

Reproduction, Sexual Culture and Colonialism among Kamoro People in West Papua

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3 Reproduction, Sexual Culture and Colonialism among Kamoro People in West Papua

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This article focuses on the impacts of colonialism on Kamoro reproduction and sexuality. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Mimika regency, we show how colonial interventions directly and indirectly changed systems, practices and norms that guided Kamoro sexuality and reproduction. We see this as a form of reproductive abandonment. Most elders recall only negative aspects of precolonial sexuality—their perspectives shaped by the punishments of the Dutch period (1926–1962). In the Indonesian era, people argue that in-migration and the mining economy have fundamentally changed courtship and sexuality and further disrupted Kamoro systems. Christianity and Indonesian ‘shame culture’ encourage younger people to blame their sexual behaviour on societal problems. Disputation over these perspectives by older Kamoro reveals how reproductive abandonment can be contested. Addressing the misconceptions, stigma and assumptions about Kamoro cultural practices is necessary for a contemporary healing process. We highlight the essential role of West Papuan knowledge production to correct hegemonic epistemologies.

Keywords: Colonialism; HIV/Aids; Gender; Sexual Culture

Introduction

If people say that alcohol is part of cultural practices, it is nonsense; that is not true. ‘Free sex’ attitudes in the past [as outsiders claim] triggered the increasing number of HIV/AIDS is nonsense. It occurred because of this development which has

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ruined culture. As we can see, we are destroyed because of modernity. Therefore, we cannot blame culture; no, culture [values and norms] is right. But we failed to maintain it, we never use it, we never go back to our culture, we are far away from it and plucked out of our culture. Also, there is no effort to document our culture properly, and [we] never teach our younger generation the genuine culture of us. To be honest, some people have created our story in their own version which is not true. (Tata, elder Kamoro woman, September 27, 2015)¹

Tata's passionate statement speaks to the heart of what Kamoro people experience today. The narrative that outsiders hear about Kamoro, similar to other West Papuan peoples, is too often about promiscuity, premarital sex, alcohol—'bad' culture—leading to HIV and self-destruction. Tata criticises these false claims, pointing to historical and contemporary violence and disruption as the ultimate causes of Kamoro struggles today. Yet not many people reflect as clearly as Tata because the violence of colonisation is repeated through the violence of denial and blame towards Indigenous cultures (Atkinson 2002). Knowledge and research about West Papuan sexuality and culture is shaped by colonisation (Butt, Numbery, and Morin 2002; Katmo 2018; Munro & Butt 2012).

Building on Indigenous scholarship and decolonial analyses of the effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous sexualities and reproduction (Barker 2017; Morgensen 2011; Oliver et al. 2015), this article discusses the influences of colonialism, Christianisation and capitalism in reshaping and redefining reproduction among Kamoro people of coastal southwest Papua, Indonesia. It draws on fieldwork and interviews conducted in 2015 by first author Els Katmo. We identify influences of Dutch, missionary and Indonesian sexual and reproductive regimes on Kamoro sexual culture, marriage and pregnancy, and show how forced changes and ideologies that denigrate Indigenous ways have affected elders and young people today. Understanding the present means looking at ongoing colonialisms: *the Dutch might not have brought all the diseases, but they changed the values, practices and norms that guided Indigenous Kamoro reproduction and sexuality.* Before colonial occupation, Kamoro people connected sexuality and reproduction in particular ways that have now been subject to colonial and mission values and practices which have enduring impacts. We see these as conditions of reproductive abandonment—colonialism changed practices of sexuality, marriage and reproduction. As Jenny Munro, Katmo and Meki Wetipo, in this issue, write, *'Settler colonialism stratifies reproduction to advance territorial control and manage the Indigenous populations that trouble it'*. We show that colonialism attempts to dismantle Indigenous futures, and persistence as a people, through the overt restructuring of Kamoro systems and the covert violence of shaming and denigration.

Colonialist approaches identify the 'Other' or colonised people by evaluating them *along standards of modern life based on Christianity and modernity* (Lomba 2015). *Dichotomous ways of thinking, such as that old or traditional values and practices need to be changed, and introduced new practices are superior, represent a colonial way of thinking.* In Melanesia, anthropologists have examined the effects of European

exploration, colonisation and settlement, showing extreme violence, inequalities and mutual transformation (Jolly & Macintyre 1989; Jolly, Tcherkézoff, & Tyron 2009). However, most are focused on postcolonial structural inequalities, power and cultural norms that shape gender and sexuality today (Spark 2020; Wardlow 2020).

