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Recognition and Strangeness in Marine Environmental Encounters on New Guinea's Far Western
Coast

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Ian Nicholas Parker

Committee in charge:

Professor Rupert Stasch, Chair
Professor Joseph Hankins
Professor Joel Robbins

2013

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University of California, San Diego

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Recognition and Strangeness in Marine Environmental Encounters on New Guinea's Far Western Coast

by

Ian Nicholas Parker

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Rupert Stasch, Chair

This thesis examines a dispute over environmental conservation projects between people living in Kaimana District of West Papua, Indonesia and environmental non-governmental organizations. It investigates social dynamics of environmentalism through analyzing a dispute over a speedboat that was seized by community members on behalf of Kaimana's hereditary merchant raja of Namatota. Through doing so, the thesis seeks to contribute to anthropological studies of peoples' relations to the environment and natural resources as well as to their relations with wider socio-political networks. I first draw insights from conversations and written reports of a former Conservation International communications employee. I then trace a history of trade relations from Seram Island in the Moluccas to New Guinea that emphasizes the role of aristocratic clans to claims over natural resources. I argue that the recent implementation of marine conservation programs in the region has led to a crisis of social recognition. The capture of a conservation organization's watercraft put into motion demands for greater participation in marine management and eco-tourism projects. I show how these demands were not merely satisfied through material exchanges of money, but also by identifying the social importance of the Raja of Namatota – and by extension the Melanesian communities of the Bird's Head and Onin Peninsulas – as persons desiring of respect.

Introduction

This thesis examines a dispute over the moral horizons of environmental conservation projects between people living in Kaimana District of West Papua, Indonesia, and representatives of an international environmentalist non-governmental organization (NGO). On the surface, the implementation of marine protected areas in 2008 could be seen as a successful example of transnational environmental governance, community-based conservation and progressive ecological development. Yet, on closer examination, tensions between communities across the coastal bays of Kaimana and external actors make clear that this appearance of success is superficial: rumors of NGOs as commercial fishers, spies, and tourist company representatives challenged the viability of marine conservation as an actual practice in the region. People from settlements within and adjacent to newly established marine management zones felt they had not been adequately represented at official meetings, that traditional authorities had not been consulted on the design of protected areas and that customary rights to natural resources had been ignored. In early 2008, several Koiwai people detained a research speedboat used by scientists for conducting ecological assessments. For approximately two years the boat was held in the name of the principality of Namatota, a dynastic ruler who claimed customary authority over the Koiwai and other communities across coastal Kaimana's bays and islands. The trustees demanded restitution of three billion rupiah (approximately \$300,000) before they would return the property to its original owners. After a long delay, in 2010 a delegation of Indonesian government officials and local conservation staff met with the raja of Namatota and the speedboat was returned in exchange for promises to support tourism development.

In this essay I examine patterns of conflict and contest in environmental conservation and programs and ideologies of development. My analysis focuses on peoples' relationship to natural resources through encounters with different interests involved in contemporary

conservation. In writing about these dynamics I hope to contribute to anthropological accounts of engaged environmental practice. I will first introduce ethnographic and environmental domains of West Papua. The context for this background is to identify the importance of mobility and intercultural relations to societies in the region, and to situate the contemporary rise of environmental governance as a form of politics in the region. Then I will examine in detail data about the Kaimana conflict available from conversations and written reports of former Conservation International communications employee Rhidian Yasminta Wasaraka (“Dian”). Dian worked in Kaimana and assisted with the resolution of the speedboat conflict. In late August 2011, Rupert Stasch of the Department of Anthropology at UC San Diego had the opportunity to meet with Dian twice in Jayapura, Papua, while carrying out research on another anthropological topic. This thesis draws heavily on audio recordings of Rupert’s interviews with Dian, and on a small electronic archive of documentary materials that Dian gave to Rupert for use by this thesis’ author.¹ Following my main account of the speedboat conflict itself, I step back to present an account of the historical rise of trade relations from Seram in the Moluccas to New Guinea as a way of making visible the role of aristocratic clans to claims over land and resources.

I argue that a particular articulation of ‘tradition’ has become a mechanism for supporting ethical demands for recognition of meaningful socio-political practices in Kaimana: More than being a vehicle for economic or material gains, the speedboat (and its capture and release) signifies the possibility of mutual interaction of indigenous communities with foreign conservationists across a dynamic cultural seascape. People in these places demanded reciprocal

¹ Conversations between Rupert Stasch and Dian Wasaraka in Bahasa Indonesia were held on Aug 28 and 29 2011 in Jayapura, Indonesia. Quoted passages from these discussions will be cited in text as (Wasaraka Aug 2011). Four documents written by Dian for herself or for CI audiences are cited: “Catatan dari Selatan tentang Pohon Besar Tanpa Akar” “Notes from the South concerning the Big Tree Without Roots” (Notes from the South); “Laporan: Road Show Resolusi Konflik”: “Report of the Conflict Resolution Road Show” (Roadshow), and “Kaimana Love Story” parts 1 and part 3 (Love Story 1) and (Love Story 3). Although these documents are primarily written in Indonesian, occasional titles and phrases are in English, which is not a spoken language of West Papua, but more common among the internationalist environmental NGO sector. All quoted passages will be presented in English unless otherwise noted. Occasional Indonesian words or phrases are identified in italics. The author accepts responsibility for all translation errors.

recognition and status equality of their capacity to enter into exchanges of natural resources that conservationists desired to protect (see Fraser 2003:27; compare Robbins 2006a:182). I discuss the role of traditional marine tenure as one site for such interactions. Another space of encounter is virtual: the circulation of textual media, such as news articles, development reports, and letters of protest. I argue that peoples' demands arose from a perception of moral injury, resolved by acknowledging the legitimacy of local rights to people as autonomous subjects in conservation projects (Honneth 2007). This ethics of recognition goes both ways: a 2007 auction of marine species naming rights in Monaco can be interpreted as way for conservation-minded donors to be inscribed into Papuan natural history. An analysis of symbolic aspects of boats and fish juxtaposes a demand for respect by traditional customary authorities with beneficent capitalist auctions of fish taxa. I show how contrasts and continuities over environmental practices highlight ways that conservation is a polyvalent cultural dialogue. That is, this thesis shows how conservation is a negotiated process of creating shared meanings about nature. It entails an acknowledgement of other peoples' assumptions about what is to be protected, how and why, as well as going beyond stereotypic projections of the environment, indigenous peoples, NGOs, and governance.

Situating the Marine Politics of New Guinea's Western Fringe

Kaimana refers to an area and a town located to the southeast of Raja Ampat, encircling a coastal region and bays, karst islands (see Figure 1 below). Raja Ampat has been an even bigger and earlier issue for marine conservation. In this thesis I will be talking about Raja Ampat because the issues are similar, though Kaimana is my main focus. The Raja Ampat Islands form an archipelago of numerous small islands, cays and shoals surrounding the four main islands of Misool, Salawati, Batanta and Waigeo, and the smaller island of Kofiau off the northwest tip of the Bird's Head Peninsula on the island of New Guinea, in Indonesia's West Papua province,

west of the prominent city of Sorong. Both are politically distinct Regencies within Indonesia's West Papua province. In recent years the Raja Ampat Islands and coastal regions of New Guinea's Bird's Head Peninsula have become key zones for environmental and development programs, based on the recognition of the region's unparalleled biological diversity. The marine ecosystems of the Raja Ampat islands in particular are the most species rich in number and abundance on earth (Allen and Erdmann 2009; Ainsworth et al. 2011). These areas are increasingly valued as locations for eco-tourism development through diving operations, and diving is well established in Raja Ampat. At a larger scale, international environmental organizations – including the World Wildlife Fund, Nature Conservancy and Conservation International – have supported six governments from Malaysia to the Solomon Islands to implement a series of protected areas as part of an intergovernmental plan known as the *Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security* (Veron et al. 2011; Fidelman et al. 2012). The Coral Triangle Initiative represents a substantial intervention to conserve biodiversity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems while simultaneously reducing poverty among people living in environmentally valued places. The project's multilateral scope is reflected in a dedicated regional secretariat in Jakarta and through partnerships with bi-national development agencies of Australia and the United States, as well as international financial institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank and Global Environmental Facility.

Conservation of biodiverse coral reef and mangrove ecosystems represented by the Coral Triangle Initiative is based on values such as nature's intrinsic right to exist as well a healthy ecosystem's capacity to facilitate development goals. Conservation practices involve culturally and historically particular configurations of values and categories. A large part of these configurations are presented in circulating global media. For instance, visions of a pristine wilderness are often presented on internet blogs, through travel magazines, in documentary films

– all of which are juxtaposed to industrialized urban landscapes that are often the destination for the consumption of idealized environmentalist stereotypy.

Distinctions between natural and human spaces are further expressed in conservation biology's identification of humans as detrimental to nature's abundance. For instance, marine scientists have identified how cyanide and dynamite blast fishing by subsistence and commercial migrants in some parts of Southeast Asia threatens marine plants and animals. At the same time, environmental scientists increasingly rely on traditional conservation knowledge to support the survival of vulnerable underwater places. Cooperative management by people of local ecosystems may reduce the effects from exploitation and climate change on marine life. Such approaches consider the importance of humans within ecosystems, recognizing that people and nature are more interdependent than previously thought. This perspective is reflected in Paul Cruzen's argument that human and natural history have converged in the Anthropocene (Cruzen 2006, Chakrabarty 2009). Shifts can also be seen in the rise of ecosystem-based management (USNMFS 1999) and through the desire to highlight human cooperation and adaptation into a more comprehensive natural resource policy.

While these methods have been important for a holistic appraisal of environmental management, insufficient attention to social relations and everyday experiences of communities living amidst natural conservation areas remains problematic if programs are to succeed in supporting biodiversity goals.² Comparative ethnographic research shows how some communities

² Political ecological studies contribute to understanding how protected areas often constrain peoples' mobility and political agency, and how development projects often project static portraits of indigenous peoples as either ecologically noble savages or the ignorant poor (Hames 2007). Historical ecological accounts challenge binary oppositions by stressing mutual feedback between cultural systems and local environmental conditions (Cronon 1983). Nature could here be conceived as an ethnographic setting in which cultural processes, activities and belief systems develop: all of which feedback to shape the local environment and its diversity (West 2005; Descola 2009). More recent analyses emphasize creativity, agency, and engagement over disempowerment, domination and exclusion in environmental encounter (Brosius 2006, Tsing 2005, Li 2007). Recognizing differences in these perspectives is important for understand conflicting views about marine conservation in New Guinea.

do not differentiate between nature and culture, while others perceive in this opposition a basis for identifying essential human values. For instance, West (2005:633) writes that when the Gimi of Papua New Guinea “conceptualize and use biological diversity for their subsistence and ritual needs, they are taking part in dialectical transactive relationships that produce them as persons, animals as active agents, and forests as living social arenas”. West argues that Gimi subjectivity is therefore expressed through and constitutive of relations between people, ancestors and forests. To Descola (1994), the Amazon’s natural world has a vibrant social life: woolly monkeys and toucans marry just like the Achuar do; dogs and howler monkeys are perceived as scandalous randy fellows, and jaguars as dangerous loners. Plants such as manioc are raised as children and tended gardens mirror a well tended home. Future ethnographic investigation in Kaimana and Raja Ampat would be a way to help identify whether people have a relationship to marine environments like Gimi have to forests. Fieldwork could determine whether in endowing nature with human values people cognitively socialize their relations with non-human species; and whether conceptual models of society must recognize non-human nature as a fundamental component of social life (see Descola 1994:326).

Community and Conservation in Northwestern New Guinea

West Papua Province is a contested border zone of environmental, political and social entanglement between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (Rutherford 2006; Cookson 2008; Timmer 2007; 2011). The biophysical landscape can be divided into mountains, lowland rainforest regions and coastal archipelagic ecosystems. The Bird’s Head and Fak-Fak Peninsulas contain vast freshwater and mangrove wetlands and monsoon forests, variable rainfall patterns and mountain areas. Most of the islands contain intact forest ecosystems, with many thousands of unique species of plants, marsupial mammals, birds, and insects.

Politically, New Guinea's western half was called Netherlands New Guinea until takeover by Indonesia in 1963, when it became known as West Irian then Irian Jaya, and then Papua. Confusingly, in 2003, the hitherto single Indonesian province of Papua was split into two, and the western part (in which Raja Ampat and Kaimana lie) started being called West Irian Jaya and then West Papua, while the eastern part remained Papua. The name "West Papua" meanwhile, continues to be used internationally as the most common way of referring to the western half of New Guinea as a whole (comprising both of the new provinces).

Indonesia's West Papua Province contains ten Regencies and its capital is in Manokwari. Around 750,000 people live across 97,000 square kilometers, speaking sixty-two distinct languages representing seven language families (Lewis 2009). This thesis focuses on the Regency of Kaimana, a place with a population of approximately 43,000 people living in seven districts and a town also called Kaimana.³ People living within Kaimana Regency speak several languages, representing multiple unrelated language families including the Austronesian, Trans-New Guinean and Mairasi families. Everyone also speaks the Indonesian national language (Lewis 2009). Papuans living here are affiliated with eight ethnolinguistic groups of varying size and composition. There are also many immigrants from other parts of Indonesia, including persons born in New Guinea but whose parents or grandparents immigrated from elsewhere in Indonesia (or the former Dutch East Indies) in earlier decades.

