the Papuan people. Vergeer and his brothers were often forced to remind themselves that change takes time. This was an important lesson for him. In his eagerness to make a difference, Vergeer reflects that, at first, he may have lacked patience in his work. He learned over time that, for meaningful development the Franciscans had to work with the people, taking their lead from the local communities in the best way to go about serving their needs.

Pastoral care was a crucial part of the work of the Franciscans during this time of conflict and uncertainty. Sacraments and celebrations with the people gave communities the opportunity to come together and grow in faith. Reading the Bible together and interpreting the Good News in the context of their difficult situation gave the people courage to deal with the difficulties they faced as individuals and as communities. The people read the Bible and talked in groups together, discussing the readings, their views, and their problems. For Vergeer, pastoral care was aimed at giving the people strength through their faith. This complemented the local traditions about the importance of ancestors; God and their ancestors were accompanying them in the great caravan of life, giving them strength.

Vergeer observed the enormous impact that the Indonesian regime had on local Papuan culture. The new administration brought unprecedented modernization to the region, the nature and delivery of which often clashed irreconcilably with indigenous ways of life. For the Franciscans, so deeply concerned with the anthropology of Papua,

this manifested itself most clearly in the diminution of local languages. Vergeer sees this as a process of "Indonesianisation". Young students moved away from home to go to school where they would learn Indonesian and gradually, from lack of practice, lose their maternal language. By the time they finished school, they were no longer able to talk to their families in their traditional tongue; in this way, the oral tradition of passing songs, prayers and rituals from generation to generation diminished. The result is that, in losing touch with their traditions, young people were becoming more and more Indonesian. This process continues to pose a particularly grave threat to the smaller tribes, many of which have as few as one hundred members; with ever-dwindling numbers, the unique languages spoken by these tribes are on the cusp of extinction. With greater numbers to sustain the traditional language, the larger tribes have a better chance of preserving their languages for longer. This is also aided by the fact that most of the linguistic research conducted in Papua was focused on the larger tribes. The Franciscans have played a significant role in recording and preserving several Papuan languages, particularly in the Wissel Lakes<sup>2</sup> region and in the Star Mountains. Many of the linguistic studies, dictionaries and teaching workbooks researched and written by the friars are now housed in a library in the Netherlands. The friars also undertook a lot of translation work, for instance, with the Bible. Vergeer once went to a Sunday celebration in the Wissel Lakes, and the reading were written in the local language but the people were unable to read it because they had never seen it written down. The bulk of the translation work happened during the Dutch administration before the Indonesian government took charge. A number of evangelical Christian Churches also have linguistic centers in Papua, in keeping with their ideological goal to translate the Bible into every language in the world. Nonetheless, Vergeer often met people who told him they had lost their mother tongue. There is a dire need to reinvigorate many of these minor tribal languages because, since so little has been written down, when the last of the members of a tribe dies, their unique language dies with them.

2 It is another name of Paniai Lakes, referring to the pilot named Wissel who discovered these lakes high up in the mountains.

Vergeer's work at the theological school was very much a continuation of *We Are The Church*. Munninghoff's goal with this movement was to empower people and to elaborate a distinctly Papuan identity for the local Church. The theological school played its part in educating pastoral workers to be self-supporting and self-reliant in the communities they served. In Vergeer's experience, people were happy with the slogan "*We Are The Church*"; under the Indonesian administration they did not feel responsibility or control over so much in their communities. With this movement, it was recognized that they were respected by the Church as Papuans. Not only did they feel that the Indonesian government did not acknowledge their

culture as distinct from wider Indonesian culture, they felt that the military and government were actively suppressing it. For the Catholic population of Papua, the Church came to be a place where they were free and respected, while the Indonesian administration was seen as a tyrannical institution. Vergeer recalls Munninghoff's role in Papua with great fondness and admiration. "*The Bishop was great, he was always on the side of the Papuans. He would visit the highlands, the remote areas, and he was always one of the people. It was his style of being a bishop, very informal, and always with the people. He was also very tolerant and flexible; he didn't pay too much attention to the rules of the Church because in that situation you just can't follow all the rules.*"

# Franciscans Responding Publicly to a Situation of Oppression

Listening to Theo van den Broek he explains that from the 1960s onwards, Indonesia had maintained a very strong military presence in Papua, which had a hugely oppressive effect on the local population. “People who spoke up against injustices always faced the risk of being labeled as subversive and anti-Indonesian, as promoters of independence, and this was a reason enough to be put them in jail. From the Indonesian military’s perspective, if you are a supporter of Papuan independence, you go to jail. There was no way of getting judicial processes to meet international legal standards; court sessions were always politicized from the very beginning. And it happened all the time. People were sentenced to twenty years or more in prison for raising the Morning Star flag of Papuan independence, without a real defense, without a real hearing. The sentence was already determined before the trial even took place.” There was also significant economic exploitation of the local population carried out by the military, particularly in the remote highlands of the interior. Military personnel engaged in illegal logging and used local indigenous communities as forced labor. If they refused to work, the people were beaten, tortured and denounced as enemies of Indonesia. Illegal grants of forest land and coastal land were made to influential parties/individuals/dignitaries from other parts of Indonesia, squeezing the local indigenous peoples further and further off their traditional land. The people rarely had any legal recourse, and the military carried out this brutal regime with impunity.

The situation was always tense, and people had to watch their way of talking and acting, while human rights violations were hardly exposed. It was also in this context that the bishops in Papua took the initiative to invite the Jakarta based and well respected Legal Aid Foundation to open a branch

in Papua; they did so in the 1980ties. Incidentally the church made clear protests but it took till 1995 before a first official catholic church-authorized report on human rights violations was made public; the report authorized and made public by Mgr. Munninghoff ofm.