Unlike most other Melanesian countries, West Papua and Kanaky/New Caledonia continue to experience settler colonialism, which is an ongoing structure and system of power that perpetuates the displacement and elimination of Indigenous peoples (Hokowhitu et al. 2021; Webb-Gannon 2021). Yet even in postcolonial Melanesian countries such as Papua New Guinea, tradition or culture is often blamed for disease and violence, and sometimes the effects of colonisation and Christianity on gender and reproduction are forgotten. As Holly Wardlow (2020), Paige West (2016) and others have shown, dominant development discourses also tend to blame tradition for the effects of structural violence, abandonment and dispossession. Understanding how Kamoro people continue to experience the effects of settler colonialism on culture, reproduction and sexuality demonstrates the relevance of these effects in the present. For example, by investigating the perpetuation of racism and racialised gender stereotypes and the imposition of White/Western structures, and by reflecting on how denigrating culture might make people feel about themselves and their heritage.

The effects of colonialism on cultural meanings and norms around sexuality and reproduction differ throughout West Papua. In urban Manokwari, a longstanding Christian missionary site and now capital city in the Bird's Head region, Christianity and Indonesian cultures have strongly affected middle-class Papuans (Richards 2004, 2016). These coastal Papuans, who have heritage in many of the regions around Manokwari, see chastity and Christian values as important ways to maintain their identity as Papuans amongst a growing population of non-Papuan migrants. But they also differentiate themselves from people who live in the surrounding mountains, who are stereotyped as aggressive and traditional. In the central highlands of Papua, young people are affected by the values that Leslie Butt and Munro (2007) describe as a 'shame culture' regarding sex and sexuality, in which Indigenous sex and sexuality is stigmatised as primitive and unregulated, and young women experience deep shame related to premarital pregnancy.

Focusing on Kamoro experiences, we first demonstrate that the Dutch erased meanings and concepts, and prohibited rituals and ceremonies, which were celebrations and expressions of sexuality and reproduction. They also prohibited important forms of cultural discipline. Then we discuss how missionaries changed the marriage system by prohibiting exchange marriage and the effects this had of women's status and Kamoro land systems. We then turn to more contemporary conditions related to the effects of the Freeport mine and Indonesian norms of courtship and premarital sex. We end by focusing on how colonial representations of Kamoro sexuality persist and are evident in young peoples' perceptions that they need to change and become more modern and Christian.

Methodological Approach

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'Kamoro' translates as living person in opposition to the dead, ghosts, things, plants, animals (Harple 2000) and spirit (Pouwer 2010). Kamoro people live along the coastal region between Asmat, a neighbouring tribe in the east, and Etna Bay in the west. In the past, Kamoro people were semi-nomadic. They depended on the rivers and swampy areas for daily economic activities, which were dominated by gathering food, preparing sago and small-scale gardening and hunting. Water and rivers are at the centre of the Kamoro belief system (Erari 1999). Prior to Dutch administration and missions, Kamoro people lived a cycle of feasts and rituals that were crucial to social and economic systems. Their territory was governed by tribal leaders known in the Kamoro language as *weyaiku* and *akwarewe*. The *weyaiku* were tribal leaders throughout the clan or *taparu*, while the *akwarewe* functioned as an advisor for the *weyaiku* in each *taparu*.

The history of contact with outsiders includes slaving and trade, exploration by European scientists and the Dutch government, the Catholic mission project, and Indonesia and the Freeport Company presence (Harple 2000). Indigenous resistance to outsiders has occurred in the pre-colonial and colonial eras, and recently in response to the Indonesians and the Freeport mine (Ballard 2002).

Given the context of Kamoro experiences, Katmo (2018) described her personal and intellectual journey in designing and conducting this research in her thesis:

During the first six months of my PhD studies, I began to read some painful texts with racist and judgmental overtones that described West Papuan sexuality as that of primitive people. Other authors noted that colonialism has shaped images of the sexuality of West Papuans. Yet, as I had been situated as an Indonesian, Western-trained researcher, the study that I planned to conduct applied typical social science research methods. I was not initially considering Indigenous, postcolonial research methods. I was not formally prepared to undertake research as an Indigenous researcher. At the beginning of the research, I was unaware of postcolonial and Indigenous research paradigms. In 2014, I attended the international Indigenous Pre-conference on HIV and AIDS (www.indigenoushivaid2014.com), held in Sydney before the International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Melbourne, which encouraged me to look for a new paradigm for my study. My meetings with other Indigenous scholars from Canada, New Zealand, the USA and Australia encouraged me to reflect on myself as an Indigenous West Papuan feminist. I realised that this study should critically consider an Indigenous perspective. This means understanding the traumatic colonial experiences of West Papuans (and the Kamoro people in particular) because of the Dutch and Indonesian occupations. Political issues in West Papua that contributed to the sufferings of the colonised people, including women, are given little attention in the Indonesian feminist literature that informed my background. I came across postcolonial Indigenous literature and encountered several Aboriginal Australian scholars at Yung-gorendi, the First Nation Centre for Higher Education and Research at Flinders University.

The authors of this article are West Papuan scholars who originate from different ethnicities in West Papua: Muyu–Merauke, Biak from Numfor, and Raja Ampat.