³ Kabupaten Kaimana Dalam Angka, 2010. Kaimana: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kaimana dan Bappeda Kabupaten Kaimana, [Kaimana: Central Bureau of Statistics, Kaimana District and Regional body for planning and development (Bappeda), Kaimana district.] p40, Table 1: "Banyaknya Rumah tangga dan Penduduk di Kabupaten Kaimana Menurut Jenis Kelamin dan Distrik", [Number of Household and Population in Kaimana Regency by Sex and District].

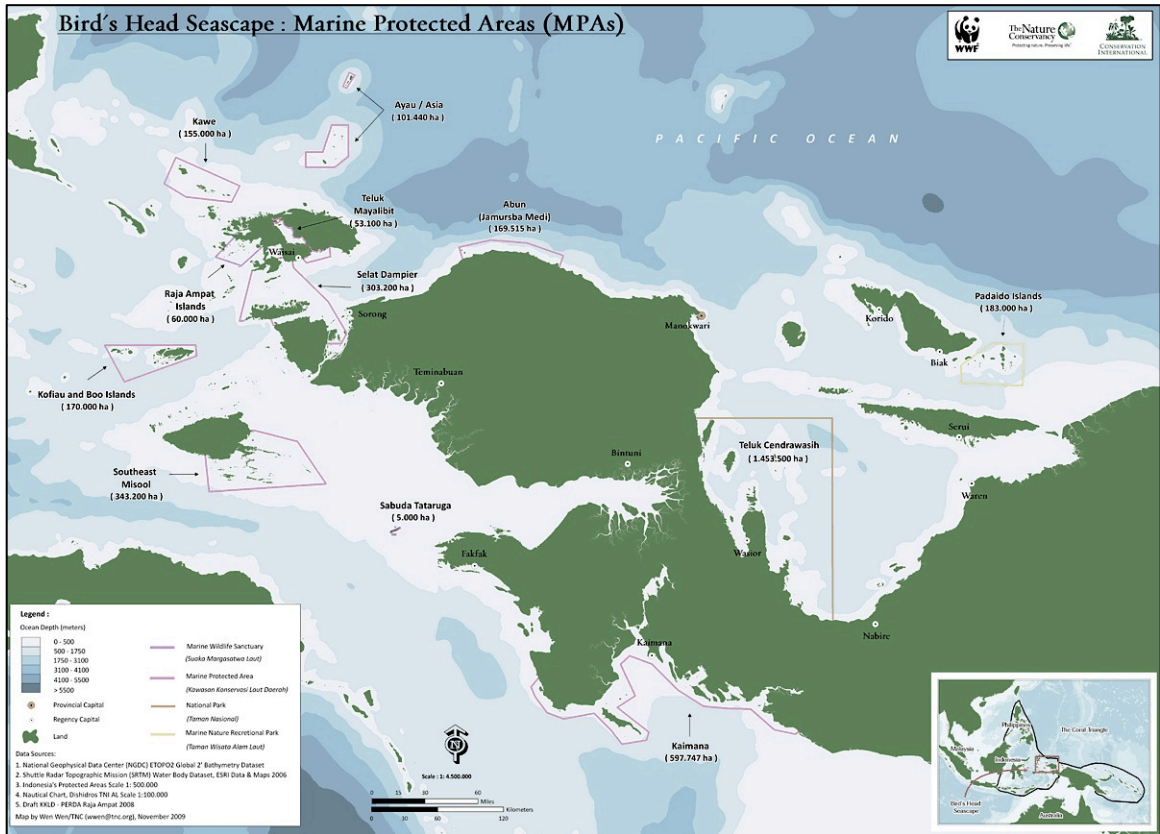


Figure 1: Marine Conservation In Indonesia's West Papua Province (Source: WWF)

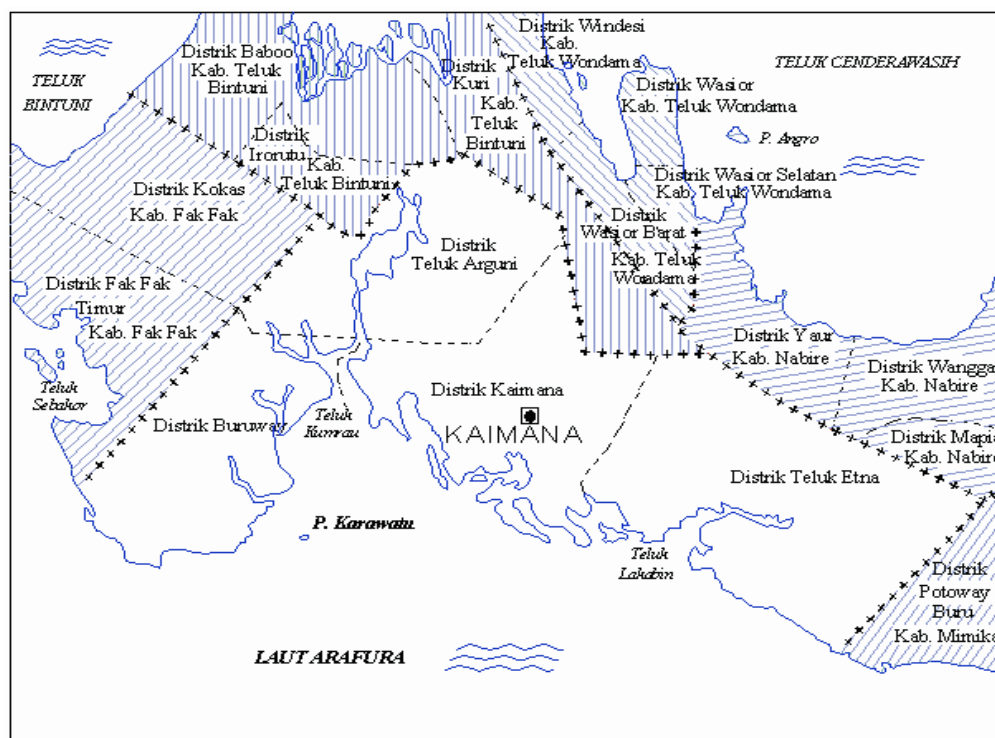


Figure 5: Kaimana District after 2002 (in Indonesian) Source: PapuaWeb.org

Stories of movement are a predominant feature of West Papua's cultural history. Such accounts provide a foundation for making sense of social relations in Northwestern New Guinea. For example, Ma'ya communities of Raja Ampat claim descent from wandering Biak culture hero Gurabesi, who subsequently left his homeland to become a vassal to the sultan of Tidore (Kamma 1972:8). Ma'ya origin stories emphasize intercultural contact across ethno-linguistic boundaries reflected in ancestral links to the Biak Island in the east and political connections to the Sultan of Tidore to the west (Healey 1998). If Raja Ampat's mythological origins stem from Biak, 350 miles to the East, its political connections emerge from contact with Moluccan sultans, 230 miles

to the West.⁴ These stories highlight the region as an area of socio-cultural transition and an axis for connecting dispersed island societies together (van der Leeden 1980:218).

Origin stories can consequently be read alongside historical accounts of ownership by vassal princes over land, people and ancestral tradition for understanding the region's interactive socio-politics (Andaya 1993; van der Leeden 1989; Goodman 1998, 2002; de Ploeg 2002). Beginning in the 16th century, European traders from Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands and England entered into complex relations of cooperation and conflict with local political elites in the Moluccan Islands in pursuit of nutmeg, cloves and other resources (Andaya 1993). The Dutch East Indies Company – one of the first global capitalist enterprises – engaged in extensive trade here beginning in the early 1600s. The eventual fiscal failure in 1798 led the Netherlands state to take over colonial governance across the Indies, leading in time also to formal Dutch claims on all of New Guinea west of the 141st East meridian.

Terms of address for eminent local leaders borrowed from Malay, Portuguese and Dutch, reflecting a history of widespread cultural contact. For example, Ellen argues that Malay terms such as *raja* (prince) and *orang kaya* (wealthy person) gained traction “because they were necessarily in constant use in a complex emergent polylinguistic and polycultural society, consisting of large numbers of small independent or quasi-independent polities” (Ellen 1986:55). (Malay was the official and de facto colonial-era lingua franca across the Dutch East Indies). Other titles, including *kapitan* and *mayor* derived from Portuguese and Dutch. Regional interconnections are still reflected in the use of foreign words in the titles of local political elites:

Thus, Hille (1905:293) speaks of the political head of Kaimana on the coast of New Guinea as ‘*raja Komisi*,’ thus using two terms neither of which is indigenous to the area. *Komisi* was presumably a proper name, taken from the Dutch ‘*commisaris*,’ as in the similar Nuaulu case. Kamma records instances where ‘*mayor*’ and ‘*dimara*’ were used as family names in the western Vogelkop.

⁴These distances are measured from the origin stone near the Mayalibit Bay on Waigeo Island (Van der Leeden 1987; Remijnsen, personal communication).

[Ellen 1986:55]⁵

Similarly, Jans Pouwer (1999) notes that how Seramese and Moluccan kings appointed local Indonesian and Papuan representatives with titles including *raja*, *kapitan* and *hakim* (Pouwer 1999:160).

In the late 20th century, Papua became incorporated into the newly independent state of Indonesia. In 1969, Indonesia claimed the Western half of the Island of New Guinea through a United Nations sponsored referendum known as The Act of Free Choice in which selected Papuan tribal representatives accepted annexation. Since then, the region has experienced a number of political and administrative reorganizations including the granting of Special Autonomy in the 2000s by former Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri. More recently, the two Indonesian provinces of Western Papua have witnessed a rise in struggles for greater political and economic autonomy, expressed recently in protests against international mining operations in Timika.

Contemporary West Papua is a place where non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly visible actors. Environmental conservation groups in particular are working to protect threatened species and to assist native peoples for sake of their socio-economic improvement. As stewards of a threatened biosphere, NGOs have arrived to a domain long used to mysterious outsiders. Foreigners interested in marine biodiversity have come again to New Guinea for good reason: scientific surveys of three coral reef areas (Raja Ampat, Teluk Cenderawasih, and the Fak Fak-Kaimana coastline), covering a combined area of more than 180,000 square kilometers, have recorded over 1,300 species of coral reef fishes and 600 corals (McKenna 2002). This accounts for approximately seventy five percent of the world's total of

⁵ J. W. van Hille, "Reizen in West-Nieuw-Guinea," Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap 22 (1905): 233-310.

these taxa and highlights the region as the most biodiverse marine environment on earth (Allen and Erdmann 2009).

In contrast to the increased attention to the region's environmental resources, ethnographic accounts of communities living in the Bird's Head and Kaimana regions remain relatively sparse. There is no significant contemporary anthropological research being conducted either in Raja Ampat or along the southern coastal regions of the Onin Peninsula leading to Kaimana. Historical accounts by traders, naturalists, colonial administrators, missionaries and Dutch ethnologists are helpful for providing descriptions of foreign commercial transactions as well as for highlighting connections of Papuan kingdoms to regional trading dynasties in the Moluccan archipelago. Themes in the available anthropological literature identify ways societies have interacted through trade, marriage alliance, conversion and migration.

Notably, an emphasis on foreign adoption and spatial mobility in New Guinea marked it as a different cultural sphere from the Malay "field" within the Dutch anthropological tradition of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (de Josselin de Jong 1977:167-8), especially contrasted against the "resilience towards foreign cultural influence" common to descriptions of Austronesian societies (Pouwer 1992:89). Pouwer and Leeden instead gathered evidence in Northwestern New Guinea of "receptivity to and ritual appropriation of foreign culture elements" (Ploeg 2002:89; see van der Leeden 1994). For instance, the circulation of imported *ikat* (textiles) known as *kain timur* (after their origin from Timor and surrounding islands) as marriage gifts, slave raiding expeditions and trade-based political systems were viewed as integral features of societies in the region (Healey 1998:338). Relations with strangers – both within and across social orders – has in recent years become a key theoretical lens for analyzing peoples' lived experiences in the region (Rutherford 2003, 2005, Timmer 2011; Stasch 2009:9; Tsing 1993). A related theme is the spatial and temporal dimension of intercultural entanglement (Munn 1990:1; Rutherford 2009:6). This is a place where Tsing's argument that a productive friction produces unexpected cultural forms

through “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” reflects social relations (Tsing 2005:4).⁶ Such a perspective challenges the spatial temporal boundedness of ‘localizing strategies’ critiqued by Clifford (1992), since disjuncture and dissimilarity are central motifs of ethnographic accounts of cultural practices of sea-oriented societies of northwestern New Guinea. It is perhaps no surprise then that anthropologist Leeden argued that the “mythical personages and material objects” mentioned in Raja Ampat stories are mediating figures, “establishing oversea connections between people living on islands” (van der Leeden 1987:9).

These studies share recognition of the importance of movement across space; of structures of difference; of socio-cultural flux between islands. Northwestern New Guinea is a place where cosmologies of mobility challenge an isomorphic analytic of ‘space, place and culture’ (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7). I will therefore use terms such as community, conservationists, local people and indigenous in this essay as words that signify a spatial-conceptual ‘investigative modality’ for values that emerge through active contestation (Cohn 1996:5; Boellstorff 2002:29; Graeber 2001:45). My examination of environmental encounter here reflects the ways culture is represented through structured processes rather than bounded unities.