### ***A milestone action: Munninghoff Report***

On 3rd August 1995, in his capacity as the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jayapura, Mgr. Munninghoff sent a report to the Indonesian Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) on the violation of human rights in the Timika area, committed by the Indonesian army. It was presented through the Indonesian Bishops Conference. This report is widely known as *Munninghoff Report*.

The report deals with human rights violations that took place in the working area of the huge copper and gold mine operated by PT. Freeport in the Timika-Mimika region. The mine is owned by the US-based Freeport-McMoran Copper & Gold Inc. The report explains the serious human rights violation against Papuan citizens which included executions, murders, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, detention, tortures, surveillance and destruction of property. Munninghoff reported that 16 people were murdered and four others “disappeared” during the period from October 1994 – June 1995. The victims were those who were accused of being members of *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (Free Papua Movement – OPM), a movement that strives for independence.

As a man from the church, Mgr. Munninghoff believed that we have a duty to protect all people who are suffering. Ultimately, his report was about the human rights violations committed by the Indonesian soldiers against the Papuans, and not to back up any independence movement as such.

For some more background of the report, it is interesting to quote Theo van den Broek where he explains the complex issue of Freeport McMoran, and the efforts of the Church to address it, in his own words:

*“The Freeport activities in the Timika area were purely a result of the Indonesian government’s economic interests in Papua. The concession to mine at Tembagapura was granted almost straight after Suharto came to power, after the 1965 coup against Sukarno. The first concession to Freeport came a year later. Suharto was looking for any kind of investment that could help the country get more income. The concession was actually illegal because it had been granted by the Indonesian government to Freeport McMoran before the Act of Free Choice in 1969; Indonesia had granted the rights to land that they did not yet have any authority over.*

*Freeport seemed to be wholly unconcerned with the situation of the local people. The people were suddenly confronted with a completely new world coming from outside. The Freeport project was like an island in the highlands, isolated and out of bounds to everyone, even the local people. Local employment prospects were nil. The mining activity was causing enormous damage to the environment, polluting many rivers and forests with the toxic materials used to extract the copper and gold. So much damage was brought on to the local population! It became clear that Freeport was not afraid of involving the army to protect their interests. The military was very blunt in its response to any local people voicing opposition to the activities of Freeport. Indonesian soldiers were employed to secure the mining operations and quell any opposition. Freeport, considered a national interest, was the biggest taxpayer in Indonesia. It was a national project that needed to be protected.*

*By that time, I had quite a lot of contact with the local tribe in that area, the Amungme people. Gradually, with the support of new NGOs, I began to hear more about the situation there. At that time I was head of the Diocesan office. I remember in 1995 a group of the local Amungme came to Jayapura and were asking for a meeting with the Bishop. He was not in Jayapura at the time so I went instead. The meeting took place in our friary in Sentani, and it had a very strong impact on me. There were ten or fifteen tribesmen talking*

*about the suffering of their people caused by Freeport and the military. A couple of victims were with them, showing me the wounds they had received from the policy and the army. They said they had tried everything; they had tried talking to Freeport, the local government, the army, and concluded that ‘there’s no hope for us’. The only place they had left, they said, was the Church. To be confronted with these stories and these human experiences –I knew they were happening, but this face-to-face meeting brought them home for me– the only response I could give was that we would take care of it. I don’t know why I said it, but I went back to Jayapura and I told the Bishop the next day that I had promised that we would take care of it. I had made a commitment on behalf of Bishop Munninghoff, but he wasn’t angry about it. He just asked me to prepare for it and let him know the developments. He had been sensitized to these kinds of issues so I knew I was not knocking on a closed door.*

*By that time, ELSHAM (a leading human rights NGO) was already investigating cases of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, forced labor and extrajudicial killings among others. When we took up the issue, there was already some momentum developing; you are never alone in this kind of work. A report – based on investigation findings by John Rumbiak/ Elsaham - had already been published by an Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), and released in April 1995, though it didn’t get much attention. It was dismissed by the Indonesian authorities as biased and anti-Indonesian. We decided to use this report as our basis, verify all the cases, and publish it under the name of the Catholic Church in Papua to give it a local institutional backing. We started working on a draft. Out of about 28 cases of human rights abuse, we singled out six cases that were strong enough to be put into this new report. I wanted to make sure all cases were carefully considered and validated. We had a reception lined up in Jakarta with the social department of the Bishops’ Conference of Indonesia and cultivated contacts with legal aid institutes to make sure we had a strong link to an external audience. The report was due to be published by August 15th 1995.*

*When I gave Bishop Munninghoff a draft for him to authorize, he called me and asked, ‘Is it all true, what I’m reading here?’ I confirmed this, and he quickly signed it and endorsed it. The report was addressed to the Bishops Conference, for the Cardinal in Jakarta.*

*However, a copy was leaked along the way, and it soon made international headlines. 'Bishop of Jayapura publishes first church report on human rights violations by Freeport in Papua'. It appeared in the New York Times and other newspapers.*

*A Bishops' Conference was held a week later in Jakarta which Bishop Munninghoff attended. He was approached by journalists from several Jakarta-based newspapers, and also by Freeport. I had the impression that the report was well received by the Conference but no one was really talking about it. And once again it was Papua, we were already something of an "enfant terrible" in the Bishops' Conference, so it was no surprise that we should be so outspoken on this controversial issue. The Bishop had no idea where the leak had come from; all he knew was that he had directed this report to the Cardinal in Jakarta. Several Generals came from Jakarta to Jayapura the day after. They asked for meetings with the Bishop, and wanted to see the documents that had informed the report. Bishop Munninghoff refused, maintaining that it was confidential material; he had given his word to the people involved that he would not disclose any details. The Bishop told me later that one of the generals had asked him if he wasn't afraid of taking this kind of step. He said he started laughing and told the general he wasn't, but that the one party to fear in a case like this was the army itself.*