We are not Kamoro people, which means we are outsiders, but as West Papuan we are insiders. Like Kamoro people, we are colonised people, but we experienced colonialism differently. Colonialism—reflected in methodologies and political ideology—has interfered with our journey as Indigenous West Papuan researchers and our efforts to conduct research. As scholars who were formed through colonial (Indo-Western) education and research culture, we were not prepared to be researchers with affirmative perspectives on our own cultural entity. In contrast, this study, which applied postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives, together with our collaborators, has enabled the expression of our own voices. We were honoured to be culturally accepted by the Kamoro people as insiders: not only because of our presence as colonised West Papuans but also based on their beliefs. In their relational ontology concepts, as visitors we were regarded as part of the lizard's body, a symbol in Kamoro mythology.

This research has applied a qualitative, postcolonial Indigenous paradigm which emphasises how colonialism influences Indigenous people (Chilisa 2012) and provides space for Indigenous people, including especially Indigenous elders, to tell their stories and challenge non-Indigenous investigators to acknowledge values and worldviews different from their own (Braun et al. 2014, 117). With a colonised nation that has been forced to change its culture to the mainstream (coloniser) culture, this approach aims to assist colonised people find their identity through self-determination. Moreover, the postcolonial Indigenous paradigm allows researched people to describe themselves in ways that they themselves recognise and know, and would like others to know of them (Chilisa 2012). This approach was necessary to balance or confront misconceptions about the Kamoro people and other Papuans. By doing this, the voice of self-determination and social justice through knowledge production can be facilitated (Smith 2012).

We carried out this decolonising and Indigenous methodology in two main ways: reflection, and centring Kamoro epistemology. Self-reflection is a mode for healing and transforming the lives of colonised people. Angelina Weenie, a First Nation woman scholar from Canada, states that 'intellectual awareness, critical self-reflection, and self-analysis are ways of transforming colonised people's lives' (Weenie 2000, 7). Self-reflection, according to Karran Thorpe and Jeanette Barsky (2001), is a fundamental part of a healing process.

This study centres Kamoro epistemology, which draws from a philosophy of maintaining the balance of life. It has sought to respect and apply a framework derived from the ethno-philosophy of the Kamoro. This included considering how their cultural understandings shaped their responses to the researchers and influenced the research design. Some of the concepts that are important to understand in the traditional framework are the *taparu* (clan/community) system, *nawarapoka* (giving back) and the local wisdom to maintain the confidentiality of Indigenous and customary responsibilities of men and women. In the language of the Kamoro, *nawarapoka* means giving back. The Kamoro people believe that everything that they give should be repaid. This principle has three aims: first, it is a sign of gratitude; second, it

is a way to strengthen the relationship between the giver and the receiver; and last, it means insuring life (Saklil 1987). The gratitude of the Kamoro people is expressed in a real form that they can see, touch and feel, such as goods or services. Socially, *nawarapoka* aims to strengthen relationships to reduce tension or conflict between *taparu*.

There are some obligations in Kamoro culture that we interpret as customary responsibilities of the researcher. These are mainly about maintaining the confidentiality of rituals in Kamoro culture and customary responsibilities of Kamoro men and women. Not all traditional rituals and customs or stories should be told to people outside the community. If customary confidentiality is breached, people believe that it will lead to anger of the ancestors. This anger can cause pain or problems for people.

Field Sites and Data Collection

This article draws on fieldwork conducted in 2015 in Mimika District.² Mimika is one of five districts (*kabupaten*) with a non-Papuan majority, around 60 per cent. Timika, the district capital, services the Grasberg gold and copper mine owned by Freeport McMoRan and PT Freeport Indonesia. Most of the Freeport workforce is non-Papuan (Sumule 2002), and the mine attracts a significant number of Indonesian military and police personnel who have committed human rights abuses against civilians (Ballard 2002; Kirksey 2012). Urban development in Timika has led to a male surplus, created by the presence of Freeport mining and associated businesses, and has contributed to a burgeoning sex industry (Butt 2005; Silitonga et al. 2011). Migrants to Timika have brought their own values about sexual culture. This includes Kamoro people who have migrated to urban areas, leaving their own norms about sexuality and adopting certain values that affect their sexual behaviour. The broader aim of the research was to investigate how colonialism contributes to the HIV epidemic in West Papua through an exploration of changing sexual cultures, gender, marriage and sexuality. This article focuses on aspects related to colonialism and sexual and reproductive cultures, rather than issues of HIV.

The research was conducted in Koperapoka, Kaugapu, Poumako and Atuka settlements. Koperapoka is an urban area located within Timika. The sub-district around Koperapoka had a population of 120,000 in 2013. Most Kamoro people in Koperapoka live alongside other non-Papuan migrants due to Koperapoka's location at the centre of economic activity. Further, most Kamoro people in Koperapoka have been displaced from their traditional landscapes. They were relocated as their lands and waterways were taken to build Freeport mining facilities and the Timika township, or destroyed by mine tailings (Ballard 2002; Leith 2002; Sumule 2002).