⁶ For instance, Stasch describes how Korowai spatial dispersion expresses the value of autonomy as well as the role of alterity in social life (Stasch 2009:4). Korowai spatial separateness is related to social intimacy. This is witnessed in relations between humans and demonic figures of alterity, such as newborn children who must be gradually socialized and transformed into human beings, or through mother-in-law and son-in-law avoidance patterns. All beings belong to clans located in specific places; even monsters and the deceased have their own lands downstream. Human existence is also manifested in physical traces through action on the landscape, as child rearing is a mechanism for supporting relationships to productive lands. This concreteness mirrors the exterior signification of gift exchanges to the productivity of social relations among people to whom another’s interiority is unknowable.

Moral Horizons of Environmental Development Programs

The Coral Triangle Initiative is a transnational program designed to support marine ecosystems through integrated conservation and social development. Ecological sustainability is promoted through procedures including monitoring and enforcement of marine areas, educational training programs, tourism development and new administrative centers. These efforts highlight how improving the external environment also entails an internal process that transforms peoples' mental landscape. Project documents from international donors often describe community in normative terms through expectations of increased material wealth as well as access to state agencies through cooperative engagement. An emphasis on co-management, ecosystem-based management and other natural resource neologisms reflects ways development organizations consider poverty a technical problem; how environmental NGOs have often ignored motivations for social action outside of mainstream economic discourses (see Brosius 1999; Ferguson 1994). That is, nongovernmental organizations promulgate a global conservation narrative that often contrasts with different peoples' relations with nature (Fieldman et al. 2012:50).

Moreover, the idea of improvement is common to national development discourses in West Papua. Development aspirations have been expressed in hopes for benefits from dive tourism, pearl cultivation, disputes over nickel mining on Waigeo and Gag Islands and over logging concessions on the New Guinea mainland. Interventions show development to be "a moral strategy, a terrain of ethics, and a relation of power" (Pandian 2008:160). I argue that examining encounters of environmental conservation therefore provides a way to understand a particular politics of development, its protagonists and antagonists, opponents and supporters (Moore 2005). I will present a few instances where programs of improvement are negotiated. The transnational governance of marine resource management in West Papua entails procedures that mark it as a frontier zone of eco-governmentality between the domain of power and ethics (see Agrawal 2005). Development here is not only achieved across the physical transformation of

landscapes but also through a moral project toward which individuals and collectives reconfigure their own natures (Pandian 2008:164; see Li 2007; West 2006).

Environmental protection is also a mechanism for making society in West Papua legible to the Indonesian state. Strange others become familiar legal political subjects through reshaping subjective orientations to the family, community, the state, as well as to international institutions (Scott 1998:2-8). However, environmentalism, as with other encounters with external institutional forces, creates opportunities for improvisation. For instance, Tania Li's (2007) ethnography of local resistance to development of Lore Lindu National Park in Sulawesi, Indonesia shows how identities are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power"; they are "unstable points of identification or suture...[n]ot an essence but a positioning" (Li 2007:24; see Hall 1990:225-226). It is my contention that an analysis of ethical assumptions about conservation among its participants will provide a lens for understanding intercultural encounter in West Papua.

Detaining speedboats as a way to express dissatisfaction with conservation in

Kaimana

I will now recount the story of the detained speedboat as a context for closer examination of a community's engagement with environmentalism. This is a story told by Rhidian Yasminta Wasaraka (Dian), a former employee of Conservation International's branch office in Kaimana. Dian played a key role negotiating resolution of a dispute over conservation practices through networks of local intermediaries in Kaimana.

Dian's personal biography is also relevant to the story. Dian describes herself as Papuan. Her mother is Javanese, and her father originates from a Muslim village in the Kokas area of Bintuni Bay (halfway between the Kaimana region and the Raja Ampat area, between the Bird's Head peninsula and the Fakfak or Bomberai peninsula to the south). She thus had strong cultural

and kinship connections to the coastal western and southwestern fringes of New Guinea (and knowledge of the rajadom system in particular), well prior to her work for CI. However, Dian has herself never been to the Kokas area, but rather was mainly raised in Manokwari town at the northeast corner of the Bird's Head, where her father is a lecturer in forestry at the State University of Papua. She also spent some of her early school years on Java, where her father was studying, and where she early experienced forms of ethnic and racial markedness and stigmatization in the eyes and words of Indonesia's Javanese majority. She now lives in the area of Jayapura, the largest urban center in Indonesian New Guinea at large. Dian is a charismatic, strong-willed woman of thirty. She has been wearing an Islamic headscarf (*saluk*) for ten years and has been on pilgrimage to Mecca. Her interest in social relations across Papua arises from her identification with Papuan peoples' rights, as well as her broadly cosmopolitan disposition. Dian's account of the speedboat affair provides a view of internal conservation discussions and misunderstandings about the significance of traditional custom, as well as a critically reflexive orientation for making sense of environmentalism in West Papua. Her account places her in an interesting position relative to conservationists: while their programs strive to conserve local natures from exploitation by foreign fishermen, she speaks to protect the resilience of Kaimana's autochthonous cultural traditions. Dian's self-description is therefore different from other CI employees in relation to her job and community.



Figure 6: Dian Wasaraka

In September 2008, shortly after starting her position as a communications employee in Kaimana for CI, Dian sought to publicize aspects of the marine conservation area initiative to communities in Kaimana (Notes from the South 5). During initial visits to villages, she spoke with residents of the town about their perception of Conservation International's marine programs: "Oh, the tourism company" people kept saying to her. Surprised at this unexpected belief, she asked "Are you sure?! CI is not a tourist company!" Yes, they insisted: the organization was surely a tourism company. Many foreigners had arrived on ships and they recently built a fancy resort. "Resort!? Ok, I realized that there was something here" Dian said, exasperated (Wasaraka Aug 2011). She later recalled that people thought that the conservationist Field Station was "better known as a Resort Villa by the villagers...because of the variety of luxurious amenities inside: electricity from generators, Indovision TVs, washing machines, refrigerators, dispensers, V-sat, many rooms, a dining room, a kitchen full of food and of course

diving equipment. Not to mention that CI and many supervisors are *orang putih* (Caucasian), so it's complete" (Notes from the South 4).

Dian then spoke with mini-cab drivers, artisans and fish vendors, all of whom said that Conservation International was definitely a tourism company intent on bringing rich foreigners to local reefs. She described experiencing the same reaction during visits to different settlements.⁷ After returning from her voyages, Dian realized there had been a major communication breakdown regarding the intentions and goals of marine conservation in Kaimana. Peoples' identification of the NGO as a commercial enterprise emerged from visible signs, such as tourists accompanying visits of marine scientists to village locations and at key ceremonies and repeated speeches about the advantages of tourism to marine management.

In making sense of this misunderstanding, I will briefly step back to describe the political and ecological setting for conservation. In the early 2000s, scientific findings of high levels of marine biodiversity in northwestern New Guinea led to calls for environmental protection in the region as a global priority. Discoveries at four key areas – the islands of eastern and southern Misool, Kofiau, Sayang and Pulau Ai, and the Wayag islands – led The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Conservation International (CI) to support the government of Raja Ampat in drafting a Decree (*Peraturan Bupati*) for the establishment of the six new marine protected areas (MPAs) in Raja Ampat. Plans for establishing protected zones were implemented in July 2007 (Bupati decree No. 66/2007). Since then the TNC, along with CI, WWF, the Asian Development Bank's COREMAP and Indonesian Government Ministry of Fisheries have extended marine protected areas to include parts of Cendrawasih Bay to the east of the Raja Ampat Islands in northern New Guinea, and hundreds of miles to the southeast around the bays and coastal regions of Kaimana

⁷ The settlements in particular were Mai-mai, Lobo, and Saria, Kambala, Buruway, Nusaulan and Namatota.

Regency in 2008, encompassing over 3.6 million hectares across ten multiple use marine protected areas.⁸

In July 2008 Indonesian officials declared a 597,000-hectare, multiple-use marine conservation area (*Kawasan Konservasi Laut Daerah*, or KKLD) in Kaimana Regency after surveys identified that its waters contained the highest fish biomass in Southeast Asia (Allen and Erdmann 2009:587).⁹ The area excludes all commercial trawl fisheries from Kaimana's waters and prioritizes the area for marine tourism, pearl and seaweed aquaculture, local artisanal fisheries, and enhancement of fish stocks through permanent closures in "no-take areas" extending four miles out to sea.¹⁰ Nethy Somba of the *Jakarta Post* described the implementation of Kaimana's Regional Marine Conservation Area in April 2008 as a negotiated process:

Kaimana's status as a KKLD was endorsed by eight native tribes. They agreed to declaring Kaimana a conservation area and handed management of the area over to the Kaimana regency administration in a ceremony held on Namatota Island, in the Triton Bay area, on April 14. "We have handed over the sea territory to the government to designate it as a conservation area so it can be protected and preserved. Many foreign trawlers have been poaching in the area thus far and as traditional communities we have limited means to prevent them. So we hope our area can remain protected and managed carefully," Yonathan Ojanggal, chief of the Mairasi tribe said.¹¹

Yet, it is notable that the local spokesperson quoted in this article is from the "Mairasi tribe": a traditionally land-based ethnic group who did not historically practice customary sea tenure, marine exploitation and ownership as was more commonly associated with the Koiwai in Kaimana and Ma'ya in Raja Ampat. Thus, Dian Wasaraka remarked that a major source of social

⁸ "Management of RI's marine resources", *Jakarta Post* Op-ed April 13 2010, *Ketut Sarjana Putra & Mark V. Erdmann*.

⁹ "Kaimana Deklarasikan Kawasan Konservasi Laut Daerah" *Kompas*, 19 Desember 2008.

¹⁰ Conversation International, *Seascapes in Focus* Issue No.6, (Spring 2009) p1-2. See also: Ichwan Susanto "Declarasi Adat Konservasi Laut di Kaimana", *Kompas*, April 14, 2008: available: <http://www.kompas.com/lipsus112009/kpkread/2008/04/14/11593399/Hari.Ini..Deklarasi.Adat.Konservasi.Laut.Di.Kaimana>.

¹¹ Nethy Dharma Somba "Kaimana designated as marine conservation area", *Jakarta Post* Jan. 16, 2009: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/01/16/kaimana-designated-marine-conservation-area.html>, Accessed 17 Nov 2011.

conflict arose from misperceptions reflected in CI's identification of the Mairasi as representative marine stewards, and highlighted the need for better efforts on the part of conservationists.¹² Mairasi-Koiwai relations may correspond to ethnographic descriptions of the relations between Matbat and Ma'ya in Misool and Waigeo islands in Raja Ampat: predominantly land-oriented Christian communities who trade sago and forest products for marine goods with sea-dependent Islamic peoples (Remijisen 2001). Public performances of tribal knowledge indicated in the news article above illuminate how environmentalism shapes expectations about peoples' relationship to the natural world. Here the Mairasi elder is presented as a steward of local nature desiring intervention from abroad. Such a construction reveals more about the category of 'indigenous' than the actual perspectives people may have about environmental protection.

Traditional leaders from Mairasi and Koiwai were later invited to a launching event for a new regional marine conservation area on 24 November 2008. Officials in attendance included the Indonesian Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Freddy Numberi, the Governor of West Papua Abraham Atururi, Regent of Kaimana Hasan Ahmad, (the highest level Indonesian civil administrative office), unnamed Kaimana community leaders, the Regional Vice President of Conservation International Indonesia Jatna Supriatna, and representatives from international nongovernmental organizations. Regent Ahmad attempted to assuage anxiety about marine conservation by emphasizing how local people will still be able to fish in certain areas and that the program would protect peoples' interests.¹³ Yet Dian viewed the launch essentially as a publicity-generating stunt oriented especially to VIPs from Jakarta and international participants.

Moreover, the official launching events did not stifle rumors or rising distrust of conservation programs. Dian reports that people felt disappointed because promised benefits of

¹² Dian thus asserts that "the Mairasi people do not have traditional knowledge about fish; they do not know the names of fish; they do not know how to make a boat; they do not have a culture of *sasi*... Because they are a people from the interior. Yet, the people of Koiwai know many details about the life of the sea. Every fish, coral, every reef they know very well" (Wasaraka 2011).

¹³ "Kaimana Dekarasikan Kawasan Konservasi Laut Daerah", *Tropika* 12(4) October-December 2008, p33.

eco-tourism had remained unfulfilled. Moreover, incriminating rumors had circulated that conservation groups were intent on selling the area's valuable fish species for over one million US dollars. These rumors originated from local newspaper reports about an actual auction in Europe of species naming rights that I discuss in more detail later (Wasaraka Aug 2011). Dian's diary indicates that customary landowners from Kaimana read the story and went to CI's office in Kaimana and demanded to speak with Program Manager Elizabeth Pasapan about the allegations (Notes from the South 6). Three of them arrived at the office and were snubbed; the Manager did not meet with them, but instead furtively left the office.

In response to feelings of disrespect, a group of people with land ownership claims over natural resources from Namatota captured a CI research speedboat used for conducting surveys in the region. The group demanded that the organization pay three billion Indonesian rupiah (approximately US \$300,000) in restitution before the vessel would be returned. That no official representative had traveled to Namatota and apologized for the misunderstandings or began a dialogue with representatives of traditional political leaders was especially injurious. And so the speedboat remained in captivity for two years, from the summer of 2008 to August 2010. A similar dispute over environmental resources occurred in the Raja Ampat Islands, in which a different CI boat was apparently detained by different people upset about restrictions to fishing sites. That two boats were captured in two places suggests a structural pattern of asymmetries in ways conservation was being enacted across Northwestern New Guinea, and a structural problem in how local communities address problems of dissatisfaction with external actors.¹⁴ Since travel by boat is the main way of getting around for locals and visitors alike, denial of scientists'

¹⁴ While pursuing ethnographic work in Indonesian New Guinea in August 2011, Rupert Stasch met with former CI staffperson, Charles Tawaru, who had been CI's program manager for one of four MPAs in the Raja Ampat area. Charles spoke about the capture of a separate CI research boat in a series of recorded conversations subsequently provided to the author.

mobility presents a challenge to fulfilling their job duties as well as to the assumed permission to circulate across other peoples' lands.