*It was a uniquely advantageous situation for us to have this older person - he was about seventy years old at the time - whose seniority and authority was respected. He held also the Indonesian citizenship, so they couldn't say he was a foreigner because he had an Indonesian passport, and he represented the Catholic Church. He stood by his actions and took all the criticism that came after the report's release.*

*We then got the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) to visit Timika to ensure they validated the cases. They met with all the witnesses and victims. The Bishop was there as well. By then it had become a national report taken over by Komnas HAM, which lent it great credibility. There was a lot of pressure on Freeport at this stage to address it; their shares were falling, and the religious institutions that had shares in Freeport wanted to disassociate themselves.*

Munninghoff never got tired to explain the situation to anyone who was ready to listen. The rebellions arose because OPM were opposing the actions of the Freeport Company because Freeport was taking their recourses, such as land, gold and copper, yet not giving them any compensation. Kelly Kwalik, the chief of OPM, in particular was working on raising awareness about this issue. However, Freeport was protected by Indonesian soldiers which made the situation very difficult and dangerous. As a result many people were arrested, accused of helping OPM. Kelly Kwalik's family was one of the families arrested. They were put in a container with only one door and no windows and were forced to stay there for 5 days, forbidden from leaving the container. This was an obvious violation of their human rights.

Munninghoff met the military general in charge of the region and questioned him about the torture and mistreatment of people in the area. The General claimed he had not known about the incident as no report had been made by the soldiers. However, despite claiming no knowledge, the general denied that 20 people were killed during the incident. Instead, claiming it was only one.

Munninghoff was eager to send the report to the newly founded Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights. He expected the Commission to do further investigation however, instead the Indonesian military heard about the report, condemning it and reaffirming its claim only one person had died. However as Munninghoff pointed out to four Commissioners from Komnas HAM, even if it was only the death of one person the report is still cause for concern. As it still indicated that the normal judicial processes were not being followed and human rights violations were still occurring.

Very briefly after the report was submitted to the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, a short article about it appeared in the newspaper, discussing the human rights violations by military personnel. The military was very angry and would not admit that their personnel had committed such acts. Eventually the report was provoking responses around the globe, especially in the United States, because the report was related to Freeport.

The report also provoked concern among Catholics in Indonesia who held government position as they feared the report would cause them to lose their jobs. However, Munninghoff said that despite such concerns it was their task to denounce human rights violations. There was also concern that Munninghoff would be harmed as a result of the report. A Catholic Indonesian policeman even went so far as to offer his assistance to Munninghoff, as the report could be seen as an attack on the Indonesian Army. However, ultimately such measures were unnecessary. In fact, Munninghoff received a lot of positive feedback from the people when he was in public. With one person even going so far as to say, "He is truly the one who is with us, he is in our side, he is our defender"

## Reaction from Freeport

The violation of human rights mentioned in the Munninghoff report was associated with the presence of Freeport in Papua. However, Munninghoff never intended to charge the murders and disappearances directly on Freeport. Instead, he pointed out that the murder of 16 Papuans and the disappearances of 4 others were committed by the military personnel. However, he did not deny that according the reliable source, the torture and imprisonment of the victims took place in a Freeport compound and some of victims were imprisoned and tortured in Freeport containers in Timika.

The link between Freeport and the incident first appeared through Suara Pembaharuan (one of the national newspaper) on 15 August 1995 which mentioned,

*"Munninghoff said the Freeport Co Ltd is morally responsible for the human rights violations because the Amungme tribesmen, who live in the Jayawijaya mountains, have become victims due to their protest and opposition to Freeport's indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources in the area"*

Internationally, Ralph K.M Haurwitz, an American journalist wrote an article in the Austin American-Statesman on 19th November 1995 about the link between Freeport-McMoran with the murder of 16 Papuans and the disappearance of 4 others, "... as part of efforts to safeguard a gold, copper and silver mine operated by Freeport".

Freeport officially denied any involvement in the violation of human rights, issuing a statement on December 23, 1995 stating,

*"It is troubling that some media, radical groups and individuals continue to report that Freeport was somehow involved in alleged human rights abuses in Irian Jaya (West Papua). Both the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights and the Catholic Bishop of Jayapura, Irian Jaya (West Papua) conducted investigations into these allegations. Both concluded that human rights abuses did occur in Irian Jaya (West Papua), but that Freeport was not responsible for these tragic incidents."*

For Munninghoff what was important was the wide coverage on the situation in Papua. He spoke about the suffering of the people that needed attention, nationally and internationally. Ultimately the report produced positive result with four of the soldiers imprisoned for their actions.