Kaugapu, southeast of Timika, had a population of 9500 in 2013. In addition to Kamoro, Kaugapu is home to a transmigration settlement for people from Java and was known as a satellite area for people from Timika seeking sex. Poumako is further southeast towards the coast and is located around the seaport. Poumako

was not initially included in the research, but Kamoro people there asked to participate. Atuka is a coastal village with a population of 3000 in 2013. Atuka is a five-hour trip from Timika accessed by boat from Poumako.

Primary participants or collaborators in this study were classified—young and old men, young and old women, elder women and men—to examine the history and changing values across generations. The participants who were interviewed and classified as the younger generation were aged from 18 to 35 years when this research was conducted. The starting age was taken as 18 years, the age at which some Kamoro people marry. The older generation consisted of those aged 36–52, while those aged 53 and over and knowledgeable about the culture and history of the Kamoro were classified as elders. Elders in Kamoro are mostly in this latter category. They are not only knowledgeable about culture but also preserve culture, and they have experienced different stages of history and are responsible for teaching the younger generation.

Purposive sampling method using the snowball technique was applied to select the elders while other collaborators were chosen randomly from the population based on age criteria in each location. Fourteen primary participants took part in the in-depth interviews in the three villages. Twelve secondary participants included teachers or retired teachers, health workers from the Community Health Centre in Atuka, staff of the Timika AIDS Commission, the Catholic church, related NGO (Non-Government Organisation) staff, and the Amungme-Kamoro Community Development Organisation (LPMK).

The data collection consisted of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and field notes. Focus group discussions were aimed at exploring gender values and sexual culture at the community level across generations. While several focus groups, based on gender and age, were planned in the design, this did not materialise at the research site. Instead, the participants organised themselves according to their traditional group arrangement which was more specific than they were asked by researchers. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to engage with the sociocultural context and structural condition of the Kamoro people and the individual accounts of the participants.

Sex and Sexuality: Banning Cultural Discipline and Imposing Punishments in the Dutch Era

Sexual culture, including sexuality and reproduction, was described differently among the younger and the older generations, and among men and women. This includes some of the terms used to talk about sex as well as the gestures and tones used. Most of the self-reflection occurred among the older generation of the Kamoro, based on examining the existing situations that they have faced including discrimination, racial judgment, economic disadvantages, violence, psychological trauma, the increasing number of deaths among the Kamoro youth and poor health conditions.

According to older Kamoro informants, in the pre-colonial period there were cultural rules, norms and punishments regarding sexuality. In the past the Kamoro people had expressed their sexuality in rituals, ceremonies, songs and carvings. Cultural celebration was part of Kamoro life. An older woman, Tata, in a focus group in Poumako, underlined how the Kamoro women in the past guided their sons and daughters when they became teenagers. She explained that the parents oversaw their children at each biological change and celebrated each stage of their reproductive and sexual development through rituals. The parents continued to guide their children in values and norms and in terms of responsibilities that they should consider as they grew up. She stated:

Thus, [in the past] a mother knew already and noticed that her daughter, who stays in her house, has grown, so she will observe her growth carefully. She will observe whether her breasts have already grown or not. She will guide and consult the daughter about how to deal with any changes of her sexuality and reproductive organs including menstruation. The mother will celebrate her daughter's first period in ritual until it's finished after three days. The mother will cry and cover her body with mud for her daughter. For boys, also, in the past they will be guided by their father until they become an adult man at around 17 years of age. Then, the father will celebrate it in a ritual. In this ritual the son will be taught how to be an adult who will have to learn how to catch fish. He also will be reminded of a man's responsibility before marriage: he must build a house, make a canoe, and provide [harvest] some blocks of sago.

Traditionally, Kamoro people applied their own penalty to sexual violations, for instance extra-marital sexual relations. These rules were banned in the Dutch period (1926–1962) which introduced Western law. In a discussion with elders Yusri and Egi, in Atuka, they explained that violation of the traditional regulations related to sexuality resulted in conflict between clans that mostly ensued for several days. They described that if a couple who had extra-marital sexual relations were caught, they would be punished by their family. The man would be beaten using a wooden stick by the husband of the woman and his family in a public space, as well as the woman by her family. This created conflicts between clans as one family or the other could view the punishment as unfair or that their relative had suffered.

The Dutch interpreted conflict among clans, or *taparu*, over violation of sexual norms, which usually occurred over several days, as a practice of uncivilised people that interfered with colonial governance. In an interview in Atuka, Ori, an older man, explained that this was the reason why the Dutch introduced a legal system to resolve issues regarding violations of sexual norms. Ori said that the colonial government introduced imprisonment as a legal punishment and burned traditional weapons that were used in battle between clans due to such violations:

The Church [Roman Catholic], and the Indonesian government [early Indonesian governance around the late 1960s to 1970s], destroyed these customary practices, they are all finished, now it is not like that anymore. In the past if they

[missionaries] found any youth with sexual violation, teenagers [having sex], married people having sex with another's wife, or local people fighting [due to a sexual transgression], they would report it to the local [Dutch] authority.