Figure 7: Conservation International's Speedboat in Kaimana, 2010

Dian's story describes the speedboat's capture in terms of an idiom of love. To her these relatively discreet events signified a larger concern with environmental conservation: "Well, at first, the love was quite good, but I don't know what happened suddenly to the love within the green community; I do not know if perhaps their love suffered from too much input from others, or what the experience of life entails after saying there is no love; that the love is no longer there." Communities did not understand what Conservation International was really up to, since

their arrival coincided with an increase in dive tourism. The goals of the marine conservation area and its relationship with fish abundance and food security remained unclear. CI was *surely* a tourism company. Their Field Station at Timinuri sure *looked* like a resort villa. At the same time, factions within the Namatota community had already discussed the possibility of opening a fish company with a Malaysian Chinese businessman who promised scholarships and funds for community programs. The Mairasi were put in the awkward position of siding with conservationists against commercial fishing due to their performative obligations to maintain customary responsibilities over sea tenure (Notes from the South 5-6). CI attempted to begin a dialogue with the Raja of Namatota as a means for developing an understanding with the community. Yet all the while CI embraced the land-based Mairasi as metonyms of indigenes since they were demographically the largest of Kaimana's eight tribal communities.

Dian identifies the pivotal role played by aristocratic lineage systems as loci of practical and symbolic authority for resolving disputes over property and natural resources in Kaimana – particularly the “rajas” of Namatota, Mairasi, and Komisi (of Adijaya). These persons represent nodes of power for networks of trade relations that extend far beyond New Guinea, but which are a separate and formally unrecognized political sphere from official Indonesian state Regents (*bupati*), village heads (*kepala kampung*) and police officials. The rajas' role reflects a dual political and symbolic organization of authority: they oversee prohibitions over land and sea resources, maintain moral economy and enforce proper marriage negotiations, as well as represent the interests of the heterogeneous ethnic groups who acknowledge their suzerainty. The Namatota Raja is based at an eponymously named small island settlement. He oversees political relations with Koiwai and Mairasi speaking communities, while Raja Komisi (also known as the Rat Umis of Kaimana) is based in Adijaya. The designation of the title “Komisi” for one of the two Onin Rajas reflects a historical entanglement with colonial rule, where power is linked to

outside political relations, seen in the adoption of Malay (*Raja*) and Dutch (*Komisaris*) titles (Ellen 1986). The implementation of marine protected areas in Kaimana did not include negotiations with these structures of authority, since neither the Indonesian government nor NGOs recognized the kingdoms as rightful owners of the area's land and sea territories. Neither the Raja of Namatota or Raja Komisi or their representatives were invited to the KKLD launching event. Dian noted that this was widely perceived as a serious breach of custom (Notes from the South 4).

Mostly importantly, a possible resolution of the conflict over the speedboat could only be achieved through the current Raja of Namatota, Mr. Hayum Ombayer: "If one wants CI's problem to be resolved the key is his honor the Raja." The speedboat was really a symbol of dissatisfaction with the practice of environmentalism in Kaimana. It was not used for any practical purposes. It was viewed as a vehicle for the imposition of conservationist practices; an indexical icon of trespass across sacred waters; a sign of Kaimana peoples' marginalization by outsiders: "The speedboat is just a signal...sometimes [we] have problems with processes that have grieved all of us, the indigenous people of tradition" (Wasaraka Aug 2011; Notes from the South 19).

After a delay of two years, in the summer of 2010, Dian and a delegation of representatives from Conservation International traveled to Kaimana to negotiate the release of their speedboat. They met with a wide variety of stakeholders including Indonesian government officials and community leaders of traditional political institutions (Kaimana Love Story 1:2-4). Dian highlighted how community leaders asked for support for educational initiatives and development and whether this presented a path to empowerment. For instance, a discussion with the Vice-Regent of Kaimana (the second-highest administrator in the local Indonesian civil government system) underscored the shortcomings of marine conservation process in the area and the lack of effective monitoring and enforcement against illegal fishing. The meeting also

highlighted internal disputes within the community between the Kaimana Tribal Council (*Dewan Adat*) and the Vice-Regent's interests. The delegation later met a representative of the Raja Komisi of Adijaya who expressed enthusiasm of government conservation programs to support community development into the future, and journalists from Kompas who had come to write about traditional customs.

A breakthrough occurred in late July when the team arrived in Namatota and met with Raja Hayum Ombayer. They arrived in the morning and met with the village secretary and religious leaders and waited all afternoon for an audience. When the meeting commenced Abang Kadir spoke about how CI did not respect traditional ways of doing things in the area. Conservation representatives apologized for violating community feelings and for not considering fishermen's needs as well as for sowing confusion through rumors of the auction that raised funds for conservation programs by selling species' names (Love Story 1:7). The Raja told the delegation to "always remember the people and to conduct yourselves with honor; in order for me to get support from all parties involved, CI should help the government to improve the community. I will always be the raja and will provide support for this process" (Kaimana Love Story 3:7).

A meeting later that day with a Koiwai communal landowning family in Timintui provided an opportunity to talk about the promised benefits of conservation, such as sponsorship for a local school as a signal for better futures. The team learned from Mr. Navaed Kamakaula that the detention of the CI speedboat resulted from a breach of custom (*adat*) and that meetings with four representatives from Namatota must follow customary rules for negotiating disputes over resources. After the delegation agreed to follow the traditional process, people expressed their support for the conservation program's good reputation in assisting them prevent overfishing in the conservation area.

The delegation committed to supporting infrastructure development for eco-tourism in Namatota and the Mairasi villages of Kayu Merah, Timintui and Lobo (Love Story 3).

Discussions with fishermen and local landowners indicated to Dian that broad engagement was necessary for building awareness of CI's mission and the conservation areas' role in supporting community goals: "We need to speak from the whole heart and with good education. The community wants to see our whole hearts; just staying in the village and eating their food is not enough if we want to be accepted and trusted by them" (Notes from the South 10).

An opportunity for showing their whole hearts occurred during a meeting with the local marine police (*Polisi Perairan* Indonesia, or polair) who somehow collided with the captured CI speedboat. The CI staff paid for repair and cleaning of damaged speedboat and removal of the oysters and barnacles that had gathered on its keel, as well as a new motor. The speedboat was finally returned a few days after the conclusion of these meetings in August 2010.

Part of the public relations effort Dian ironically called a "Road Show" was directed at countering persistent rumors: that CI is a tourism company of nefarious fish thieves who are there to get rich by selling natural resources and exploiting communities for tourism revenue; that conservationists were lazy and arrogant and did not respect customary rights of indigenous peoples; that they were a front for Western spies or land speculators. A different approach, one based on traditional customs was therefore essential. "It cannot be resolved by government channels or other paths" (Notes from the South 23).

Resolution of the speedboat affair depended on careful negotiation with a range of actors over support for tourism projects. For example, the Indonesian government's Regent in Kaimana proposed turning Namatota into a pilot area for integrated development project for community-based tourism and fishing activities, including introducing freshwater fish into nearby lakes. The Regent expressed interest in funding assessments and expanding research on hawksbill and green

sea turtles on Venu, hammerhead sharks and sunfish near Etna Bay, along with further studies in Buruwai and Triton Bays (Kaimana Love Story 3:5). Technical solutions, assessments and surveys conjoined with the Regent's desire to stock local lakes with fish highlights the local use of development language. Appropriation of such technocratic language is not merely practical but also effects peoples' views of themselves. Tania Li describes how similar processes of bureaucratic interaction among traditional landowners in Lore Lindu National Park in Sulawesi Indonesia created new subjects of conservation:

Through its program for community development, the project proposed to create a new collective subject, a community that would assess, plan, reach consensus, and think of population and natural resources as entities to be managed. The proposed technique for creating this subject was to guide villagers through a carefully crafted sequence of activities: participatory assessment of community resources, problem analysis, preparation of development proposals, application for funding under the official budget planning process, monitoring, and evaluation of outcomes. [Li 2007:132]

People in Lore Lindu expected to learn new practices or to become educated through workshops about new agricultural techniques by way of a rational legal bureaucracy that fed on technology and capacity transfer for optimal performance (Li 2007:133). In so doing, the moral horizons of development led people living near the national park in Sulawesi to think differently about their relations to migrant populations, the Indonesian nation state and to themselves.

Dian's written accounts are valuable for making sense of development processes. She reflects on the problems of conservation while also facilitating its broadcast. Yet she is also reflexive about the ways CI's engagement with people was a performance – a cultural public relations “Road Show” for communicating conversation practices across the region. Farther to the northwest communication outreach could be heard during a weekly radio show *Gelar Senat Raja Ampat* (storytelling mat) “which has hit upon a successful recipe of exposing hot environmental

topics in Raja Ampat through a combination of original Papuan songs and storytelling.”¹⁵ This radio show broadcast support for dive tourism, turtle conservation, tourism user fees and development planning issues while also creating new subjective relations among its audience.

Circulating media such as official program documents, letters to and from CI, news articles, surveys and brochures are important sources of official knowledge production for environmentalism. A few days after taking the speedboat, Anwar Kamakaula wrote a letter to CI’s regional office explaining how his actions were a necessary response to rumors that the NGOs had sold rights to fish as a matter of honor. Following their discussions, Dian and colleagues worked to produce a pamphlet, “Know CI’s Kaimana Program” to distribute widely throughout the community (Love Story 3:10). The circulation of media by both sides of the conflict shows how words become signifiers for conservation practice: they flow to persuade others of their just intentions. Ways people misread others’ intentionality about environmental engagement is also important. I will turn to another case of misrecognition in a later section that examines naming rights of fish species below for understanding the symmetries and asymmetries of environmental encounter.

Before doing so I want to underscore how the aristocratic clan of Raja Hayum Ombaier’s acknowledgement of CI as legitimate actors was a critical factor in breaking the impasse over the speedboat. Recognition of conservationists’ ability to continue working in the region was possible after exchanging promises to support tourism projects across Triton Bay (Notes from the South:8). Dian underscores the raja’s importance: “he’s got more power than the provincial government – remember this and not [the identity of being] Java, Papua or American” (Notes from the South:12). While the three billion rupiah was never paid, the aristocratic clans of Koiwai and Mairasi received the symbolic wealth they had desired all along: recognition and

¹⁵ Conservation International, “A New Future for Marine Conservation: Papuan Bird’s Head Seascape”, 2008, p3.

acknowledgement of their role as the fundamental stakeholders to conservation projects in Kaimana. They had not previously been granted a voice at the table in discussion of eco-tourism projects.

The speedboat negotiations provided a way to make the significance of traditional authority visibly concrete to stranger conservationists. The boat indexed the ability of conservationists to move through a particular social space, iconic of the Raja's power, symbolically mediating between official scientific knowledge and Kaimana community's cognitive geography. The possession of foreign property inverted claims of ownership by local people who felt disrespected. The act of capturing something owned by someone else provided a context for political engagement as well as for the possibility of intersubjective relations. In presenting evidence for this argument, I will first identify the way property can be analyzed as a way to link political and symbolic claims about nature. I will then draw from Axel Honneth's argument about the moral imperative for recognition as a means to understand claims made in negotiations over the speedboat.

Joel Robbins (2006a) argues that an ethnographic focus on property could bridge a research focus on symbolic and political approaches to the environment in anthropology: "It is as property that nature is socialized" (Robbins 2006a:172). By drawing from Hegel's arguments in the *Philosophy of Right* for conceiving politics as "the pursuit of mutual recognition, not a Hobbesian struggle for self-aggrandizement or self-protection," Robbins emphasizes how property provides a fundamental means for the recognition of people and that this is often more important than material benefits that accrue through ownership.¹⁶ For instance, in Urapmin

¹⁶ Robbins' stress on property for understanding human-environmental interactions arises from arguing that, of the three qualities of property identified by Hegel – use, alienation and possession – the latter has been largely underappreciated in Melanesia. He identifies how the critique of possession in Melanesia by Strathern was fueled by "a sense that one never truly holds something as one's own, but instead always already owes it to others with whom one has exchange relations" (Robbins 2006a:180). Yet he suggests that ownership is necessarily prior to exchange: how else would one explain the ritual significance of

society, things, spaces and natural domains are owned primarily by individuals through productive action (Robbins 2006a:174). Even within a household property is carefully demarcated between a man and wife. Spirits in nature are also primary owners and are important to a full understanding of social relations (2006a:178).

By holding onto something of value to conservationists, the people of Kaimana forced environmental planners to realize that they had not adequately considered claims over coral reefs in ways important to Namatota's relationship to itself. By preventing the mobility of scientists throughout their conservation seascape people challenged the spatial connectivity of the NGOs' marine protected areas, as well as severing claims that the implementation of conservation practices aligned with local environmental understandings. Travel to Triton Bay to conduct marine assessments is also a matter of power. The possession of another's boat denied the possibility of conducting surveys, and of the rationale of measuring improvements in nature resulting from the protected area. The denial of the use of the speedboat as property provided a device for forcing the NGO to face its misrecognition of local peoples' needs. Yet it also set into motion a process of mediation through dialogue that led to increased reciprocal recognition of potentially commensurate environmental goals.