For some additional background on the 'Freeport reaction' another quote from Theo van den Broek:

*The Bishop was invited by Freeport to visit the mining site and 'see with his own eyes how well Freeport was working'. When the bishop came back from Jakarta he told me we would visit Freeport the following week. I wasn't very enthusiastic about this and explains to the bishop that Freeport was probably trying to hit the headlines again, reversing the line to show he had visited Freeport. I didn't think it was the right move. He agreed and cancelled his visit. Freeport was, however, undeterred. We had three straight days of phone calls requesting us to visit. In the end we said we would go on the condition that they also invited all the local leaders from Timika. So we had prominent local figures like Tom Beanal, Yopi Kilangin, and others who had been protesting for years against Freeport. I still don't know if it was the right decision."*

*Freeport had agreed to sponsor extensive new developments at the University of New Orleans. The Dean of the University, a Jesuit, had read the report and was very anxious about accepting Freeport's money. He asked to be put in touch with Bishop Munninghoff. Freeport astutely arranged a phone call to take place while we were visiting their facility. He asked Munninghoff whether Freeport was directly involved in the killings and abuses. The*

*Bishop responded that they weren't directly involved in the killings, because technically the army perpetrated the violence, but that they were doing it on Freeport's behalf. After that phone call Freeport requested an interview with the Bishop and filmed it. The question was repeated and the Bishop replied in the same way. It was in the papers the next day. Many now had the impression that Bishop Munninghoff was backtracking, and this no doubt damaged the impact of the report. We both should have stopped that but I didn't pick up on the kind of game that was going on and unfortunately we made a mistake. Nonetheless, the report had raised critical issues. With Komnas HAM picking up the story at least we had very substantive evidence and support. And it was the first time a church was really speaking up on human rights in Papua. There was an impact within Papua as well. It was the first time that the Papuans felt there was a church speaking out on their behalf, they were hitting headlines across the world and everyone was talking about it. Overnight,*

*Bishop Munninghoff was lauded as the number one human rights defender in Papua.*

*With this success we raised expectations, because after this we knew there would be another case that would need similar attention. After the Freeport report, Munninghoff became known as 'the Bishop for human rights'. People know that they could turn to the Bishop for his support. I think he was happy to take on that kind of position. He took it as a matter of course in our work after that, and it became an important part of the Catholic Church, especially in the Diocese of Jayapura. Being in Jayapura gave us access to the high-level stakeholders, to regional government and to the national level. So, it was a major milestone; we did this without realizing the impact we could have. We were challenged to respond because our spirituality and our experience with the people compelled us to do so. An opportunity had arisen to stand up firmly for the Papuan people, to be with them, to fight for recognition of their dignity."*

## Chapter 4

# Post-Suharto

### Frans Lieshout

Lieshout acknowledged that, after the fall of Suharto in 1998, the situation in Jayapura and Biak significantly changed. In particular when Lieshout moved from Biak back to the Baliem in 2007, he got this impression.

In Baliem valley, however, where the life of the people was still very much under the surveillance of the military and its intelligence, life was not much different from the time under Suharto. People still felt that they were not free to move to other places. The negative influence coming from outside the valley was perceptible, especially with regards to alcohol consumption, promiscuity among young people and the loss of the social control of the people. As a result, the HIV/AIDS prevalence increased significantly. This prompted older people to say, “We used to live really well here, we had our morals, our style of life...the government came, more churches came, all the external influences came, and we are not happy anymore!” Lieshout, as well could feel that people were not happy as they were before. This situation became worse after the Government of President Megawati adopted the Special Autonomy Law in 2001. The implementation of this law brought a huge amount of money into the region, which did not benefit the common people living there who continued to live as 50 years before. Further, Lieshout explained that despite the fact that some young Papuan could have access to higher education, progress was slow. Unfortunately, the bad influences coming from outside Papua were present and tangible within the community.

Nonetheless, not everything was bad. Lieshout still remembered the franc dialogue between President Abdulrahman Wahid and Tom Beanal, during the presidential visit to Jayapura, in 2000. Tom Beanal—educated at the Theological Highschool led by the

Franciscans and for some years lay pastoral worker in the Diocese of Jayapura - is an Amungme tribal leader who was known for bringing Freeport to court in New Orleans in 1996. During this visit, Wahid met some Papuan leaders and Lieshout was one of the invitees. Tom Beanal spoke to the President and said, “Papa Wahid, what I will say is not against you, but against Indonesia. We know that you are blind, but you are the first Indonesian who sees the Papuans.” He continued, “Therefore, we want to leave Indonesia and we will become good neighbours. Because now for so many years, many people of Papua died already, so we will leave Indonesia. We can be apart from Indonesia and become good neighbors.” Wahid replied, “first of all, from the beginning I was surprised that Indonesia called you Irian Jaya that is a bad name. So from now on, I will call you Papua. And the flag and the hymn, ok, you can use that. But I have not the right to give you land apart from Indonesia. But if you want to fight not with war, or like that, but democratically, to be apart from Indonesia, if you want to reach that, that is up to you- you can do that.” Wahid spoke very well and earned a lot of respect by the Papuans. He was indeed very much the opposite of former (and later) Presidents who often gave the Papuans the feeling not being respected and not seen as real humans. Papuans felt always oppressed, not just physically but also very much culturally.

### Theo van den Broek

President Suharto stepped down in 1998, following the riots and pressures from the students. Protests took place everywhere. An economic crisis contributed to this outcome as well. This was a historical moment for the Indonesians; the beginning of a change. Suharto was considered a dictator who used a top-down approach for Papua and for the whole Indonesia. Jakarta, was the center of the power



which used to decide for everybody what to do. Once President Suharto resigned, there was a period of time where everything was possible and people were screaming all over the place and not getting arrested for it! The same feeling of freedom from dictatorship ran across Manado, Sumatra, Aceh, Moluccas and everywhere else. In the following parts, Theo van den Broek explains his views and experience with the Papuan people during the post Suharto period.