Thus, we argue that the remaining collective memories as revealed by the older generation are mostly about punishment from the Dutch. We could not find any positive descriptions of sexuality of the Kamoro people. The Kamoro people are not simply 'missing' their culture as Todd Harple (2000) claimed, but the oppressive traumatic experiences in the Dutch period forced them to cease reproducing their cultural values, wisdom and practices, to cease passing these down from generation to generation. Not passing on and recreating cultural values reflects profound reproductive abandonment caused by colonial impact.

Decentring Women: Dutch Missionaries' Prohibition of Exchange Marriage

According to some elders and older participants in this study, when they were young, around the late 1960s, they were not involved in courtship as it is known today. Prior to marriage they had not engaged in a romantic relationship or dating. They knew each other as they had grown up and lived together as a community, and there were rules and punishments that directed the relationships among youth. Their parents and other relatives guarded them and were also involved in initiating relationships between young marriageable people.

Marriage was arranged by family. An elder in Kaugapu, Imus, described how marriage in the Kamoro culture has been transformed, especially through the reduced authority of women. In pre-colonial period marriage, as he outlined, after accepting a marriage proposal offered by a woman's parents, a man must start to build a house, make a canoe and prepare a garden. The marriage ceremony began after completion of the house as well as the canoe and garden. The man's parents and family then arranged some materials to give to the woman's family. They usually prepared sago blocks, pigs they had hunted, and new canoes to take to the woman's family. Even though they were engaged already, sexual intercourse before the marriage ceremony was prohibited. Imus said:

In the past, it was prohibited to sleep together [sexual intercourse]; no, parents were too strict, and this should not have occurred. It will result in conflict, battle, between this family and that family. They will fight, not only for a day but two or three days. It is a woman who will reconcile them. If a woman stands in the middle, they cannot do anything, they stop fighting as they feel shame [respect] to the woman because the woman is the decision maker, but not now. Now the woman is not [the decision maker].

According to Imus, in the past, marital conflict arose if the woman was not allowed to be involved in determining her husband, so Kamoro elders agreed that women should be involved in choosing their husband.

Marriage in Kamoro was also modified when the Dutch Catholic missionaries arrived. Imus explained that in the exchange marriage when the man's parents

approved the wedding proposal offered by the woman's parents, the marriageable sister of the man was offered to one of the woman's brothers. The exchange marriage aimed to balance the relationship through the principle of reciprocity. Imus added that it was also a sign of admiration from the woman's family for the man's efforts to meet the marriage obligations: 'There is such hard work that a man should offer before marriage, as I told, before [the house, canoe and garden] is finished. From there, the exchange marriage began'. According to our participants, exchange marriage was a pre-contact tradition.

The Dutch confronted the women-centred culture of the Kamoro through the introduction of Christianity, followed by the introduction of a patriarchal society. The missionaries forbade exchange marriage and announced that the church was the only institution to legitimate marriage. This had repercussions for the Kamoro's women-centred culture; indeed, it could be argued that these new rules were intended to damage Kamoro land and social systems. Pre-contact, Kamoro women were the owners of economic resources inherited from their mothers. Women also had control over allocation and usage of these resources. Julius Coenen, a Franciscan priest from the Netherlands who worked in Timika from 1953 to 1963, affirmed that a woman in the Kamoro culture was *taparamako* or the owner of land, sago forest and river (Coenen 2012). As a member of a matrilineal clan, a man was responsible for protecting the woman's ownership. In the ambitious effort to dominate natural resources, however, the coloniser changed Kamoro social institutions such as marriage and family structure.

The central position of women in Kamoro culture reflects the belief that women are the source of life. Imus said that *mirikaoteyao* refers to a woman who birthed the Kamoro people; this is the basis of the women-centred culture. The roles of women and men in marriage previously complemented each other, but during the Dutch era women's role became confined to the private sphere, while men were encouraged to become heads of families, breadwinners and gain formal education and enter the labour market in the modern economy.

It is clear to older and younger people that Kamoro marriage has fundamentally changed. Rado, a young Kamoro man in Koperapoka, shared the cultural knowledge that he received from his parents about marriage in the past.

As I heard from my parents, if a man is interested in a woman, he has to build a house and prepare everything, including a canoe to catch fish. Then after arranging everything with parents and family, he brings the woman to live in the house that he built. Now, it is not like this anymore, the time is different.

In the modern view, marriage should be based on love, which means people themselves are supposed to decide who they will marry. It is implied in modern marriage that it is the man who should offer marriage in the first place. Marriage can be undertaken without parental involvement or prior preparation, and it has become a way of covering up or penalising premarital sex rather than an integral part of the social and gender system.