The speedboat's capture in 2008 and its release in 2010 through demands for reciprocal interaction to enter into ecotourism discussions suggests that the Raja and his subjects desired economic gains from conservation projects as well as status within a larger community. Perhaps the speedboat negotiations were not merely about the demand for material reciprocity but also a context for reasserting networks of mutual relations established through a history of trade.

'smell' from Urapmin feasts as a means for relinquishment by spirits over their ownership of animals? Personhood in Urapmin is consequently a 'transacted process' realized through the exchange and receiving of socially mediated property. The possibilities of sociality arise from socially mediated recognition through things; gifts allow people to recognize each other as persons and as possessors of a common relatedness.

I will argue here that the speedboat capture expresses a basic moral claim about the possibility of autonomous action in the world. I will draw from Hegel's theory of recognition for supporting my claim that the speedboat's capture can help explain processes of intersubjectivity in conservation encounters. My argument is based on calls for a broader understanding of the possibilities of reciprocal social relations. For instance, in *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (1997) Williams argues that Kojève's work on Hegel's theory of recognition has largely distorted Western intellectuals' understanding of the Master and Slave allegory central to an understanding of domination:

In contrast to Kojève, Hegel's master and slave is but an important first phase of unequal recognition that must and can be transcended. It is not the final, but merely a transitional, inherently unstable, configuration of intersubjectivity. Genuine recognition is fundamentally reciprocal and involves the mutual mediation of freedom. [Williams 1997:10]

Butler (1987:63) similarly criticized Kojève's position as based on "an ontology of negation and finitude" (Williams 1997:11). To Kojève, mediation between Master and Slave is impossible: opposition and struggle is absolute; he views the world through an ontological opposition between being and nothingness. Kojève's interpretation of recognition reinforces a concept of individual autonomy and denies the possibility of transcendence. Instead, Williams and Honneth offer a different possibility: "the I becomes a We through affirmative self-knowledge in other conferred by reciprocal recognition" (Williams 1997:12). I will attempt to parse this assertion below in reconstructing key attributes of Honneth's critical theory of recognition. This will provide a theoretical axis for my argument about the moral horizons of marine conservation in northwestern New Guinea.

Recognition, as interpreted by Honneth, is a concept that goes beyond a social scientific focus on domination over others' lives. His critical theory attempts to shift the emphasis in normative social theory from 'redistribution' to 'recognition': from the elimination of inequality

expressed in Rawlsian or Marxist inspired normative political theories towards a focus on dignity and honor (see Nancy Fraser 1995; Honneth 2001:43-48).¹⁷ Honneth conceives critical theory as an attempt to overcome the social pathologies of capitalism's deforming effects on reason through autonomous action (Honneth 2009:21). Demands for social justice should consequently emphasize moral recognition over economic redistribution. Honneth criticizes Fraser (1995) and Taylor (1992) for overemphasizing the politics of identity and for oversimplifying the collapse of a chronology from individual legal equality to culturally defined difference (Honneth 2001:52). He argued that economic transactions and desire for distribution are based on particular cultural values concurrent within modern liberal democratic societies (Thompson 2005:92; Fraser and Honneth 2003:155-158; Gal 2003).

Instead, a focus on the social significance of moral feelings is considered prior to material interests in redistribution. Discussions about recognition in contemporary social theory often focus on injury or injustice that emphasizes one's distance from another. In contrast, Honneth argues that feelings of moral disrespect not only restrict one's freedom to achieve desired actions but also deny the possibility of intersubjective self-understanding. He distinguishes three types of disrespect: physical or bodily; social exclusion and denial of legal rights; and solidarity with self-realization. Honneth's three interconnected forms of recognition – "primary relations such as love and friendship, legal relations, and a community of value and solidarity" (Honneth 1995:129) – are themselves the constitutive conditions for progressive self-actualization: "Love makes possible self-confidence, right makes possible self-respect, and social esteem develops self-esteem" (Williams 1997:15). Honneth calls this foundation a practical "relation-to-self" that emerges through intersubjective awareness (Honneth 1995:93). A persons' self-knowledge can

¹⁷ The moral foundations for realizing positive intersubjective relations draws from social philosophical investigation into possibilities for living a good life: in Ancient Greece, only certain persons of social esteem were able to achieve a good life; Kant identified in 'respect' the core of the categorical imperative (Honneth 2007:129).

therefore only be fulfilled through reciprocal acknowledgement by others. My examination of this process extends Honneth's notion of 'self' to include the social body of Raja Ampat and Kaimana as a culturally unified identity.¹⁸

Recognition as a process of ethical engagement suggests an important shift for analyzing contemporary environmental movements. Local peoples in valued natural settings have increasingly demanded recognition of traditional natural resource practices overseen by local leaders as practices of care for their environment and community. By demonstrating an ethic of care people are able to advocate for external appraisal of prior rights to fishing, forest harvesting among other forms of customary resource use. For instance, Peter Brosius (2006) shows how the Penan in Sarawak, Malaysia resisted commercial and state logging in their traditional forested lands through letter writing, community produced maps, video interviews, and verbal argument. Brosius argues that Penan did not merely resist against forms of external domination but engaged in a politics of recognition: "in making their arguments to loggers, civil servants, environmentalists, and others, Penan are attempting to speak across difference, to familiarize themselves, to frame their arguments in ways they hope will be recognizable to outsiders" (Brosius 2006:283). Brosius identifies a persistent weakness in political ecological analyses:

The theorizing of domination has consistently been framed as being manifested in contests in which there are agents who exercise power/hegemony and agents who resist. What the present analysis points to is a recognition of the fact that much of what we have come to designate in our analyses may be something quite different. What we may in fact be observing are efforts at engagement/articulation: efforts born of frustration and desperation, to be sure, but efforts at engagement all the same. [Brosius 2006:315-316]

¹⁸ Honneth's social theory sees in a focus on domination Hobbes' account of individuals in a state of war, as well as a social theoretical position reflected in Marx, Sorel and Sartre that "takes as its starting-point moral feelings of indignation, rather than pre-given interests" (Honneth 1995:161). Instead, he identifies how the collective experience of injustice "does not have to be seen as something ultimate or original but may rather have been constituted within a horizon of moral experience that admits of normative claims" (Honneth 1995:166). Honneth's work therefore attempts to construct an empirical social scientific basis of reciprocal recognition and presents possibilities for a normative theory of ethical living.

Andrew Mathews' (2008) study of forest fire policy in Oaxaca, Mexico identifies interesting forms of engagement as well as tacit concealment of official environmental policies. He analyzes conferences as performative spaces for conveying state administration and enforcing legibility of people to bureaucratic power, while state forest officials collude, conceal and evade with subjects of rule in negotiating actual fire practices (Mathews 2008:286; Scott 1998). Joel Robbins' discussion of recognition through property provides a frame for Melanesians to enter into social relations within Urapmin and beyond. Desire for recognition by whites is expressed in hopes for the destruction of locally owned lands by Western mining companies: a desire to disassociate from spatially situated spirit owners of natural landscapes following conversion to Christianity, as well as hopes of providing foreigners with property they value as a way to be recognized as valuable themselves (Robbins 2006a:186). These ethnographic accounts provide a lens for viewing environmental encounter through reciprocal interaction rather than through exclusion of the desires of environmentally dependent communities.

Collective mobilization of political resistance is made possible through a shared awareness of being disrespected. Indignation then provides a mechanism for active transformation from humiliation to a positive relation-to-self (Honneth 1995:164). Honneth stresses that E.P. Thompson focused on moral indignation over economic privation as a vector for political revolt. In a later article he importantly identifies how "we become aware of the norms that regulate our behaviour in the form of 'knowing how' only in those moments when our expectations are disrupted" (Honneth 2002:513-514). According to Ricoeur in his *Course of Recognition* (2004:258): "[t]he investigation of mutual recognition can be summed up as a struggle against the misrecognition of others at the same time that it is a struggle for recognition of oneself by others." For Ricoeur, ceremonial gift exchange arises as a truce at the heart of a recognition-misrecognition dialectic, "invoked as a special form of states of peace" (2004:259) through gratitude to a dissimilar other (Connolly 2007:135). Whereas for Husserl and Levinas

other minds remain opaque, Ricoeur suggests that through *agape*, or generosity without expectation for reciprocal return, intersubjective mutuality can arise over and above strategic alliances cemented through ceremonial gift exchange (2004:235-242; see also Hénaff 2010). Dissymmetry between oneself and another does not dissolve with mutual recognition but commensality is symbolically mediated through prestation (Connolly 2007:140-141). Yet the generous gift was never received in Kaimana: hopes for mutuality (*allelon*, “each other”) were dashed, or at least forestalled, in the refusal of CI staff to meet with incensed Koiwai community members, lack of opening generosity in development planning and through persistent rumors of theft.

The speedboat affair is to Dian a “love story”: it is a tale of different parties’ divergent feelings of desire and need toward each other; of broken hearts of local people about conservation’s promises; of Dian’s personal love for the people and Raja of Namatota; and of their love for her as an embattled Papuan woman fighting for their rights to self-realization through development. Her account is ironic in many ways. Notably, her work to release the speedboat through raising awareness of traditional symbolic power led Dian to eventually quit her job at CI. She submitted a letter of resignation immediately before embarking on the trip to meet with Kaimana community representatives in the summer of 2010. Her argument for ethical treatment by conservationists extended to her personal relations within the organization, which she viewed as relatively compromised by political interests, ignorance, and insufficient sensitivity to Papuan peoples’ needs. After writing her reports Dian spoke of returning to finish a postgraduate degree. She continues to support human rights and environmental education initiatives. In defending herself from accusations of personal bias in the speedboat affair, Dian reflects on her love:

You never know how it feels to lose someone you love, you will never know how frustrating [it is] when all your efforts to liberate your beloved only arrive at a dead end... I only wanted to ask you: is there space here [for change]? Did you ever humbly come to the raja's house? If not then do not be surprised if i'm more loved than you. Remember firstly that I always thought I did not work for CI – I worked for my people. And I will always stand beside them. [Notes from the South 17]

Her written memoir ends with a poem from a student at a local university: "*Ilmu-ilmu yang diajarkan disini kan menjadi alat pembebasan ataukah alat penindasan*": "Science taught here becomes either an instrument of liberation or of oppression." The poem speaks to the promise as well as the peril of environmentalism in New Guinea. Dian's story emphasizes the pivotal role played by Rajas for ensuring that promises are kept. I will now discuss the historical role of Rajas as mediating figures for coastal communities, before then discussing other ways conflict over environmentalism in Kaimana can be construed as a matter of respect.

Histories of Coastal Papuan Rulers' Authority over Natural Resources in Relations with Foreigners

Dian's story highlights the importance of dynastic clans for mediating disputes over resource issues. She presents Rajas as locally recognized intermediaries for resolving political economic disputes over natural resources. I will reconstruct here a history of such traditional authorities from myths, secondary sources and blogs. Uncovering traces of local leadership systems will help illuminate how the speedboat's capture was a mechanism for creating mutually reciprocal relations based on recognition of diverse ways of engaging with the environment.

The political geography of the Raja Ampat is reflected in its name, literally 'four kings', which refers to four mythical brothers who were born from sacred eggs near the Wawage River on Waigeo Island (van der Leeden 1987). The four brothers soon established clans on different islands: Fun Giwar became raja of Waigeo; Fun Tusan, traveled to Salawati; Fun Mustari went to South Misol, and Fun Kilimuri left for South Seram. A fifth brother Fun Sem became a spirit, while their sister Pin Take married Manarmakeri of Biak and settled at Numfor in Cenderawasih Bay (compare Rutherford 1999; Kamma 1957). Their son Gurabesi eventually returned to Waigeo and then became a warrior to the Sultan of Tidore and married his sister Boki Taiba. This condensed origin story is important for demonstrating connections between Waigeo to local islands, as well as to nonlocal societies such as Tidore, Seram and Biak. Myths present islands, societies and clans with different values (Tidore is conceived as a place of war, politics, bride-givers, while Biak-Numfor is a realm of peace, supernatural power and bride-receivers) contained in a symbolic system mediated by Gurabesi's heroic travels (van der Leeden 1987:13). Symbolic relations of Raja Ampat leaders mirrored political bonds with regional power brokers, especially the Moluccan Sultan of Tidore who, along with the rival Sultan of Ternate, dominated the valuable spice trade in nutmegs and cloves up to the mid-19th century (De Ploeg 2002:91; see also Andaya 1993; Goodman 1998, 2002).