### ***Year 1998, the beginning of REFORMASI***

Van den Broek observed that despite the shift in the power, it took some time before Papuans step up. The Vice President Habibie was sworn in to replace Suharto. During Habibie's period, the Papuans' desire to be independent and recognized as people started to take more shape and develop. They wanted to discuss their history, the distortion of history, and have it rectified, and at a more extreme level, express that they were free and independent from Indonesia. This movement started in 1998, and for the first time there were communication channels. People were free to move from one place to the other. As a result, news spread quickly.

The visit of the 100 leaders – who wanted independence– to Habibie, represents another important step. Habibie asked them to reflect it much better; they came back demanding independence all the same. This time was a kind of 'spring time' for the Papuan independence movement. It was either autonomy, federation or Merdeka (freedom).

### ***The beginnings of Justice and Peace Secretariat (Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian – SKP)***

In Papua there has been continuous military presence and oppression from the 1960s to the 1980s. People who spoke up always faced the risk of being blamed and stigmatized as anti-Indonesian, promoters of independence etc. Any of these being a valid reason to be put in jail. The Government of Indonesian would send any supporter of the Papuan struggle to jail.

After the adoption of the Special Autonomy Law in 2001, it was thought that it was now possible to protest and demonstrate legally. However, people

continued to be sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for raising a flag, without a proper trial or chance to defend themselves.

The *Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian* – SKP (Justice and Peace Secretariat) of the Diocese of Jayapura started to operate in 1998 and meant to contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation. Its creation was the logical result of many years of involvement in defending victims of human rights abuses, as well as in witnessing the oppression of the Papuan by the Indonesian authority.

Beyond that, SKP also was aware of activities such as illegal logging, done by those coming from outside Papua. These were all concessions for people in Jakarta to get hectares of forests for logging or fishing concessions in the coastal areas where the local people fished and got their living from. These kinds of economic activities also made people more sensitive about what was happening in Papua, and enabled others to see how Papuans were being pushed out from any economical opportunities.

Further, Van de Broek explained that one of the important points for the *raison d'être* of the SKP were the Freeport Mining Company violations in the Timika area, where there was a clear economical interest of the Indonesian government.

### ***Capacity Building among the Papuans***

Human rights became a very broad issue according to Van den Broek. In SKP trainings, it was often simply about sitting down with local leaders or people selected by the parish and to reflect on what was happening, what kind of world they were living in, what was the traditional one, what had changed and who were the new stakeholders in their area. This was a phase of hearing their complaints of what was happening to them. Many of them were under pressure of the company, or local kiosks; leaders felt that education was not taken seriously; some had too many military personnel around them. In some areas, there were very clear cut human rights violations, killings, beatings, and people being raped. The whole spectrum of human rights violations were occurring. The end question was always 'what should be done?' And so SKP encouraged them

to select five to six people who would form a type of small commission to report any incidents. SKP offered help in setting up local working groups related to SKP in Jayapura, such the case in Wamena, in the Star Mountains, and in Paniai. It also started working with ELSHAM, LBH and ALDP [a NGO set up by mainly Moslem Students] in some areas. They then started getting the backing of religious leaders as a way to obtain better legitimacy for their actions.

Van den Broek often told the Bishop that as SKP they weren't doing something special within the Diocese, they were just doing the Church's work, and it takes a lot of time to have this message sink in, with the priests and with the Bishops. *"It was often felt by some that we should not get involved in politics,- refering to the official policy line by the Catholic Church that we shouldn't get involved in politics. But we were not talking about politics; we weren't supporting any party or backing any political stance. This was about being a steward of creation and protecting the dignity of the people. As members of the Catholic Church, and as Franciscans, we felt we had to do it"*.

When SKP started off, the main objective was to report, mainly to report on the special events that were taking place. "We were not involved from the very beginning in the analysis of the human rights situation, we did that later. We started reporting on events, writing in the local papers, in special reports that we made public for everybody to read".

Getting in touch with the people in the field was also one of the things SKP did. The human rights situation was still poor. In the highlands, in the inlands of Papua, SKP started workshops to give people the chance to reflect on their own situation. "It was an opportunity to get a grip on it, to understand, and then prepare to react or find away to deal with the human right issues. The staff of SKP then built on skills; ensuring people had the skills to document human rights issues".

SKP also concentrated on thinking and reflecting over the human rights and dignity of the people, by working on these issue with pastors. They also tried to get in touch with the parish priests and people who were in charge. In part this was about making sure that they understood that they should get involved and pay attention to the issues; rather than leaving it

to an outside organization. At the time SKP started, ELSHAM, a key-partner and very much backed by the Protestant Church, was already there as well and some other NGOs also started showing more interest in dealing with human rights violations.

According to Van den Broek, he always has been stressing that "we shouldn't just lean on human rights organizations to address human rights issues. As a church, we had something special to say. It is so much part of the values of the Gospel; it should be part of our very own mission, not outsourced to another NGOs". It was a very clear conviction on his part not to leave it for 'others' to do this work. However, it was good to have a network with other organizations, particularly as they may be more skilled in documenting things or they may have more possibilities to travel. Especially as SKP didn't have much staff in the very beginning.

SKP then moved on to this idea of getting the religious leaders together. To make sure they were informed of what was happening and get them to understand that there was something important happening that was important for their Church or any religion and for their own religious community. On the practical side, this support made SKP reports better supported as they now had signatures from a number of religious leaders, mostly the Protestant and Catholic Church and Muslim leaders. They were the three main ones, with Buddhist and Hindu leaders as well upon occasion. This helped lift the reports outside of just small circle or a few institutions. It was an opportunity to move into more joint action.