'Married by Accident': The Effects of the Freeport Mine and Indonesianisation of Premarital Sex

As mentioned, the Freeport mine has had considerable impacts on all aspects of Kamoro life. It has contributed to rapid social change through the intense presence of non-Papuan migrants, and Indonesian systems and structures, in a frontier atmosphere. Rapid urbanisation in mining regions is marked by extreme inequalities, a mobile population of relative strangers and a sexualised economy. Throughout West Papua, young people must migrate from rural areas to urban towns for school, although others go in search of adventure or respite from the village. When a person moves out of their cultural boundaries, for instance to the town where more diverse groups of people live, they tend to also move away from their traditional norms (Herdt 1997). In urban areas like Timika, where they are not necessarily living with relatives and may be in precarious economic situations, they encounter a visible sex industry and different values and norms regarding sex. Sex is more visible through Internet pornography, sex industries and the freedom to engage in social and sexual relationships. Urban migration to Timika in particular, as a centre of mining-related sex, money, and HIV prevalence, has strongly influenced sexual behaviour.

Participants said that modern courtship has been introduced through Indonesian migrants and through media, in particular television, which has affected the younger generation of Kamoro.

Courtship occurred in the past, but it was done secretly as they [youth] were afraid of their parents and afraid of other people and authorities, including the chief of the village. They did it secretly. But after the town of Timika developed, this kind of naughtiness from elsewhere has influenced our younger generation. They have learned all these practices that were brought in, thus they become knowledgeable and even able to get a girl pregnant. When I was a teenager, we never engaged in courtship, even if we were interested in a girl, it was not easy to meet her. We had to have a bridge [go-between]—my sister helped me to connect with her [his girlfriend]. In the past we were unknowledgeable [about sex]. (Ori)

Ori means that they did not have easy access to sex. He refers to his impression of different types and aspects of sex that are known today, and he sees modern Indonesian courtship as meaning having sex.

Other participants also argued that Indonesian influences have brought sexual freedoms. Adolf, in an interview in Atuka, explained how young people today at an early age can meet in a social space where they are able to initiate their own relationships. In Atuka, they usually met up when watching soap operas in the only house that had a television, owned by a non-Indigenous businessman, after which they would go to the beach to have sex. For Adolf, this symbolised the Indonesian role in promoting sex for young people. Even though across Indonesia premarital sex is strongly stigmatised and punished, secret sex and clandestine courtship is somewhat common among young people (Bennett 2005; Richards 2016). At the same time, evidence suggests that more Papuan youth are engaging

in sex at a younger age than other cultural groups (Diarsvitri et al. 2011). While some point to sex parties and alcohol, we see the influence of colonialism on youth sexual behaviour.

Among the younger generation of Kamoro, sexual intercourse in courtship is common. The meaning of sex for the younger generation has changed, as for some young people it is primarily for pleasure or love. Several young Kamoro men and women implied that sex is a way to express love. On the other hand, a few young women said that they had been coerced by their boyfriends to have sex. Most of their boyfriends had persuaded them that sex is a way of expressing love, and if they refused the relationship would end.

With pressures and opportunities for sex so abundant, and no access to sex education or birth control, premarital pregnancy is common. Instead of being wanted, and a source of happiness, pregnancy has become another way to experience shame and hardship. What people call 'marriage by accident' is increasingly common, meaning that a couple gets married because the woman is pregnant. The man might be asked to either pay a fine or marry the woman. These couples are then in a vulnerable position, as contrary to the past custom where a house and garden preceded marriage, these newlyweds mostly share the house of the woman's parents.

The effects of teen pregnancy are wide-ranging, causing layers of punishment upon young adults, their families and babies born to young parents. Elders are concerned that pregnancy disadvantages young women. They are not usually allowed to continue their education as teen pregnancy is viewed through the lens of Indonesia's shame culture. For example, an Indonesian teacher in Atuka said that pregnant youth must be taken out from school because they might negatively influence other students. Parents who find it unfair that their daughter has been expelled have been known to forbid the young man from attending school. Hasan tells his story:

I stopped going to school. It was my fault; we were in a courtship relationship when she got pregnant. She told me she was pregnant, and I said, 'that's okay, I will be responsible, but you must tell your parents. Instead of being sinful, we will marry, otherwise our child or yourself or our parents or our brothers and sisters will be cursed by my sin [as] I got you pregnant'. At the time, I continued my study while she didn't. Her parents were not happy and got mad about that. They were angry at me and reported me to the police. I was imprisoned. My parents were not happy and wrote a letter to the police stating that they would pay her family so that I could be released. My family collected an amount of money which was around ten million [IDR = \$1000 AUD] and paid her family. Then I was released and moved from Hiripauw [the men's village] to live with her in her parent's house.

Hasan and his girlfriend eventually married, but neither of them finished secondary school and they were unable to access employment or earn money to fulfil their basic needs. The way pregnancy is punished may create intergenerational suffering for

children borne of such relationships. We should not assume that when the Dutch banned traditional forms of discipline and punishment they did not entrench a new punitive system, as evident in Hasan's experience of incarceration. It is not only that young people are unable to access contraception or sex education to prevent pregnancy, but in the context of an HIV epidemic this denial of their right to health care is an act of reproductive abandonment because it threatens Kamoro futures.