It was a heterogeneous political realm. At least as early as the 15th century, Seramese merchants instituted a ‘trade-oriented socio-political system’ in Papua through confederations of small principalities ruled by Islamic merchant kings identified as ‘trade friends’ (Goodman 1998:433, 446; see also Andaya 1993:53-55; Wagner 1996:285-298). A historical network of trade and exchanges through monopoly zones called *sosolot* facilitated connections between merchants from Seram Island in the Moluccas to “Onin Kowiai” in the Fak-Fak area of West Papua (Goodman 1998:421). Luxury forest products, bird of paradise feathers and people were exchanged through a competitive system dominated by local leaders and emerging European interests to regions across maritime Southeast Asia. Kamma (1957) highlights the historic role of Biak slave expeditions reflected in the Timorese word for *papua*: pirate (Kamma 1957:9). The rajas of Bintuni Bay and the Onin Peninsula maintained political power by establishing monopoly zones in coastal river areas through local representatives (Haenen 1998:236).¹⁹

The political economic networks of the Moluccas and Western Papua were therefore essential for European access to natural resources in a commercially valuable region. In 1581, Portuguese sailor Miguel Roxo de Brito visited the Raja Ampat islands and Seram and described the *sosolot* network (Sollewijn Gelpke 1994:123-145 in Goodman 1998:436). In the mid 17th century, the Dutch East Indies Company attempted to monopolize trade networks exemplified in a slaving expedition led by Johannes Keyts in 1778 and through a failed attempt to establish a fort (Du Bus) in Triton Bay at Kowiai between 1828-1836 (Goodman 1998:429). Trade friends in places including Namatota became important for slave raiding and commercial exchange of goods to Seramese sailors (Hille 1905:254-256 in Goodman 1998:436-438). Collection of nutmegs and the bark of massoy trees (*Cortex oninus*) in the area was protected by restrictions on

¹⁹ Johsz Mansoben (1994) argues that raja polities are one of a series of political systems in Northwest New Guinea. Others include the classic big-man systems of New Guinea described by Sahlins (1963), clan-head systems of local kin groups dominated by hereditary chiefs with ritual power and mixed systems that contained characteristics of Raja and clan types (Healey 1998:339-340).

aristocratic forests, which helped to consolidate political power to rajas. The rajas of Koiwai (Namatota), Aiduma and Rumbati became the main power centers of the nine Islamic kingdoms along the Papuan coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Raja systems emerged as small scale polities among the Raja Ampat Islands (Waigeo, Salawati, Batanta and Misool), coastal and western parts of the Onin Peninsula and Papua's southwest coast by becoming connected to an international community through faith in Islam and regional suzerainty to the north Moluccan kings in Ternate, Tidore, Jailolo and Bacan (Healey 1997:345), Seramese traders and European merchants. Yet the rajas were likely axes for diverse ethnolinguistic networks closer to home. For example, Dian mentions how the Raja of Namatota in Triton Bay and Raja Komisi of Adijaya maintain sovereignty over the Mairasi, Koiwai, Irarutu, Madewana, Miereh, Kuripasai, Oboran, and Kuri communities (Wasaraka Aug 2011). She also notes that places such as Kayu Merah, while situated within the Indonesian regional administrative district of Etna, are considered kin to Namatota and under his suzerainty. As a mediating figure herself, Dian discussed with CI staff the value of the raja of Kaimana to social relations: "I spoke with CI just [so that they] learn to see that the power of the king in Kaimana is quite significant compared to the others" (Wasaraka Aug 2011).

The reasons for Dian's emphasis on the Rajas of Namatota, Kaimana and Adijaya as mediating figures for resolving the speedboat issue therefore becomes clearer when we consider the historical importance of local political elites as symbolic social intermediaries. Ideological and economic claims to their re-emergence can be read through circulating global media. Dian's written materials to CI staff throughout the speedboat detention provide one level of internal circulation. Internet websites are an additional source of evidence of the return or persistence of the rajas. I present examples from three sites here. An English-language blogsite devoted to the

‘Kingdoms of Indonesia’ exemplifies the dense genealogical material used to revive traditional authority:²⁰

In the SE East of the Bomberay peninsula of Papua lies the Namatota, or Kowiai area. The raja of Namaotota, who lived in the capital Namatota was together with the raja of Rumbati the most important raja of the peninsula. His area was the biggest of all, although not always he had a very direct influence there. Before the statelets of Arguni and Kaimana were his vassals. The raja of Namatota could augment his influence with the help of the sultan of Tidore. It was also described as a commercial principality with the economic centre in the capital. The dynasty says, they originally come from the Gunung Baik area. The present raja of Namatota is Raja Hayum Ombaier and like most of the other rajas here is also member of the local government. The present raja is [also a] member of the staff of the Regent of Kaimana.

The current raja is thus connected to a regional history and simultaneously legitimated as a participant in the contemporary Indonesian nation state. The use of English as a medium of communication suggests the author’s intent is to spread his message far beyond Indonesia’s shores. Revival of local political traditions consequently speaks against a specifically Indonesian construction of indigeneity as a domain of village life as well as an assertion of identity connected to global circuits of trade relations (see Povinelli 2002:49,56 for comparison). In another account, Donald Tick of the Center for the Documentation of Indonesian Royal Heritage based in Vlaardingen Netherlands stresses the intermediary role of local elites:

The Rajas of Namatota and the Rats Umis of Kaimana were also quite influential in the Arguni bay area in the north of the area, but later that remained more or less a nominal influence only. Most of all these rulers in the Bomberai/Onin area were trader dynasties, who had more interest in trade, than real rule as it was known in the west. So the Dutch were not always fully satisfied with the intermediary function they had between the Dutch Government and the more inland living peoples... Nowadays the Onin, or Bomberai area rajas are especially important in being the representatives of their area concerning the rights the local people have in protecting the ecological system of their areas. The radjas of Namatota and the Rats Umis of Kaimana were not always so at the top of their

²⁰ Source: <http://kerajaan-indonesia.blogspot.com/2010/03/namatotathe-most-eastern-indonesian.html>, Accessed 17 Nov 2011.

power, but the people always respected them as the at least symbolic representatives of their areas to the outside world.²¹

The blog's emphasis on the importance of the rajas to the protection of natural sites near coastal settings supports my claim that they are mediating agents for environmental issues between different peoples. For instance, the author states that the Raja of Rumbati and Raja of Misool in Raja Ampat linked colonial officials to the Sultan of Tidore in a different sociocultural context in the Moluccas. The website also mentions how authorities across Onin had lately returned to reclaim their role as guardians of tradition. Another blog, called "Aituarow Kaimana Centre" provides genealogical information on the succession of dynastic rule among Kaimana's aristocratic families. It is named after a local clan name that signifies "a man whose roots can never be destroyed."²² The blogsite is especially interested in broadcasting details about the former rulers of southern Arafura after the throne of Kaimana and its power was 'usurped' by the Netherlands and then by the Government of Indonesia.

²¹ Source: <http://kerajaan-indonesia.blogspot.com/2009/05/rat-umis-abdul-hakim-achmad-aituarauw.html>, Accessed 18 Nov 2011.

²² Aituarow Kaimana Centre: http://aituarauw-kaimana.blogspot.com/2009_03_01_archive.html, Accessed 17 Nov 2011.



Figure 8: Five of the nine monarchs of Papua during a national meeting of Indonesian dynasties. From left to right: the raja of Fatagar, the raja of Rumbati, a former raja of Sekar, the raja of Arguni, a raja-muda (son of the ruler) of Kaimana and the Raja Komisi (Rat Umis) of Kaimana [source: <http://kerajaan-indonesia.blogspot.com/> Aituarow Kaimana Centre]

The ways such blogs describe the importance of dynastic clans to local politics is echoed in Dian's description of the raja's symbolic status as metonymic of a community at the speedboat meeting, in the Kamakaula Family's demands for a customary legal process (*prosesi adat*) and through her written exhortations to respect the primacy of traditional kinship relations over exogenous ethnic categories.²³ Dian's statements find support in the assertion by a former Summer Institute of Linguistics missionary to the Mairasi area that Namatota's raja had influence over the Mairasi people, who paid him tribute (Peckham 1983:141). This writer also points out how the coastal Koiwai people introduced Islam to inland Mairasi settlements. Processes of religious conversion are unfortunately not well documented in the area but such statements

²³ Peckham in a footnote identifies Kamakaula as the name of a Koiwai settlement (1983:143, ff4).

suggest another context for analyzing intercultural encounter. What emerges here is a story of how the principalities of Kaimana and Raja Ampat did not emerge within European colonialism or modern capitalism alone. They emerged instead as nodes of power within a confederation of trade polities through exchange of goods and gifts – such as imported bridewealth valuables such as cannons, gongs and cloth (*kain timur*) – important to marriage relations across northwestern New Guinea. They grew and developed in interaction with European actors at fringe extremes of colonial and capitalist enterprise but with a logic of their own. This political economic realm was also a realm of symbolic status encompassing a moral order of social relations.

The conservationists' projection of an integrated Bird's Head Seascape is symmetrically related to the political waterscape of traditional aristocratic polities. Biak apart, all the areas most valuable to marine biodiversity protection align with areas of traditional raja authority. Such correlations are potentially valuable for analyzing cultural order, especially considering the role of local leaders in enforcing ritual prohibitions against over-harvesting marine species. Viewing rajas as centers of power across marine-based cultural landscapes encourages comparative ethnographic study of water-based sociopolitical life (see Orlove and Caton 2010:403). Raja Ampat and Kaimana are socio-political domains with different values about peoples' relationships to protecting or exploiting marine environments. Yet they are also domains where people's relationships to land, water and each other are saturated with symbolic relations.

It is my contention that the social theoretical discussion of mutual recognition and its emphasis that the moral dimension is important to the intersubjective potentials of human life is key to understanding the claims made by the Raja of Namatota. At root is a central claim: "human beings are vulnerable in that specific manner we call 'moral' because they owe their identity to the construction of a practical self-relation that is dependent upon the help and affirmation of other human beings (Habermas 1990:43-57)... the 'moral point of view' refers to the network of attitudes that we have to adopt in order to protect human beings from injuries arising from the

communicative presuppositions of their self-relation... It is “a quintessence of the attitudes we are mutually obligated to adopt in order to secure jointly the conditions of our personal integrity” (Honneth 2007:137).

The disrespect experienced by the Raja of Namatota and to people living in and near the communities of Kaimana was driven primarily by a sense of moral outrage at rumors of fish thieving, appropriation of communal land for foreign tourism, as well as by not granting the rajas themselves visible roles in the implementation of regional marine conservation areas. The emphasis on granting these persons an important political role in negotiating with outsiders challenges the perception that transcultural recognition of difference projects a communitarian equality over complex internal social relations (Fraser 2003:22). The three million rupiah was never paid, but meetings with different people, combined with audiences with the rajas, led to the speedboat’s return. It therefore is likely that the resolution of the speedboat conflict, and environmental encounter in Kaimana more generally, is mediated through recognition that both conservationists and local landowners were moral persons deserving of mutual respect.

An especially important site for recognition of a local conservationist ethic can be seen in discussions about traditional marine tenure. In Northwestern New Guinea people oversee a form of traditional marine management of coastal epipelagic fish and commercially valuable benthic animals such as trochus shells and sea cucumber. Environmental NGOs view such practices as a potential bridge between socially specific protections and transnational conservation goals.

Traditional marine management as a context for recognition of indigenous environmentalism

Customary marine tenure across the Bird's Head Seascape has become a subject that animates conservationists and engages locals as a context for recognizing the importance of indigenous environmental practices as potentially complementary to biodiversity goals while also drawing from different motivations. 'Customary' or 'traditional' management typically provides spatial boundaries, temporal restrictions, acceptable gear, limits to effort and catch restrictions for preserving valued biota in specific ecological habitats (Hviding 1996; Cinner and Aswani 2007:203). Within specific managed areas, gender, sex, age, social status and food taboos have been shown to be important for sustainability.²⁴ Such practices have garnered attention from economics and environmental governance studies (Berkes, Colding, and Folke 2000; Dietz, Ostrom, and Stern 2003) in part as evidence against 'the tragedy of the commons'. Well-managed areas can also increase prestige through global media and encourage tourism. On the other hand, local governance of resources can be politically unstable and often competitive (Bubandt 2006; Pannell 1997; Thorburn 2000; Adhuri 2002) Scholars have also criticized how stereotypes about indigenous knowledge, local identity and community dynamics project a holism to places where a diversity of lived experiences is commonplace (Lemos and Agrawal 2006; Sillitoe 1998; Nazarea 2006). 'Traditional' tenure may arise from conservation intervention, or may reflect optimal harvest strategies epiphenomenal to biodiversity conservation (Foale and Manele 2004).

Discussions about traditional marine management highlight how conservationists can cooperate with local communities in protecting biodiversity. They also indicate an important context for studying ethics. Marine tenure is also potentially a context for recognizing pre-

²⁴ Such practices, where extant, are seen to provide incentives to conservation based on self-interest and due to socio-cultural dynamics. For instance, landowners with customary rights over natural resources are culpable for over-exploitation; development projects often face higher costs within areas with complex local claims over natural resources. These negative effects create positive incentives to support traditional tenure in areas where social conditions are supportive of conservation-oriented environmental goals.

existing local forms of environmental practice as legitimate, bioethical engagement with intrinsically valued plant and animal species. That is, such practices provide a context for recognition of morality through protection of endemic flora and fauna. The ethics of protection may be applicable to how people desire to be perceived by others. People living in valued natural settings have demanded recognition of their natural resource practices for land rights as well as for respect. A 2010 Jakarta Post article describes customary marine conservation known as *sasi nggama* in Kaimana:

There is an unwritten law among native tribes in Kaimana which has been observed through the generations called *sasi*, or punishment. *Sasi* prohibits entering the sea area within a particular period and when breached, punishment can be fatal. The punishment is not meted out directly by the ruler, or *kumisi*, but by nature. “Breaching the *sasi* means death, such as by drowning,” Yonathan said. The most common form of *sasi* is *sasi trepang* (sea cucumber) and *sasi lola* (clam), which are not to be caught when *sasi* is imposed. The guardian of the sea during the implementation of *sasi* is the ruler’s wife or tribal chief, who stands on the beach holding a spear overseeing the sea. Violating *sasi* is the considered the same as tearing the clothes off the ruler’s wife or tribal chief and is thus punishable to death. The changing times and increasing openness among the Kaimana people, as well as the increasing number of trawlers poaching within the area, are behind the communities’ decision to hand over supervision and development of the area. Although *sasi* is still implemented, trying to manage the area with this method is no longer effective.²⁵

Customary oversight of sea cucumber and clams described in the passage above refers to a system of interactive social practices for using, accessing, and sharing resources. Specific applications draw from local cultural knowledge about the environment through stories, myths, ritual performances, written and spoken prohibitions, religious sanctions and political institutions (Berkes and Folke 1998). Breaking the *sasi* taboo in Kaimana is taken as seriously as violating the raja’s wife: such a crime demands effective punishment for dishonoring the integrity of the landscape’s sacred body.