The conflict among different communities which happened in the city of Ambon, Mollucca, in 1997 – 1998 and perceived as a religious conflict, was the source of inspiration for Mgr. Leo Laba Ladjar ofm, successor of Muninghoff. Thousands of civilians, coming from the Christian and Muslim communities died during this conflict. Leo Laba Ladjar, completely in line with his predecessor, thought that Papua should not have the same fate. Thus a horizontal conflict among different communities in Papua should be avoided and therefore the church should work on peace and steward the good relationship between different communities in Papua.

The Bishop was very much aware of the conflict

which could arise in Papua due to the presence of multinational corporations to explore new mining potentials such as the new gas field. He also nursed close contact with other religious communities, especially the Protestants, to work on the campaign for peace in Papua, together looking at the development and changes of the society and collaborating to prevent conflicts.

### ***Papua Land of Peace***

With the full support of Mgr. Leo Laba Ladjar ofm, SKP carried out a joint action on 21 September 2001, during the UN World day of Peace. SKP succeeded in getting all religious leaders together to march around town, on a Saturday night. They went from the Parliament, where the deputy speaker of the Parliament talked about human rights; then off to the Mosque, where the Ulama spoke about peace; then on to the Protestant church where the Protestant minister appealed to peace, and then to the Catholic church with the Bishop of Jayapura, Mgr. Leo Laba Ladjar. The procession then ended up in the police headquarters, where they were received by the police and the second in charge of the army. Everyone was talking about peace and lighting candles everywhere. In every spot there was a short ceremony and everybody was represented: the civil government, the army, the police and the religious leaders.

Those joining the procession were mostly people from universities and schools. As they proceeded, people heard about what has happening and joined in. Slowly more and more people joined. It was the first time they really had such a demonstration, in a very peaceful way, involving everybody and highlighting the importance of peace and denouncing any form of violence.

Starting from that point there was a kind of growing public understanding that the religious leaders were together, visibly demonstrating their unity in the pursuit of peace. It was also a very supporting factor for the more and more popular movement under the banner: "Papua Land of Peace". The movement, including the banner, was as much a product of things happening in other circles as well. At the Papuan people's congress, one leader started to talk about "a zone of peace in Papua". SKP picked up on

this and tried to find a way of giving it more content by organizing a very open workshop. They tried to find stakeholders and to map what everybody could do to promote peace. So it wasn't just the churches, but the university was also invited, to invite them to carry out better research and emphasis that academics have a role to play in peace. So *Papua Land of Peace* was more than just religious coordination. There were university representatives, there were representatives from various governmental departments, as well as representatives of almost every important NGO in Papua. So it was a meeting of all stakeholders. Everybody enjoyed the workshop because it was the first workshop where they didn't have to listen to three days of presentations; there was only one presentation and after that they just went through a couple of discussions; developing diagrams and situations of peace.

SKP started slowly to develop a yearly analysis of what was happening in Papua by writing a chronology and then an analysis of whether there was a pattern in it. This ended up being a series of *Memoria Passionis*, published by SKP of the Diocese of Jayapura. It was developed in the context of the church, and within religious communities because it was part of their work and their mission. "It was within this context also that SKP started to build up on our international networks and church links and this is where Franciscans International came in very strongly". Van den Broek remembered reading a statement during the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2002, which shocked the Government of Indonesia. Papua was now being put on the map in that milieu; it broke the silence in Geneva. He explained that the diplomats of the Indonesian Permanent Mission to the UN were upset with the statement. SKP got a seven page letter by the Permanent Mission, where they admitted implicitly to the accusation of crimes against humanity in Abepura for the first time.

### ***Human Rights Violation in Abepura***

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, Papua has witnessed a power struggle of the military in Indonesia. The case of the human rights violations against Papuans in Abepura which took place in 8 December 2000 shows this struggle.

Van den Broek recalls that prior to incidents in Abepura, there were series of incidents involving security officers and Papuans. It started in Wamena region, and then it went up to the Highlands. The people in the highlands were often suspected of being members of the OPM and were accused as anti-Indonesian. These culminated in the Abepura incident. The police station was attacked on December 7, 2000 by an unidentified group of people which resulted on the death of two police officers. The police officers accused those who came from the Highlands as the one behind this attack. Soon after the attack, the police and the *Brimob*, a special unit of the police, came and stormed the student Ninmin dormitory in Abepura which mostly hosted students from the highland region. They ransacked and attacked the students. Within twenty-four hours, three highland students had been killed, and one hundred individuals had been detained, dozens of whom were badly beaten and tortured.

According to Van den Broek, this case was particularly violent. SKP had been involved in bringing the case to the national attention. SKP together with Elsham-Papua, Kontras and Legal Aid Institution (LBH) made an initial report on the case. SKP then joined the local team to carry out an investigation in Abepura and Jayapura. It was a job well done and a strong base for advocating the case. The report was substantial enough to get things

taken to the Human Rights Court though it took a long time before that process finally ended up in the court in Makassar, in 2004.

This was the first case that had been taken to the Human Rights Court in Makassar. However, what was discouraging was the accused who were very clearly reported on in the Komnas HAM report, were still promoted in Jayapura. They got better positions within the police force and were never off service while waiting for the court process. Even when the court case started, it was almost impossible to have enough counterweight of witnesses there and have the witness feel safe enough to give their testimonies.

For Van den Broek, the fact the case was brought to the Human Rights Court was a milestone. It was the first case that has been handled by the Court, it was also the first success for the work of Komnas HAM. However, the result of the case was very disappointing. Essentially the court decided that the accused had done nothing wrong, that they were just doing their job. Obviously this was a very disappointing outcome especially as the court could have used this case to help in deterring these violent acts. While we will never know the internal impact in the police or the army organization, externally there was no change. The perpetrators were considered only as officer who were doing their job. They were not interested in right of the victims. For Van den Broek, the justice was not really being done.