Colonial Representations of Kamoro Sexuality: Shame and Contestation

Some older participants, like Tata, whose words started our article, reflected on outsiders' perspectives on Kamoro sexuality. In a focus group discussion in Poumako, participants shared their stories of culture, and memories, to convince us as researchers to confront Indonesian and Western views about Kamoro culture. They explained that misinterpretation of Kamoro rituals and practices in the Dutch period had affected the views of Indonesian people, and West Papuans, about Kamoro sexual behaviour. Indeed, most of the histories and experiences of the Kamoro people appear in the coloniser's literature. Representations of Kamoro culture in some studies, reports and letters written by Dutch missionaries and anthropologists were quite biased. Harple (2000, 24) suggested that descriptions that were mostly written by the Dutch have shaped contemporary misinterpretations of Kamoro society.

Colonialism continues to influence the present through a culture of shaming and blaming, and encourages people to give up their practices and ideas. Some of the participants in this research, mainly the older generation, in our discussions about sexuality, instead of clearly stating certain vocabularies or terms or expressions related to sexual practices, tended to disguise these words. Even more, their gestures during our encounters signalled traumatic experiences due to sexuality. An elder, Yusri, a carver in Atuka, did not directly explain the symbol of 'vagina' that he carved. He decided to explain it to the researchers on another day in hushed tones. He brought the carving to the place where we stayed and illustrated that his carving was the genital organ of a woman.

An older Kamoro man, Tony, in a focus group in Poumako, explained that the symbol represented the source of life. We interpret this as an effort to contest the biased narrative regarding sexuality. The Bishop of Timika added that this symbol means that women are the source of life. The reactions and gestures of the Bishop and Tony in Poumako were unlike the elder man in Atuka. The Atuka elder's response implied some embarrassment, shame or discomfort. Perhaps he had learned or was directly instructed by his parents to be more cautious or even to keep this matter a secret. Kamoro culture in the pre-colonial era expressed sexuality through carving, rituals and ceremonies. These expressions today may be seen as backward. The carver, Yusri, might have been reticent to carve that kind of symbol, but carving was his source of income so he had kept the meaning of this symbol secret.

In comparison with the older generation of Kamoro, self-assessment among some of the young people, particularly in Koperapoka, was not based on 'self-reflection' as Weenie (2000) describes it. Their awareness largely mirrors outsiders' perceptions of them, particularly those of non-Papuan priests, nuns, police, government officers and other migrants. The younger generation is not as critical as the older generation, and they may disregard the effects of globalisation, Christianity and colonisation on their lives. In a focus group in Koperapoka, three young men, David, Sale and Rado, spoke about their experiences with alcohol and sex and how they had changed when they became involved in the Catholic Youth Group (OMK) in Timika.

I am thankful that the OMK has helped young people to adopt a new way of thinking and gradually leave behind our bad attitudes. We begin to be close to God and God opens our hearts and minds to be better in the future. Alcohol has destroyed us. When we got drunk, we used to fight with the migrants around here or have pre-marital sexual relations, which is prohibited by God. We, the young people in Koperapoka, weren't previously aware of that. But now we've changed, and I'm grateful for that. (David)

Previously, I was a drunk, and when I got drunk I used to commit weird things. I fought with others. One of my friends invited me to join the OMK. I didn't join the OMK directly when he asked me to do so. I was thinking of it until one morning I woke up after drinking alcohol at a party the night before. I felt unwell. I then asked the Lord to show me the way and, yes, I joined this group and now regularly attend Sunday mass. (Sale)

We [the young Kamoro people] in OMK have been chosen by God as God's agents to help our friends, who are not aware of their negative attitudes, and encourage them to forget all issues or things that destroy their life. (Rado)

Like other young Kamoro people, in their self-assessment they expressed regret about attitudes they see as inappropriate according to non-Papuans' perceptions or Christian values. They express that it is their own attitude that 'destroys their life'; this, rather than the inequalities and violence of the past and present. They tend to situate themselves in terms of a binary, reflecting Christian values, 'before I was close to God', which means 'bad', and 'after I became close to God' meaning 'good'. To us this signifies colonialist approaches in identifying the other, or colonised people, by categorising and evaluating them in terms of these standards. By absorbing Indonesian and Christian images of good and bad, young Kamoro blame themselves for all the social problems in Timika: alcohol consumption, early pregnancy, sniffing petrol, robbery.

We argue that these kinds of self-reflections among the younger generation are not contributing to healing and transformation but are instead enhancing feelings of guilt and deterioration of self-confidence. Many have adopted a colonial way of thinking and interpretation that is reshaping their identity as Kamoro youth in contemporary culture. Evaluating sexual culture according to colonial standards and then continuing to correct it has resulted in trauma and lowered the confidence of older and younger generations of Kamoro.