²⁵Nethy Dharma Somba “Kaimana designated as marine conservation area”, Jakarta Post Jan 16, 2009: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/01/16/kaimana-designated-marine-conservation-area.html>, Accessed 25 Oct 2011.

Marine tenure in northwestern New Guinea is based on customary law that prohibits over-harvesting economically valuable fish, clams, snails, and sea cucumbers where they aggregate. Recognized tribal leaders and political authorities such as the raja are responsible for overseeing ceremonies and for enforcing regulations. Marine tenure in both the Raja Ampat Islands and Kaimana is applied within a certain periodicity either biannually or yearly. From November to March areas are closed to commercial fishing activities with the arrival of powerful monsoon winds from the east. Bound coconut leaves and bamboo signifies that traditional marine tenure is in effect for a particular location: “That way, catching some fish species can be limited so they have time to breed,” says La Aga Samay of Namatota.²⁶ Such tenure practices also entail caring for coral reefs by removing any nets stuck on the reef.



Figure 9: Ritual offerings at the closing of a marine site, Kaimana [Photo: Dian Wasaraka]

²⁶ “Kaimana: Eksotisme Alam Bahari”, A Ponco Anggoro, <http://travel.kompas.com/read/2010/07/05/16360992/Kaimana..Eksotisme.Alam.Bahari>, Accessed 17 Nov 2011.



Figure 10: Sasi preparations, Kaimana [Photo: Dian Wasaraka]



Figure 11: Shells and other marine biota at a sasi site, Kaimana [Photo: Dian Wasaraka]

Kaimana Tribal Council Chairman Marthen Feneteruma explained how Namatota Village communities of Adijaya, Kambala, and Mai-mai have sustained conservation efforts in Triton Bay for many years. The photographs above provide evidence of ongoing ritual prohibitions. Similarly, a missionary account identified how the Mairasi people enforced land-

based regulations for protecting coconuts, nutmeg and forest goods (Peckham 1983:140): “A woven palm frond, giant clam shell, carving of a crocodile’s head, a small bottle of coconut oil, or many other things may serve as a warning that something is being protected by spirits. A potential offender knows he will get sick or die if he trespasses.”

Surveys of *sasi* practices among island communities of Raja Ampat to the northwest of Kaimana identify how traditional and official authority are key factors to successful conservation: the breaking of taboo sanctions in Misool Island is first negotiated at the local level by the village headman (*kepala kampung*) who is a recognized traditional leader, while district government regulations govern cyanide and blast fishing (McLeod et al 2009:663). Those found guilty of breaking *sasi* prohibitions pay a monetary fine used for village improvements (see Zerner 1994).

Marine management in the Christian village of Tomolol on Misool Island in Raja Ampat follows a seasonal cycle with its initiation once or twice yearly during the monsoon season from April to September and concludes with the arrival of the west winds in October (McLeod et al 2009:664). Prior to Christianity’s arrival people would gather around a circle and share a ritual meal and would then adorn bamboo with flowers marked crosswise on the shore to mark an site marked off from harvesting (McLeod 2009:665). Offenders would be punished through sickness caused by material artifacts from the site. Contemporary *sasi* ceremonies involve the Church and the entire community in the marking of special wooden signs, monetary exchange and food offerings. McLeod’s research – sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and other NGO partners – identified how group homogeneity, an emphasis on ritual performance and religious sanction, economic incentives and political legitimacy are important for the success of marine tenure (McLeod 2002:671).

It is important to stress that marine tenure systems like those in Tomolol are dynamic, competing systems rather than static harmonious relationships between people and nature (Zerner 1994; Bubandt 1995; Pannell 1997; Adhuri 2002, 2010). For instance, communal marine tenure

in the Kei Islands in Eastern Indonesia is complex and reflects peoples' perceptions of relationship to commercial market value of shells and fish, as well as complex internal negotiations over sea territory and access rights (Adhuri 2010:10). Elite control over trochus (*Trochus niloticus*) shell harvesting in Sapura and Kei Islands in the Moluccas highlights interclan rivalries over access rights (Thorburn 2000). Additionally the re-emergence of 'traditional' tenure in Vanuatu can be understood partly as a response to conservation intervention (Johannes 1998; Ruddle and Satria 2010). Traditional marine tenure has become a discourse about 'best practices': well-managed areas occur in well-managed societies, or so the story goes. Desire to promote biodiversity is therefore also a context for environmentalist interventions for fostering a will to improve.

Part of the appeal of community management systems arises from viewing them as examples of successful common property regimes, and evidence against a neoliberal conception of individual property as necessary to prevent the tragedy of the commons (Ostrom 1990). Well-managed areas can also increase prestige through global circuits of trade or media exposure beneficial for other ends. On the other hand, decentralized local governance of resources can be problematic when cooperation at scales beyond the scope of local control is required. Conflicting desires over development projects can rapidly undermine conservation goals (Duncan and Duncan 1997). Moreover, an increase in population density, economic inequality, loss of social solidarity, or changes to market values of protected species can negatively effect peoples' interest in caring for shellfish, turtles or fish.

It is also not entirely clear whether local tenure systems reflect optimal harvesting strategies and are merely epiphenomenal to biodiversity conservation (Foale and McKintyre 2012). Differences between permanently closed marine protected areas and seasonal harvesting tabooed sites (Cinner et al. 2003), or Western linear timescales verses Melanesian ritual timecycles underscore how conservation is not a universally similar phenomenon. For example,

in some cases, species biodiversity may not be as important as the desire to accumulate fish for marriage feasts (Foale and Manele 2004). Stereotypes about indigenous knowledge, local identity and community dynamics also project a cognitive holism to places where diversity of lived experiences is commonplace (Agrawal 1995; Stillitoe 1998; Nazarea 2006). Nevertheless, conservationists increasingly work to synthesize values about nature between local needs and applied scientific goals. Cinner and Aswani (2007), among others, call for hybrid institutions of customary and modern management where traditional authorities take part in designating marine protected areas in places like Roviana Lagoon in the Solomon Islands (Cinner and Aswani 2007:210; Lauer and Aswani 2009). The push for adaptive institutional mechanisms for connecting custom with scientific imperatives is seen as a way to expand the sphere of beneficiaries to conservation in ways that make sense to peoples' worldviews. It has also become an important discourse for demands of local rights to natural resources.

I would like to briefly take stock of my arguments to this point. My previous discussion of recognition emphasized how notions of property are important to the emergence of self-consciousness and to sustaining social connections. Traditional fishing sites maintained through seasonal taboos overseen by customary authorities provide examples of communal property regimes that exist across maritime Southeast Asia. Similarly, speedboats are property of conservation organizations for examining natural settings. Communal marine sites provide a physical space for the expression of value of the natural world and people's role in protecting it. The speedboat objectifies conservationists' intention to survey, demarcate and administer the environment. Its capture prevented mobilization of such plans. Its removal from circulation therefore created a context for interaction within a unique socio-historical situation represented by the aristocratic rajas' customary legal-political oversight of marine harvest cycles.

Demands for a fair share of natural resources through tourism revenue has lately become a practical way for the rajas to increase their visibility to state officials as well as to stranger

conservationists. Desire to benefit from eco-tourism projects is also a desire to be treated as partners in development.²⁷ The speedboat's detention is at root a way to demand respect: moral outrage at rumors of fish auctions and sentiments of unfulfilled tourism promises led people to protest at CI's field office (Wasaraka Aug 2011). Prevented from speaking with CI's manager in Kaimana, Elizabeth Pasapan, Anwar Kamakaula and a few associates captured the speedboat on behalf of the Koiwai of Namatota, setting into motion a process for securing rights that had up to then been denied. It was also a powerful way to register a community's discontent.

²⁷ Interests in development by people in Namatota also included a desire for their own commercial fish company (Wasaraka 2011). This desire was not shared among the Mairasi informants Dian spoke with during her visits to village sites.

Famous Fish: The Blue Auction gala sold species' naming rights, expressing conservationist demands for recognition

Interestingly, rumors that conservationists intended to sell New Guinea's fish were correct. On September 19, 2007, Prince Albert II of Monaco and the Monaco-Asia Society held a "Blue Auction" gala event with Christies International to raise funds for Conservation International's marine programs in the Bird's Head Seascape. The black tie soiree auctioned naming rights to ten species of fish and one shark, netting two million dollars to support educational, taxonomic capacity building and marine enforcement initiatives. Ironically, program activities were to take place on board more boats: the *Kalabia* for educational programs and the *FRS Monaco* for patrolling the Kawe (Wayag-Sayang-Uranie) marine protected area in Raja Ampat. The Monaco Asia Society poignantly remarked on the value of patronage to nature's survival:

The Blue Auction was a world-first format which received worldwide coverage. With the slogan "Leave your mark forever on our blue planet", The Blue Auction was taken place in the historical Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. Attended by 300 international guests, members of the Indonesian government as well as other notable guests all participated in this affair. High-level bidders from all over the world came to the Principality to take part in the event. Winning bidders saw their names forever embedded in the scientific names of these new species, while contributing to the worthy cause of nature conservation.²⁸

Financing conservation through naming locally endemic fish is a way to acknowledge outsiders as integral to West Papua's marine sustainability. To people who claim customary rights over access to marine resources, it is perhaps not surprising that the sale of local fish species would have been discomfiting. Names convey important historical and cultural information about peoples' relationship to place. Earlier I drew attention to how people in Kaimana viewed breaking the *sasi* taboo as an act similar to violation of the chief's wife's body. While fishing activity away

²⁸ Source: Monaco Asia Society: www.masociety.net, Accessed 28 Nov 2011.

from villages remains a primarily male enterprise, *sasi* ceremonial exchange in Kaimana appears to have a distinctly female gendered dimension. Sea cucumber, trochus shells, and fish are not only external to society, but are potentially composite aspects of personhood, social identification, and concrete manifestations of life-giving processes Koiwai have with the marine world. Mairasi myths describe several water creature rulers, personified in iconic beings who represent biotic classes such as coral reefs (*sa'ari*), octopus (*urita*) and fish (*uratu*) (Peckham 1982:52-59).

If culture, as Marilyn Strathern wrote, "...consists in the way people draw analogies between different domains of their worlds" (1992:47), the ideas people have about marine animals reflects assumptions about categories of human experience. Viveiros de Castro noted how Amerindian societies perceive a unity of human and non-human nature and a diversity of corporeal forms. This contrasts with a Western presupposition of the unity of nature and multiculturalism as an ontologically differentiated process: "perspectivism supposes a constant epistemology and variable ontologies, the same representations and other objects, a single meaning and multiple referents" (Viveiros de Castro 2004:6). According to this type of reasoning, 'nature' to Amerindian eyes is not external to representation. Bodily differences between species provide for a 'referential disjunction': where jaguar society sees manioc beer, humans see blood. It is unclear how communities conceive of the sociality of nature in Kaimana and Raja Ampat in relation to the Amazonian point of view. Yet the fact that breaking the *sasi* taboo could be interpreted similarly to sexual violence suggests that human-marine animal relations are not merely analogous. The same could not be said about conservationist values about nature, as I will describe below.

Selling names to endemic fish species can perhaps be justified financially but not symbolically to people with different presuppositions about humans' relationship to 'nature'. Washington Post science journalist Juliet Eilperin wrote that selling rights to name natural species

is an emerging trend for rapidly funding conservation projects that raises questions about longer-term effects on biological systematics.²⁹ The Linnaean system of Latin nomenclature classifies organisms through a species and genus naming convention. The International Code of Zoological Nomenclature has not yet issued a policy for determining who can name a species but has expressed concern about an increase in commercial naming practices. While in Monaco, Eilperin interviewed senior CI adviser Mark Erdmann who argued that the Blue Auction was merely reviving an older European tradition that acknowledged aristocratic patrons who financially supported scientific inquiry:

“Now you’re going to name something after people who are paying after the fact, but they are paying for the conservation of those species,” Erdmann said this summer as he surveyed the Bird’s Head Seascape, the diverse ecosystem off the Papua province that is home to walking sharks and more than a thousand other species. “Same difference.”³⁰

Following this ichthyological gift exchange, ten new species descriptions were published in *Aqua: The International Journal of Ichthyology* (Volume 13, 2008). The Blue Auction joined a number of other instances where nature could be sold to the highest bidder, including a payment of \$650,000 by Golden Palace Casino for the rights to name a primate *Madidi titi*, otherwise known as the GoldenPalace.com monkey (*Callicebus aureipalatii*), or entomologists Quentin Wheeler and Kelly B. Miller’s prestige naming of three slime-mold beetles *Agathidium bushi*, *Agathidium cheneyi* and *Agathidium rumsfeldi*, after President Bush, Vice President Cheney and then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, respectively. In 2008, Purdue University auctioned the naming rights to seven newly discovered bats and two turtles. John Bickham, a Purdue professor of forestry and natural resources noted perceptively that “[u]nlike naming a building or

²⁹ “Auction to Name Fish Species Nets \$2 Million for Conservation”, Juliet Eilperin; Washington Post, Sept 20, 2007.