# True Stewards of Human Dignity

Having gone through the various chapters before that have given room to eight Dutch Franciscan Friars, missionaries in Papua, to share their experiences, insights and factual presence with the Papuans, we would like to give it a try to highlight the main features of their joint stories.

[1] there is the impression that they all talk in a way as if they didn't do that much special. They talk in a very natural way about how they have been trying to give some meaningful contents to their vocation: joining the mission in Papua. Although going to Papua to 'build the church community', and working on it in a very consistent and involved way, their stories show few high pretensions, rather the opposite, and they prefer to leave it to others to value their contribution to the establishing of a "more peaceful and mankind-friendly world as a place to live for all".

[2] what strikes as well is the fact that all went to Papua "for the Papuans". They went there for this special people who were so much challenged by an everyday increasing confrontation with a new/other world. This basic option remained true also after many other Indonesian people than the Papuans started living in Papua and determining the direction of developments in Papua. Within that context the 'option for the Papuans' stand its ground but also changed colour, as it became more and more - especially over the last 20 years - an 'option for the marginalised and oppressed Papuans'.

[3] this colour change happened once again in an almost natural way; nothing that has been constructed or chosen for as 'a premeditated missionary concept', but just by experiencing and following the situation, reflecting on developments, letting them speak to 'the heart' and trying to understand the consequences for the Papuans. It just

happens and translates another very basic option by the Franciscan missionaries in Papua, i.e. "just be with the people". In their sharing of experiences it has been repeated over and over: "we should just be there", "be with the people", "learn from daily life together", "learn the language so we can communicate", "learn the values of the indigenous community, so we can understand them". The presence has been valued as rewarding in the simple words: "being with them they also started giving attention to me". The mere presence has been often experienced as the 'very heart of the mission', and has also given that kind of joy and appreciation to the point that even a substantial lack of visible results of the mission in terms of a growing community of believers or social-economic progression, etc, often have been accepted without having the feeling that their presence has been meaningless, or that they had failed in their mission. 'Being together has a meaning in itself' they are telling us.

[4] while the sharing of life and building up a life together has been the main base and source, it invited them also to be sensitive for very daily and down to earth needs. Simple care for the sick, giving medical service, trying to improve the nutrition level, taking part in looking for solutions of disturbing problems in the community, physically remaining with the people when they were under political pressure and/or under threat, sharing fear, empowering people to lead their community, assisting people to read and write, defending the rights of the people, demanding outside parties to respect the indigenous community and their values, etc, have been core activities of the Franciscan missionaries. They did it because they felt it was the most obvious thing to do. They never have seen themselves as very special or labeled as human rights defenders, as they were not really interested in any labeling.

[5] Within that context they have always tried to contribute concretely as much as they could, especially via the providing of education facilities. It was their conviction, backed by the policy by the diocese, that education is one of the key factors in giving people a chance to develop themselves; in empowering them to face the challenges and findings solutions appropriate for them; in creating participation. It is often said in the previous chapters how Franciscan missionaries have tried to provide quality to schools and how they have protested 'programs from outside' meant to change the mentality and way of life of the people without asking their opinion first, or without letting them their own choice.

[6] the approach chosen by the Franciscan missionaries shows a lot of respect for what is already in place: the way of thinking, cultural values, pattern of leadership, patterns of solidarity, spiritual values and convictions of the indigenous community. Very many efforts have been made to make the recognition of basic human values in the traditional culture known and making them a part of building up a community of people living their faith and togetherness. Therefore, from the very start a lot of attention has been given to the need for missionaries to learn and understand the local culture. This same attitude pushed the Franciscans at a later stage to make anthropological study one of the key components of the curriculum of the Highschool for Theology, set up to educate pastoral workers and priests in Papua.

[7] doing so they felt very supported by the 'new spirit' of the Vatican II. The predecessor of Mgr. Munninghoff, Mgr. Staverman ofm, who attended the Vatican II was very much inspired by the new insights identified and formulated via this 2nd Vatican council. He made sure that this gain was communicated to the missionaries in his diocese. This new spirit was very much in line with what missionaries were already involved in. To know that also "Rome" was thinking in the same line only strengthened them to keep the direction developing with renewed enthusiasm and conviction.

[8] this new spirit also motivated them in the early 1970ties to put their full weight behind the initiative of Mgr. Munninghoff ofm to organise a 'diocese-wide

pastoral consultation'. The pastoral consultation was hold under an interesting banner, reading: "We Are The Church". As commented on by the Franciscan missionaries in the previous chapters, this 'slogan' covered various aspects, among others, the recognition that the indigenous community had its own very important values that should be kept alive and recognised as "christian values" as well; it covered also the very attitude of the church leaders/missionaries that they have to listen to the people; and it covers also the conviction by the Franciscan missionaries that a church is made up by its members, and not just by the hierarchy. So, whatsoever the future of the christian community/church might look, it should be based on local tradition, values and insights and based on participation of all. All the members of the community are responsible for 'what kind of community/church will be build up'. The creation of a sense of belonging and 'owning' the church was very central in this diocese-wide pastoral consultation that lasted for a couple of years. "We are the church!" To promote this substantial participatory approach special cadre trainings have been set up and a very honest effort has been made to make room for lay pastoral workers as rightful leaders of the local communities besides the ordained priests.