Conclusions

Colonialism impacts colonised people's lives, including their sexuality. Ann Stoler (2010, 46) has demonstrated that sexuality is the most salient marker of otherness and therefore figures in any racist ideology. The sexual culture of West Papuans has been influenced by both Dutch and Indonesian colonialisms. Vanessa Oliver and colleagues (2015, 5) similarly write about colonialism in Canada, 'many young people's ideas about sex, sexuality, health seeking, family, fertility and relationships are all influenced by historical and present-day patterns of discrimination, which play an important role in sexual behaviour'. Masculinities informed by contact with colonialism may reproduce dominant White values about manhood (Denetdale 2021, 235; Innes & Anderson 2015) as we saw when the missionaries banned Kamoro exchange marriage and imposed male-dominated Christian marriage and associated economic patterns.

The older generation of Kamoro spoke of sexuality and fertility in the rituals, art, norms and practices of sexual education in the past that have been progressively erased since the arrival of the Dutch and are generally not practised today. This is because misinterpretation of Kamoro peoples' sexual culture is widespread. They explained that dominant Indonesian perspectives today refer to imagined sexual practices of the past. Even though people do not practise these aspects of culture, stories about them have been passed through generations. These stories are, however, often told to remind offspring about the dangers of continuing these practices or rituals in the face of their criminalisation.

Social institutions, norms, gender roles and responsibilities that regulated relationships, including sexuality, which were present in marriage, family and courtship practices, have been forcibly changed or discontinued. The introduced systems fostered patriarchal individualism instead of a communal, matrilineal clan system. Standards of masculinity in relation to marriage included capability to hunt, to build a house, to make a canoe and garden, to fulfil the needs of the new family. Sexual intercourse in the previous era was not permissible before commencing the marriage ritual. Traditional punishments would be applied for any violation of these rules. These traditional punishments, however, were banned with the introduction of colonial legal systems.

1 These changes have contributed to changes in sexual behaviour. They have granted Kamoro men privilege as the head of their family, weakened social cohesion and social control, destroyed older forms of sexual expression and sexual education, and damaged traditional frameworks. Pornography has made sex more visible, but this visibility is not matched by adequate attention to sex education. As well as poor education, practical efforts to empower young Kamoro are inadequate. Taboo and stigma around condom use affects access to this means of safer sex practice. The meaning of sexual intercourse has changed as well. For older generations it related to procreation while among the younger people it is for pleasure or love, or power.

Some of these findings resonate with anthropological and other research on sexuality in Melanesia, especially Papua New Guinea, even though the colonial conditions are different. Like Angela Kelly et al. (2010), we found that concepts about sex and sexuality in the younger generation were shaped by both traditional cultural norms and Christianity. Young people are experiencing changes in the traditional values system and norms, which complicate sexuality and create barriers to engage in safe sex, as well as placing women in situations where sex is forced (Kelly et al. 2010). Christianity has given colonial moral frameworks a new force and authority in the context of modernity. As a result, 'sexuality continues to be associated with immorality and deep shame' (Eves 2012, 64). Some studies still tend to blame presumed cultural practices and attitudes without looking at the impact of Australian or other agencies' presence, as Patti Shih et al. (2017) demonstrate. These findings affirm the need for a growing engagement with feminist and Indigenous theories, including critical race theory and intersectionality, to better understand how ongoing colonialisms affect beliefs and practices related to sex, sexuality and reproduction.

Colonialism has a fundamentally profound impact on generations of colonised people, not simply the loss of cultural heritage that has destroyed the cultural pride of generations. It can be traced, for example, in the youth of Kamoro blaming themselves for social problems. Munro (2018) similarly found the rise of 'shame' in the experiences of Papuan youth resulting from their immersion in the Indonesian education system. These phenomena reflect colonial impacts.

Reproductive abandonment occurred in forced changes to marriage and sexual practice, but then it persisted as dominant ideologies blamed Kamoro culture and encouraged young people to see their culture as 'bad' or useless. Rehabilitation is not about creating cultural festivals or exhibitions that focus on promoting exotic material culture, as Freeport has initiated through its cultural programmes. Rather, it is about correcting hegemonic epistemologies that blame Kamoro culture and individual behaviours for the deep structural effects of colonisation. Trauma healing for the older generation must be done first so that they can guide young people to reflect on the past and create a better future.

Hegemonic epistemology (Morton 2003) remains strong in research about sexuality and HIV/AIDS in West Papua. Encouraging the representation and authority of Indigenous people in knowledge production is important. This can be done by reducing political barriers in conducting research and enhancing the role of West Papuan researchers to support knowledge production using decolonising methodologies. Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, 72), West Papuan scholars have ways of reclaiming a voice, reconnecting and reordering those ways of knowing. This process enhances the critical consciousness of West Papuan researchers and helps West Papuans to heal from the trauma of being defined through the colonisers' lens.

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Notes

- [1] All names are pseudonyms.
- [2] This study received ethical approval from Flinders University, [South Australia](#).

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