³⁰ “New Species Owe Names to Highest Bidder” Juliet Eilperin; Washington Post, Sept 14, 2007, Accessed 14 Nov 2011.

something like that, this is much more permanent. This will last as long as we have our society.”³¹

Notwithstanding important efforts to protect ecosystems in the Bird’s Head, the ‘same difference’ of paying for and conserving natural species underscores an assumption common to conservationist discourses about nature: that the natural world is a domain extrinsic to human interpretation that is not affected by cognitive categories outside of natural historical taxonomies. Misrecognizing the possibility that nature is socialized in ways that bear directly on people’s understanding of themselves reaffirms an ontological separation of nature from culture. This is problematic and ironic: problematic because the auctioning of endemic species’ names was interpreted in Kaimana and Raja Ampat as theft, and ironic because the auction event provides a vehicle for evangelism of conservationists and corporate benefactors, and the logic of capital as integral to nature’s care; that rich outsiders should be forever recognized for acting on behalf of people’s needs. Spreading the good news about conservation’s goals is enshrined in newly sanctified biota. Previously unacknowledged, transcendent species have through being named after foreign donors become immanent in the bays and coastal reefs of Papuan lands. If “wildness is the preservation of the world” (Thoreau), the wildness of New Guinea’s Bird’s Head will forever be in debt to Westerners. Their names will forever be recognized on the hooks and within the nets of local fishermen. Whether a Charlene’s anthias (*Pseudanthias charlenae*), Erdmann’s dottback (*Pseudochromis erdmanni*), or Nursalim’s wrasse (*Parachelinus nursalim*), these fish will remind Papuans of their entanglements with foreign others.

The Blue Auction shows how Western scientific knowledge identifies difference in nature through new species descriptions. Taxonomic classification is a paradigmatic way of

³¹ “Darling, I named a bat after you for Christmas...” The New Zealand Herald, December 10, 2008. Accessed 18 Nov 2011.

knowing through the separation of humans from nature. Its applied consequences take the form of zones forbidden to human use.

Conservation is not only a way of maintaining boundaries between nature and culture, but also a practice of care. For both conservation scientists and the rajas of northwest New Guinea, demonstrating responsibility for marine resources is a way to gain prestige. In a different context, Munn (1986:68) described fame in Gawa as “the circulation of one’s name outwards from the self, by extending one’s spatio-temporality through influential acts that move the minds of others”. Munn shows how fame is iconic as a virtual influence for extending one’s subjectivity. This is seen not only in persons but also in things – especially in named shells (1986:114). In Kaimana we see how fish become a vehicle on one hand for the circulation of the reputation of NGOs and their benefactors, and on the other as a mechanism for demonstrating local environmental practices as well as a rejection of foreign expropriation perceived as theft.

Rather than attempt to smooth out these clashing practices of recognition at right angles to one another, perhaps their incommensurability provides an axis for ethnographic analysis. Since misunderstandings and equivocation are key to anthropological interpretation, the translation of the equivocal dynamics of cultural difference, of different misunderstandings of others’ intentions, is itself a process of making sense (Wagner 1981). Perhaps it is only through the dissonance of encounters, as with the recognition of disrespect, that transformation is possible.

Practices of recognition and belonging in Kaimana

The environmental encounter over the speedboat initiated a dialogue about who speaks for nature. The arrival of stranger conservationists to Raja Ampat's karst islands and later to the bays, mangroves and settlements of Kaimana required translation: marine protected areas had to be recognized by local landowners to be realized; tourism discourses required referents in order for monologue to enter a dialogic imaginary; financing initiatives demanded explanation if they were to be accepted. Translation of environmental practices into locally salient idioms is only possible when dialogue unfolds in shared space and time. Through encounter, Rajas and conservation scientists act, speak, and read each other into being.

Both conservationists and local peoples engaged in ethical discussions about their role in the environment. Both desired to be recognized in each other to bring about potential realization of different goals – whether the percentage of increased coral cover or fish abundance, seasonal *sasi* closures or concrete plans for tourism development projects. Acknowledgement of the goals of marine protection or economic development also entails a moral project of recognition. I drew from Axel Honneth to emphasize how intersubjective understanding provides a mechanism for one's "relation-to-self" to be fully realized (Honneth 1995:93). Honneth emphasizes that the good life emerges through widening spheres of recognition: through love that is conditional to social ontogeny and self-confidence, access to rights as a precondition for self-respect and social solidarity as a basis for self-esteem. Capacity for moral action is dependent on affirmation in others (Habermas 1990:43-57). Moral actions are expressed in dispositions necessary to protect against "injuries arising from the communicative presuppositions of their self-relation" (Honneth 2007:137; see Keane 1997:12, 224). Moreover, the basic condition for practices that allow for the development of self-esteem is the existence of a shared value-horizon through participation in activities of value to the community (Honneth 1995:121). NGO websites, radio shows, newspaper articles, blogs sustain a shared spatiotemporal horizon. They are also a negotiated

space of encounter. They highlight different understandings about the environment, local authority, history and value. While these media are addressed to different audiences they provide a basis for the potential of shared cooperation for protecting nature.

Here I present a few material examples of moral communicative action expressed through the circulation of media. 1) Days after the speedboat's detention, Anwar Kamakalua of Namatota sent a letter to the local offices of Conservation International explaining that they held the boat captive because of the Blue Auction issue as well as their rejection of any face to face talks. A week after the arrest of speedboat, CI met with Anwar in Kaimana facilitated by the local government. There they tried to explain the auction to no avail (Notes from the South 7). 2) CI staff statements against mining speak against environmental destruction to gain legitimacy among local communities as ethical persons: "There is tremendous wealth in the natural environment from fishing, pearling and tourism," Erdmann says, citing a State University of Papua survey that found the long-term benefits from these eco-friendly economic activities outweighed the short-term gains from mining; "Mining and this precious, pristine eco-system can't coexist in the long term."³² 3) Conservation International's Indonesian language website describes how it has been protecting ecosystems and biodiversity that supports culture for years.³³ They highlight how specific tools for bolstering community programs ensure that the conservation of biodiversity benefits local leaders, including creating an Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Program (ITPP) to support traditional adat practices.³⁴ Their tourism-based conservation approach attempts to link "aesthetics, existence and values of other cultures, as well as the most strategic way to ensure local benefits." 4) Endorsement of a marine protected area in Kofiau and Boo in Raja Ampat occurred in October 2011 in a ceremony on Gebe Kecil Island, when traditional leader Elias

³² "Chipping away at paradise," Tom Allard July 2, 2011 Sydney Morning Herald, Accessed 5 Dec 2011.

³³ Source: http://www.conservation.org/sites/indonesia/tentang/Pages/misi_visi.aspx, accessed 5 Dec 2011.

³⁴ http://www.conservation.org/sites/indonesia/inisiatif/budaya/Pages/masyarakat_tradis.aspx, Accessed 15 Nov 2011.

Ambrauw handed an endorsement letter to the Raja Ampat government.³⁵ The letter was signed by clans who held marine tenure over the waters in Kofiau – and divided traditionally managed marine areas into a food security and tourism zone, a *sasi* zone and sustainable fisheries and mariculture zones. According to Lukas Rumatna, The Nature Conservancy’s manager for the Bird’s Head Seascape, “This ceremony is proof that the people of Kofiau acknowledge the importance of protecting their marine resources ... by combining local practices with modern conservation,” especially ecosystem-based management. These excerpts are tokens of a desire to be acknowledged as moral actors.

Such statements provide glimpses of a flood of e-mails, project documents, letters, surveys and development policy statements that speak about peoples’ role in environmental management. It is a discussion in two languages (English and Bahasa Indonesia) across different cultural fields of environmental practice. Yet the media examples presented above suggest a transformation occurred in which CI and Kaimana came to recognize each other as integral to the discussion about nature’s place in contemporary Papua. Through exchange across different media they experienced intercultural encounter translated into a shared spatiotemporal setting.

Circulated media can be read alongside the speedboat and fish auction as contexts for recognition. Both events extended the fame of places like Kaimana and Monaco outwards to others. Printed and spoken words – including Dian’s own writings presented in this essay – allow us to acknowledge the ethical demands facilitating peoples’ struggle for autonomous action in the world. I would also like to suggest that this type of perspective supports anthropological accounts of cultural order in flux; that an evaluation of social life should attend to dynamic structures that congeal in space and through time.

³⁵ “Kofiau-Raja Ampat communities Confirm Commitment for Marine Conservation through a Traditional Declaration”, The Nature Conservancy, October 19, 2011.

In a discussion of subjectivity and social space in the town of Katherine in Australia's Arnhem Land, Francesca Merlan (2005) identified the importance of interaction to phenomenological notions of self: "Subjectivity is always fundamentally under construction, and always fundamentally relational. It is, of course, 'subject' to the patterning of historical, on-going socio-cultural organization, and so not randomly variable" (Merlan 2005:169). Merlan argues against a bounded cultural space in Katherine: she stresses being open to improvisation in the creation of persons or interpretations about Aboriginal-white relations in a town. Her account of 'making sense' of a road project interpreted as a rainbow serpent provides her with an 'intercultural' description of peoples' reflexive orientation to social relations and their potential transformations (Merlan 2005:181). As Voloshinov finds the essence of language in interaction (Merlan 2005:176; Voloshinov 1973:94), Merlan argues that individual consciousness emerges through unique utterances and creative actions that draw from a given social orientation. Structure exists in "those elements of social meaning and ordering that perdure as the products of interaction, rather than as elements of a system stored in separation from the world and only engaged and 'risked' at particular moments" (Merlan 2005:177). This interactive processual basis for social reproduction and cultural change contrasts with a perspective that cultural categories exist prior to or external to events (Sahlins 1985). She also asserts that this perspective can analyze social relations *across* fields of embodied dispositions (Bourdieu 1997).

I believe Merlan's analysis supports an interpretation of the speedboat's capture as a process of recognition as a type of semiotically mediated dialogic communication. The capture of the boat was a response to printed accounts of fish thieving at the Blue Auction: such problematic words predetermined a forceful symbolic response. Marine environmental encounter in Papua then reflects Bakhtin's identification of discourse on the boundary between familiar and alien

contexts (Bakhtin 1981:284). It demonstrates how cultural reflexivity unfolds through interaction with different environmental stakeholders.³⁶

Negotiation over the stakes of natural resource management is by no means a settled affair. It is unclear which eco-tourism projects will generate sufficient returns to sustain itself in Kaimana. It is not clear whether conservationists have received due recognition for their well-intentioned efforts to protect local biodiversity. Yet the possibility of recognizing in different people a similar desire *to be loved* (Papuan conservation programs, the Raja among foreign resource officials, and Dian within Kaimana), *to secure rights* (CI to initiate conservation in particular places, Koiwai peoples to their traditional lands, financial benefactors to fish names), and *to acquire social esteem* (desire for acceptance of CI to local communities, of traditional authority structures to environmentalists) suggests that cultural encounter on Papua's northwestern fringe is an ongoing process for structuring new "relations-to-self" through intersubjective acknowledgement (Honneth 1995:93,129). The three spheres of mutual belonging presented above are to Honneth the constitutive conditions for progressive self-actualization through reciprocal recognition: "Love makes possible self-confidence, right makes possible self-respect, and social esteem develops self-esteem" (Williams 1997:15). Moreover, it is possibly only through encounter that people become aware of norms for living a good, ethical life (Honneth 2002:513-514). Aside from reading environmental encounter through Bakhtin's concept of diglossia, or through Honneth's social psychological typologies, at a basic level demands for mutual respect by NGOs and local marine-dependent communities shows us a process that accounts for others as coeval persons in a shared spatiotemporal domain. That cultural meaning is structured through similar processes (Munn 1986). The search for a cultural

³⁶ In the end, an ethics of recognition combined with demands for effective future redistribution- speaking optimistically to Fraser's hope for a full account of cultural demands as a terrain of positive encounter through demands for reciprocal recognition and status equality with others (see Fraser 2003:27).

theory of hybridity, according to Robbins “would be one that looked for order on the level of culture and that categorized hybrid formations in terms of the different ways two or more cultures interacted to construct them” (Robbins 2004:328). The recognition of local marine environmental practices as proportionate to conservationist goals suggests that environmental encounter in northwest New Guinea is a setting for such hybridity.

In conclusion, I want to point out why a focus on the possibility of mutual recognition through ethical environmental encounter is important for challenging perspectives that stress the primacy of competition or domination in social life. In contemporary West Papua aspirations for greater recognition among marginalized communities are witnessed, as we have seen, in the struggle for territorial rights and active participation in development projects. For Jap Timmer (2005) people across the region share a common aspiration for deferential treatment as human beings expressed in desire for recognition of peoples’ inherent dignity (*harga diri*) (Timmer 2005:4). This process may not necessarily entail outright political autonomy according to Western juridical norms, but rather occurs through recognition of Papuans as equal human beings. Desire for freedom “is thus chiefly a response to decades-long denial of the people’s competence in learning and performing in modern colonial and postcolonial contexts” (Timmer 2005:4; Cookson 2007:16). The identification of freedom in Northwestern Papua as a process of recovering human dignity underscores the importance of moral claims. It suggests that disputes about conservation provide a way for people to demand recognition of their knowledge about nature, their rights to be equal partners in development, and to become part of a broader discussion about living the good life.

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