[9] this very much "Papuan style"-oriented building up of the church came under pressure the moment more Indonesian pastoral workers and priests from outside Papua and with a different 'church-tradition' start playing a role in Papua. In various interviews it has been mentioned as a part of concern for the Franciscan missionaries. They felt that some basic quality of the former approach came under pressure, especially the 'way of being with the people', 'respect for local values and participation' as well as the clear-cut 'option for the Papuans'.

[10] indeed, as the editing of the interviews over various periods in time suggests, changes were taken place, resulting in new challenges and in a more complicated multicultural context than ever before. Within that context the Papuans were slowly surrounded by nowadays a majority of other Indonesian ethnic groups/populations. As we have already hinted to before, the context has been increasingly marked by marginalisation of the indigenous communities, the Papuans. It is within

that setting as well that the Franciscan missionaries felt challenged to become more outspoken and go public as 'human rights defenders' – a label they never claimed, but factually were. Although they never had seen themselves as 'human rights defenders' factually they had been playing that role, but in the changing context a new dimension has been added to that role, as it became a public role. The Munninghoff-report dealing with clear human rights violations and receiving national and international attention, was indeed a milestone. A milestone, not marking the start of human rights attention by the Franciscan missionaries, but marking the need that now more was needed than just 'silent diplomacy'. The church had to speak out, they felt, publicly and so they did.

[11] the more and more complicated context and the increasing social, economical, cultural and political marginalisation carrying with it an increase in denying the basic rights of the local indigenous people demanded for more special and public efforts. It demanded also more professional skills in 'defending human rights' or , as the Franciscans prefer to say, in 'defending the dignity of human people'. Because of that need the Office for Justice and Peace, led by the Franciscan friars, was set up and developed itself as an very important church voice while stressing once again "the option for the marginalised Papuans". Once again they did it because 'defending human dignity' is valued as an integral part of the very mission of the church, not as something special. The church had its own special voice to add to the defence of the basic right to life for the Papuans, a mission that can not be outsourced to NGOs or similar institutions. Noblesse oblige!

[12] a special feature in developing this explicit public stand on "human dignity" and "human rights" is the awareness that this kind of work should not be seen a kind of monopoly of the catholic church, but should be developed while looking for as many partners as possible, including international networking, such as with Franciscans International. An outstanding achievement by the Office for Justice and Peace has been uniting the religious leaders in

Papua – catholic, christian, muslim, buddha and hindu leaders - to give a joint voice to the defending of human dignity. For the Office for Justice and Peace, looking for ways to reach the main objective – human dignity recognised and respected - has been always more important than claiming its own credits and therefore working together has been always looked for in a very open and natural way, while fully aware of its own limits of capacity.

[13] in the same context of 'working with partners' another impressive initiative by the Office for Justice and Peace has been the effort to involve all the important components of the society in the movement of peace-building. They invited the representatives of the governmental administration, of the NGOs, of the academic as well traditional institutions, of the security forces as well as representatives of all religions to sit down together for four days to find out what 'each specific stakeholder' could contribute to the realisation of "Papua Land of Peace". Doing so, some important push has been given to fill the slogan "Papua Land of Peace" with an operational concept and contents. Although the follow-up on various levels have proved to be very difficult, the initiative put the movement "Papua Land of Peace" clearly on the map of any organisation or institution interested in actively looking for a peaceful solution of the problems in Papua.

[14] finally the interviews offer us a fascinating blend of core values and principles that have made the Franciscan missionaries in Papua true "STEWARDS OF HUMAN DIGNITY" in a very complicated and not always friendly context. The fascinating blend consist of [a] *an inspiring and supporting franciscan spirituality* [b] *the factual option for the poor*, [c] *the natural respect for other people, their way of thinking and living*, [d] *the eagerness to let daily experiences come in and talk to the heart, and finally* [e] *the will to act accordingly without too much calculations of risks, gains or loss*.

**Theo van den Broek**

Jayapura, 23 June 2014

## List of Acronyms

ACFOA	<i>Australian Commission for Overseas Aid</i>
AFC	<i>Act of Free Choice</i>
AI	<i>Amnesty International</i>
ALDP	<i>Alliance Democracy for Papua</i>
FI	<i>Franciscans International</i>
Komnas HAM	<i>National Commission on Human Rights</i>
LBH	<i>Legal Aid Institution</i>
LBHI	<i>Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation</i>
MSC	<i>Missionary of Sacred Heart</i>
NGO	<i>Non-governmental Organization</i>
OFM	<i>Order Minor Friar</i>
OPM	<i>Free Papua Movement</i>
Pepera	<i>Act of Free Choice</i>
SKP	<i>Justice and Peace Secretariat</i>
UN	<i>United Nations</i>
UNCEN	<i>Cendrawasih University</i>
UNSF	<i>United Nations Security Force in West New Guinea</i>
UNTEA	<i>United Nations Temporary Executive Authority</i>
YPDM	<i>Rural Development Foundation</i>





At the beginning of the 20th century, Franciscan friars left their home in the Netherlands to share their lives with the Indigenous Peoples in Papua. They gave testimonies of their faith, through different periods and social situations by struggling together with the Papuan for their dignity.

Since two decades, Franciscans International (FI), as the NGO of the Franciscans Family at the United Nations, is supporting the friars' mission. FI promotes the campaign of Papua Land of Peace at the international level, especially at the United Nations as means to find a peaceful solution of the problems in Papua. This campaign is rooted in the work of the friars that is described in this book, as the true stewards of human dignity.

**Markus Heinze, ofm**

Director of Franciscans International



**Franciscans International**

A voice at the United Nations

Franciscans International  
37-39 Rue de Vermont  
1211 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Web: [www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org)  
Email: [geneva@flop.org](mailto:geneva@flop.org)